

# IMPACT REPORT 2020-2022

1	Summary
2	Words from our directors
3	Land acknowledgement.
4	Timeline
5	Internal Management
6	Finances
7	Communications
8	Initiatives
9	Events
10	Competitions
11	Policy Recommendations
12	SYC in the Press
13	Lessons and Oppourtunities
14	Thank You

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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# SUMMARY

The goals of Sustainable Youth Canada's Montreal branch are to **engage, educate** and **provide tools** for youth to become environmental leaders.

Between January 2020 to December 2021, our team was composed of eleven motivated members. In these two years, we participated/hosted ten events and eleven initiatives, competed in two competitions for which we both received mentions, judged one competition, and participated in four policy-recommendation campaigns/ consultations. In total, we collaborated with 32 partners (pending the waste management collaborators), and our work was recognized in the media five times. We engaged with hundreds of youth from elementary schools, CEGEPs, and universities. **We are just getting started.**

# WORDS FROM THE DIRECTORS



In early 2019, we set out on a mission to sustain the climate movement in Montreal beyond the climate marches but rather with tangible community projects, we recruited a qualified and diverse team through mass outreach and interviews. We created an organization where, while we each have our expertise and specific roles, we prioritize our grass-roots approach, where every person has an equal say in how we create an impact. After much preparation and effort, we were ready for our first in-person event with people outside our team, an open mic event and a meet-and-greet with the team. We had many activities lined up with various academic institutions in the spring of 2020 to educate and involve youth in climate justice. We were bubbling with excitement. The very weekend our events were supposed to materialize, the whole world shut down due to the global outbreak of COVID-19.

In the face of uncertainty, community was more important than ever for our small group. We supported each other through thick and thin, anchored in our vision of a better world, and tried to do everything in our power to persevere. Together, we surpassed these challenges as an organization. In doing so, we learnt to get to know each other more deeply and became a support system. We are very blessed and grateful to have had the privilege and pleasure of creating an impact together. A sincere thank you to our team and alumni.

In reflecting on the past year, we flourished. We built capacity for climate action with youth at the frontlines in Montreal. Next year, we hope to continue with this culture of mutual growth, impact, and storytelling.

Sincerely,

**Katia Forgues and Shir Gruber**

# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A land acknowledgement is read at the start of all official SYC meetings. The declaration is as follows:

**ÉJC est situé à Tiohti:áke (Montréal), un territoire autochtone non-cédé. Nous reconnaissons la Nation Kanien'kehá:ka comme les gardiens des eaux et terres de Tiohti:áke qui a servi de lieu de rencontre et d'échange entre plusieurs nations depuis la nuit des temps.**

**SYC is situated in Tiohti:áke (Montréal), an unceded Indigenous territory. We recognize the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation as the traditional custodian of these lands and waters, which have served as a meeting ground between many nations since time immemorial.**

Wherever an official meeting occurs, or an event is held, it is our duty to acknowledge the traditional stewards of the land we are on. Being reflective about which Indigenous Nations have claims and deep historical roots to the land on which we live is critical to reconciliation. The land acknowledgement is a form of recognition of Indigenous land rights that have been historically neglected. At the beginning of meetings and events, we encourage our audience to reflect on the implications of this reality and to have this reflect on their actions.

## WINTER 2020:

SYC Montreal Officially re-opens its doors

## SPRING 2020:

COVID-19 global pandemic begins

## FALL 2020, WINTER 2021, SPRING 2021:

A digital shift of most of SYC's activities with partners

## SUMMER 2021, FALL 2021:

A reintroduction of in-person programs

## 2022

TIME  
LINE

# INTERNAL MANAGEMENT

Our team consists of 11 motivated executive members and one ambassador who work on a voluntary basis. Each person holds a specific role for which they have the leadership but many people will work on each project based on their skills and interests. Our goal is to create a community where we feel we can make greater contributions and impact together than we could as the sum of our individual efforts. In this regard, **we aim for our organization to be collaborative** rather than hierarchical.

Here is a list of our members and their position. For more detailed biographies please refer to our [website](#):

**Allie Wang** (Outreach)

**Alia Dobson** (Graphic Designer)

**Ava Torkaman** (External Events)

**Gabriel Masi** (Internal Affairs)

**Katia Forgues** (Co-Director)

**Marianne Bellavance** (Secretary)

**Naba Tahir** (Treasurer)

**Nico Serreqi** (Media Chair)

**Sam Loutet** (Initiatives)

**Susan Ly** (Ambassador, Initiatives)

**Shir Gruber** (Co-Director)

**Romy Shoam** (Communications).



## TEAM CHANGES

Throughout the past two years, there have been several changes in team composition. The members that have departed include **Ryoma Martin** (Marketing), **Kristi Brokeri** (Initiatives), **Ouiam Meftah** (Outreach), and **Naba Tahir** (Treasurer). Members that have joined the SYC Montreal team include **Sam Loutet** (Initiatives), **Marianne Bellavance** (Secretary), **Allie Wang** (Outreach), and **Susan Ly** (Ambassador, Initiatives).

## VISION BOARD

Once our team was formed in the Fall of 2019, our first task was to form the branch's vision by determining short-term and long-term goals. We did this through a Post-It activity where each member was asked to write down goals they deemed important on a post-it note and then placed them on a whiteboard. These included both personal and organizational goals. As a whole, this formed a vision board for our branch

The core goals of Sustainable Youth Canada's Montreal branch is to **engage, educate** and **provide tools for youth** to become environmental leaders and it is based on the idea that, as youth, we can have a meaningful impact to change the world.

# MEETINGS AND RETREATS

The executive committee meets bi-weekly for 1h30 to share progress with the team and make group decisions. Between large meetings, smaller project related groups organize sub-meetings as needed.

