



Through ecological restoration we can restore our own connection to the natural world.



What an incredible year of growth and support! Through secured funding from both the Wellington and Waterloo Catholic School Boards and fee-based programming with the public boards, local universities, churches and community groups we have been able to offer 'Care of Our Common Home' programming to 1,225 students and participants. Thank you to everyone's help in 2019 we have planted a further 2,500 trees, shrubs and wildflowers.

Martin Tamlyn, Project Manager

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OGF Project Programs

This spring Grade 4 students helped us restore meadow habitat by planting over a thousand prairie flowers beside the pavilion to attract pollinators and birds, installed bird perches and built snake hibernacula (homes). In the fall, grade 7 and 8's focused on reforestation, invasive plants and healthy watersheds.



Ontario Trillium Foundation Recognition Event



Left - Saying thank you to our supporters



Right - Upper Grand students enjoying the new pavilion

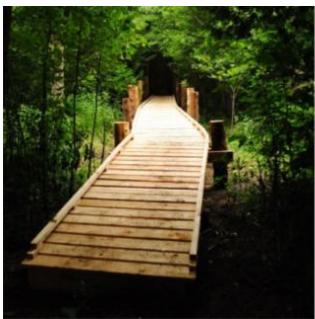
On Thursday August 15th, we invited volunteers, donors, and supporters to our teaching pavilion to recognize the financial support we have received from [The Ontario Trillium Foundation*](#) GROW grant, Sue Richard's estate and others donors that help make this project possible. With this support we were able to construct our beautiful teaching pavilion, creating a space for learning and gathering while providing shelter from the sun or rain for anyone enjoying our trails. The photo above shows Martin Tamlyn of the Old-Growth Forest Project together with Roger Yaworski from the Ignatius Jesuit Centre receiving a plaque from representatives of the Ontario Trillium Foundation, Wayne White and Mike Walker. [Read more here - Wellington Advertiser article.](#)

** An agency of the Government of Ontario, the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is one of Canada's largest granting foundations. With a budget of over \$136 million, OTF awards grants to some 1,000 projects every year to build healthy and vibrant Ontario communities.*

Trails and Infrastructure Improvements

This year also brings us to the end of 4 years of infrastructure work that enables us to run our programs and provides a trail system that is open all year round. This has included boardwalks through sensitive wetland areas, the OGF Project education pavilion and the Marden Creek observation deck. With thanks to the Haverson Family, we have also been able to build fencing around our native plant teaching garden. Their donation was given in memory of Barbara Haverson, who loved to walk the Old-Growth Forest trails.

Our final boardwalk project features a raised platform supported by cedar posts to allow the spring floodwaters to rise underneath. This allows the wetland to thrive while preventing a lot of wear and tear on the boardwalk. We used locally sourced Eastern white cedar and because it grows in wetlands, cedar wood is naturally rot-resistant. You can find our new boardwalk along the Jim Profit Trail.



The OGF Teaching Garden

Our native edible tree, shrub and herbs teaching garden is a very attractive food source for our deer and rabbit populations. Therefore, our fence will protect our plants as we aim to take special care of them.

The teaching garden has been planted with trees and shrubs that would have traditionally been valuable food sources for the Indigenous peoples of Southwestern Ontario including the Neutral, Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. Some of the species we have planted include American Hazelnut, Red and Black Raspberry, Paw Paw, American Plum, Chestnut, Serviceberry, Hickory, Oak and Sumac.

Our intention for the garden is to encourage engagement with students and volunteers with the garden, caring for the plants and learning about their uses.



Jill and Sara, OGF Project staff, 2019

Restoration Training

Over the last couple of years we have received many phone calls and emails asking how to manage invasive plant species without using herbicide. In response to this interest we began running restoration training workshops for project leaders and volunteers.

The OGF Project lands make an ideal site for demonstration and hands-on training. Here are some photos from the fall, training volunteers from the [Donkey Sanctuary of Canada](#) on how to manage European Buckthorn and Phragmites.



Seed Collecting Workshop

This fall we invited Jessica Trzoch from [Green Legacy](#) to lead a workshop on collecting and growing native tree seeds. Together we walked the trails, learned how to find and assess the quality of seeds, and collected two species of dogwood berries for the Green Legacy to grow. Lots of hands make quick work, and we were able to quickly fill our bags with berries. We even found a viable American Beech Nut on the tree at the edge of the meadow. This is exciting news because this species has been having trouble producing viable seeds throughout Ontario, and Jessica had not seen a viable Beech nut in years.

Many of the trees we have planted in the Old-Growth Forest Project over the last 6 years were provided by the Green Legacy, and now many of them have matured enough to produce seed of their own that we can share back, helping both of our visions thrive!



Knowledge Sharing



'As time moves on, people of all cultures in all parts of Canada are witnessing first-hand the impact of modern life on the environment, be it global warming, endangered species, the destruction of natural landscapes or the impact of industrial pollution. The "environmental crisis" has also prompted some of our Knowledge Holders to believe that now is the time to start to share our knowledge of the land, so that we can all work together to create a better future.'

(- A. Kulnieks, D. R. Longboat and K. Young (Eds.), *Contemporary Studies in Environmental and Indigenous Pedagogies: A Curricula of Stories and Place*, 89-108)

Thank you to the [Ontario Trillium Foundation GROW Grant](#) we have been able to work with an incredible and creative evaluation team. They have helped us tell the story of what happens when folks are engaged in nature connection and ecological restoration activities. At a recent gathering we were able to share our findings with the larger conservation and environmental education



community.

Here is just a snippet of some of reflections we've received from both children and adults:

Not just being an observer or passerby but being a participant

I started being outside more

In the future I will become someone who helps save the planet

I found my happy place

Was brought back to my childhood

I will encourage others to help nature

More mindful of the role nature plays in worship

It showed me how a small act can have a big impact

For the first time I found meadows beautiful!

Planting a tree felt sacred

I now understand the connection between streams and the watershed

I will be more grateful for this under-noticed ingenuity

We are filled with gratitude to all our donors, collaborators and volunteers that have made this project possible and would especially like to thank our amazing OGF project staff this year, Jilliana Wiersma and Sara Harder DeWeerd for all your hard work and enthusiasm.

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**If you would like to support our work restoring nature
and inspiring the future stewards of this plant,
please donate below.**

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