



Vision. Action. Change.

TEACHER GUIDE

A PROJECT OF:



SUPPORTED BY:



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What is Our Canada Project (OCP)

Our Canada Project, designed for youth age 6-25, is an innovative call to action for responsible citizenship. The **Our Canada Project** encourages young people to engage in "conversations about the future" and share with others their vision for a sustainable Canada and the actions they will take to bring Canada closer to their vision.

Our Canada Project was designed by a group of 22 youth from across Canada brought together *Learning for a Sustainable Future*, in partnership with Deloitte to discuss responsible citizenship, and how best to inspire youth to take action toward a more sustainable Canada. The answer was simple: give youth a chance to share their voice and they will take action. And so, the *Our Canada Project* was born.

The **Our Canada Project** website (www.ourcanadaproject.ca) features an interactive map where students can share their vision and action projects, including videos, pictures and text. As students celebrate their projects by sharing them with their friends and families, the word gets out to Canadians nationwide, showcasing the great work that classes and students across Canada are undertaking, big or small, to make Canada a better place.



Our Canada Project is a project of [Learning for a Sustainable Future \(LSF\)](http://www.lsf-lst.ca). LSF is a national charity founded in 1991 to promote, through education, the knowledge, skills, values, perspectives, and practices essential to a sustainable future. Please visit <http://www.lsf-lst.ca> for more information.

As we approach Canada's 150th anniversary, we hope you will use Our Canada Project to create your vision for a better Canada and what are you doing to make it come true.

Goals and Process:

This Teacher Resource has been developed to support you in engaging your students in envisioning a more sustainable Canada and taking action.

The Goals of Our Canada Project are:

- To foster an appreciation for responsible citizenship
- To teach the curriculum expectations through authentic opportunities for making positive changes in the local community
- To provide action experiences which cultivate the attitudes, knowledge and skills necessary for students to envision a more sustainable future and take action in the community
- To inspire students to be agents of change and stewards of sustainability in their local community

The process is easy!

- Step 1** Watch the animated OCP video (<http://ourcanadaproject.ca/about/>) Undertake an activity with your students to create their vision for a more sustainable Canada.
- Step 2** With your students, decide on an action project that they will undertake to achieve their vision (visit www.ourcanadaproject.ca for inspirational ideas)
- Step 3** Do the project, documenting your action with pictures and videos. Lots of great resources, videos and children’s literature can be found on LSF’s resources for rethinking database (www.r4r.ca).
- Step 4** Post your vision and action project, with pictures and video on www.ourcanadaproject.ca.

Step 1 - Visioning a More Sustainable Canada

The following activities can be used with your students to vision a more sustainable future and identify issues they care about that they may want to take action on.

Activity #1 - Imagining a More Sustainable Community

Materials needed: mural paper, markers, crayons

Instructions:

1. Sit students in a circle and have them close their eyes.
2. Read the following...

Imagine yourself to awakening from a deep and refreshing sleep; you find yourself lying on your back in soft grass. You feel the sun on your face; looking up, you see blue sky and clouds moving. The breeze smells fresh, like meadow flowers. Sitting, you realize you are on the crest of a hill. Nearby you see a hedge -- there is an arched, white gate in the hedge. You walk up to it, put your hand on the latch, lift it, and pause -- anything could be on the other side. You push, and walk through the gate into the morning of October 2030.

You look down the hill on the other side of the gate, and see a perfect world.

- What do you see? Hear? Smell?
 - What does the environment look like? The sky, the land, the water?
 - What are people doing - the children, the elderly, the men, the women?
 - Are they playing? Are they working? Are they happy?
 - What does the neighbourhood look like? How do people live, travel? What do they eat?
3. Have a discussion around each of the above questions.
 4. Have students draw a mural of their vision for a more sustainable community.

Activity #2 -Why Care?

Materials Needed:

Pictures that illustrate diverse and important environmental, social, and economic issues (See [Appendix A - Activity 2](#) sample pictures for ideas), paper and crayons/markers for making their own pictures.

