



Image Credit: I. Bertazzo

# 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

April 14, 2020

## Save Our Seine River Environment Inc.

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A River Lies Waiting to be Discovered...

**Save Our Seine**  
river environment inc.



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# Save Our Seine is Making a Difference!

Save Our Seine River Environment Inc. (SOS) continues to make a difference and an impact for the Seine River Greenway, its flora and fauna, and for the people who enjoy this wonderful greenspace. 2019 was a year of accomplishments!

The urban Seine River greenway is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples and on the homeland of the Metis Nation. We acknowledge this land in our work.

- 2019 was an important year as we received a significant grant from the Province of Manitoba-Conservation Trust for a large project to enhance the Seine River Greenway.
- Our Urban River Keepers program was very strong and removed significant trash from the river as well as assisting our land care volunteers with noxious weed removal and new plantings. Due to great interest from volunteers, a Land Care volunteer group emerged in the South St. Vital area and has engaged many people, including individuals from neighbouring condos. They have been involved with a great deal of noxious weed removal, wild flower plantings and tree/shrub plantings in partnership with the City of Winnipeg and Nature Manitoba. Land Care volunteers also worked hard on the Niakwa Trail Demonstration Rain Garden as we continued to establish wild flower plantings in the rain garden.
- Another important impact we had was with public education, including with several school groups, with a university class, with teachers learning how to use the Seine River greenway in their lessons, and with the public through public presentations.
- 2019 was also significant as SOS moved forward electronically with our social media presence (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook), an enhanced website, an electronic newsletter and use of virtual meetings for executive and board meetings. We now have 699 twitter followers and nearly 400 contacts for our e-news!
- An important focus of SOS over 2019 was enhancing our Board governance area including establishing board orientation and training, board code of conduct agreement, and updating the bylaws.
- A significant accomplishment for SOS was the mobilization of community support at City Hall in November to stop proposed cuts to the SOS grant from the City of Winnipeg. The community responded with numerous letters, over 30 people attended the City Hall presentation and

nearly 15 people presented on behalf of SOS. As a result, so far it looks like we were successful in retaining the grant.

- SOS once again had a significant impact on greenway advocacy, and worked in partnership with various levels of government including proposing suggestions for development design of the tunnel riverbank area under the new Fermor Bridge and the Highway 101-St. Anne's Rd intersection.
- Finally an important accomplishment was the establishment of our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary planning team who have been working hard to plan a great 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year for Save Our Seine.

I am honoured to serve as President of SOS. All of this fine work is due to the dedication and support of so many people including our volunteers, staff, donors, grantors, supportive elected officials at all levels of government, businesses, non-profit partners, educators, community members, and many others who collectively support the work of Save Our Seine in our effort to preserve, protect and enhance this hidden gem in Winnipeg. Thanks to you all for your contributions, and to all who enjoy this precious greenway.

Sincerely,

Laurie Ringaert (President)

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2019

## (January 1 - April 12):

- Denis Gautron (President)
- Alain Cenerini (Vice-President)
- Laurie Ringaert (Treasurer)
- Anita Moyse (Secretary)
  
- Isabelle Bertazzo
- Veronica Dunne
- Victoria Grima
- Tari Mvingi
- Robyn Palmer
- Marc St. Laurent
- Wilma Sotas
- Sandra Stewart

## (April 12 - December 31):

- Laurie Ringaert (President)
- Denis Gautron (Past President)
- Robyn Palmer (Vice-President)
- Anita Moyse (Secretary)
- Sunny Saini (Treasurer Oct to Dec)
  
- Isabelle Bertazzo
- Veronica Dunne
- Josee-Anne Le Dorze
- Tari Mvingi
- Wilma Sotas
- Sandra Stewart
  
- Samantha Houston (resigned in Nov)
- Becky Kolzak (Treasurer, resigned in Oct)
- Victoria Grima (resigned in Nov)
- Alain Cenerini (resigned in Sept)

## STRATEGIC SUMMARY

Vision: “A sustainable and protected Seine River Greenway that provides a healthy habitat for vegetation and wildlife and contributes to the quality of life of all residents and visitors.”

### Objectives/Strategic Focus:

1. Preserve, protect and enhance the Seine River greenway
2. Restore and repair the Seine River greenway
3. Raise public education and awareness of the Seine River greenway
4. Improve public access to the Seine River greenway
5. Improve water level, flow and quality
6. Work in partnership with governmental, business and other non-profit organizations for responsible planning of the Seine River greenway

# ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

## 1. Signature Initiatives Strategy



### A. Seine River Greenspace Enhancement Project (SRGEP)

#### Goal Addressed

- Preserve, protect and enhance the Seine River greenway.
- Restore and repair the Seine River greenway.
- Improve public access to the Seine River greenway.
- Raise public education and awareness of the Seine River greenway.

