

A year in the life of a tree-spirit

Woody survives vandal's fire

Inside...



Adopt A River

The Seine River classroom teaches kids about living ecosystems



New St. Vital trail

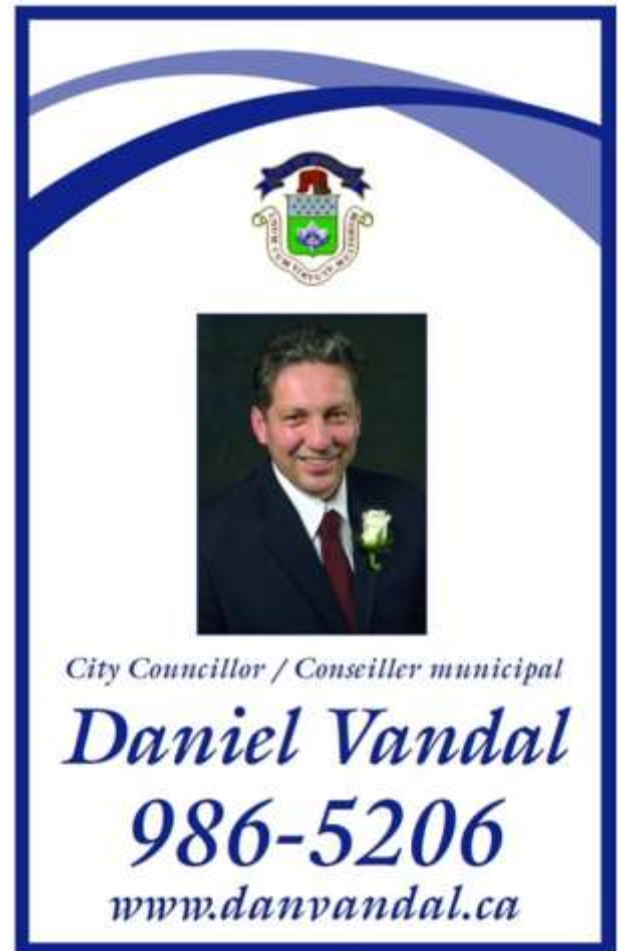
Quarter million dollars in funding, months of construction...Completed!



Trees of Hope

Volunteer tree planting at Vermette plants dozens of trees at historic park

SOS wishes to thank the following for their support!



Your Members of the Legislative Assembly

Recognize the Efforts of Save Our Seine in Maintaining a Healthy Environment for Our Community



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Please contact us at saveourseine@gmail.com if you are interested in sponsorship opportunities.

From the desk of the editor

Cameron Regier—SOS Board Member

Last fall, and 2010 altogether, could only be categorized as hectic for SOS. We were tooting our own horn, celebrating our 20th Anniversary. It was a year to continue events which have long been a part of SOS; community walks and bbqs, the Green Team on the river and meetings with stakeholders, politicians and bureaucrats at all three levels of government, all with the goal of ensuring the Seine river is clean, healthy and navigable for today and years to come. It was also a year for new activities for SOS, like a raffle and a 20th Anniversary Gala. We even had a 20th Anniversary commemorative newsletter. There was a lot going on!

While we might have been making less noise in 2011, rest assured we were hard at work. Recall last newsletter we announced a feasibility study on the Adopt A River program which brings local school kids to the river to experience a living, breathing ecosystem. We quickly **moved past “feasible” and into “deployment”**. We were able to hire an Executive Director to implement this program, among many other projects. If you notice we look just a little bit cleaner, a little bit sharper each time you check out the newsletter and website, it’s because thanks to the *Winnipeg Foundation* we have been able to hire a marketing professional to hone our public image. You may have seen yours truly profiled in the Winnipeg Free Press volunteers section, or heard us on CBC Radio or CJOB. Perhaps we still made a lot of noise. I hope you and the rest of Winnipeg were listening!

The goal of our 20th Anniversary year was to take steps to ensure this organization continues for the next twenty years. Check out some of the projects in this newsletter and some of the sponsors we have brought on board and it should be clear we are well on our way. However we still need your help. We still rely on donations to fund our programs, a volunteer board that works hard to steer and administer this organization and our wonderful volunteers who help us clean the river, plant trees, stuff envelopes, make phone calls, donate professional expertise **and just plain spread the word about the Seine river and it’s importance to the health and happiness of the community**. If you do any one of those (or other things), thank you! If you are interested in any one of them, let us know!