Instructions:

1. Sit kids in a circle.
2. Show each picture to the group.
3. Ask the children to share how they feel when they look at the picture:
 - What makes them happy or sad? Why?
 - If it makes them sad, what could they do to make it better?
 - If it makes them happy, what could they do to enhance it?
4. Have the children draw their own picture of what aspects of a better world make them happy.
5. Have each student share with the class and post their picture on the wall.
6. You can sort the pictures by focus – environmental, social, economic

Activity #3 – Thank You Cards

Materials Needed: paper, crayons/markers, chart paper.

Instructions:

1. Sit kids in a circle.

“Aboriginal people talk about Mother Earth as the source of all life. Mother Earth provides us with our food and clean water sources. She gives us materials for our homes, clothes and tools. She provides the raw materials for our industry, ingenuity and progress. All are provided by our mother, the Earth. “

2. Have students share things that Mother earth provides.

“Mother Earth also teaches what we need to know to take care of her and all her children.”

3. Have the students design a thank you card drawing on the inside everything that they are thankful to Mother Earth for.
4. Ask students what they can do to make sure that Mother Earth will still be around for future children. Write them on chart paper.

Activity #4 – Making Earth Happy

Materials: paper, markers, cloth, hats, old clothes, etc for skits

Instructions:

1. Sit kids in a circle.
2. Have students take turns making a statement about what makes nature, animals, and the earth “happy” or “unhappy” (ex. clean air and clean water are good for people, animals and plants. Plastic bags in the ocean are harmful to marine life.)
3. Have students share what can they do or not do to contribute to the earth’s happiness? (ex. walking for short trips can reduce air pollution.)
4. Working with a partner, each pair creates a short skit that demonstrates a lesson about something that kids should do to make the earth happy or something that they shouldn’t do because it makes the earth unhappy.

Step 2 – Deciding on an Action Project

a) What is an action project?

An action project is distinguished by:

- Choosing an issue that is important to the group
- Visioning, researching, acting, reflecting, celebrating
- Meaningful engagement of students throughout an entire process

b) Benefits of an action project

- Action projects illuminate the trans-disciplinary and deeply interconnected nature of real problems
- Action projects that involve being outdoors provide students with opportunities to fall in love with Earth, which then becomes its own motivator to act.
- Using the environment and an integrating context for learning has been linked to improved test scores on the standardized tests in the United States.
- Action projects create a natural relationship between the people in the school and the wider community
- Action projects cultivate skills, knowledge, attitudes necessary for active citizenship, and increases the likelihood that participants will engage in future action projects

c) Help students choose a sustainability issue that is important to them

Sustainability is often defined as the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs. Sustainability can be defined as “conversations about the future”- understanding how our actions today will affect the ability of future generations to live well on this planet. We want to make sure that we make good decisions in our everyday lives that positively lead to our social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being.

- **Social** issues include improving human health, nutrition, social inclusion/interaction, human rights, livability and well being.
- **Economic** issues include reducing our consumption of energy, waste, and water, sustainable consumption of products, poverty reduction, and greening our products and services.
- **Environmental** issues include reducing water, air and land pollution, enhancing biodiversity, ecosystems, water, natural resources, food and agriculture.
- **Cultural** issues include diversity and tolerance, equity, citizenship, community building, and cultural enrichment

Please see **LSF's Engaging Students in Sustainable Action Projects (ESSAP) Guide** at [www.lsf-
lst.ca](http://www.lsf-lst.ca) for the following activities you can do with your students to help them choose an issue.

- Activity 2A – Why Care? What Does this Picture Make me Think About?
- Activity 2B – Value Line Activity
- Activity 2C – Visioning a Change for a School
- Activity 2D – Why Care? What Would the Consequences of that Be..?