In addition to our meetings, we organize one retreat per semester to work on the larger vision of the organisation and have fun to bond and strengthen our group cohesion. Our first retreat in early 2020 consisted of a group photoshoot and a friendly cooking competition. To conclude the retreat, members partook in creating and decorating a tree with reusable and recyclable materials. The idea behind these activities was to create bonding opportunities, practice problem-solving, and strengthen teamwork while having fun.

The fall 2020 retreat consisted of a social-distanced picnic at Beaver Lake on Mount Royal followed by a charade competition and an agility competition where teams of two begin relatively close to each other and throw an egg to their partner. With every successful throw, they take a step back, which increases the probability of dropping the egg. We wanted to have this get-together to boost morale in the context of online school, which can be isolating, share some laughs, and bond.

The 2021 fall Retreat was a Halloween-themed Murder Mystery organized by the SYC Montreal Secretary Marianne. Everyone came in costume, and we shared a meal before our game. This event was the first indoor retreat we were able to have since the beginning of the pandemic, and we were overjoyed to be able to spend time together.



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## INTER-BRANCH RELATIONS

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The SYC Montreal branch has tasked itself with expanding the organization across Canada. We helped to establish branches in Ottawa and Nova Scotia in collaboration with dedicated Canadian youth. The Ottawa branch was successfully re-launched in December 2021 with a complete executive team. We have also been in touch with interested youth in Vancouver and Waterloo, guiding them on creating climate action through Sustainable Youth Canada and explaining our work in Montreal.

# FINANCES

As a volunteer-based organization, 100% of the funding we have received from grants and other organizations thus far have been implemented into our operations. In the early fall of 2021, we received a grant of \$1,000. Over the course of the next few months, we additionally received micro-funding and operation assistance from other sources as well. Any funding we have received has secured us in organizing initiatives of a greater scale, has helped in paying for necessary equipment used in our cleanups, and has funded the tests we have needed for conducting soil contaminant analyses. Operational assistance has been especially helpful in that we are able to work with other organizations that have similar goals as us, and these organizations have kindly aided in funding some components of our projects.

With the continued growth of our organization, we aspire to apply for larger grants and continue to work with like-minded groups to increase the scope of our activities and projects. As we also welcome more members to the team, we would like to be able to provide a stipend to each individual in order to repay the group for their dedication and efforts. Our team's expansion allows us to reach the aforementioned goals through allocating more time and work into funding opportunities; this expansion, along with our activities such as our Generation G podcast, will increase our communications and marketing to further relay our messages across Montreal.

# COMMUNICATIONS

It is vital to be transparent and keep our community in the know about the work we have been doing. This impact report is an effort to synthesise and summarize our work for it to be accessible to the public. On a more frequent basis, we communicate through our media channels. We have created a website, Facebook and Instagram page that became an essential medium of communication with the organization's audience and an integral part of keeping engagement with the community. The Instagram account currently has 208 followers, and the Facebook page has 363 likes and 381 followers. Through these two platforms, SYC has shared updates, details for upcoming events, introductions to the team, videos and photos from the events SYC hosted, and relevant content such as quotes and graphics related to the climate justice movement. Social media platforms have also been used to connect with other organizations. The following continues to grow and expand as we explore how to utilize these platforms best to communicate and forward transparency.

## Our online platforms:



www.

[www.sustainableyouthcanada.com](http://www.sustainableyouthcanada.com)



[www.facebook.com/sycejcmontreal](http://www.facebook.com/sycejcmontreal)



@sycejcmontreal

# INITIATIVES

Our philosophy is to lead change and empower others to do the same through initiatives that touch on varied environmental challenges. Since the ecological problem is significant, solutions need to be diverse, multi-disciplinary, and creative. Our initiatives include a wide range of activities such as environmental consulting on waste management or municipal greening, educational videos, and activities for students from elementary to university and citizen science on forest restoration, to name a few.

# ONGOING INITIATIVES

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## 1. **PROJECT PHOENIX: GIVING WINGS TO ANGELL WOODS — 2021 (ONGOING)**

SYC, in collaboration with Trash Talk, is undertaking a project to assess the environmental status of public green space, Angell Woods, in Beaconsfield, QC. This 210-acre park is composed of wetlands, old forests and new growth. Historically, the park has been an informal dumping ground for tiling material, car parts, railway ties, cement, household waste and even chemical products. Over the past year, we have organized a dozen cleanups, collected 18140 pounds of trash, developed and implemented a protocol to categorize and sort the garbage, and collected data on soil contamination. We are analyzing our data, from which we will create a report with our key findings and recommendations to be shared with the municipality and local stakeholders. We created a map through remote sensing with estimates of invasive species growth in the area and collected soil samples that we analyzed. A report on this project is coming in spring 2022. In the long term, we aim to preserve and restore the biodiversity in Angell Woods in partnership with the community to give Angell Woods "back its wings." Read more about our actions thus far [here](#).



## 2. MONTREAL RECYCLING REVIEW, CAMPAIGN PROJECT, AND AWARENESS INITIATIVE — STARTED IN 2021 (ON-GOING)

To address the gap in public knowledge on how recycling works in the City of Montreal and put pressure on policymakers to adopt more sustainable practices, SYC is undertaking a review of the current recycling program in Montreal. This investigation reviews what is recycled, how much is actually recycled, and where the recycling products end up. The end goal is to produce a public awareness campaign that outlines the status of recycling in the city and create policy recommendations where necessary in partnership with community stakeholders. We have written an [open letter](#) to the municipal government (see policy recommendation section).

We would like to thank Thais Georges-Picot, who was an intern at the Lachine waste sorting center, for providing insightful knowledge on the current waste management practices in Montreal, Theodora Samiotis for guiding the writing of the open letter, and Gary Joseph Panganiban for providing us a platform to discuss by [interviewing Sam Loutet on CBC Listen](#).