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Denis Kuyp

Fort Whyte Adventure Travel Raffle

Support SOS, Fort Whyte and have a chance to win one of 3 fantastic trips! 50% of the proceeds for tickets we sell go directly back to SOS! Tickets are sold 3/\$10. Contact us at saveourseine@gmail.com or 794-3700.

Tickets must be in by December 10, 2011.

1st Prize: CORSICA—Mountains & Villages

A 9 day/8 night trip for two to the Mediterranean island of Corsica. This tour includes time to travel the island on your own and guided walking tours along routes from the Mediterranean to the highlands through forests, valleys and traditional mountain villages.

—OR— \$5000 CASH

2nd Prize: VANCOUVER ISLAND—Orcas & Grizzlies

A 6 day/5 night trip for two to the northeast coast of Vancouver Island, British Columbia. This self-guided cultural and wilderness adventure takes you along the pristine waters of the Johnstone Strait to view majestic orcas and grizzlies and to spend time exploring the colourful village of Alert Bay.

—OR— \$3500 CASH

3rd Prize: HALIFAX—City Break

A 4 day/3 night trip for two to Halifax, Nova Scotia. Explore charming seaside towns, sun-drenched beaches, sparkling coves and miles of rugged shoreline guarded by graceful lighthouses.

—OR— \$2000 CASH

Urgent Action Needed: RCEN Funding Cuts

Federal environment minister Peter Kent announced Oct. 13, 2011 that the federal government is unilaterally ending its partnership agreement with the Canadian Environmental Network (RCEN). RCEN is a national umbrella organization representing 640 environmental groups across the country. It has affiliate networks in 11 provinces and territories including the Manitoba Eco-Network, of which SOS is a member. As a result, **lay-offs in RCEN's Ottawa office have occurred.** The potential closure of the RCEN will be felt across the country, as environmental organizations in provinces like Manitoba will lose their voice at the national table.

"The RCEN has a democratic, peer-selection process for providing representative input on consultations. Without the RCEN, the federal government can pick and choose which voices it wants to hear. Groups outside Ottawa, and the perspectives of Manitobans, will be left out of the picture." said Josh Brandon, RCEN national council member.

The RCEN has served as a conduit for national organizing on environmental issues for 34 years. It is considered a model environmental network worldwide. Manitoba Eco-Network and SOS urges all Manitobans speak up for democracy and to contact their elected representatives to let them know they value the work the RCEN does in providing understanding and effective communication on environmental issues across Canada.

Trees of Hope Planted

Kristine Koster—Executive Director, SOS



In 2011, Fido and Evergreen announced the launch of *Share Your Care*, a campaign to support 20 environmental and community group projects across Canada. SOS and our Métis partners **L'Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba** participated in the *Share Your Care* campaign and received \$2,500 for our "Plant Trees of Hope" project.

On September 10th, over 25 eager volunteers arrived, shovels in hand, ready to "Plant Trees of Hope" at Vermette Park. SOS and L'Union nationale created the Vermette Park Memorial Grove where the trees of hope were planted. The families of Vermette will be remembered with young trees that will grow tall and become habitat for species such as great horned owls, woodpeckers and deer. Following the tree planting, everyone joined together under a tent for a BBQ and live music by a talented and lively Métis fiddler and guitarist.

SOS is very grateful for the support of our event sponsors. Stanley Tools donated all the tools necessary for planting and caging the trees. Both Canada Safeway and Sobeys supplied lunch. The City of Winnipeg provided woodchips, planting instructions and a critical component for a successful tree planting - water!

Thank you to everyone who helped to make this a spirited, community event! SOS greatly appreciates the dedication and valuable contribution of all our volunteers. We depend on you and you always impress us with your generosity.



Connecting nature with health

Ian Johnson—SOS Volunteer

The next time you take a walk along one of the city's beautiful nature-lined trails, try taking your blood pressure before and after. Unless you run into a bear along the way, chances are it will have dropped during your walk, even if you only strolled for a few short minutes.

Already have low blood pressure? Try measuring your sympathetic nerve activity, or your cortisol levels, or your concentrations of intracellular anti-cancer proteins. For that matter, try **measuring just about any health indicator you can think of. They've all probably improved, too.**

Save Our Seine has devoted its efforts over the years to preserving and restoring local **nature areas. That's always been a good thing for plant ecosystems and wildlife, but a surge of** scientific research over the past few decades is revealing just how good that might be for our own health too, in a way that goes far beyond the satisfaction we might get in seeing our backyards stay green.

