



TRCA Youth Council Annual Report 2021

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INTRODUCTION

Around the world, youth councils have been created by governments, community groups, and non-profit organizations as a means of providing local youth with an opportunity to gain important skills, build capacity and network, while providing the sponsoring agencies with important input and perspectives from youth stakeholders. The long-term success of efforts to advance environmental protection and sustainability in the Toronto region depend on the support of the region's youth, both now and into the future. TRCA's Community Engagement Strategy (2017) recommends more focused engagement of youth to enhance the reach of TRCA programs and activities and prepare the next generation of conservation leaders (Actions 6.1 and 6.2). Activities of the Youth Council build on existing engagement programs while deploying tools and strategies to develop a strong network of youth driven to take active ownership of their local environment.

The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) Youth Council reports directly to the Regional Watershed Alliance. The mission, mandate and goals, were developed by TRCA and the Regional Watershed Alliance (RWA) in consultation with relevant stakeholders. At RWA Meeting #1/2017, held on November 15th, 2017, Resolution #R002/17 was approved, in part, as follows:

WHEREAS THE Terms of Reference of the Regional Watershed Alliance proposes the establishment of Watershed/Working Groups, Youth Council, and Indigenous Liaison Committee;

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT the following members of the Alliance [the RWA Working Group] work with staff to lead the establishment of Youth Council including development of Terms of Reference:

a) Lisette Mallet; b) Amory Ngan; c) Rui Felix; d) Mick Malowany; and e) Karen Lockridge.

The current term of the Youth Council Executive runs from March 2021 to March 2022. This report provides an overview of the 2021-2022 Youth Council program, recruitment of new Executives, workplan, and a program evaluation and recommendations for program improvement.

PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

The program framework for the Youth Council was created through a collaborative process between TRCA staff and RWA Working Group members. The program framework remains the same as it did in 2017 when it was developed.

The framework is intentionally open-ended so that Youth Council Executive members can develop their own project ideas to meet program goals. The ultimate goal of the Youth Council is to build healthy communities. This is achieved through four program objectives:

- a) Build capacity and engage youth by providing youth across the Toronto region with learning opportunities;
- b) Build a youth network/strengthen existing networks through creation of a broad network of youth in the region that is interested in environmental and sustainability issues;

- c) Identify youth perspectives by developing an understanding of youth opinion around current environmental issues and how these might be incorporated in the work of TRCA and its partners; and
- d) Create fun opportunities for youth through entertaining and engaging learning opportunities.

For a more fulsome discussion of program development and rationale please see the 2018-2019 Youth Council Annual Report.

Youth Council members may either join as a General Member or an Executive Member. General Members can take part in Youth Council events and initiatives and there is no significant vetting process to join as a General Member, nor any limit on the number of General Members. The Executive Membership, which consists of ten members, serve as the guiding body for the Youth Council and are responsible for the development of program activities and priorities that fit within the objects defined in the program framework, in collaboration with TRCA staff. Executive Members are expected to volunteer approximately 3 to 4 hours a week, and maintain correspondence with the TRCA staff and the rest of the Executive. Executive Members have a one-year term with the possibility of extension for an additional year and are appointed through an annual application and selection process that involves relevant TRCA staff and the RWA Youth Council Working Group, and takes place in accordance with TRCA's Public Appointments Policy. The intake for general members is open year-round, while the applications for the Executive only open for approximately one month.

DEFINITION OF YOUTH

The term "youth" has no consistent definition. Depending on program goals the target audience of "youth" may consider only high school students or may consider older groups all the way up to university graduates and young professionals. The original program framework for TRCA's Youth Council set the age threshold as 16 to 24 years old. It was noted, however, that the demographics of youth recruited in those first few months, skewed heavily towards a majority of female members. After consulting with TRCA's Education and Training Division, as well as the Regional Watershed Alliance, the decision was made in 2019 to expand the age cut-off to 30 years old. The rationale for this was that males are more likely to volunteer when they are older. Data collected from registrants suggest that increasing the age had marginal impact on gender distribution, as the gap between male and female registrants has shrunk since the first year of the program but there is still a disparity between the number of male and female registrants (Figure 1).