### 3. **PODCAST SERIES — LAUNCH IN SPRING 2022**

**Gen G**, or **Generation Green**, is what we are naming the next generation. We envision a future green with hope and change. This podcast serves as a platform for innovative ideas. While we base our podcasts on scientific and academic literature, we allow speakers to voice their opinions and creativity while acknowledging their bias and positionality. Views may change with time. Especially with fast-changing realities, they are malleable. **Yet, the goal is merely to expand a conversation.** To bring refreshing ideas, ideas that reform the way we think and approach everyday life in the context of the climate crisis and the paradigm shift our generation aims to pursue. We invite listeners to filter through the podcaster's words, walk with their thoughts, and take what they think can serve them in life. Each episode aims to bring us a step closer to a brighter future. A first series of podcasts are set to be released in the spring of 2022.

## **4. COMMUNICATING SCIENCE WITH THE CANADIAN WILDLIFE FEDERATION — WINTER 2022**

As a follow-up to our previous event, we are partnering again with the Canadian Wildlife Federation to give a workshop on science communication for youth 15-18 years old. We will guide them through creating a communication piece and expose them to the different avenues of science communication (video, podcast, infographic, or article). Interested youth will have the opportunity to present their communication piece at the wild future conference organized by the Canadian Wildlife Federation.

# PAST INITIATIVES

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## **1. CANADIAN WILDLIFE FEDERATION YOUTH LEADERSHIP — *FALL 2021***

The Canadian Wildlife Federation partnered with SYC and UrbaNature in a bioblitz event for youths 15-18 years old on September 9th, 2021, to shed light on the ecological value of the Falaise St-Jacques and introduce them to sustainable community-led projects. The key to this initiative is developing youth leadership and giving them tools to create their initiatives. The event was successful, and all ten participants made plans to establish sustainability leadership initiatives close to their hearts in their communities. The positive response has led us to continue our collaboration with the Canadian Wildlife Federation.

## 2 ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN NOTRE-DAME-DES-VICTOIRES SUMMER CAMP — SUMMER 2020 AND SUMMER 2021

For the second year in a row, SYC animated activities in the Notre-Dame-des-Victoires Summer camp to **teach young campers about waste management and recycling**. Over two days, we cleaned the local neighbourhoods by picking up trash, recycled old t-shirts into tote bags and created grass beings by planting grass and wildflower seeds in biodegradable cups that the campers decorated. Most campers were well educated in basic waste management. **Over 70 campers participated over two days**, and with the help of three different groups, we picked up more than **14kg of trash**.



### **3. MONTREAL WEST CITY COUNCIL BIODIVERSITY INITIATIVE — SPRING 2021**

SYC served as a consultant for Montreal West Green City Council to create preliminary plans to **increase natural biodiversity in the township**. We helped through the brainstorming process and suggested different implementation strategies. We contributed by researching plant species that would most benefit the ecosystem and the legality and plausibility of planting on the city and personal property. A public awareness campaign about biodiversity and school workshops were also in the works. Although not all our ideas were implemented, it created a discussion about green spaces in the City Council. A school took up the initiative to plant wildflowers with their students.

### **4. WASTE MANAGEMENT CONSULTING — SPRING 2021**

When citizens reached out to us with concerns that their work offices downtown did not have composting, let alone recycling, we provided them with information, connected them with local Éco-Quartiers and helped them build a plan of action. They chose not to go forward with their plan right away and we respected that. The disadvantage of doing consulting, as we learned, is that the implementation of your co-created ideas is not in your hands.

## 5. SCHOOL COMPOST INITIATIVE WITH ÉCO-QUARTIER — FALL 2020 TO WINTER 2021

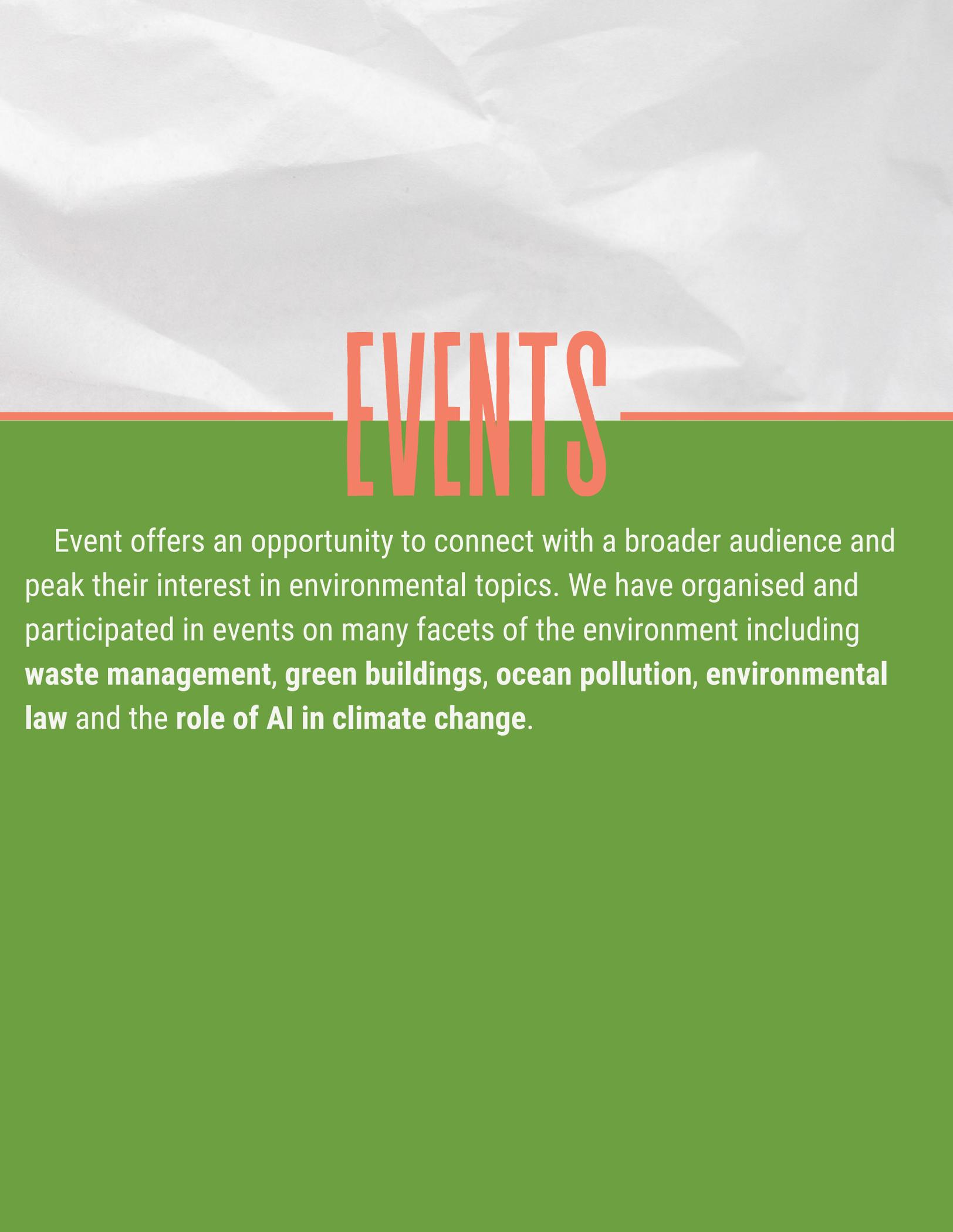
SYC worked with la Maison de l'environnement de Verdun to implement composting in Des coquelicots elementary school. We provided educational resources and worked with our liaisons to see that the **staff team and 118 students** had the necessary information to implement the initiative in their classrooms successfully. These resources included creating an original video that explained composting basics in an age-appropriate and fun way. Despite the short period from the beginning of the initiative to the deadline, we worked very hard and efficiently. We would like to make more original content for the future and post it on YouTube and other social media to reach more students.