Nature, the science is saying, is good for our health. Your reaction to that statement might **be a loud 'Duh!'**, but **it's really only been in the past 30 years or so that the scientific communi-**ty has been able to produce the necessary evidence to firmly back it up.

The research was kick-started back in 1984 when a curious scientist named Roger Ulrich convinced officials at a local hospital to allow him to test a theory, namely that nature could help patients recover better and faster. Once given permission to test his claims, he tracked the health of surgical patients under two different conditions. In one condition, the patients had a view of nature out of their recovery room windows, in the form of a cluster of trees. In the other condition, the patients saw nothing but a brick wall. Accounting for age, gender, race, and general medical histories, he found that the patients with a nature view, when compared to the patients with solely a view of a brick wall, had fewer complications after surgery, shorter hospital stays, more health-related positive comments from doctors and nurses, and a decreased need for painkillers. In other words, the view of nature alone was somehow impactful enough to provide a wealth of health benefits. It was an incredible result.



A relaxing fall walk along the St. Vital trail—great for your health!

Ulrich's study was remarkable not only for the results, but also for the waves of similar research it helped generate. Scores of studies since have added to his findings, and they all say the same thing: the more nature we have in our lives, the healthier we are.

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A group of walkers enjoy the beautiful and historic St. Boniface trail

Nature can do everything from lower anxiety to increase the rate at which our bodies produce cancer-fighting cells. And **you don't actually have to be in nature to get the benefits.** Planting a few trees in your front yard is enough to significantly improve your emotional well being, everything else considered. Even just living near nature can do wonders. A huge study involving hundreds of thousands of people conducted in Holland found that people who lived within a kilometre of a forest or wooded area were significantly **healthier than those that didn't.**

So why now? Why is science suddenly spitting out so much information about the relationship between nature and health? Some might see science as catching up, just adding its voice to a relationship that has long seemed intuitive to many, but there are much more relevant reasons for the current surge. For one, the world is becoming increasingly urban. Eighty percent of Canadians live in an urban area, and here in Manitoba, a good majority of us live in Winnipeg. Developed areas mean less nature, so scientists want to see what benefits **we're losing when we separate ourselves from nature.**

Health is a second reason. Global health trends are generally declining (in Winnipeg and Manitoba, too), and officials are looking for effective ways of reversing those trends. With the scientific backdrop that all these nature studies have provided, health officials are increasingly looking to make urban areas as natural as possible. **It's preventive medicine at its simplest.** Residents get healthier and happier, and the burdens on standard health care are lessened.



Winnipeg winters are too long to stay indoors. Bundle up and get out!

So the next time you're walking a trail in the Bois-des-esprits, or sitting on a bench in a leafy park, or even just looking at the trees in your neighbourhood, remember that it's not just the deer and the squirrels who are benefiting, it's you.

Green Team 2011

Kristine Koster — SOS Executive Director

Whenever I have the opportunity to speak to the public about SOS activities, I always mention the impressive efforts of the Green Team. It is no small feat to clean up an urban river. I am also sure to mention that our success depends largely on the generous financial support we receive from Casera Credit Union and the Manitoba Government. Just this spring Casera Credit Union announced they would be supporting our Green Team for \$18,000 over the next three years. We are immensely grateful for their continued support of the SOS Green Team.

The Green Team is a critical operation for SOS as they are responsible for cleaning the river and keeping it navigable. The four students hired to the SOS Green Team work tirelessly to remove all the garbage that is thoughtlessly thrown into the river. Every year I am reminded how important it is to teach the public that the Seine River is not an acceptable place to dump garbage. Items removed from the Seine in 2011 include: cans and bottles, furniture, electronic equipment, building materials, two toilets, a culvert, car tires, shopping carts, bicycles, **children's toys, children strollers, clothing and shoes, various signs, golf clubs, a manhole cover, a safe, and automobile parts.**

The Green Team faced interesting challenges in 2011 with extremely high water levels in the spring followed by extremely low water levels in late July and August. By August much of the river was exposed making it easier to access the garbage sitting at the bottom of the river. In addition to removing garbage, the Green Team dismantles log jams to improve water quality and navigability for people and fish.

Training is an important component for a successful Green Team. This year SOS offered various training courses including:

- Purple Loosestrife and European Buckthorn identification training, provided by Kevin Land of the Invasive Species Council of Manitoba.
- Elm Tree identification and Dutch Elm Disease training, provided by Mike Allen of Viburnum Tree Experts.
- Canoe techniques training, provided by Dave Pancoe.