#### Implementation

- Marc St. Laurent (SOS's SRGEP Project Manager) prepared a scope of work and engaged Scatliff + Miller + Murray (SMM) Landscape Architects to oversee the project.
- SMM met with SOS and City administration (August 22), conducted field assessments, and began design work on all the aspects of the project.
- A survey was conducted to identify sections of riparian trails and river banks that need repair or enhancement (Louis Riel Senior Trail and Bois-des-Ésprits). Preliminary design solutions were developed for different categories of work required.
- SOS hired a Habitat Technician to work with the Land Care Team and the River Keepers. Staff and volunteers removed invasive species and planted native species at various locations along the greenway.

- A preliminary design was developed for a permanent accessible dock that would be built into the bank at John Bruce Park. Additional locations along the river were identified and prioritized for a regular dock or launch site enhancements to improve river access.
- A preliminary concept and design was developed for an interpretive node in Bois-des-Ésprits as part of the SRGEP. Ten interpretive signs were installed along the greenway.

## ***B. SOS Urban River Keepers Program***

### Goal Addressed

- Preserve, protect and enhance the Seine River greenway.
- Restore and repair the Seine River greenway.
- Improve water level, flow and quality.

### Implementation

- The Green Team worked from May 15 to August 9.
- The team was supervised by Summer Clean-Up Coordinator Emily Thoroski (480 hours), and assisted by Executive Director Michele Kading and a volunteer Stewardship Mentor.
- In addition to the Coordinator, the team consisted of a Habitat Technician (370 hours) and four River Keepers (3 at 350 hours each, and 1 at 157 hours).

## ***C. Land Care Initiative***

### Purpose and Goals

- Preserve, protect and enhance the Seine River greenway.
- Restore and repair the Seine River greenway.

### Implementation

- Land care events focused on work along the Rain Garden and the Seine River greenway in the River Park South area, and on laying the groundwork to extend into St. Boniface in the coming year.
- This was the first year that Landcare volunteers scheduled twice-weekly regular events (Tuesday mornings and Thursday evenings) from July through mid-September. Events took place along the South Trail between the Royalwood Bridge and Creek Bend Road and at the Niakwa Trail Rain Garden.
- A total of 29 events were coordinated: 25 recurrent weekly Tuesday morning and Thursday evening events along the River Park South greenway, as well as 4 events at the Rain Garden at Fermor Avenue and St. Anne's Road.

- The events connected local residents with each other, Save Our Seine, and the Seine River, as everyone worked together to remove invasive plants (thistle, burdock, leafy spurge, etc.) and plant native species. This increased awareness and appreciation of the river and its natural spaces. The Land Care Volunteers created a list of 52 potential volunteers and advertised events with posters along the river and via e-mails, the SOS e-news and other SOS social media communication. Fifteen volunteers came between three and ten times, totaling at least 600 hours over the period. Seed scattering was included when native wildflower seed was available.
- Additional events included: a native shrub planting event near The Legend (expertise and materials provided by the City), weed removal by a condo association, and planting Jerusalem artichoke near the Hindu Temple. Volunteers also added fencing to protect the plants from herbivores (rabbits and deer) and watered the new plantings through the heat of the summer.
- The SOS Landcare Team worked in cooperation with the City of Winnipeg Naturalist, and with the assistance of 15 regular and many impromptu volunteers to remove invasive weeds, plant and reseed beneficial native plants, and nurture new plantings.

### Community Involvement

- Community volunteers remain the cornerstone of a successful land care initiative. In addition to our scheduled events, several volunteers also committed to work independently to weed, plant and nurture the land in their own neighbourhoods along the Seine.

## **2. Education Strategy**





## Goal Addressed

- Raise public education and awareness of the Seine River greenway.

## Implementation

- On November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019, twenty-six teachers from a cluster of schools from Louis Riel School Division (LRSD) participated in a tour of Bois-des-Ésprits. The purpose of the tour was to learn about land-use along the Seine River. One of the main themes was land-use related to the impact of residential and commercial development.
- A grades 3/4 class at Highbury School invited the Chair of the Education Committee, Denis Gautron, to lead a discussion regarding beaver activity in the Seine River forest. The students were concerned about the steps taken to prevent beavers from cutting trees in the forest.
- Grades 5-8 students from École Varennes invited Denis Gautron to talk about the function and purpose of the rain garden adjacent to the Superstore parking lot. Beaver activity was also discussed.
- An In-Seine Art event was held at John Bruce Park with students from Dakota Collegiate (Sept 25<sup>th</sup>).
- A francophone youth group met at Lagimodière-Gaboury park in Saint Boniface for a guided walk along the river and also to participate in a shore cleanup. Ten to twelve students participated in the event. This park has historical importance as it is the birthplace of Louis Riel.