## **6. DIY GREEN CHRISTMAS VIDEO FOR NOTRE-DAME-DES-VICTOIRES COMMUNITY CENTER — *FALL 2020 TO WINTER 2021***

During the winter of 2020, the SYC team teamed up with Notre Dames-des Victoires community center to provide them with an informative video about different ways kids can sustainably celebrate the holiday season. We created a short film proposing treats, gifts and decorations that were recycled, reused and repurposed. The video promoted a green lifestyle and taught kids that it is possible to enjoy Christmas while being eco-responsible. The video was shared on the center's social media page, and the initiative was well received by the kid's parents and the camp coordinator. Find the video [here](#).

## **6. BACK TO THE ROOTS: SOURDOUGH VIDEO — **SPRING 2020****

At the heart of the initial COVID-19 bread craze, SYC contributed to our beloved homemade recipe to inspire people to do things by hand and eat their fresh local creations. What better way to understand the value of what you consume than trying to make it yourself? This video was a lesson of resiliency and was meant to bring people, particularly our team, together as our plans and projects fall apart or transform with the pandemic's rise. Our video has **1166 views on youtube** and a reach of **10,372 people on Facebook**. Find it [here](#).



# EVENTS

Event offers an opportunity to connect with a broader audience and peak their interest in environmental topics. We have organised and participated in events on many facets of the environment including **waste management, green buildings, ocean pollution, environmental law and the role of AI in climate change.**

# IN-PERSON EVENTS

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## 1. OPEN MIC EVENT & CLOTHING DRIVE - DECEMBER 2021

A year and a half after it was originally planned, we hosted our first in-person event collaborating with Dsign Lab McGill, a club focused on discussing fashion. The open mic served as a meet and greet to a larger public with our organizations. We hosted this event at Reggies MTL bar. Over a hundred people attended our event, and approximately 15 groups performed on stage. We collected a car full of clothing donated to the women's shelter [Chez Doris](#) and [Head and Hands](#).





# ONLINE WEBINARS AND PANEL DISCUSSIONS

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Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, most of our events took place online. This medium comes with disadvantages, such as the difficulty for attendees to create meaningful bonds or connect with the organizers. However, the advantages are that online events have no spatial boundaries, and thus we were able to collaborate with organizations and have attendees from across the country. We recorded most of our events, making them accessible to people who could not attend live. Moreover, the low financial barrier of online events enabled us to organize more webinars and panels. In a year, we organized or participated in nine online discussions.

# 1. C40: STUDENTS REINVENTING CITIES PRESENTATION — *OCTOBER 2021*

As part of the C40: Students Reinventing Cities competition, SYC collaborated with McGill urban planners and architects to submit an ambitious plan for the redevelopment of the Faubourgs district and we won a special mention in this competition (please see competitions portfolio to learn more). Therefore, we were asked to present this project to other competitors and representatives of the city of Montreal.

The presentation was hosted by the City of Montreal and the C40, a global network of mayors taking urgent action to confront the climate crisis and create a future where everyone can thrive.

# 2. ENVIRONMENTAL LAW AND THE CITIZEN: ROADMAPS AND ROADBLOCKS — APRIL 2021

Following the positive feedback and many environmental law questions from our first Panel with Legacy Fund for the Environment, we hosted a second event on April 14th, 2021. The panel discussion focused on exploring Canada's attempts to protect the environment through topics such as the effectiveness of environmental assessments, the intrinsic rights of nature, and why there are incentives to destroy green spaces for the benefit of development. Panellists included Peter Trent (former mayor of Westmount and author), Devon Page (Écojustice), Yenny Vega Cardinas (International Observatory on the Rights of Nature), Richard Janda (McGill University), and Alison Hackney (Legacy Fund for the Environment).

## 3. SUSTAINABILITY X TALKS: PROTECTING BLUE SPACES — MARCH 2021

SYC and UBC Wastenauts hosted a joint panel discussion on March 19th, 2021, focusing on how we can protect our oceans. The event included keynote speaker Dr. Paloma Corvalan (President of the Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology), who discussed how to help the oceans through waste management. The event had 54 registered attendees. Find the recording [here](#).