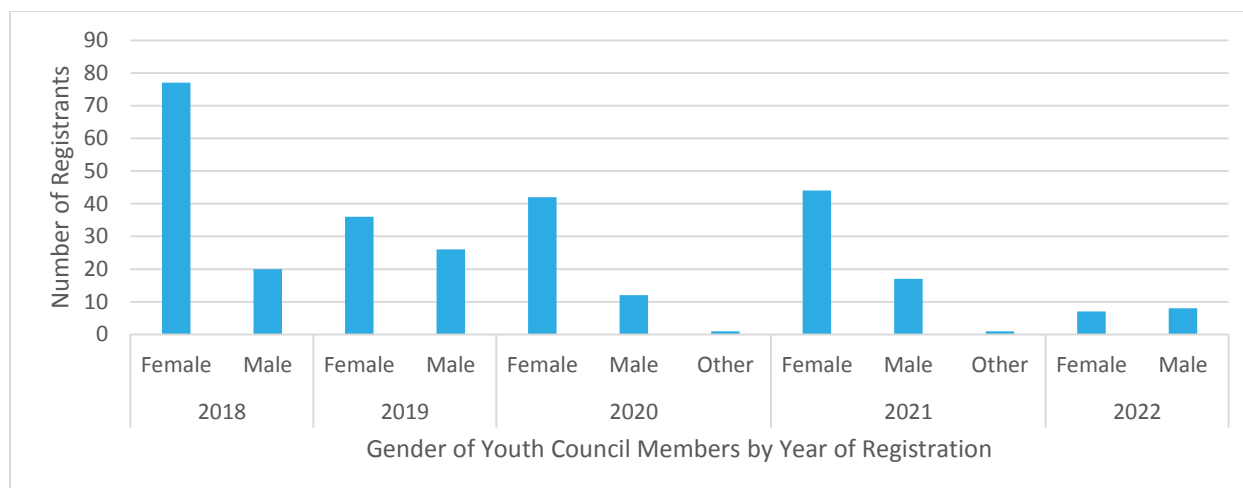


FIGURE 1 NUMBER OF REGISTRANTS BY GENDER AND YEAR

Despite this ongoing disparity in gender, it is recommended that the age distribution remain at ages 16 to 30. While the age distribution is large, we have noted that there is valuable peer mentorship between Executive members who are at different life stages. Thus, this large distribution of ages is positive for the experience and capacity of Executive members.

RECRUITMENT

A recommendation was made in the 2019-2020 Youth Council Annual Report to extend the terms of all the 2020 Youth Council Executive by several months. The rationale for this was due to the ongoing changes to regulations around gatherings resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Youth Council Executive was forced to adapt to an entirely online presence, and by extending the term by several months, it allowed the cohort time to adjust to the new realities brought on by the pandemic and more time to complete planned initiatives. The 2019-2020 Youth Council Executive members were provided with the opportunity to elect to extend their term for another year. This resulted in six vacant seats for new members for the 2021-2022 term. Because of these decisions, applications for the new 2021 Youth Council Executive did not open until December 2020 and remained open until late January 2021. 24 applications were received (for comparison, there were 19 applicants in fall 2018 and 31 applicants in fall 2019).

Applications were evaluated by the RWA Youth Council Working Group and TRCA staff. Considerations for the selection of Executive Members included: representation from across the jurisdiction, demographic factors, and merit based on the quality of application. Responses to short answer questions were weighted more heavily than other factors. Age was also factored into the assessment of their experience and writing level, as applicants ranged from high school to post-graduate level students. Furthermore, since there is a large age distribution, and there has historically been less representation from the younger cohorts, two spaces were intentionally held for high school-aged applicants. It was decided not to hold interviews, as the role is volunteer based, and it would be difficult and time consuming to schedule. Generally, most applicants were either nearing the end of undergraduate/college degrees or had recently graduated. The new Executive was selected by February 2021.

