

eCards

Research Topic Success Stories

Success Stories

Do you ever think that issues like global warming are just so huge that we might as well give up? Don't! If people thought like that, we would never have put an end to slavery, invented airplanes, or found the vaccines for smallpox and other diseases. If we gave up easily, we would not have accomplished many important things that at one time seemed impossible.

We often hear about environmental problems like climate change, but it is just as important to hear about the big and small energy success stories that are taking place around the world. Countless individuals, small groups and big organizations are working for change and have already made a real difference. Margaret Mead, a famous anthropologist, said "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Individuals Can Make a Difference

Young people like you are taking action all across Canada to make their communities a better place. They sometimes get recognized with awards, but many never end up in the media spotlight. Nicholas Horyski in Winnipeg, Manitoba did win an environmental award for his work. At 8 years old, Nicholas saved his allowance to buy two trees and then donated them to his city for environmental reasons. For the next two years, his commitment to environmentalism motivated him to raise more money for "green" causes. He even had the

opportunity to meet with the Premier of Manitoba and urge the government to do more for conservation and reforestation. Educators are making a difference too. Check out GreenLearning's Challenge showcase page here, <https://programs.greenlearning.ca/submission-showcase> to see what some educators and their classes have achieved in being more environmentally friendly. Ken Crozier of Robert Little Public School in Acton, Ontario won an award in 2005 for his environmental leadership at the school. There, he set up a recycling club and a composting program. He also created naturalized learning grounds at the school. Instead of only pavement and a little grass, the schoolyard now provides shade, gardens, quiet areas for relaxation and places where classes meet outdoors.

Small Organizations Can Make Big Changes

Small groups like schools, churches and small businesses can make a real difference too. Central Dufferin High School, with help from the community group PURE (Power Up Renewable Energy Cooperative), has become an energy leader. It is the first school in Ontario to have a major solar and wind-powered energy system! Their project included the installation of a 500-watt photovoltaic solar panel array, a 1.5 kW wind turbine, smart metering and a battery storage system.

The installation and use of the system is connected to the learning of the learners. Classes helped with the construction, and now different classes learn from the equipment and the data it generates. Learners also lead tours so that other learners and community members can learn from the project.

The school's partnership with PURE helped it become part of the community's plan to conserve electricity and increase the use of renewable energy technologies. Learners have applied their learning in many ways including going door-to-door in their neighbourhoods to perform home energy audits (energy investigations) to help homeowners become more "green." In 2005, these audits became an established project in the community called "Reduce the Juice," and now high school and university learners are actually hired for the summers to raise awareness in their towns. Check out GreenLearning's Home Energy Audit Challenge here, <https://energyrevealed.ca/home-energy-audit-challenge/> which can teach learners to be environmentally friendly at home by making small retrofits and adopting behaviour changes towards using energy a little more wisely.

There is Strength in Numbers

When people get together in larger groups, their collected energy and experience can make a difference by urging entire countries to change. Groups that work on social causes like energy conservation that are not part of government or business are often called non-governmental organizations, or NGOs for short. One example of an NGO in action is in Brazil where 18 organizations came together to form a network called RENOVE (the National Network of Civic Organization for Renewable Energy) which is committed to helping rural communities in Brazil.

RENOVE has focused on many aspects of development. One of their most important victories has been to convince the government that renewable energy is one of the key solutions for improving the quality of life in rural communities and that it should therefore be a bigger part of Brazil's national energy strategy.

Over time, the network has grown to 32 non-governmental organizations and universities that together provide technical help, training and a voice for rural communities. They have brought about legal changes, pushed for long-term energy planning and helped establish organic farms. The Brazilian government now provides subsidies for solar, wind, biomass and small hydropower plants.

Fact Sheet: Global Stories

- Habitat for Humanity, a global organization that builds affordable housing, has started to invest in energy-efficient homes because of their savings and benefits over the long term.
- Groups like Action for Nature work to inform young people from different countries and to recognize their accomplishments in helping the environment. Check out the 2020 winners here, <https://actionfornature.org/eco-hero-awards/2020-awards>.
- The Solar Electric Light Fund (SELF) in Washington, D.C. connects dozens of communities on four continents to help them build renewable solar power projects like solar-powered wells, schools and clinics as well as solar-powered computers and Internet access.
- Demand for solar energy has grown substantially. In places like California, where governments offer financial incentives to use solar energy, many homeowners are adding renovations such as solar panels, and many architects and developers are offering options for solar systems and providing solar-ready wiring in new houses.
- Wind power is the world's fastest-growing energy source. In 2020, the world added record-breaking 93 gigawatts of new wind turbine power. Global wind power capacity increased 14.3% in 2020, compared to 2019 from 651 gigawatts to 744 gigawatts.

Fact Sheet: Canadian Stories

- David Suzuki, an accomplished environmental scientist in Canada, was one of the top ten finalists in the CBC's Greatest Canadian contest.
- A married couple living near Victoria, British Columbia quit their high-paying jobs to build a two-storey cob house which involves a centuries-old technique using mud, clay and straw. The building will house four families and will use in-floor heating, wind and solar power to run appliances, and it will have a south-facing wall of windows to catch the sun's heat.
- Tara Ryan began Evergreen Theatre to bring plays with environmental themes to schools across Canada. The Theatre started in Calgary but now tours as far away as Washington, D.C. and Australia!
- Architects and developers have begun to pay more attention to designing buildings with energy efficiency. Houses can now be given an Energy Star rating like energy-efficient refrigerators and other appliances.
- In the field of business, the EYA Youth Environmental Entrepreneurship (YEE) program helps young people gain skills so they can develop sustainable business ideas that have positive social and environmental impacts.
- Below is a fact sheet produced by Canwea about Canada's Wind Energy in 2019. More information can be found here: <https://canwea.ca/wind-energy/installed-capacity/>



Source: Canwea