

Be mindful of building on a flood plain



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At 26 kilometres, the urban Seine River is the second-longest river in Winnipeg.

No one knows this better than the Green Team and volunteers who pulled 5,910 feet of fallen trees from the river this summer. That's over one mile (1.8 km) of heavy tree trunks and branches!

In the words of Green Team supervisor Chris Pearce, "No wonder we're on our third winch. Two years ago we spent most of our time pulling out garbage.

"Last year, we mostly broke up log jams. This year, we've done nothing — it seems — but haul out trees."

In reality, the Green Team has done much more, including:

- Removing 52.5 bags of garbage, six shopping carts, and umpteen coconuts (averaging one a day);
- Wrestling out two alligators (OK, they were only plastic);
- Retrieving 10 life savers;
- Cutting 56 European buckthorn trees (an invasive species);

- Removing willows, thistle (ouch!) and burdock;

- Maintaining Vermette Park.

All of this was achieved under the watchful eye of "Uncle Dave." Dave Venema is an unsung hero who volunteers countless hours year-round to take care of his beloved greenway.

A longtime resident of St. Vital, Dave has been a steward of the Bois-des-Esprits for more than 50 years, voluntarily keeping it clean and healthy. You may have seen him walking along the trails with the tools of his trade — a wheelbarrow, shovels, and chain saw. His property — which backs onto the Seine — serves as home-base for Save Our Seine's annual cleanup. Every year, Dave provides his expertise to guide clean-up operations and maintain the well-used equipment that is essential for this work. Together, he and Chris provide training and ensure the safety of the team.

Soon after I joined Save Our Seine, Dave showed me around his property, where he maintains a scenic footpath along the river's edge. He shared his concern that one day SOS might not receive enough money to clean the river.

Each year, SOS must apply for provincial funding to cover part of the salaries for the team. He worries this annual grant may disappear. The team also needs some pricey



Supplied photo

Thanks to the hard work of the SOS Green Team and dedicated volunteers such as (l-r) Mitchell Samborski, Dave Venema, and Lakachew Tememe, the Seine River is being used by more canoeists and kayakers than ever.

equipment (a van, trailer, boats, chainsaws, winches, safety equipment, tools and supplies).

For the past six years, Casera Credit Union has provided generous grants that help offset these and other costs. Despite this, Uncle Dave still worries. You see, he is also the volunteer treasurer of SOS.

For almost a decade, he has overseen the charity's flow of money with the same careful attention that he watches over the river. He dreams of having an enduring and predictable flow of grants and donations to keep the clean-up program and other projects afloat.