## Community Involvement

- Local SOS supporters donated \$1000.00 towards the In-Seine Art Project for a second year. The art project is held in partnership with Dakota Collegiate, and is connected to the Seine River greenway. The intention is for the artwork to be on display at exhibits in the school and school division.
- Volunteers supported the Adopt-a-River/Waterways program. Through Adopt-A-River/Waterways, water testing kits are available to students in junior high schools to analyze water quality along the Seine River. The kits are used to test oxygen levels, turbidity, pH, bacteria and the number of macro-invertebrates, a key indicator of river health.

### 3. Public Engagement, Outreach and Partnerships Strategy



#### Goal Addressed

- Raise public education and awareness of the Seine River greenway.
- Work in partnership with governmental, business and other non-profit organizations for responsible planning of the Seine River greenway.

#### Implementation

- Executive Director Michele Kading is a community correspondent for *The Lance*. In 2019, she contributed articles to *The Lance* on the following topics: daylighting, wildlife corridors, new environmentalists, the downside of infill, the Seine River Greenspace Enhancement Project, stream order, turtles, European buckthorn, rubble and puddles providing animal habitat, signs, debris dams, the proposed SOS funding grant cut, and time for reflection.
- SOS took part in the Manitoba Premier's announcement regarding Conservation Trust funding (April 15<sup>th</sup>).
- A preliminary concept and design was developed for an interpretive node in Bois-des-Ésprits as part of the Seine River Greenspace Enhancement Project (SRGEP). Ten interpretive signs were installed along the Greenway.
- A public awareness campaign was launched on November 15 following an announcement that the City was proposing to eliminate SOS funding. SOS supporters were notified via the SOS website, Facebook page, Twitter, e-newsletter, and direct email. SOS also responded to interview requests.

- SOS participated in consultations with the Province, including meeting with the Water Stewardship Department (January 4<sup>th</sup>), and attending Highway 100 public information sessions (January & December) and a stakeholder meeting (December 3<sup>rd</sup>).
- SOS continued to strengthen relationships with key people in the City, including attending the annual meeting between SOS and various city departments (March 14<sup>th</sup>).
- SOS responded to greenway issues raised by community members and the City of Winnipeg. New GIS maps and data sets were created to address issues and assist with future planning.
- SOS worked on enhancing our e-news, website and social media presence (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook),
- During the year, SOS was featured in the French media in a few radio interviews and newspaper articles for the francophone community.
- SOS provided public awareness presentations in 2019, including a presentation to the Manitoba Naturalists. SOS engaged with local residents along the Seine by providing a presentation to Appleton Estate Seniors Club (133-135 Niakwa Rd)
- In February 2019, SOS worked in partnership with the Windsor Park United Church to host the documentary film: “Call of the Forest: Wisdom of the Trees”. Over 100 people attended.

#### Community Involvement

- As part of the public awareness campaign to save SOS funding, supporters wrote letters, phoned City councillors, signed a petition, made written submissions, and spoke at a public hearing (Nov 25<sup>th</sup>) in opposition to the proposed cut.

## **4. Fundraising Strategy**



In 2019, fundraising efforts were increased to support core operations, staff positions, and SOS projects:

- The City of Winnipeg provided a grant (\$30,000) to support the annual operation of Save Our Seine, allowing for the extension of the part-time Executive Director position for a seventh year.
- The Province of Manitoba provided funding for the SOS River Keepers (\$15,160/1,200 work hrs) through the provincial Urban Green Team program. Additionally, Casera Credit Union (CCU) provided \$5,000 and Canada Summer Jobs provided \$7,100 toward hiring a Summer Clean-up Coordinator and Habitat Technician.

- The Conservation Trust awarded a \$100,000 grant to SOS to initiate the Seine River Greenspace Enhancement Project (2019/2020). The grant is split between habitat enhancement and connecting people with the Seine River. The Winnipeg Foundation provided a matching grant of \$45,000. Mountain Equipment Co-op (\$15,000) and The Blennerhasset Family Foundation (\$2,500) also contributed toward the building of an accessible dock as part of the project.
- Councillor Brian Mayes (St. Vital Ward) provided a grant of \$1,500.00.
- SOS was also grateful to receive additional donations from corporations (\$2,000) and from individuals (\$6,800 - through Canada Helps, the Jim Gyselinck Memorial Fund, the United Way, and direct donations).



## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Please see attached financial statements and review engagement.

## LOOKING FORWARD TO 2020

OUR PLAN IS TO WORK ON THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIC AREAS IN 2020:

- Effective Implementation of Programs/Projects Strategy
- Effective Fund Raising for Organizational Sustainability Strategy
- Effective Member and Volunteer Management Strategy
- Effective Organizational Development and Management Strategy
- Effective Advocacy and Partnerships for the Sustainability of the Seine River Environment Strategy
- Effective Communication Strategy