

ACTIONS CREATE RIPPLE EFFECT

The CAWST Youth Wavemakers program is helping teach thousands of students across Alberta about local and global water issues and then inspire them to try to address the issues.

The program works with teachers in kindergarten to Grade 12 classrooms across Alberta, providing a wide variety of resources, including lesson plans, games, action planning tools and other curriculum support. Youth Wavemakers also holds professional development workshops for teachers who want to learn about how to integrate global and local water issues into their curriculum.

The program encourages students to directly get involved and make a difference. Youth Wavemakers offers students in kindergarten to Grade 12 anywhere in Canada \$500 action grants to help them develop a project that addresses a water issue, either in their own community or somewhere around the world.

"Youth are encouraged to do two things — take action and build awareness," says Michelle Macdonald, the Youth Wavemakers program manager. "That approach creates a ripple effect that inspires other youth and adults in Alberta to themselves take action on environmental issues."

Every year, Wavemakers gives students a way to demonstrate their impact to the community through Calgary's largest World Water Day event, which attracts hundreds of people. In 2014, youth projects launched through the program conserved more than 500,000 litres of water and reached more than 14,000 Albertans through events, campaigns and other awareness-building initiatives.



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The projects helped fix leaky toilets, install water bottle filling stations in schools, raise awareness about water quality, build water smart gardens and raise money for water causes in Alberta and in developing countries.

"By collecting and sharing stories of action

from youth overseas, in Zambia, Haiti and Nepal, youth here in Alberta are inspired to take action on water issues within their own community," Macdonald says.

Being named an Emerald Awards finalist helps demonstrate to young Albertans who work with Youth Wavemakers that they

are part of a much bigger environmental movement.

"We are thrilled to be finalists for the Emerald Awards," Macdonald says. "The other finalists are among the most inspiring individuals and organizations in Alberta, and it is a privilege to be among that group."

Providing tools for schools

ConocoPhillips Canada encourages young people to become environmental stewards by supporting two different initiatives — the school environmental quest program, and Element Society's destination conservation program.

Since 2007, both of these annual programs have provided schools with the tools they need to help educate their students about the environment, why it's important and what actions people can take to help preserve it.

The school environmental quest (SEQ) program provides grants to help fund various different environmental or energy efficiency projects in kindergarten to Grade 12 schools in Alberta, northeastern British Columbia and the Northwest Territories. The SEQ grants provide the school with \$1,000 to implement environmental and energy-saving programs. The program also provides resources and



workshops to teachers about environmental issues.

Dozens of schools have taken the challenge to develop an environmental project in the last eight years. At the end of each year, ConocoPhillips Canada creates a booklet with information about each initiative and distributes the information to each school that participated in order to help share knowledge and build capacity.

ConocoPhillips Canada SEQ partnered with the Elements Society to fund the destination conservation program in 2007. The program

helps schools fostering an eco-friendly culture by reducing their footprint and establishing student-led environmental projects and programs.

"There are so many innovative and inspiring environmental initiatives underway in Alberta, so to be selected as one of this year's finalists is a true honour," says Barbara Simic, the director of community investment and volunteerism at ConocoPhillips Canada.

"Being selected as a finalist means that although there is still a lot of work to be done to improve the environmental impacts of our work,



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we're headed in the right direction and making good progress. It's incredibly rewarding."

It is tremendously important to celebrate successes like this, she says. Platforms such as the Emerald Awards serve as a reminder that we all have a role to play in sustaining the environment.

"Hearing about the many ways we are working together to do this is such a positive experience," Simic says.

"It's hopeful and exciting to learn about what we're capable of. We are truly happy to be selected as a finalist this year and look forward to celebrating the hard work and ingenuity that leads to environmental excellence in the province of Alberta. Congratulations to all the nominees and finalists."