## 4. VITAL CONVERSATION WITH THE FONDATION DU GRAND MONTRÉAL — MARCH 2021

Trash Talk hosted a vital conversation with the Fondation du Grand Montréal on March 11th, 2021, where they discussed their project and SYC's contributions to conserve and revitalize Angell Woods. Speakers included **Nicolas Vynke, Malcolm Adamson, Lucas Hygate**, and our very own **Shir Gruber**, as well as **executives from the Fondation du Grand Montréal**. This conversation aimed to update community stakeholders about youth's work in Angell Woods, Beaconsfield, and other cleanups. There were employees and representatives from the city of Beaconsfield present, interested community members, and members from the Fondation du Grand Montréal.

## 5. IMPACT STUDENT AND ALUMNI ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ISAAC) PANEL — JANUARY 2021

The Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) ImpAct Student and Alumni Advisory Committee (ISAAC) hosted a panel on January 30th, 2021, for their new cohort where **Kat Cadungog** (Foundation for Environmental Stewardship), **Cyrielle Noël** (Ocean Wise Chúk Odenigbo from Future Ancestors Services), and our very own **Shir Gruber** (Sustainable Youth Canada) spoke about their respective expertise. There is no recording publicly available to our knowledge.

## 6. COMMUNITY-BUILDING WITH THE MONTREAL CLIMATE MARCH ORGANIZERS — JANUARY 2021

The event took the form of a joint panel discussion between SYC and The Climate Crisis AI Hackathon hosted online on January 19th, 2021, that reached 1988 people on Facebook. The event was part of a 48-hour hackathon focused on climate change. The panel was moderated by SYC director Katia Forgues who discussed with three leaders in youth environmental activism: **Payton Mitchell**, **Ashley Torres** and **Emma Lim**. Topics of the discussion included how to build community in the face of times of isolation and uncertainty, drawing on the panellists' experiences organizing the 2019 Climate Marches across so-called Canada. Find the recording [here](#).

## 7. ONLINE PANEL WITH LEGACY FUND FOR THE ENVIRONMENT — JANUARY 2021

SYC hosted a panel discussion online with the Legacy Fund for the Environment on January 9th, 2021, to connect SYC's network of young environmentalists with the Legacy Fund's opportunities and give insight into the world of environmental law. The Legacy Fund's mission includes supporting citizens' groups who use the law to defend Canada's Environment. Panellists included **Danielle Gallant** (Écojustice), **Alison Hackney** (The Legacy Fund), **Geneviève Paul** (FIDH), and **Campbell Stuart** (The Legacy Fund). **77 people attended the webinar live**, while the Facebook event reached **5831 people**. Find the recording [here](#).

## 8. PANEL ON SUSTAINABILITY AND TECHNOLOGY WITH THE JOHN MOLSON SUPPLY CHAIN AND BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY ASSOCIATION (JSBA) — JULY 2020

This online panel was hosted on July 4th, 2020, to elaborate on the future of technology, supply chains and sustainability in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hosted by the John Molson Supply Chain Association, the speakers included **Tamara Luice** from Deloitte, **Marion N. Chivot** from KLM, **Johannes Naimer-Stach** from Climate-KIC and **Shir Gruber** from Sustainable Youth Canada. The event had over **50 attendees**, and a highlight video is accessible [here](#).

# 9. REBOOTING THE ECONOMY POST COVID-19: DISCUSSION WITH SCIENTIST DR. CATHERINE POTVIN — APRIL 2020

On April 29th, 2020, we hosted a webinar with **Dr. Catherine Potvin**. Together, we talked about ways to reboot the economy post-COVID-19 and the effects of the pandemic on climate change and sustainable behaviours. Viewers were heavily involved in the discussions, as indicated by their participation during the Q&A period. The webinar ended positively, with Catherine reminding viewers to stay optimistic in times of uncertainty. As our first online event during the pandemic, we were initially uncertain about the logistics of online seminars, but the event was a massive success with **1.3k views on Facebook Live**. We learnt a lot about online event hosting in the process, which we applied to future events. Find the recording [here](#).

# COMPETITIONS

## 1. CLIMATESCIENCE OLYMPIAD — *SEPTEMBER 2021*

**1,000,000 students** compete in the Global ClimateScience Olympiad 2021. Winners share **\$15,000 and present at the UN Climate Summit**. We decided to compete as a team for the qualifier. In our first attempt, **we received a special mention** as we were at the top 15% of competitors,. We plan to try again in the future.

ClimateScience is a UK-based global charity led by hundreds of driven volunteers from 30 countries and a small team of staff. We aim to make learning engaging, accessible and reliable.

## 2. C40 STUDENTS REINVENTING CITIES

### COMPETITION: SITE DES FAUBOURG — MAY 2021

As part of a C40 competition, SYC collaborated with McGill urban planners and architects to submit an ambitious plan for the redevelopment of the Faubourgs district. At the intersection of environment, urban planning and architecture, this project challenged us by its multidisciplinary and concrete nature. With the departure of the Molson Brewery and the relocation of Radio Canada, the rebirth of this neighborhood offers us a special opportunity; to learn about rebuilding an urban neighborhood from the ground up and to experiment with the solutions we will soon have to apply city-wide to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. **We won a special mention for our project.**

The competition was hosted by the City of Montreal and the C40, a global network of mayors taking urgent action to confront the climate crisis and create a future where everyone can thrive.

### 3. AI HACKATHON JUDGING — JANUARY 2021

The Climate Crisis AI Hackathon was a 48-hour event over the weekend of January 22nd, 2021, with **over 250 participants**. It brought together beginners and experts to tackle Climate Change related problems using AI. Over 250 vetted, talented, and diverse participants supported by leading mentors in their fields came together to address the climate crisis and its impacts on communities and ecosystems. Sustainable Youth Canada was asked to help judge competitors' AI projects based on our community needs and expertise in environmental sciences. **Shir Gruber, regional director of Sustainable Youth Canada Montreal, judged this competition.**

This event was made in collaboration with District 3 Innovation Center, Montréal Newtech, Concordia University, CIFAR, Environment Canada, Canadian Center for Climate Services, SecondMuse, Dawson College, Front Row Ventures, AI For Tomorrow, and others.

