

Eco Echo springs forth with vigorous growing season

BY JOHN WOOLFREY
Contributing writer

The green is showing, which means the seedlings planted by the folks at Eco Echo, an environmental campus in Wakefield, are coming up roses!

- This month, Earth Path nature programs will resume welcoming young nature lovers to Eco Echo, the Outaouais Environmental Campus, for its 14th season. Children aged six to 12 get to spend the day in the great outdoors exploring forests, meadows and wetlands, as well as learning about plants, how to track animals, building shelters and making nature-based arts and crafts. The Wakefield Wanderers program takes place on

Fridays from March 22 to June 7. earthpath.ca

- Instead of hibernating this winter, a group of talented community members have been busy preparing "Symbiosis", a multimedia science and art exhibit for Earth Day - April 22. Set to tour the MRC des Collines-de-l'Outaouais, its first stop is at the Wakefield Library from April 1 to 27. After that, it travels to Perkins, in Val-des-Monts, for the first half of May, then to Cantley for the second half. From June 6 to 22 it will be at La Fab sur Mill in Chelsea, and will include a performance by the local band Esmerine. Future dates TBA.



Artist and project lead cJ fleury with Symbiosis participant and "budding" artist Alain-Jorel Alavo holding up a sample of his work at the Cantley workshop. Photo: courtesy cJ fleury

SUMMER GETAWAY!

Summer Getaway in Wakefield Area! Classic century old cottage! Spacious living-room and two bedrooms with 3-piece bathroom. Large screened porch overlooking front yard and forest.

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- On Earth Day, Eco Echo will host a panel of experts - Christian Messier, Ronnie Dreaver and Chantale Doucet - who will discuss the evolution of the MRC des Collines-de-l'Outaouais' forest canopy. Their presentation will be followed by a screening of the film "Inhabit: A Permaculture Perspective".
 - Also starting in April, artist cJ fleury will be giving one of Eco Echo's two-hour Mapping the Community Forest workshops, in which participants can find out just how much the forests have changed over the past 300 years. Participants will be invited to add their creativity to a collective art and science exhibit, which will be shared throughout the MRC. Spots can be reserved at www.ecoecho.ca
 - In May, Eco Echo will host Tree Canada's national board of directors to highlight the action taken by the Outaouais Environmental Campus in support of Canada's 2 Billion Trees Commitment. Part of that commitment included planting 20,000 trees on the Minnes Farm - also known as Eco Echo - in 2020.
 - Christian Messier, forest ecology professor at Université du Québec en Outaouais (UQO) and UQAM (in Montreal), will continue collaborating with the MRC to share research on the Community Forest Canopy, with the goal of encouraging all six municipalities to work together to protect and care for this vital natural resource.
 - POCO (La Pêche Organic Community Orchard) volunteers, who have been having great success on the campus' one-acre organic orchard, are looking forward to another fruitful season.
 - A series of workshops on permaculture will be hosted online and at Eco Echo, such as the Forest Education workshops in the fall of 2024.
- For more info and to support Eco Echo, sign up for the newsletter at ecoecho.ca

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From the Grassroots – Climate and Justice



BY ILSE TURNSEN
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Ilse Turnsen, Wakefield, Transition écologique La Pêche Coalition for a Green New Deal, reminding us that we are in a code red climate crisis.

Earth Day: healing ourselves, healing the planet

The Theme of Earth Day 2024 is Planet vs Plastic. Recently, I had participated in a hard-hitting, online learning experience* with Linda Vanderlee (Living Aligned Coaching) and Andrea Prasmowski (Forest Therapy, Ottawa), which disclosed that every week we absorb a credit card's worth of microplastics. One million plastic bags are being produced every minute. Babies are particularly vulnerable to absorbing microplastics, which constitute a serious health risk to everyone.

global-plastics-treaty
About self-healing: I had a recent conversation with Alice Irene Whittaker – a local mother, author, and environmental communications leader, who advocates for a circular economy, which is a model of production and consumption that involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing and recycling material and products as long as possible. Whittaker, who is executive director of Ecology Ottawa, is engaged in a personal process to ensure balance. Personal burn-

Whittaker, who is executive director of Ecology Ottawa, is engaged in a personal process to ensure balance. Personal burnout cannot be the underpinning of climate and justice action.

The Earth Day website has excellent information about the health and environmental hazards of microplastics: www.earthday.org/campaign/end-plastic-pollution, and the UN International Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution is meeting in Ottawa next week, working on a binding treaty to reduce plastic production by 60 per cent by 2040. There is a petition you can sign to add your voice: action.earthday.org/

out cannot be the underpinning of climate and justice action. Carrying the burden of climate and ecological crisis alone corrodes agency and hope (the conviction to work for climate solutions). The work at hand involves repairing our relationship with nature and ourselves. Looking for inspiration? Check out her podcast: "Reseed" and new book: "Homing: A Quest for Care for Myself and the Earth" – www.aliceirenewhittaker.ca



Alice Irene Whittaker, the executive director of Ecology Ottawa, advocates for a circular economy and argues that consumption should involve sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing and recycling material and products as long as possible. Photo: courtesy Irene Whittaker

With regard to community collaboration: Last week, as Biblio Wakefield Library liaison, I had the privilege of meeting with cj fleury, Shelley Crabtree

and Gillian Kirkland to problem-solve with Christopher Minnes (Eco Echo) about mounting the art installation that will be highlighted during Earth Day celebrations at Centre Wakefield La Pêche, with help from Laura Birks who works for the centre. The installation was created in workshops held all over the MRC, resulting in breathtaking panels that invite us to enter into a deeper awareness of and knowledge about our forests. The multi-layered funding, collaborative problem solving, creative inspiration and pragmatic expertise involved, based on ecological conviction, provides stunning evidence of what is possible.

Returning to alignment with the earth: I attended a sign-making workshop for Partagé Community Garden Community. We talked about policy regarding food waste and inclusiveness as

we worked in the garden. There's something about working with your hands and discussing challenging topics that contributes to balance and calm. We also discussed how many splendid proposals arose from the public consultation hosted by the La Pêche Commission for Developing a Climate Action Plan.

We hope that the commission will recommend a strategy for mobilizing motivated community members aligned with the earth and offering a variety of skills that will help members work together in a systematic way to continue contributing to climate, ecological and social justice and resilience.

*If you're interested in discussions with friends leading to climate action – an appropriate Earth Day resolution – I highly recommend you check out: www.theweek.ooo/

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