



2021 **ANNUAL REPORT**

Save Our Seine River Environment Inc.

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF SOS

As President of SOS, I am once again humbled to have this position of leadership in caring for this incredible river and greenway. I am humbled and amazed by all the people who love and care for this greenspace.

As I reflect on 2021, it was another year of great accomplishments and also one of change for SOS. If there is anything constant in our lives, it is change! Once again we have all been navigating our work in a time of COVID. I will try to recap a very busy year – details on many of these initiatives and accomplishments are provided later in this report.

At the beginning of the year, we formed our first partnership with the Niakwa Country Club to work on mutual environmental goals together. Early in the year, we began our advocacy project in partnership with OURS-Winnipeg to make amendments to the proposed City of Winnipeg OurWinnipeg 2045 and the Complete Communities 2.0 policy documents. This work was highly successful, with the City of Winnipeg passing important amendments that will ensure greenspace planning and preservation for years to come.

This year also saw the completion of the Seine River Greenway Enhancement Project with the installation of the interpretive node and the opening of the universal dock at John Bruce Park.

As usual, our Summer Program team and Land Care Volunteers were very busy with planting, weeding, and the removal of trash and a myriad of strange objects from the river, with the added challenge of navigating COVID restrictions, an unusually hot summer, and very low river levels.

Many people were saddened by the fall of our beloved Woody-Mhitik wood spirit in Bois-des-Esprits; however, we were very pleased to partner with Le Musée de Saint-Boniface Museum on his preservation.

Our long-time Executive Director, Michele Kading, resigned in December. Michele was with SOS for over seven years and helped the organization move forward in so many ways, notably with advocacy on many land development and policy issues, fund development, and oversight of many projects and programs including the Summer Program. We express our sincere gratitude for Michele's work with SOS.

Finally, all of our good work would not happen without a great team of Board Directors, Committee Members, volunteers, contractors, summer staff as well as our supporters, donors, funders, and partners.

On behalf of Save Our Seine, I am thankful to this incredible team. I would also like to thank all of the SOS members and the wider community who are engaged with this organization and who provide stewardship for this wonderful river corridor and greenway.

Laurie Ringaert



BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2021

January 1 – May 14

- Laurie Ringaert
President
- Denis Gautron
Past-President
- Michael Juce
Vice-President
- Anita Moyse
Secretary
- Sunny Saini
Treasurer
- Isabelle Bertazzo
- Veronica Dunne
- Josée-Anne Le Dorze
- Paula Kreitz
- Wilma Sotas
- Sandra Stewart
- Eric St-Onge

April 14 – December 31

- Laurie Ringaert
President
- Denis Gautron
Past-President
- Victoria Grima
Vice-President
- Anita Moyse
Secretary
- Pramini Warnock
Treasurer
(appointed in July)
- Amber Giesbrecht
Treasurer
(resigned in June)
- Lia Abolit
- Isabelle Bertazzo
- Denis DePape
- Robyn Palmer
- Eric St-Onge
- Paul Turenne
- Max Griffin-Rill
(resigned in October)
- Michael Juce
(resigned in August)
- Makenna Short
(resigned in August)
- Paula Kreitz
(resigned in June)

STRATEGIC FOCUS

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.

Goals

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



SIGNATURE PROJECT: SEINE RIVER GREENSPACE ENHANCEMENT

This was a project that started in 2019 and was completed in 2021. Our 2020 report outlined a great deal of this work while this report provides the highlights from 2021.

Goals Addressed

Restore, repair, and enhance the Seine River Greenway

Improve public access to the Seine River Greenway

Implementation (2021)