The ecological value of the Seine River is maintained each year through the efforts of the SOS Green Team. Thank you to all the 2011 Green Team members for your persistence and remarkable hard work!

Thanks to the following Green Team supporters:





Photos clockwise from top:

Green Teamer Shelbi pulls a ladder from the river.

David Sinclair guides a canoe full of debris pulled from the river.

The SOS van full, just another days (or hours!) work.

Shelbi removes debris from a tree, while Katy manoeuvres the canoe.

Anybody missing a bike? Or a tire (or three)?



A year in the life of a tree-spirit

Walter Mirosh — Les Gens De Bois Woodcarving Club

Every spring Robert Leclair and Walter Mirosh, the original creators of Woody- Mhitik, would go out to Bois-des-esprits forest in south St. Vital to spruce up the carving after a long cold winter. Over the years from 2004 to 2011 there has been some vandalism, graffiti, spray-paint, paint balls, some hacking with a machete but most of this was annoying and all was repairable. When we got the call on Tuesday, June 21, 2011 that Woody was burned, it was devastating.

The carvers went and saw that the damage to Woody, the Spirit guardian of Bois-des-esprits forest, was not as bad as they first perceived it to be. The fire was started with a propellant and it just happened someone was walking through the forest and called the Fire Department who quickly responded before too much damage had been done.

The fire fighters were able to extinguish the fire with foam. This white powder covered the whole sculpture giving the forest scene an eerie feeling. Fortunately, the fire did not destroy any part of the main wood spirit, leaving the faces and beard untouched. The part that was burned was the "O" of the SOS and only to a depth of 3/8 of an inch. The charcoal was removed with a scraper and a large gouge. The "O" was re-carved and the rest of the face features were cleaned up, leaving only the eyebrows black. The fresh wood was coated with several layers of boiled linseed oil and left to soak in and dry.

Sometime later we received another phone call from two regular walkers of the forest who had picked up a portion of Woody's nose they had found on the ground beside the carving. We discovered that our very hot, dry summer had caused the wood to dry out and crack behind the nose. Walter and Robert did some nose surgery using wooden dowels and 3000 pound epoxy to reattach the damaged nose. The tree surgeons will do some more cosmetic work later in the fall.

The carvers received many emails and phone calls from people who have been touched by the wood spirit's presence in this pristine river bottom forest. We hope the area residents and the people from all around Winnipeg and even visitors from other countries will have this sculpture to enjoy for a long time.

May Woody -Mhitik wave and greet the forest walkers and the paddlers of the Seine River for many years to come!



Top: damage from fire.

Bottom: Robert LeClair and Walter Mirosh strip and repair Woody.



Above left: Woody in his youth, pre nose job. Center and Right: Large chunk of nose that fell off and was reattached.

Volunteer spotlight

Chris Pearce — SOS Board Member

Protect, preserve and enhance. The mandate of Save Our Seine fits well with Tod Bowser. This quiet St. Vital resident, often seen with a boyish smile and a mischievous sparkle in his eye has single-handedly collected 40 garbage bags of trash along the banks of the Seine River during the summer of 2011.

When he moved back to St. Vital 5 years ago, Tod found himself living near the river. After watching a proud buck saunter down his street to the Seine, Tod was intrigued and went looking for riverside trails. On the advice of a friend he went to Bois-des-esprits. He was astonished that such a magical place existed in Winnipeg. Another friend lent him a copy of the Lance **which had an article with SOS's web address and phone number. Since that initial contact, Tod** has been a constant steward of the river and SOS volunteer, always with a garbage bag in hand on his daily walks. He enjoys the river while helping to make it a clean and safe place for others.

Tod's favourite trail is north of John Bruce Road on the west side. There he has encountered much wildlife, particularly deer and turtles. On one memorable afternoon, a young deer walked alongside him at a short distance, stopping when he did, then walking when he did, the way a pet dog might. The deer met up with a sibling and they browsed together, **comfortable in Tod's gentle presence.**

His one wish? A pair of hip-waders. If you're able to donate a pair to SOS please call Chris at 453-3807.



The Clean-up team of Tod Bowser (on shore) and Chris Pearce (in river).

Living with White-Tailed Deer

Erin McCance — PhD Candidate, University of Manitoba,

Department of Environment and Geography

Many urban centers throughout North America are experiencing growing urban white-tailed deer (WTD) populations. The highly resilient and adaptable nature of WTD has contributed to their ability to survive in human altered landscapes. White-tailed deer find refuge in urban centers due to hunting restrictions, firearms discharge laws, and minimal predation. Urban environments provide WTD with adequate shelter, available water, and both natural and human supplemented food sources. These factors, coupled with a high birth rate, have resulted in increasing WTD populations in largely human populated areas.