Representation on the Youth Council (both General and Executive) is inconsistent across TRCA's jurisdiction (Table 1). This is partially to be expected as a result of population and post-secondary institution distribution

across the jurisdiction. In an effort to maintain diversity (geographically and demographically), specific outreach to communities continues to be made through the assistance of members of the Regional Watershed Alliance, municipal partners, and agencies that work specifically with different communities.

TABLE 1: LOCATION OF YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBERS (BOTH GENERAL AND EXECUTIVE)

Region	City	Count	Proportion of Total	Regional Proportion
Durham	Ajax	7	2%	5%
	Oshawa	2	1%	
	Pickering	5	2%	
	Uxbridge	1	0%	
	Whitby	1	0%	
Outside*	Alliston	1	0%	4%
	Guelph	5	2%	
	Kitchener	1	0%	
	Milton	3	1%	
	Oakville	2	1%	
Peel	Brampton	28	9%	13%
	Caledon	1	0%	
	Mississauga	10	3%	
Toronto	East York	1	0%	59%
	Etobicoke	14	5%	
	North York	30	10%	
	Scarborough	35	11%	
	Toronto	103	33%	
York	Concord	1	0%	19%
	Maple	3	1%	
	Markham	14	5%	
	Newmarket	1	0%	
	North York	1	0%	
	Richmond Hill	8	3%	
	Stouffville	7	2%	
	Thornhill	5	2%	
	Vaughan	7	2%	
Grand Total		308		

*Recruitment is open to individuals who reside or attend school in TRCA's jurisdiction. Some members, therefore, reside outside the jurisdiction.

ONBOARDING YOUTH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE 2021-2022

In past years, in-person workshops have been held for new Youth Council Executive as a means to introduce the new members to each other, engage in team building experiences, and start work planning for the year. As a result of gathering restrictions in place due to COVID-19, all activities had to take place remotely. TRCA staff met with the returning Youth Council Executive members to plan an online onboarding event. There was concern

that an activity that was longer than 1.5 to 2 hours online would be overwhelming for the group, especially considering that most members will have already had many other online activities throughout their day with work or school. To alleviate fatigue and capture the interest of the new members, it was decided that the onboarding activities would be split into two 1.5-hour sessions to be held on consecutive weeks. These activities included an interactive presentation introducing conservation authorities and TRCA, setting expectations for the group for the year, drafting a preliminary workplan and determining preferred methods of communication. The Youth Council Executive agreed to monthly meetings to be held the first Tuesday of each month and opted to use email as the main means of contact.

The introductory presentation was delivered using Mentimeter software. This allowed for some traditional PowerPoint-style slides and some interactive slides whereby participants answer questions on their own devices and the answers are posted to the entire audience in real time. Following the introductory presentation, the Youth Council Executive were posed the question "What do you think are the most critical issues in TRCA's jurisdiction?" The responses to this question can be seen in Figure 2 through a word cloud. The size of the lettering is indicative of the number of times that response was written.

What do you think are the most critical issues in TRCA's jurisdiction?

Mentimeter



FIGURE 2 WORD CLOUD GENERATED RESPONSES; THE SIZE OF THE LETTERING INDICATES THE FREQUENCY THAT A RESPONSE WAS WRITTEN.

Finally, a group “bake-along” team building activity was led by returning Youth Council Executive Wai Ying Lam. Youth Council Executives were provided with an oatmeal chocolate chip cookie recipe in advance of the online meeting. It was a fun and casual activity that helped the group bond as peers, despite the physical distance.

IMPACT OF COVID-19

The 2021-2022 term was the second year that the Youth Council has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This was the first entirely online term, and it bears note that the consistency in the participation among Youth Council Executives was the most consistent to date. There are likely different factors impacting this

phenomenon including having a strong cohort of returning executives that set expectations for participation by peers, and online meetings being more accessible for the group than having to travel for in-person meetings. Furthermore, all members of the Executive were already very familiar with online meeting platforms and etiquette, which reduced the learning curve compared to the previous year.

WORKPLAN: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The broad goals and objectives outlined in the program framework remained the same from previous years. The following section outlines the initiatives created by the 2021-2022 Executive, and how they addressed program goals and objectives.