- The universal canoe/kayak dock was completed and opened at John Bruce Park. The dock is the first of its kind in Winnipeg, allowing community members with various abilities, families and those new to paddling to enjoy the Seine River. This new dock saw hundreds of people use it starting in May. People of all ages and abilities praised the new dock for allowing them to paddle the river for the first time, while others have appreciated that they no longer need to get their feet wet to access the river.
- Completed a series of enhancements to the trails surrounding John Bruce Park in order to protect sensitive vegetation and repair/prevent riverbank erosion.
- Construction of the interpretive node was completed in Bois-des-Esprits. Many people have praised the node and have used it as an important rest and interpretive place. Others have used it as a great spot for photographs of their group as they enjoy the Seine.
- Completed native vegetation planting along Louis Riel Sr. Trail in Royalwood.
- Marc St. Laurent (volunteer) contributed his expertise toward setting up and managing contracts as well as designing the accessible dock. Michele Kading (Executive Director) provided overall project oversight and Laurie Ringaert (President) worked closely with the team.
- A presentation on the Project was made by Bob Somers (Scatliff+Miller+Murray), Marc St. Laurent and Laurie Ringaert to the Red River Basin Commission.
- Held a virtual launch of the project at John Bruce Park in June 2021, which included Minister Rochelle Squires, Councillor Brian Mayes, MLAs Andrew Smith and Janice Morley-Lecomte, along with President Laurie Ringaert and Executive Director Michele Kading.

Project Partners & Funders

- This was an important partnership between the City of Winnipeg and SOS.
- Scatliff+Miller+Murray Landscape Architects were the main consultant and provided oversight over much of the design and construction.
- The project was funded by the Province of Manitoba (Habitat Heritage Corporation-Conservation Trust & Building Sustainable Communities funds), City of Winnipeg (Land Dedication Reserve Fund), Councillors Brian Mayes, Kevin Klein and Shawn Nason, The Winnipeg Foundation, Mountain Equipment Co-op, Thomas Sill Foundation, Blennerhassett Family Foundation, corporate sponsors, and individual donors.
- Many thanks to the elected officials who supported this initiative, including Province of Manitoba MLAs Rochelle Squires, Andrew Smith and Janice Morley-Lecomte, and City of Winnipeg Councillors Brian Mayes, Kevin Klein, and Shawn Nason.
- Thanks to Colin Mathieson, a local Paralympian, for providing expert user advice on the design of the universal dock.
- Thanks to the SOS community for stepping up with many individual donations toward the dock during our campaign.



SUMMER PROGRAM

Goals Addressed

Restore, repair, and enhance the Seine River Greenway

Implementation

- SOS hired a team of 6 youths to help care for the greenway: Stewardship & Education Coordinator (Clara Rogers), Lead Hand (Nick Taylor), Habitat Technician (Kennedy Povey), and three River Keepers (Paige Prescott, Barbara Farpelha, and Isaac Henderson).

- Removed waste from the river and shores, including 36 metal signs, 40 tires, 10 shopping carts, and 51 bags full of various household waste.
- Cleared away two fallen trees that were blocking the river with the help of a volunteer arborist.
- Removed various invasive plants from the greenway, including 39 bags full of European buckthorn and 31 bags full of other plants such as Canada thistle, burdock, and leafy spurge. These were properly disposed of to ensure they would not continue to produce seeds. Particular attention was placed on buckthorn removal at Kavanagh Park.
- Three project sites were maintained (“The Meadow,” Niakwa Trail Rain Garden, “The Triangle,”) through watering of previous plantings, weeding of invasive species removal, and protective fencing for at-risk plants. Some protective fencing was removed from previously established plantings.

- Species along the greenway were identified and recorded, including 73 plants, 14 birds, 11 mammals, 3 fish, and 5 reptiles. The team also contributed observations for the scientific community through iNaturalist.
- On days of extreme heat, the team researched and developed six educational signs ranging in topics from distinguishing rhubarb from burdock, algal blooms, birds along the Seine and general information about the ecosystem.

Project Partners & Funders

- This program was funded by the Province of Manitoba (Urban Green Team Program) and the Government of Canada (Canada Summer Jobs).
- Thank you to the Winnipeg Foundation for the COVID-19 stabilization grant and to the Real Canadian Superstore at St. Annes Road & Fermor Ave. for supplying water for plants.
- Thank you to Norwood Motors Sales & Service for servicing the SOS truck.



LAND CARE

The 2021 Land Care initiative focused on restoring the health of the Seine River Greenway. The Land Care Committee and volunteers identified a wide variety of factors impacting the health of the greenway. Together, they formed and implemented a remediation plan based on best practices.