Growing urban deer populations may potentially lead to human-deer conflict. As white-tailed deer populations increase in metropolitan areas, the number of human-deer conflicts generally increase. White-tailed deer cause commercial and residential property damage by eating natural and managed flora, and pose a significant human health and safety concern. Urban deer are involved in an increasing and alarming number of motor vehicle accidents. Deer-vehicle collisions (DVC) represent a human-wildlife conflict of serious concern as they may result in significant risk to human safety, deer mortality, and vehicle damage. Research has **found that over 90% of deer hit by a vehicle die. In Manitoba, there are roughly 6,400 DVC's every year, with approximately 410 of these occurring annually in Winnipeg.**

Yet, despite the occurrence of urban human-deer conflict, WTD are a valuable resource, supplying humans with many benefits. White-tailed deer are highly valued by many urban residents for their aesthetic appeal and they have won the hearts of the majority of the human population.

In some cases, urban residents may attract deer to their property by feeding deer and/or wildscaping their yards. Residents may do so for various reasons such as the opportunity to view deer, or an attempt to reconnect the natural world to their constructed environments, or perhaps out of concern for deer welfare. It is important to understand, however, some of the negative impacts that feeding deer may have on the overall health of the deer population. Providing a supplementary food source creates an un-natural situation, which may balloon deer populations affecting the herds natural checks and balances. This is especially challenging in urban environments where natural predator/prey dynamics are already out of balance. **Artificially supplied food sources have been shown to reduce WTD's ability to survive on their own, making them more vulnerable to starvation, predation, disease and DVC's.**

Residents feeding deer may lead to the habituation of deer to humans, removing their natural fear of humans. Habituated wildlife can lead to dangerous situations for both the habituated wildlife and humans. Man-made food sites also result in unnaturally high deer densities. This uncharacteristically high congregation of deer in one area may attract predators and may cause localized over-browse of nearby flora, conflict for neighbours, enhanced potential for disease transmission, and may lead to aggression and social behavioural changes among the herd.

Additionally, artificial feed sites may lure deer away from their natural wintering areas, changing their behaviour and movement patterns. During the winter deer often retreat to protective often softwood cover, or "deer yards," to avoid deep snow, high winds and extreme cold. In these areas, deer move around very little, using a network of trails that disperses them and reduces competition for natural food. Quality wintering habitat, not food, is the most important factor for deer survival.

The most critical factor in an urban environment, however, where deer reside within a matrix of busy streets, is that artificial food sites may draw deer across busy roadways multiple times a day to access the unnatural food sources. This may result in an increased risk for both human and deer safety. It is important for our successful co-existence with WTD that we learn to admire deer from a distance, enjoy having deer reside within our neighbourhoods, while still allowing deer to rely on their natural skill sets to maintain their life needs.

New South St. Vital Trail

Denis DePape—SOS Vice President

If you are looking for something enjoyable to do in the next while, take a hike or bike down Winnipeg's new public access trail along the Seine River from Royalwood Bridge to near Creek Bend Road. Graveling of the trail was completed in the last two weeks and it is now suitable for regular use.

Start on the southeast corner of the Royalwood Bridge (at the junction of Southglen and St. Anne's Road) where there is sign saying "Seine River Pathway". The return trip by bike takes about 25 minutes while walking would take about an hour and 15 minutes. The best place to park is the Extra Foods parking lot.

The experience is very different from Bois-des-esprits with nice oak and river bottom bluffs, meadows, and forest on the east side and condo's, senior's home, high school, and temples on west side. The friendly, meandering Seine River is always nearby. Whereas BDE gives a feeling of being enclosed, this walk gives a feeling of openness over most of its length. Keep your eyes open for the deer, on one walk I saw half a dozen including three bucks.



Another jewel on the Seine for everyone to enjoy. Another positive accomplishment of Save our Seine, thanks in large part to our past President, Dave Watson.

J'adopte un cours d'eau

Denis Gautron — SOS Board Member

Après une étude effectuée dans une vingtaine d'écoles de la Division Scolaire de Louis-Riel l'organisme Sauvons Notre Seine a appris qu'il y avait un niveau d'intérêt très élevé pour le programme national : J'adopte un cours d'eau.

