



2012 Environment & Diversity Mini-Grants

Grantee Project Descriptions

Adopt-A-Pond (\$5,000)

The Toronto Zoo's Adopt-A-Pond Programme will pilot a new cultural initiative to include new Canadians in a variety of environmental programming to meet community requested environmental opportunities. This initiative will be achieved through Community Based Social Marketing. Focus groups were held with program directors at various settlement agencies and community centres throughout the Greater Toronto Area to determine program options. These options include culturally appropriate educational hikes, species identification workshops and cultural story sharing regarding the environment. Over the course of the summer the program will be delivered in weekly or bi-weekly sessions to teach a variety of environmental stewardship values to new Canadians. By combining ideas and feedback, the following goals will be achieved:

- Engagement of more community members in gaining more meaningful experiences and information;
- Establishment of a group of community leaders who have the capacity to make meaningful behavioural changes resulting from participation in our programs; and,
- Incorporation of information on cultural knowledge into on-site exhibits at the Toronto Zoo.

Afri-Can FoodBasket (AFB) (\$4,500)

The Culturally Specific Food Security Curriculum Initiative will continue and expand upon the work begun by the CSFSC Working Group in Spring 2011. By engaging directly with students and staff of the Africentric Alternative School (AAS), as well as volunteers, community stakeholders, and other resources, this group has begun the process of creating a Curriculum Manual for teachers. The funding for this group will provide an individual(s) with employment and mentorship from the organizations represented in the Group. The Group intends to further engage collaboratively with diverse cultures from the African Canadian community and beyond. This engagement will result in the Group's ability to compile and publish a CSFSC Manual. The CSFSC Manual will be a tool providing many channels of learning in food security to students and teachers at various levels of education. The Manual will also be a tool for AFB, AAS and others in continuing to actively support diversity in the food security movement, challenging mainstream representation of environmental advocacy, and allowing under-represented communities to lead their own sustainability.

This process will positively impact and strengthen current mainstream efforts in the environmental movement by centralizing marginalized voices and experiences, and by building new legacies among the local and international food security landscape.

Alternatives Journal (\$3,000)

To ensure that Alternatives Journal is truly representative of the broader Canadian community, the organization seeks to establish a writing bursary available only to new Canadians. The bursary will provide six recipients with a chance to contribute to the ongoing conversation that seeks environmental solutions, and will provide them with opportunities to gain hands-on publishing experience. Alternatives Journal will work with the appropriate diversity-promoting organizations in seeking out new Canadians interested in (writing about) the environment. An editor will be assigned to work with each recipient to develop and translate their ideas into a finished story which will appear in the journal. Readers will gain the benefit of recipients' experiences - both in their birth countries as well as in Canada. The experiences shared with the readership will result in actively promoting a more open and inclusive Canadian environmental community. Ultimately, this will help to ensure that the broader Canadian environmental movement gains the benefit of the wisdom and deepened involvement of this cohort of new Canadians.

EcoSuperior (\$5,000)

EcoSuperior plans to use diversity funding to become more inclusive of First Nations communities. The aim is to begin providing some of the same opportunities for environmental stewardship in nearby First Nation communities that is offered to city of Thunder Bay residents. At the same time, the goal is to integrate diversity within the organization, starting with Aboriginal people. This will require the combined efforts of the board and staff. Outreach initiatives include Fort William First Nation, Pic River, Pic Mobert, Red Rock, and Pays Plat reserves. Some initiatives may be limited by the facilities available in each community—for example, many do not have a recycling program. By November, successes in reaching those targets will be reported. Outcomes include:

- Aboriginal representation on the board;
- Building diversity into core operations;
- Outreach deliverables targeted at First Nation communities in as many program areas as possible; and,
- Achievements in waste diversion, water conservation and pollution prevention.

MiningWatch (\$2,500)

Mining has been identified as a priority area of concern for many northern Ontario First Nations, in particular the Matawa First Nations who are affected by exploration activities and proposed developments in the area dubbed the “Ring of Fire”. Their ability to oblige companies and governments to fully address their concerns and engage in a way that respects their Aboriginal rights and protects the ecosystems they depend on is limited by their lack of political power and technical capacity. NGOs can assist in filling some of these gaps if respectful and collaborative relationships can be developed between them and the First Nations.

MiningWatch will facilitate a one-day exchange and networking session with representatives from First Nations communities and NGOs. The day will include open dialogue and formal presentations on topical themes including the status of regulatory reform of the Mining Act, environmental assessments, First Nations socio-economic interests in the mineral developments, and Aboriginal rights.

The outcomes of the event will be as follows:

- Shared understanding of the priorities of the participants and their communities / organizations;
- Awareness of the technical capacities available within the NGOs that could assist First Nations communities;
- Improved understanding of the political and legal framework within which mining projects are developed;
- Strengthened relationships between the NGOs and First Nations that create opportunities for future collaboration.

Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (\$5,000)

The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) seeks to engage First Nation communities as it pursues a multi- year, multi-agency initiative to develop a Thames River Water Management Plan. The project will maintain and improve the health of the Thames River. The project’s steering committee and UTRCA will rely on the expertise of Walpole Island First Nation (WIFN) as a leader in First Nation consultation. WIFN has a track record as a leader in consultations: it was recently selected for its use of provincial core consultation funds (from the Ontario Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs). UTRCA will contract the services of WIFN to provide information to the steering committee in an awareness training session. This will engage First Nations at the governance level in the future. WIFN will also be contracted to develop strategies that increase cultural awareness and reconciliation to improve relations with Aboriginal communities. The aim is to increase diversity within the governance structure of the project by using effective methods to engage First Nations communities. UTRCA will then use these strategies to improve First Nations communities’ engagement in other programs and service areas.