Goals Addressed

Restore, repair and enhance the Seine River greenway

Improve public access to the Seine River Greenway

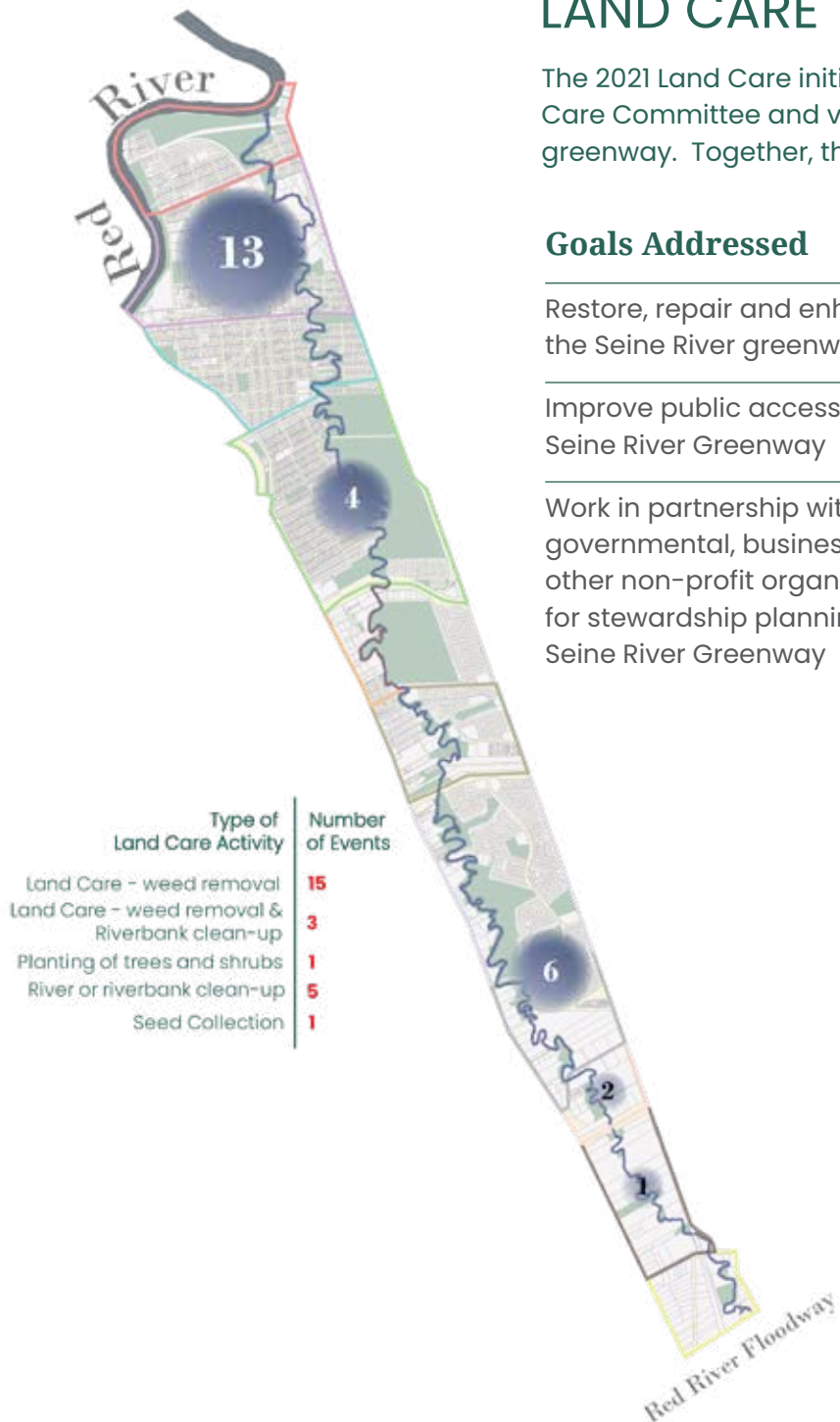
Work in partnership with governmental, business and other non-profit organizations for stewardship planning of the Seine River Greenway