Objective: Build youth network

The Executive continued to create newsletters that were sent out on a regular basis, ranging from quarterly to monthly. The content of the newsletters was created by the Executive and typically included a call to action in the form of an event that General Members were invited to participate in.

This year, the reach of the Youth Council was broadened as new youth councils or youth initiatives reached out to program staff for guidance, or with collaborative opportunities. Some new groups that reached out this year included The Bruce Trail Conservancy, MP Maninder Sidhu's Brampton East Youth Council, and The York Region Food Network.

Objective: Learn about what is important to Youth

All members, whether they are General Members or applying to be on the Executive, complete a survey as they register. The same survey has been used for the duration of the Youth Council program.

Survey Methods

All members are required to complete a short survey at registration. In this survey, in addition to demographic questions, registrants were asked to select their top five interests from a list of 25 different topics. Topics include a range of sustainability, environmental, and social issues. For a more detailed description of the rationale for the selection of those topics and survey questions, see "TRCA Youth Council 2018-19 Report".

Results

Demographics

Youth Council members are mostly from Toronto (59%, Table 1) and are mostly in their early to mid-twenties (Figure 3). This is reflective of the strong university network that we have tapped into. As mentioned in previously, the Youth Council membership is comprised of more females (71%) than males (29%).

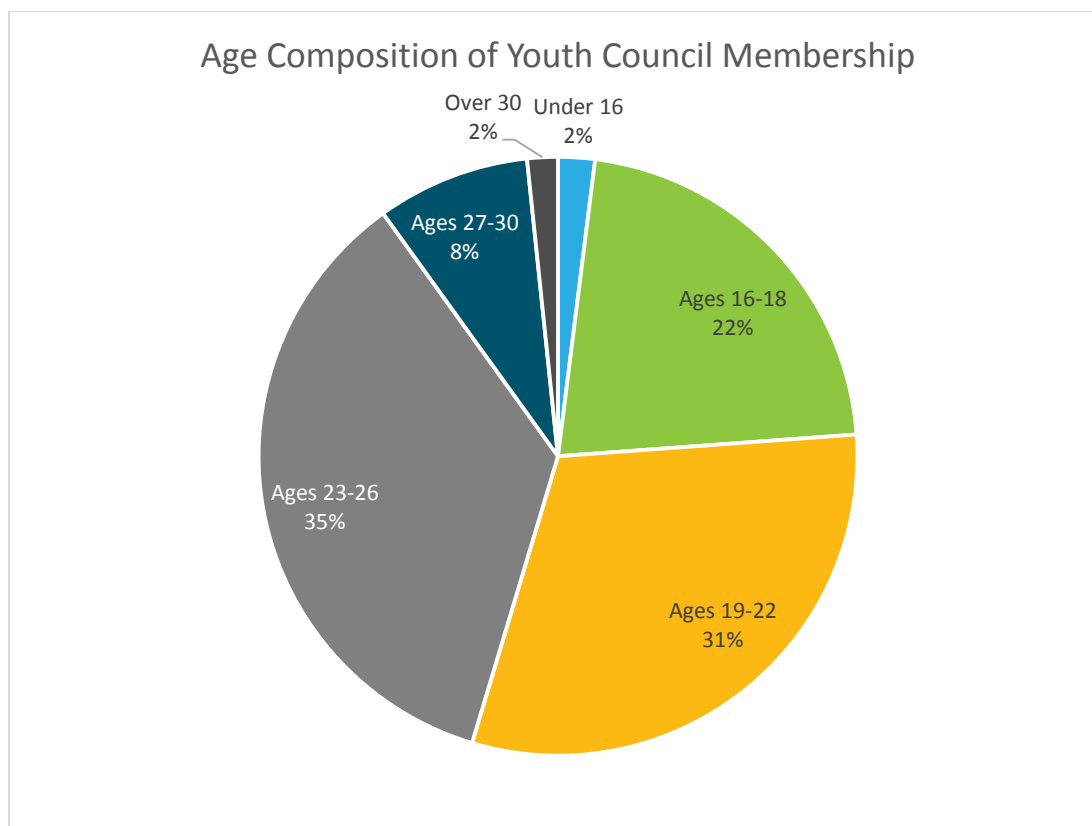


FIGURE 3: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF MEMBERSHIP

Most Important Issues

Registrants were instructed to select the top five most important issues from a list. This list included environmental, social, and sustainability issues, and was developed through a collaborative effort between the RWA Youth Council Working Group and TRCA staff (a more fulsome discussion of this process can be found in the “TRCA Youth Council 2018/19 Report”). Some respondents elected to choose more than five, and those additional answers were recorded. There is no way to determine the individual hierarchy of importance for each respondent, therefore we rely on the number of times an item was selected to indicate its overall importance to the entire group.

Aggregated responses were similar to last year (Figure 4), where “Climate Change” was once again the most frequently selected topic. Indigenous Reconciliation is a topic that has seen increased interest over the last four years. Results from 2022 survey respondents should be interpreted with caution, with only 15 respondents at the time of writing this report. A fulsome overview of 2022 survey responses will be provided in the 2022-2023 Youth Council Annual Report.

There are some differences by municipality (Figure 5), but these differences should also be approached with caution as the low number of members in some municipalities (e.g., Durham) will exaggerate those proportions. Climate Change continues to be the most important issue throughout TRCA’s jurisdiction.