Research: What has already been done on this issue? What can you learn from those experiences? Is there anyone else in your community who is already working in this, or that has knowledge that could help you? Don't feel you need to reinvent the wheel!

d) Choose an Action

As a group, explore types of action projects

- Appendix B provides an outline of types of action projects.
- Appendix C provides some examples of action projects.
- Review other schools/groups action projects on the OCP website.
- Brainstorm action ideas as your class.
- Decide on the criteria you will use to choose an action;
 - Is it locally relevant?
 - Is it relevant to your student's lives?
 - Does it address the root cause of the problem?

Step 3 - Action Project Planning

Make a Plan and Do it!

Use the **Action Planning Template in Appendix D** to help you undertake your action project.

Post the plan somewhere that everyone has access to it. Revise as necessary

Celebrate milestones along the way and at the end of the project. Make sure you capture your project with pictures and video. See Appendix E for instructions on film making.

To access over 1,000 peer reviewed, curriculum linked lesson plans, videos, children's literature and outdoor activities that integrate environmental, social and economic perspectives through learning that is interdisciplinary and action oriented, please visit LSF's teacher portal at Resources for Rethinking (www.r4r.ca).

Step 4 - Posting Your Vision and Action Project to Our Canada Project

Post class vision and action project on the Our Canada Project website along with any photos/videos you've taken along the way. Sharing your experiences helps inspire youth across the country to also take action towards sustainability, motivating them to be more successful.

Your entry on the Our Canada Project website makes you eligible for the **LSF-RBC Our Canada Project Award!**

Award Amounts:

- First place: \$3,000
- Second place: \$2,000
- Third place: \$1,000



Criteria:

- Youth have incorporated sustainability themes into their vision and action-based project as evidenced in their posting (Environment/Economic/Social/Cultural)
- Demonstrates responsible citizenship as evidenced in the vision, and action project
- Demonstrates creativity and innovation as evidenced in the vision and action project
- Multimedia submission captures the spirit of the action-based project (picture and/or a video)
- Action-based project is youth-led
- Impact –number of people directly involved and depth of engagement
- Social Media – number of Facebook Likes, Tweets and comments

Appendix A - Activity 3 Sample Pictures









Appendix B - Types of Action Projects

Educate & Inform:

This can involve educating peers or younger students, community education programs, newspaper articles, plays, poems, posters, advertisements, workshops etc.

Make Consumer Choices:

Personal decisions like refusing to buy items with more than one layer of packaging, buying Canadian made and locally grown products, buying organic, boycotting products produced by known operators of sweatshops, buying used, reducing consumption etc.

Persuade Others To...:

Similar to educate and inform, this approach attempts to convince people to make changes. Letters to the editor, PA announcements, advertisements (or anti-ads – see Adbusters’ website), pamphlets, street theatre etc. are all useful persuasion tools).

Raise Funds:

This can refer either to fundraising for an external cause or raising funds to implement your own project.

Engage in Political Action:

This has some crossover with legal action and can include meeting with elected officials, speaking at public meetings and hearings, circulating petitions, supporting political candidates, writing letters to the editor etc.

Initiate Legislative Action:

This approach is important and usually involves a longer term process. Short term contributions, such as making a presentation to city hall or town council can help initiate or support a legislative change – e.g. making a presentation to support the creation of an anti-idling bylaw or a law to reduce pesticide use in the community.

Eco-management Projects:

These projects make physical changes to the environment including schoolyard naturalization, tree planting, river bank stabilization etc. Be careful to distinguish their ecological value from projects that are simply for “beautification”.

Make Lifestyle Choices:

In addition to consumer choices, this also includes such decisions as walking, riding a bike or taking public transportation, choosing low-impact entertainment, and generally conducting one's life in ways which have less impact on the planet and are more sustainable in the long term.

Peaceful Dissent:

This involves opposition to a rule or to the usual way of doing things, but it does not involve breaking the law. Examples of peaceful dissent include: parades with protest signs, gatherings in public places (with a permit), wearing gym clothing inside out to protest the use of sweatshop labour, etc.

Appendix C – Examples of Action Projects

What about those Mosquitoes?