Implementation

- Actively engaged local people in the practical preservation and restoration of the natural ecological habitat along the urban Seine River.
- Over 40 volunteers invested approximately 220 hours in maintaining and improving the overall ecological health of the Seine River Greenway.
- Twenty-six Land Care events were carried out along the urban Seine River. These events were primarily focused on the removal of invasive species, scrap metal, organic waste, garbage, furniture, tires, and deadfall to keep the trails and river navigable.
- Several trees and shrubs were planted at Kavanaugh Park to assist in forest restoration.
- Hosted a seed collection event where volunteers learned about native grasses and forest restoration. Ten pounds of Virginia wildrye seeds were collected and will be used for future restoration projects.
- Established the SOS Land Care Champions citizen science initiative, led by experienced volunteers from previous years. This initiative provided the “boots on the ground” to gather ecological information of the urban Seine River Greenway.
- Over 60 observations were recorded along the greenway, including the times and locations of plant species and wildlife activities, as well as various socio-environmental issues such as illegal construction and dumping of waste.

Project Partners

- Continued working in collaboration with the City of Winnipeg Naturalist Services and 311 Services, as well as with nearby neighbourhoods to ensure the safe enjoyment of the Seine River trails and increase reforestation efforts.



EYES ON THE RIVER

SOS launched Eyes on the River as a pilot program in 2013 in order to encourage the public to report environmental concerns, illegal activities, safety hazards, or any other types of issues affecting the Seine River environment.

These observations help SOS to improve the overall health of the Seine River, increase accessibility, and to discuss and solve concerns with the City of Winnipeg and other relevant entities.

Goals Addressed

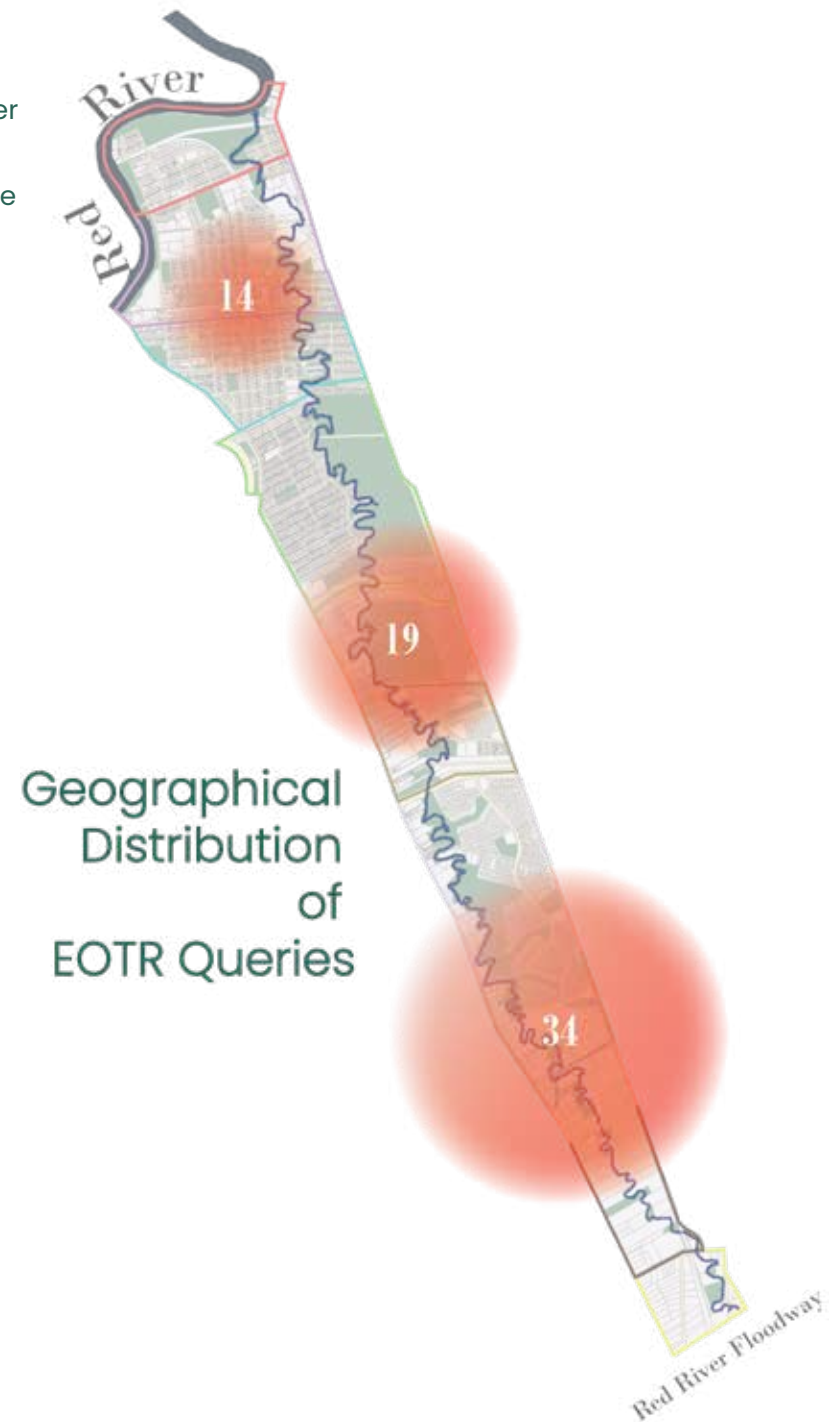
Preserve and protect the Seine River Greenway