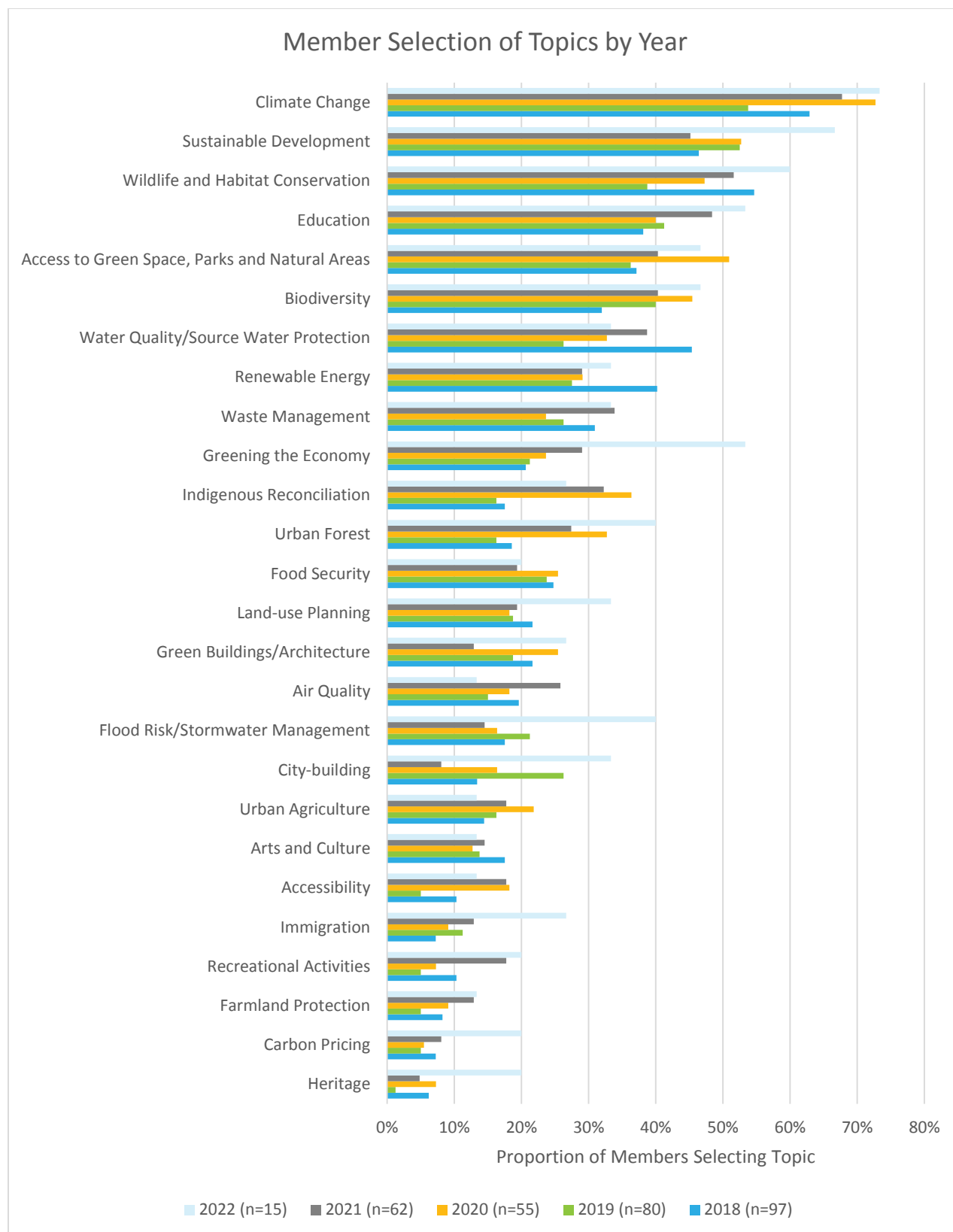


FIGURE 4: MEMBER SELECTION OF TOPICS BY YEAR

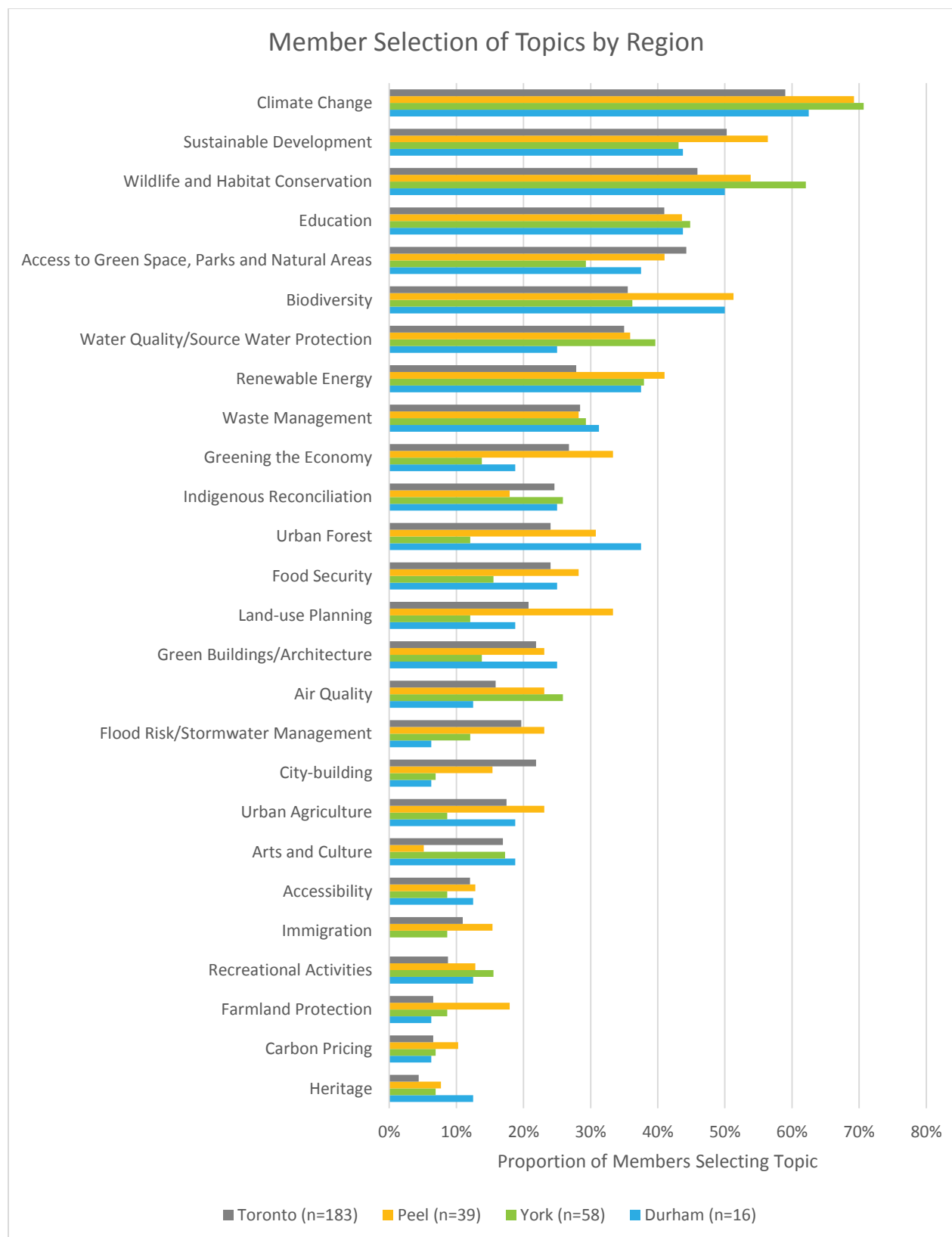


FIGURE 5: MEMBER SELECTION OF TOPICS BY REGION

Greenspace Accessibility Research Project (Ongoing)

The Youth Council Executive has consistently remained interested in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) topics surrounding the environmental field, including the importance of greenspace and barriers for certain groups to access greenspace. As a reflection of the research-background that many Executive members have, it was proposed to carry out a research project to determine the barriers faced by certain youth groups and audiences to accessing greenspace and make recommendations from a DEI perspective, which could also benefit TRCA's work. This project aligns with the Youth Council mandate to identify youth perspectives around environmental issues and how these might be incorporated in the work of TRCA and its partners.

TRCA staff have been extremely interested in this project and as a result, it has expanded and various teams, including Conservation Parks and Lands, Education and Training, and Ecosystem and Climate Science, have