In response to a high mosquito population and concerns about the town's spraying program, Grade 6 students researched and presented a variety of solutions to community council. As a result, the council members struck a committee to examine the issue and eventually transferred from spraying to an integrated pest management system. (Alberta)

Cafeteria Recycling

Concerned that their peers were not recycling pop cans and bottles, high school students did a traffic flow survey of the school cafeteria. Survey data in hand, they lobbied the school custodians to alter cafeteria seating arrangements and add more recycling containers. (Caledon)

Junction Creek Restoration Project

High school students joined an existing community creek restoration project in their ongoing work to clean up and restore Junction Creek as a healthy coldwater stream. (Sudbury)

Clean-up and Pair-up

Bothered by the air, noise and visual pollution created by a neighbouring aluminum factory, students convinced factory owners to invest \$1.5 million in cleanup, changes in manufacturing processes, and on-going support for future student projects. (Quebec).

Yellow Fish Road

As a way to inform residents that what flows into the storm sewers goes directly into local streams, high school students painted yellow fish beside storm sewer entrances and hung yellow fish-shaped information pamphlets on neighbourhood door handles. (Woodbridge)

Teaching Grade 5's

Concerned about the lack of environmental education in the schools, high school students prepared a series of workshops highlighting local environmental concerns, and then delivered them to a grade 5 class. (Woodbridge) [See www.ecoMentors.ca for help with this type of project]

A Fish Hatchery for Black Creek

High school students are participating in the Black Creek Restoration Project. They have a fish hatchery, release trout annually, run planting and clean-up events, and are currently applying to get funding for a feasibility study to try and remove a concrete channel that makes up a section of the waterway. The school has received charitable status and is currently applying for its own funding grant for future projects. (North York)

Let's Talk Tortoise

After hearing that their state reptile, the desert tortoise, was endangered because of loss of habitat and respiratory problems, grade 6 students launched a major public education campaign. They designed posters for display at area businesses, submitted articles to the local newspaper, and developed a video. They also raised funds through t-shirt sales and distributed "tortoise cans" to local merchants. Finally, the class developed a proposal for the Bureau of Land Management suggesting an "open-use area" for off-highway vehicles so that those vehicles would not further damage the desert tortoise's habitat. (California)

Reusing and Raising

We wanted to protect the environment and help other communities so we thought of the idea of the *Second Time Cool Project* as a fundraiser. Second Time Cool is the design and creation of fabulous and funky recycled items from used material. Our teachers suggested many possible ideas for us to make and we chose 5 favourite products: jewellery, pillows, stuffed animals, clothing and jean bags. For one full day our school was turned into a "factory"! With the help of our teachers, 16 volunteer parents and grand-parents and students, we designed, sewed, strung and stuffed more than 100 items! We planned an extravagant sales event including an awareness activity, great food, live entertainment, a raffle and of course, the sale of our fantastic Second Time Cool creations. This special event not only allowed us to raise over \$2000 for children in need, it also gave us the chance to share what we had learned about global and environmental issues. (Montreal)

Organics at the Market

A partnership between Sulyn Organic Catering and the local school supports a student to host an organic food booth at the local farmers market. (Eganville)

A Pond at the School

As part of a five-year plan, grade 9 and OAC students worked to transform an enclosed patio and lawn space into a mini-habitat for many wildlife species. The project has had numerous positive effects: it has become less difficult to encourage volunteerism, more classes are using eco-visits as a curricular component, and students have learned

responsibility, citizenship, and are suggesting ideas for future projects, including ways in which the technical shops and art department can join in. (Niagara Falls)

Healthy and Fair Athletic Wear

Students at a local school are discomforted by the fact that they do not know what conditions their athletic wear was made in. They want to purchase athletic clothing that is certified to be free of sweatshop labour and child labour. To make a statement about their opinion, they start a campaign to have students wear black armbands during phys.ed classes and at school sporting events. The armbands have writing on them which says 'choose clothes made in healthy working conditions' and a website URL. The students create a blog which provides more information about their concerns, about child labour, about sweatshop labour and about alternative sources of clothing.