Restore, repair, and enhance the Seine River Greenway

Improve public access to the Seine River Greenway

Implementation

- Received reports of a variety of greenway issues raised by community members, which were subsequently reported to the City of Winnipeg and acted on as appropriate.
- In 2021, 67 observations and concerns were received from the public through SOS communication platforms (social media, email, and website).
- The queries submitted raised concerns about land disturbances, trail maintenance, feeding of wildlife, vandalism, illegal construction, new development, falling debris, river and trail obstructions, beaver activities, culvert blockages, low water levels, and homelessness.
- Received queries for general information on various topics such as the history of the Seine River, hazardous waste, Dutch elm disease, flooding, invasive species, and Woody-Mhitik, the spirit tree.



PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

Goals Addressed

Raise public education & awareness of the Seine River Greenway

Implementation

- SOS garnered 120 members in 2021, which helped to raise approximately \$2,300 for general operations through membership fees.

- Produced a monthly electronic newsletter (SOS E-News) to update our subscribers on our activities and progress of our projects and initiatives. Subscribership increased from around 600 to over 800 subscribers.

- Engaged with the public through social media, garnering 1,610 Facebook followers, 964 Twitter followers, and 660 Instagram followers.

- Updated our website with news and blog articles, which attracted over 11,000 visits over the year.

- Executive Director Michele Kading contributed 11 articles as a community correspondent for The Lance on a variety of topics relating to SOS and the natural world.

- Gave a presentation to students (Grade 10) at Vincent Massey Collegiate on the environmental benefits of the greenway and challenges due to development.

- Two SOS volunteers were selected as Butterfly Rangers with the David Suzuki Butterflyway Project. Our Butterfly Rangers planned and carried out activities with students (Grades 2-5) at Ecole Riverview School, taught them how to germinate native plants and created a butterfly garden in front of their school.

- Created educational packages about Pollinator Week which were sent to several schools within walking distance of the Seine River.



A NEW HOME FOR WOODY-MHITIK

The beloved Woody-Mhitik wood sculpture found a new home at Le Musée de Saint-Boniface Museum.

Woody-Mhitik, known as the spirit tree, stood in Bois-des-Esprits attracting visitors for over 15 years before succumbing to the elements in August. It was carved from a 150-year-old elm tree that was slated for removal due to Dutch elm disease.