become involved in helping to develop the scope of the project and resourcing. The development of this research project is ongoing and will remain a long-term initiative of the Youth Council Executive. This work is also helping to lay the groundwork for how the Youth Council can be better integrated with the workings of TRCA.

Objective: Create Fun Opportunities

In lieu of in person activities, the Youth Council Executive hosted a number of online events, including online movie nights, live broadcasts, open meetings, and interactive presentations. The following section provides a brief overview of each activity hosted by the 2021-2022 Youth Council Executive.

Online Movie Night: Climate Change (February 2021)

This online movie night featured Protect Our Winter's film "Electric Greg." The film covers one man's journey transitioning to a lifestyle that includes skiing but no fossil-fuels. There were two presentations following the movie, the first from Protect Our Winters to discuss their climate change programming in winter sports, and the second from TRCA's Climate and Ecosystem Science team. The Youth Council Executive then led a panel discussion with both speakers. This event had 16 participants.

Online Movie Night: Hidden Rivers (May 2021)

Hidden Rivers is a documentary that explores the health and biodiversity of rivers in the United States Appalachian region. While there are some geographic differences between Appalachia and the Toronto region, many of the lessons around river health are true to both regions. Following the film, a panel discussion was held featuring the Toronto Zoo's Great Lakes and Aqua-Links Program and TRCA's Aquatic Monitoring and Management team. There were 29 participants at this event.

Facebook Live: Electrofishing in Toronto Harbour (July 2021)

TRCA's Watershed Planning and Ecosystem Science team invited the Youth Council to co-host a live broadcast of electro-fishing in the Toronto Harbour. The event was broadcast on both Facebook Live and YouTube, and featured fishing demonstrations, fish identification, interviews with monitoring staff, and tours of the electrofishing boat. Participants were also invited to pose their own questions that were answered by staff live. At the time of broadcast there were 559 views (443 Facebook, 126 YouTube) and a recording of this event remains available online.