Supplies to Bosnia

In partnership with the Community Action Centre, elementary school students are raising funds to send school supplies to children in Bosnia. The supplies will be sent in "Waste Works" tote bags – bags made from material that has been diverted from the local landfill. In conjunction with this project, the school is also supporting a focus on developing students' conflict resolution skills. (Eganville)

Waste Consolidation Project

Through a one-day blitz, the Guelph Waste Consolidation Project plans to reduce the number of stops the garbage truck needs to make. This model program consolidates household waste collection, changes community behaviour and improves air quality. Students distributed information flyers and measured house participation rates on collection day. (Guelph)

Safe and Active Routes to School

Partnering with the City Hall, high school students will create a "walking school bus" to escort elementary students to school. This project reduces greenhouse gases, increases fitness, and helps develop a sense of community. (Guelph)

Super Sleuths Track Marine Debris*

Since 1992, high school students have been studying current patterns and "fingerprinting" the debris that washes up on their shores. They've written more than 100 letters to sources they were able to "fingerprint" and have received 30 responses indicating that companies will change their products and practices to reduce litter. Inspired by their initiative, various organizations have donated resources and funding to support the students' work. (Texas)

Vehicle Idling Reduction

Students are learning about the effects of idling vehicles, surveying the number of idling vehicles outside their school, and then creating a banner to mount outside the school, designating the student drop-off area as an “idle-free zone”. (Mississippi Mills/Almonte)

Senior Citizen’s Social

For over ten years, high school students have hosted an annual senior citizen’s social to celebrate the Christmas season. Students throughout the school bake and donate gifts, while others serve the seniors and provide dramatic and musical entertainment. (Caledon)

From Drought to Good Sense*

Grade 8 students lobbied the Senate Governmental Organization Committee for approval of their resolution urging the state to use drought-resistant plants in landscaping around new buildings. In their presentations, the students demonstrated that landscaping with drought-resistant plants not only saves water, but also money, energy, labour, and fertilizer. As a result of the students’ lobbying and educational effort, legislation passed in 1988 and is still in effect. (California)

Personal Choices!

Each week this high school class chooses to take on one personal challenge to decrease their impact on the planet (e.g. limit showers to 5 minutes; use a cloth napkin instead of a paper towel). After committing to making a change for one week, some students choose to continue with their new habit on an ongoing basis. (Caledon)

Wells in Africa

A grade 7 student has raised money to build a well in Africa, providing clean drinking water to a whole village of 500 adults and children. (Ottawa) www.ryanswell.ca

Appendix D – Action Project Planning Worksheet

Date: _____ Name: _____

Team Members:

1. What is the issue/problem that you want to work on?

2. What would you like to see happen? How would you like this to be different?

3. Explore the root causes of the problem.

<p>What are possible symptoms of this problem?</p>	<p>What are possible root causes of the problem?</p>
<p>What are possible remedies for the <i>symptoms</i>?</p>	<p>What are possible remedies for the <i>root causes</i>?</p>

4. Examples of actions you could take to deal with this issue:

Type of Action	Examples of Action Someone could Take about the Issue (Be as specific as possible!)
<p>Educate & Inform</p> <p><i>This can involve educating community members, peers or younger students through: community education programs, newspaper articles, plays, advertisements, workshops or songs.</i></p>	
<p>Persuade Others To...</p> <p><i>Similar to educate and inform, this approach attempts to convince people to make changes.</i></p>	
<p>Raise Funds</p> <p>This can refer either to fundraising for an external charity/'cause' or raising funds to implement your own project.</p>	
<p>Engage in Political Action</p> <p>Trying to persuade people with political power to ...</p>	
<p>Make Personal Lifestyle Choices</p> <p>Personal decisions that do not involve buying things, like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing reusable bags to the grocery store • Riding your bike or walking instead of asking for a ride • Choosing to leave and/or express disapproval when people tell racist/sexist jokes 	