Former SOS Board Director Marcel Ritchot was instrumental in preserving the remnants of Woody-Mhitik and connecting with the museum about displaying the carving. Marcel and the original carvers, Walter Mirosh and Robert Leclair, were honoured at a small event held at the museum on December 4th.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to Marcel Ritchot, his helpers, and to Le Musée de Saint-Boniface Museum for providing a new home to Woody-Mhitik.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR STEWARDSHIP PLANNING OF THE SEINE RIVER GREENWAY

Goals Addressed

Work in partnership with governmental, business and other non-profit organizations for stewardship planning of the Seine River Greenway

Implementation

- Formed a partnership with the Niakwa Country Club towards the common goal of protecting and enhancing the Seine River corridor through ecological sustainability, biodiversity, public awareness and education and other mutual initiatives.

The NCC is working on its Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for golf certification, which the partners saw as an opportunity to work together on improving our understanding of the ecosystem and its management.

The partnership is highlighted on the NCC's [Nature of Niakwa website](#).

- Advocated on the proposed City of Winnipeg [OurWinnipeg 2045 document](#) and the accompanying [Complete Communities Direction Strategy document](#).

We partnered with OURS-Winnipeg, held two large virtual public events, and met jointly with nearly all of the city councillors. As a result of this effort, several significant changes were made to these long-term planning documents.

We are very appreciative of the Winnipeg City Council for these final amendments that will include a Master Greenspace Plan, a Nature Corridor Plan, and Biodiversity Policy.

The amendments move Winnipeg into compliance with the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, which states that greenspaces must be at the heart of urban planning.



VOLUNTEERS

Goals Addressed

Preserve and protect the Seine River Greenway

Restore, repair, and enhance the Seine River Greenway

Raise public education & awareness of the Seine River Greenway

Improve public access to the Seine River Greenway

Work in partnership with governmental, business and other non-profit organizations for stewardship planning of the Seine River Greenway

Implementation

- Volunteers recorded over 4,300 hours of time supporting SOS activities during 2021. This is valued at an estimated \$87,000 in equivalent paid staff.
- All board members volunteered their time to attend board meetings and many delivered other programs.
- Volunteers served on 11 different governance and program delivery committees: Executive, Governance, Nominations, Finance, Land Care, E-Comms, Summer Clean-up-Stewardship Program, Public Awareness & Education, Eyes-on-the-River, Seine River Greenway Enhancement Project Advisory, and Niakwa Golf and Country Club Partnership.



AWARDS & RECOGNITION

In December of 2021, Save Our Seine was awarded **Greener Greenspace** recognition by the Society for Organic Urban Land Care (SOUL).

SOUL particularly appreciated that SOS has been the leading organization in Winnipeg caring for the Seine River and surrounding greenspaces for over thirty years and that SOS invests in tree planting and other initiatives to contribute to the site's ecological health every year.

SOUL is a national organization and professional association that promotes ecological approaches to land stewardship.

In 2021, they launched the Greener Greenspaces program to showcase municipal, institutional and community-led initiatives that support urban biodiversity and ecosystem health.

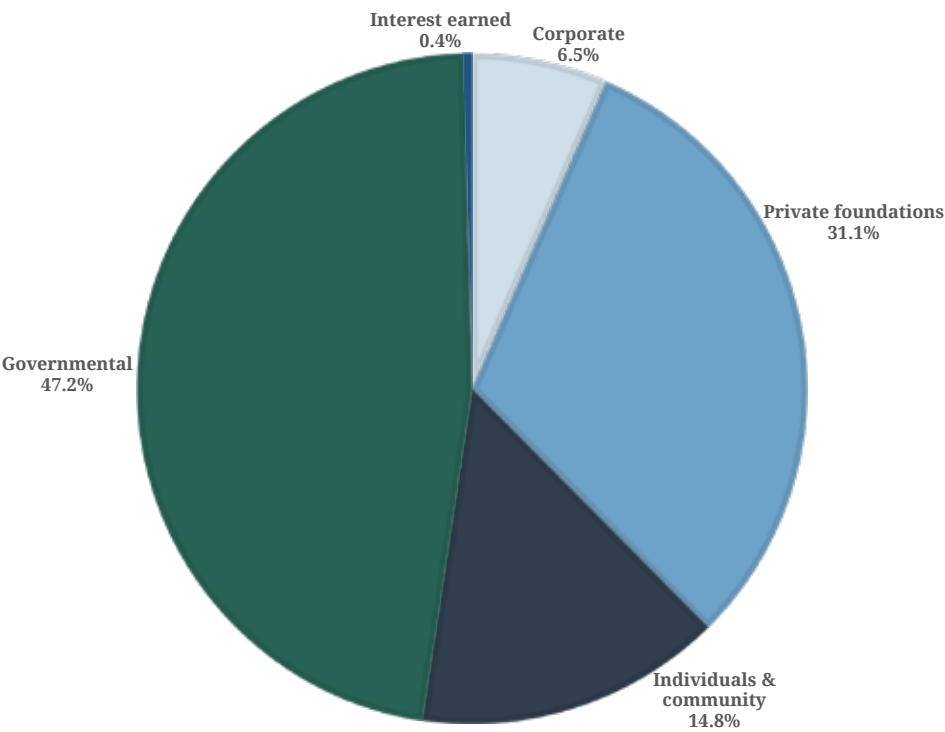
The purpose of this program is to raise awareness about ecologically-focused land stewardship as a means to inspire others and build the movement across the country. A map and descriptions of all of the recognized Greener Greenspaces can be found on [SOUL's website](#).