# 1. OPEN LETTER FOR A BETTER WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY IN MONTREAL — *WINTER 2021*

Ahead of the Montreal municipal election in November, SYC wrote an open letter to the candidates to ensure their support of the 'Plan d'action du Plan directeur de gestion des matières résiduelles de l'agglomération de Montréal', and present critiques and recommendations on making recycling more effective in Montreal. The letter represented five organizations representing over 19,000 Montreal residents and 65 citizens. An additional 625 people signed our follow-up petition. Find the letter [here](#).

# 2. GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ABOUT CANADA'S NATIONAL ADAPTATION STRATEGY — SUMMER 2021

We were invited by the federal government to discuss Canada's national adaptation strategy as youth representatives. The Government of Canada committed to developing a National Adaptation Strategy as part of its strengthened climate plan, A Healthy Environment and a Healthy Economy, in December 2020, working with provincial, territorial and municipal governments, Indigenous peoples, and other key partners to develop the strategy. The virtual forum launched community consultation on developing this strategy. You can find the report from this consultation [here](#).

### **3. SIGNED THE CHARTER FOR THE PROTECTION OF MONTREAL'S GREEN SPACES AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS (GREEN CHARTER) — SUMMER 2021**

Montreal's first citizen conference on protecting natural spaces, Forum Nature, was held at the Maison du Développement Durable on April 16th, 2016. More than 100 academics, scientists, and environmental experts, from over 40 organizations shared research and ideas about protecting Montreal's few remaining green spaces. The Charter for the Protection of Montreal's Green Spaces and Natural Environments (Green Charter) was developed and approved at this historic forum. In 2021, we signed this charter and bolstered its messaging. You can find the charter [here](#).

# 4. OPEN LETTER TO GOVERNMENT OF CANADA'S MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND HIS RESPONSE — SPRING 2021

Sustainable Youth Canada, along with many other Canadian youth organizations, helped write an open letter to the Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson in response to the federal budget announcement on behalf of over 150 individual youth and in partnership with 17 youth organizations from across Canada voicing youth support for bold action to protect 25% of land and ocean by 2025, and 30% by 2030. This letter came about via a Pan-Canadian Youth Working Group for Biodiversity and Climate created by the IUCN WCPA Beyond the Aichi Targets Task Force. You can see his response [here](#).

Other signatories include; [Youth Circle for Mother Earth](#), [Emerging Leaders for Biodiversity](#), [The Canadian Rockies Youth Network](#), [Green Ummah](#), [The Pristine Blue Initiative](#), [Shake Up The Establishment](#), [The North Coast Ecology Centre](#), [Fridays for Future West Kootenay](#), [Canadian Youth Biodiversity Network](#), [Project Rooted Outdoors](#), [The Greenbelt Youth Ambassadors](#), [Foundation for Environmental Stewardship](#), [Break The Divide Foundation](#), [TrashTalk](#), [McGill Environment Students Society](#), and [Community Climate Council](#).

# SYC IN THE PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS

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1. **McGill Reporter article:** Sustainable Sparks: Katia Forgues on leading youth activism in the sustainable movement by by Maya Willard-Stepan, interview with Katia Forgues
2. **Global news article:** Green Party looks to upset federal elections after COVID-19 with new vision for Quebec's environment by Alexandre Robaey, interview with Nico Serreqi and Shir Gruber
3. **The Link article:** Project Phoenix to give Angell Woods back its wings by Talia Kliot
4. **CBC Radio segment:** Waste Management campaign ahead of Montreal municipal elections, interview with Sam Loutet
5. The Palgrave Handbook of Positive Peace: **A Framework for Grassroots Environmentalism in Academic Settings** by Shir Gruber

# LESSONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Over the last year, Sustainable Youth Canada Montreal grew tremendously. It was by no means easy, but amidst global unrest and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we showed resilience and were able to gain a unique perspective on the climate crisis and the role which youth play in solving it. This section summarizes the lessons we learned as an organization, the current challenges and opportunities we see in this sector.

## AVAILABILITY OF FUNDING

One of the main barriers we face as a youth-led non-profit organization is a lack of available funding. There appear to be gaps in funding opportunities until a concept is thoroughly thought-out and planned. Realizing a concrete plan takes time and resources which is challenging when an organization must choose where to spread its limited resources. Having funding secured during the planning stage would give us security that our ideas can be implemented.

Furthermore, the time commitment of volunteer activism is heavy for a person who must work to earn money. This challenge is particular to organizations like ours, which strive to make long-term changes led by youth that benefit the greater whole. We strive to grow enough so that, in the future, we can pay youth for their work. We believe this issue stems from society not considering youth as serious partners in capacity building for climate action.

Giving some form of monetary compensation is important to support all members' participation, especially giving the opportunity for participation to youth from lower-income households, and core-funding is key to sustain youth organizations.

# BRINGING YOUTH VOICES TO THE TABLE

Many youth organizations focus on education, but this is limited in making tangible change in communities. Educating the younger generation is very important, but changes in government policies and older generations' actions need to be made now. The main challenge here is finding a way to bridge the intergenerational gap and bring youth ideas to the conversation.

Furthermore, beyond education, youth need to be empowered. There is a great need for further leadership resources for youth, who often need a push to start great movements in their communities. With additional training and guides on how to navigate large academic institutions for youth projects, systems thinking, biodiversity surveys, and science-informed policy advocacy, we see an expansion of the ability and efficiency of youth activism. At the heart of this increase in mobilization is the need to break down barriers between youth of different backgrounds. The rural-urban youth divide, for example, poses many challenges but also a great deal of opportunity for collaboration.