<p>Make Consumer Choices</p> <p><i>Personal decisions that do involve buying things, like: refusing to buy items with more than one layer of packaging, buying Canadian made and locally grown products, buying organic, boycotting products produced by known operators of sweatshops, buying used clothing, buying less stuff, etc.</i></p>	
<p>Get Your Hands Dirty Projects</p> <p>These projects make physical changes to the environment including removing litter from a local waterway,, stabilizing a river bank, pulling out plants that are not natural to the area. They also include things like: building a school or play structures for children in need, etc.</p>	
<p>Peaceful Dissent</p> <p><i>Peaceful Dissent involves opposition to a rule or to the usual way of doing things, but it does not involve breaking the law (when breaking the law, the term is 'civil disobedience').</i></p> <p>Examples of peaceful dissent include: parades with protest signs, gatherings in public places (with a permit where necessary), refusing to attend an event sponsored by a local employer if the local employer does things that damage the water, etc.,etc.</p>	

5. What criteria should you use to choose an action?

Choose 3 potential actions. Write a brief description in the top row of the chart. Write the criteria you listed above on the left side of the chart (a few examples are provided for you). For each possible action, put a check, an “x” or a question mark beside each criterion.

Criteria	Possible Action #1 is: _____ _____	Possible Action #2 is: _____ _____	Possible Action #3 is: _____ _____
1. Will the action address the root cause of the problem (not just a symptom)?			
2. Will this action be effective in making the change we hope for?			
3. Will the results of the action last for a reasonable amount of time?			
4. Is this action suited to the number of people we have working on this project?			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
11.			

What action would you like to take to try to improve this issue? Be specific.

6. Why did you choose this particular action?

7. What is the goal of your project?

8. Who is the target audience for your project?

9. What questions do you need answered? Keep a running list here.

12. How can you engage the supporters so that they can help you?

13. How can you address the concerns of the people who might be resistant to your project

14. How will you know if you are successful?

(Use the following workplan sheet to help your group to make a plan to find the answers to these questions.)

EVIDENCE THAT WE HAVE MADE PROGRESS TOWARD OUR GOAL	TOOL THAT WE CAN USE TO MEASURE OUR SUCCESS	SPECIFIC MEASUREMENT THAT WE WOULD BE HAPPY WITH	STATUS ON: _____ (Date)	STATUS ON: _____ (Date)
E.g. If the project goal is to get one school day per year committed to activities which raise awareness about water-related issues for the whole community, one piece of evidence that we have been successful is community support for the project.	E.g. Count signatures on a petition.	E.g. 100 signatures		

Workplan: Who is doing what?

(Include details about: who is researching the answers to the questions identified in step 5, who is approaching potential supporters, who is addressing potential resistance/concerns with your project, who is buying _____, who is writing _____, who is...)

WHAT?	WHO?	WHEN?	STATUS on _____ (date) (Is it done? Is it in progress...)	STATUS on _____ (date) (Is it done? Is it in progress...)

Appendix E - Film Making Activity

Description

Students utilize digital media to create a documentary film about their action project and local issue.

Curriculum Connections

Students' documentaries should be holistic and demonstrate their competency in as many, if not all, of the curriculum expectations

Materials

Film-making equipment, editing software (i.e. Adobe Premier Elements 12), Scrap paper

Procedure

1. Students work in their action project groups to create a documentary film highlighting their action project and the issue they addressed. Students should work collaboratively to create a storyboard for their film, write a script, plan digital effects and contact different community stakeholders to gather information and conduct interviews. As a class, students should create criteria to determine what a good documentary looks like, feels like and sounds like.
2. Note: The documentary films should provide information about the local issue and answer the following questions:
 - i. What is your local issue?
 - ii. Why is it an issue?
 - iii. Who does it affect? (humans, non-humans) What parts of the community (geographically) does the issue affect?
 - iv. Does it have social, economic or environmental implications? If so which ones? Why is this important?
 - v. What did you do to address the issue?
 - vi. How did you do it?
 - vii. What can others do to address the issue?
 - viii. What was the impact?