Ce programme qui connaît des grands succès au Québec implique directement les élèves à faire une analyse d'échantillons d'eau obtenu d'une rivière locale. Afin d'obtenir les échantillons les élèves se rendent sur les berges de la rivière pour obtenir de l'eau de différents niveaux de profondeur de la rivière.

Une préparation détaillée en classe est nécessaire pour outiller les élèves à se rendre au bord de la rivière. Un manuel de l'enseignant et un cahier pour les étudiants sont fournis à chaque classe qui désire se préparer pour ce projet de recherche très motivant pour les élèves. Le guide pédagogique décrit les méthodes d'échantillonnage, présentent des conseils pour assurer un déroulement sécuritaire et propose des activités qui permettent aux étudiants d'apprendre les connaissances contenues dans les activités.

Une fois retourné en classe avec leurs échantillons d'eau les élèves procèdent à une analyse scientifique qui fournit des données dans les sujets suivants :

1. Une analyse de la qualité de l'eau : acidité, montant d'oxygène dissous, turbidité, la température, la dureté et la quantité de coliformes.
2. Récolter et identifier des macroinvertébrés benthiques peuplant le cours d'eau. Les larves d'insectes, les mollusques et les crustacés qui vivent une partie de leur cycle dans l'eau sont un indicateur clé de la santé de l'eau de la rivière.
3. Les données obtenues permettent aux jeunes de poser un diagnostic sur l'état du cours d'eau. Suite à la rédaction d'un rapport les élèves procèdent à une activité concrète telle qu'une corvée de nettoyage, plantation d'arbres ou sensibilisation de la communauté. Ces données sont partagées par l'entremise d'un site web national afin de faire des comparaisons avec d'autres projets semblables à travers le pays.

Kristine Koster, coordonnatrice de projet pour SOS a présenté le programme à une vingtaine d'enseignants de la Division Scolaire Louis-Riel. Alain Cénérini, enseignant à l'école Lacerte lui apporta son appui car et il a déjà réalisé ce projet avec ses élèves de 7e et 8e année. C'est une première pour ce programme au Manitoba. Harry Bell coordonnateur de programme à la DSLR fournit le leadership dans l'implantation de ce projet dans la division scolaire.

Thanks to the following 2011 Adopt A River supporters:



Adopt A River

Denis Gautron — SOS Board Member

The results of a feasibility study in the schools of the Louis-Riel School Division indicated a high level of interest in the national program: Adopt a River.

This program is presently very successful in Quebec as it involves students in authentic analysis of water samples obtained from local rivers. Groups of students learn and perform the correct scientific method of obtaining water samples from different depths of the river.

A detailed preparation in class is necessary as students do the research by actually going **into the shallow river itself. A teacher's manual and student task sheets are supplied to each** class to facilitate the teaching of the proper scientific process for collecting and analyzing water samples.

Once students return to class with their samples of water they perform a series of tests that provide information in the following areas:

1. Analysis of water quality: acidity, oxygen level, turbidity, temperature, hardness and quantity of coliforms.
2. Collection of macroinvertebrates that live in the river. The larvae of insects, mollusks and crustaceans live a part of their life cycle in the river and are a good indicator of the health of the river.
3. The data collected enable students to make draw conclusions and make inferences about the condition and health of the river.
4. A report of the research project is written and shared with other schools in Canada on a national web site. This allows students to make comparisons of results from other regions in Canada.



There is a commitment on the part of the students to participate in an activity to improve or protect the ecosystems they have discovered in and along the river. This action can include a clean up of part of the river, a tree planting or communication with members of the community about their finding and concerns.

Kristine Koster, Executive Director for SOS, provided the training for the program to sixteen teachers in the Louis-Riel School Division. Alain Cénérini, a teacher at Ecole Lacerte shared his expertise and successes as he has implemented the program with two classes of students. This was the first experience for this program in Manitoba and it proved to be very motivating for both students and teachers. Harry Bell, curriculum coordinator in the LRSD is organizing the implementation of this program in the school division.

Green Team Crew Leader Wanted

We're looking for a Crew Leader who can work with our Green Team several days a week next summer. This would ideally fit someone who is physically fit, perhaps retired or semi-retired **and can work well with young adults. Work would involve organizing the day's tasks, holding** safety meetings and working alongside the team, canoeing down the river, picking garbage and hauling debris. Chainsaw and canoe experience an asset. Hours would be flexible during the week, but ideally several days a week for the majority of the work day. The Crew Leader would work in conjunction with a coordinator who would handle the administration of the Green Team.

If this opportunity interests you please contact us at

saveourseine@gmail.com or 794-3700.

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