# TEAM MANAGEMENT AND COLLABORATING WITH EXTERNAL PARTNERS

As a new organization we learnt a lot about communication, as much for working as a team as to collaborate with external partners. We had situations where miscommunication and unclear task delegation led to us being slowed down, or having one person taking on too much work. In working with other organisations we noticed it was very important to set clear expectations at the beginning of a collaboration and making sure we have the same vision. We learnt to have better work delegation at the beginning of a project, many check-ins as a project unfolds, and ensuring that help is always available when a team member feels overwhelmed by their workload.

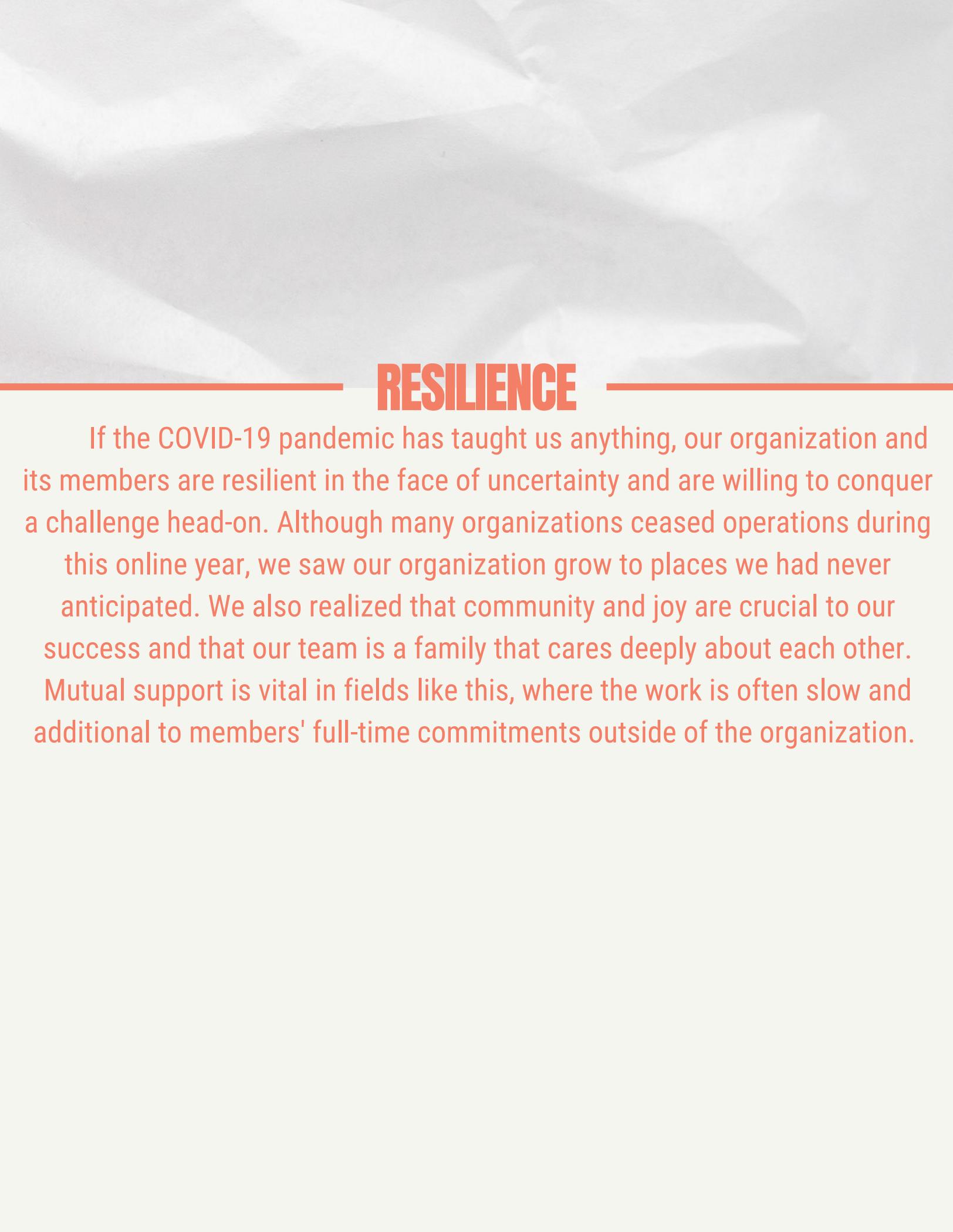
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# TEAM BUILDING

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Having a strong diverse and united core team is an extremely important first step to creating change. Due to our nature as a youth organisation, a challenge we deal with is member turnover. Young adults are going through a period of rapid change in their lives, often studying or working abroad making it hard for anyone to plan more than 2 years in advance. Out of our team of twelve, four left and four new members came on board. This makes it ever more important to integrate new members and have smooth transitions. For this reason we established a system where leaving members need to tell us a few months in advance so we can find a replacement that they can help train.

This high turnover also means we are often recruiting new members. We aim to have a team diverse in gender, education, language, ethnicity and experience to be representative of Montreal's youth, but have not yet reached this objective. Although we pride ourselves in having members from various backgrounds, we would benefit greatly from having more contributions from Black and Indigenous people and members not currently in post-secondary education. We also have an underrepresentation of francophones even if most of our team does speak French. Our outreach is mainly done through university channels and our personal networks which has led for example to half our team attending McGill University. We want to address the diversification and expansion of our core team in the future. The first step to achieving this is creating well-intentioned and thoughtful connections with these communities, creating an inclusive space so that everyone feels welcomed, and going a step further in our recruitment to reach more diverse audiences.



## RESILIENCE

If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, our organization and its members are resilient in the face of uncertainty and are willing to conquer a challenge head-on. Although many organizations ceased operations during this online year, we saw our organization grow to places we had never anticipated. We also realized that community and joy are crucial to our success and that our team is a family that cares deeply about each other. Mutual support is vital in fields like this, where the work is often slow and additional to members' full-time commitments outside of the organization.