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

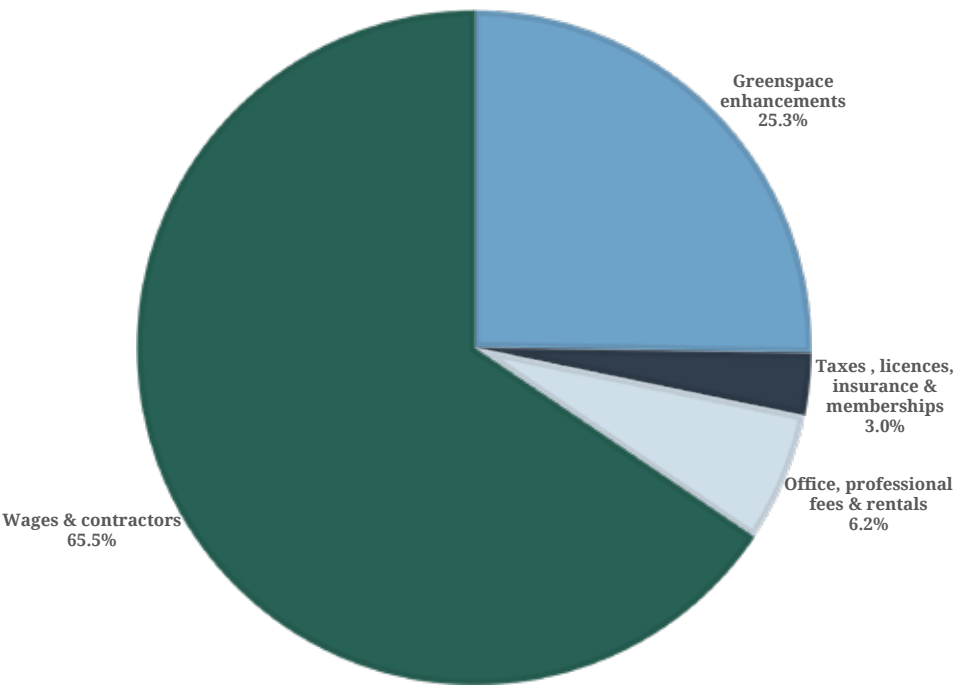
This page summarizes the income and expenses for SOS in 2021. Please refer to the 2021 financial statements for more details.

In 2021, total income was \$172,678 and total expenditures were \$128,932, resulting in a surplus of \$43,746.

INCOME SOURCES



EXPENSE CATEGORIES



THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR SUPPORTERS!

Our work wouldn't be possible without your generous support! In 2021, SOS received \$19,403 from individual donors, including \$2,339 in membership fees, as well as support from the following organizations and government grants.

Operating Grants



Sisters of Our Lady of
the Missions/Religieuses
Notre Dame des Missions
- Canada



COVID-19 Stabilization
Grant

Corporate Donations



Greenspace Enhancement Project



St. Vital, St. Norbert, & Seine River Wards

Employment Programs



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