



United Nations Association in Canada

Association canadienne pour les Nations Unies

What is the United Nations Association in Canada?

UNA-Canada has an established tradition; the charity was founded in 1946. With a professional, national secretariat in Ottawa and regional offices in Toronto and Vancouver and Calgary, UNA-Canada derives much of its strength and community outreach from its network of eighteen volunteer-based branches and contact points. The organization is driven by a board of directors composed of members of private and public sectors, academia, and community leaders. UNA-Canada partners with like-minded organizations as well as multilateral organizations to deliver effective programming.

UNA-Canada's mandate is to educate and engage Canadians in support for, and understanding of the United Nations. Key programmes target Canadian youth, human rights, sustainable development, environment, peace building and corporate social responsibility.

Youth4Water Backgrounder:

In March 2007 the United Nations Association in Canada (UNA-Canada) launched Youth 4 Water. It is a part of the UNA-Canada pan-Canadian umbrella programme *The Ripple Effect*. The programme seeks to engage Canadians and foster a generation of young leaders equipped with skills to address issues of water scarcity, conservation, sanitation and to promote water as an international human right.

Youth4Water first began as a pilot project, funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), through its Stand Alone Public Engagement Fund (SAPEF). The project is a partnership between youth from Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) and the Institute at Havergal College. It has since expanded from seven participants to 16 members. The initiative convenes youth of diverse socio-economic backgrounds, representing communities from across the GTA, to engage in learning activities that focus on political, social, and economic issues of water and sanitation. The youth meet on a weekly basis and are currently using this information to educate and inform their Canadian peers and fellow youth from around the world through online forums, workshops, film screenings and presentations. The intention is to work through both the formal and non-formal education channels in order to engage a broad spectrum of youth participation.

Youth4Water has benefited from the support of a reputable organization (UNA-Canada); it also has the grassroots fundamentals in place to reach its local demographic through its partnership with TCHC. Though the group is small, these young leaders reach into schools, community organizations and partner with other like-minded organizations in the GTA. Because they themselves are youth, they offer a unique ability to tap into young populations through peer-to-peer outreach.

Youth4Water Successes:

Since its launch, this dynamic group of youth has made huge waves. In February 2008 they traveled to Walkerton Ontario where seven people died and 2,300 fell ill due to contaminated tap water in

The Ripple Effect

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2000. The youth visited Walkerton's Clean Water Centre, met with Concerned Citizens of Walkerton and developed a partnership with the town's youth group.

For six months *Youth4Water* collaborated with a young Toronto film maker to produce '*Water is a Matter of Survival*' a documentary highlighting Toronto water issues. The film follows *Youth4Water's* six-month journey uncovering the myths and realities of Canadian water issues in preparation for their presentation at the International Exposition on Water and Sustainability in Zaragoza Spain. The documentary features the youth's trip to Walkerton, Ontario, their meeting with a Nishnawbe Aski Nation elder and their investigation of the impact of the Don and Humber River on Toronto's water. The documentary highlights past water tragedies, future concerns and solutions while presenting the thoughts and ideas of seven passionate young people on conserving our world's most valuable resource.

In June 2008 *Youth4Water* screened this documentary and presented a 45 minute segment on Canadian water issues at Expo Zaragoza, the international exposition on 'Water and Sustainability' in Spain. *Youth4Water* also sat on a discussion panel with youth from Europe and South America. The film is currently being used to inform and educate their peers.

Youth4Water has developed a 'Youth Perceptions Survey' to collect young people's perceptions on Canadian water issues. The survey results will be used to produce a *Youth Statement* on water which will be delivered to the Government of Canada and other organizations. The committee plans to deliver their findings and statement in time for March 22, World Water Day. *Youth4Water* and their peers are concerned about Canadian and international water. The committee recognizes water as an international human right and believes their Government should implement an effective national water strategy and sign on to the UN General Comment 15 – water is a human right.

Future Plans:

Over the next year, UNA-Canada plans to expand its outreach to more regions across Ontario to strengthen *The Ripple Effect* programme of water and sanitation initiatives. This plan for expansion is based on the recognition that Province-wide youth participation is essential in order to increase the general public's understanding of source water protection and act accordingly. This is not a process that can be performed overnight, therefore, this project is put in place to strengthen the capacity and broaden the knowledge of the Province's future young stewards.

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