# LESSONS FROM COVID-19

## ***Going Digital***

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### ***Expiry dates on free trials for software and funding.***

One of our online events was hosted on GoToWebinar. While the event ran smoothly, we did not realize that our free trial ended the day before the event began. To avoid this in the future, we have a list of all our software memberships and their expiry dates. Furthermore, we are creating a sponsorship package for businesses or foundations interested in supporting our efforts.

### ***Communicating with online panellists in advance.***

In one of our online events, a panellist left a webinar early due to a miscommunication and language barrier. While the event was a success overall, we learned to introduce ourselves to collaborators a few days before an event to go over the itinerary. Furthermore, SYC has the policy to designate one team member the responsibility to facilitate communication with panellists and moderators.

## ***Schools and municipalities are slow*** ---

Given how overwhelmed our municipalities and education systems are with COVID-19 uncertainty, it is exceptionally difficult to partner with schools to create long-term projects.

Schools tend to have bureaucracy which can slow the process. Furthermore, reaching out in the early springtime for the following academic year seemed to be important as this was the time teachers were planning their lessons.

Thus, in the future, SYC will aim to set our expectations with school collaborators during early spring. Furthermore, in general, we believe the earlier we can convene to discuss a project, the better.

We learned a great deal about the slow pace of action at the municipal level. Despite city initiatives moving slowly, we will continue to nurture our efforts through campaigns for change and added targeted dialogue. Moreover, we will also proceed in engaging the other sectors of society that are more fast-paced.

One area of high interest to us is youth-centric environmental transition consulting. Despite the high demand for such organizations, there are very few non-profit organizations doing this kind of work. There is an immense opportunity to expand and collaborate between existing consultants, and we see Sustainable Youth Canada as taking on a prominent role in this. We equally believe that metrics of impact are important when making projects and we believe there is opportunity to innovate in how we see growth in our society (or degrowth). This will be a subject of discussion as we enter 2022.

Currently, we see an opportunity for a coordinated national youth strategy to target Sustainable Development Goals. For example, we see Goal 12 “responsible consumption and production” as a low-bearing fruit of high relevance to Canada, where youth can make an important difference. Sustainable Youth Canada would like to pursue this in the future as we see it as a chance to create lasting connections among Canadian youth and create a real push for change in the general public.

# FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

# THANK YOU!

Thank you to all our members and volunteers. It has been an exciting time serving you and we are excited to see what 2022 brings. Thank you to our donors, namely the Youth Impact Challenge.

Team members which contributed to the writing of this report: **Gabriel Masi, Naba Tahir, Romy Shoam, Ouïam Meftah, Nico Serreqi, Sam Loutet, Ava Torkaman, Marianne Bellavance, Allie Wang, Katia Forgues, Shir Gruber, and Alia Dobson.**

Graphic design by **Sara Carling.**



# ANNEX: LIST OF COLLABORATORS

## **Trash Talk**

TrashTalk is a Montreal-based, youth-run organization dedicated to empowering our generation to become more environmentally conscious. One of their main initiatives is to organize trash cleanups in parks around the island of Montreal.

## **Canadian Wildlife Federation**

The Canadian Wildlife Federation's mission is to conserve and inspire the conservation of Canada's wildlife and habitats for the use and enjoyment of all.

## **UrbaNature**

UrbaNature helps protect the Falaise St-Jacques, which they use to do outdoor and environmental education in Montreal.

## **Le Service des loisirs Notre-Dame-des-Victoires**

Le Service des loisirs Notre-Dame-des-Victoires is a community center located in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve with activities for youth and adults. They operate an after-school program and a day camp for elementary school students in the summer.

## **Montreal West Town Council Environmental Action**

### **Committee**

Montreal West Town Council Environmental Action Committee is a standing advisory committee of Council invested in making the town a more sustainable and environmentally friendly community.

## **La Maison de l'environnement de verdun**

La Maison de l'environnement de Verdun is a part of The Regroupement des éco-quartier (REQ). This non-profit and non-partisan organization was founded in 1999 by neighbourhoods wishing to pool their resources for ecological purposes. Since 2002, the REQ has represented its members at the regional level.

## **The Legacy Fund for the Environment**

The Legacy Fund for the Environment partners with the public in identifying and prosecuting legal action in defence of the Environment. They invite activists and their non-profit organizations (NPOs) to discuss proposals for legal action with them.

## **UBC Wastenuts**

UBC Wastenuts is a solution-driven Engineering Design Team that encompasses sustainability in engineering design and principles of a circular economy. Their goal is to radically minimize waste on Earth and apply knowledge from all fields to transform that waste into a valuable resource.

## **The Foundation of Greater Montréal**

The Foundation of Greater Montréal mobilizes philanthropic resources, disseminates knowledge, sparks initiatives, and supports its community, all with a view to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Greater Montreal.

## **AI Launch Lab**

AI Launch Lab is a non-profit start-up company established in Montréal, Canada. They address Québec's AI talent gap by training talented individuals highly motivated to work in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning.

## **John Molson Supply Chain and Business Technology**

### **Association**

The John Molson Supply Chain and Business Technology Association is a student association whose mission revolves around providing academic support and resources to students to enhance supply chains and technology education.

## **Dr. Catherine Potvin**

Dr. Catherine Potvin is a biology professor at McGill, Canada Research Chair in Climate Change Mitigation and Tropical Forests, and the director of Sustainable Canada Dialogues, a cross-disciplinary association of over 80 researchers working to guide Canada's environmental transition.

## **Les Amis de Meadowbrook (Les Amis)**

Les Amis de Meadowbrook (Les Amis), a committed group of citizens affiliated with local and national environmental groups devoted to protecting natural spaces.

## **IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA)**

IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) is the world's premier network of protected area expertise. It is administered by IUCN's Global Programme on Protected Areas and has over 2,500 members, spanning 140 countries.