

NETscape

The newsletter of the National Environmental Treasure

The National Environmental Treasure is a people's trust fund devoted to the exclusive funding of Canadian environmental organizations, to increase their core capacity in critical areas such as environmental education, public communications, research and key operations. We are particularly interested in supporting the under-funded smaller and medium-sized organizations, working in local communities and regions. Our goal is to build a 30 million dollar public charitable foundation for the environment - the equivalent of every Canadian donating a "loonie" for their environment.



The painting represented here is meant as an approximation of the finished artwork and may differ slightly from the painting received. Estimated value \$1,500.

The NET launches first e-auction thanks to Vancouver Island watercolourist

In September 2004 the National Environmental Treasure launched its first e-auction, featuring a 15" x 20" watercolour painting by well-known Vancouver Island artist Leanne Cadden.

"The NET is about every Canadian and particularly about young Canadians, ensuring their future. It is through the generosity of young and talented people such as Leanne Cadden, that we will eventually succeed. Indeed, the first popular event we ever planned, 'paving the yellow brick road' with loonies on the Sparks Street Mall in Ottawa, showed how much people need to feel their individual actions can make a difference. The first person to put down a loonie was a young homeless man. It is our dream to build this trust fund, with streamlined applications that are designed to increase the capacity of on-the-ground environmental groups", says Ann Dale, NET founder and Chair.

Become the 1000th person to donate to the NET to win. To make your donation, visit www.oursafetynet.org/donation.htm and follow the links. You will automatically be issued an income tax receipt for your online donation. We will notify the winner as soon as the 1000th donation is made. You can make a difference now!

To learn more about Leanne visit www.leannarto.com

A safety NET for our children's children

Our operating principles include inclusivity, transparency, partnership, coordination and cooperation, diversity and walking our talk.

Funding will be directed at medium and small-sized environmental groups working directly in communities and across communities. There is no lack of funding for the sexier big projects, however, some of the less visible but equally important capacity building work is not so well funded, and the NET has been carefully designed to fill gaps, not duplicate the work of others.

We are still trying to establish the ambitious trust fund of \$30 million dollars built by every Canadian donating a loonie. We are still looking for a collection mechanism for this idea and are actively seeking partnerships.

If you have an idea or know of an organization that may wish to work with us, please do not hesitate to contact us at info@oursafetynet.org. In addition, a new business plan is now being developed for the NET and will be available as of April 1, 2005.

OUR GOALS

Establish a long-term trust fund for environmental organizations to support environmental action that is ultimately self-sustaining and not dependent upon further donation.

Increase public awareness about the environment and the work of environmental organizations, locally and nationally.

Provide event venues for sponsors to highlight their overall commitment to environmental groups.

Educate individual Canadians, particularly young people, by demonstrating that many small actions (i.e., giving one loonie) can contribute to meaningful social action by establishing a long-term legacy for environmental organizations.

It is clear that the highly effective watchdog role that environmental groups played in the past must not only be maintained, but in fact enhanced, given the fiscal realities that have led to funding cutbacks. We must ensure that our environmental safety net remains firmly in place. A people's trust for the environment where every individual action counts, is an important first step to restoring our environmental security.

Clifford Lincoln
House of Commons Standing
Committee on the Environment &
Sustainable Development.

Is there really a need for a National Environmental Treasure?

Poll results consistently reveal that the majority of Canadians (82%) are aware of environmental issues. One of the main reasons for this awareness is due to the work of the environmental community and their public education campaigns over the last few decades.

However, systematic funding cutbacks to environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS) have seriously affected ENGOS' capacity for strategic planning and maintaining long-term effective communication programs. Small- to medium-sized ENGOS have been particularly hard hit during this time of funding restrictions and increasing competition for fewer resources.

ENGOS are struggling to sustain their education and public information campaigns and to provide long-term advocacy on any one issue. This is undermining their credibility and ability to keep key issues high on the public agenda. In addition, their research capacity, which has been historically underdeveloped and underfunded, has encountered increasing setbacks over the last few years. Other sources of funding are failing to fill the gap. The NET is responding with a unique program to restore and maintain ENGO capacity.

Building Capacity

The NET is an innovative strategy for developing a sustainable environmental movement in Canada. While there is funding available from government sources, public and private foundations as well as corporations to finance environmental initiatives, that funding is almost exclusively project-based. Therefore, under this traditional format, underlying organizational weaknesses are not addressed. The NET's concept of targeting the core capacity and operational level for funding aims to restore environmental organizations' capacity for strategic planning and maintaining long-term effective communication and public education programs.

Working Locally and Nationally

Much of the funding available is regional, which cannot meet Canada's national environmental needs and objectives. Environmental issues transcend human-made political boundaries, requiring efforts at all levels. The NET is unique in working with groups locally, regionally and nationally.

Catalyzing Partnerships and Collaboration

The NET also models an unusual organizational structure, one that puts primacy on relationships, partnerships and committed joint actions. The NET is committed to remaining a virtual-based organization, and will not grow into a national organization with its own central hard infrastructure. Rather, it reaches into communities through existing networks and innovative partnerships - both with traditional and non-traditional allies of the environment, working through others, while retaining a small central core. This unique administrative structure allows the NET to minimize its administrative costs, and, as an operating principle, we commit to taking no more than 10% of monies generated for administration.

NETscape is produced by the National Environmental Treasure. Your comments are encouraged.

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