#TRCANatureStories Social Media Campaign (November 2021 Onwards)

In order to engage a wider audience in greenspace, as well as help TRCA social media audiences get to know the Youth Council Executive, the Executive members led a social media campaign called “#TRCANature Stories” in which each Executive member drafted a short post about getting out into nature, as well as associated images. TRCA social media followers were encouraged to share their own “nature stories”.


Objective: Build youth capacity and learning opportunities

Come Learn With Us: Indigenous Canada Course (three events, held in June, July, and September 2021)

Indigenous Reconciliation has been a topic of increasing interest among both General and Executive members of the Youth Council (see Attachment 1). The Youth Council Executive discussed at length how they could incorporate principles of reconciliation into their own work with the Youth Council. They decided that educating themselves, as a settler group, about Indigenous history and experiences would be an important first step toward reconciliation. The University of Alberta offers a free self-directed online course “Indigenous Canada” through the online platform Coursera. Course topics include land claims, environmental impacts, legal systems, Indigenous history, and current issues that affect Indigenous people today. The Youth Council Executive challenged themselves to take this course, and then hosted three online discussions at regular intervals over several months. They also invited General Members and other youth to join them in taking the course and participating in the discussion, hence the title of the campaign: “Come Learn With Us”. There were few participants in these discussions beyond the Executive members, but the Executive believed that the discussion and incorporation of reconciliation into Youth Council programming was, nevertheless, worthwhile.


To promote this campaign, the Youth Council Executive recorded a promotional video explaining their motivations for taking the course, and what they hoped to gain from the experience. This promo is still available online here: https://youtu.be/1yXbqLhL4_Y

FIGURE 6: NEWSLETTER INVITING GENERAL MEMBERS TO JOIN IN THE COME LEARN WITH US SERIES



Dear Youth Council Members,

We would like to invite you for an opportunity to “come learn with us” about Indigenous issues and reconciliation.



Akash Kar

The Youth Council Exec will be taking the University of Alberta’s free online course “Indigenous Canada”, and we are hoping that you might be interested in taking it with us. Through this self-directed course, we hope to better understand Indigenous history, as well as current issues that affect Indigenous peoples today. Course content will include land claims, environmental impacts, legal systems, as well as a variety of other topics. For the 12 lessons, we’ll have 3 meet-up sessions where we discuss what we have learned.

We feel that it is important for us to take steps to learn more about Indigenous issues, but we aren’t experts in Indigenous studies and these discussions are intended for all of us to get together and reflect on what we learn through the course.

We also understand that people learn at different paces, and so we will provide lots of time for you to complete the course modules—and even if you miss one we would still love to have you join in the discussion!

We hope to see you on Thursday, June 24 at 5:30 p.m. for our first session where we will discuss the first module. The second and third meet ups will be later in the summer and early fall—so stay tuned!

[Register through Coursera](#)

Note that while there is an option to purchase the course and get access to graded assignments and a shareable certificate, this is not required to participate in the Youth Council discussion sessions.

[Join the Zoom discussion](#)

We are very excited to all learn together!

-Youth Council Exec

Ask Me Anything: Getting into Conservation (two events held in June and September 2021)

This year the Youth Council Executive was fortunate to have strong participation from a high school student, Lillian Zhang. While much of the activities that the Youth Council Executive has organized in the past may have been of interest to all General members, there were no campaigns aimed specifically at high school-aged members. To address this, Lillian suggested that the group create an online event for high school students who were interested in pursuing conservation/environment in post-secondary school. Rather than having TRCA staff discuss their professional journeys, which may not have been as relevant for current high school students, this event featured the stories of the current Youth Council Executive. This provided strong peer-to-peer learning/mentorship and an opportunity for capacity building among both the participants and the presenters.

Leading up to the event, the Youth Council Executive worked with TRCA’s Marketing team to develop personalized content to be shared through Instagram. This social media campaign took place during the weeks leading up to the event, and first posed the questions:

- Are you in high school or university and interested in environmental issues?
- Curious to know what type of careers are out there when you finish school?
- Ask us anything! Answers will be posted on TRCA’s story or presented in the Youth Council’s AMA Event on June 3rd. Click the link in the bio to register!

Some user questions were collected through Instagram, and the Youth Council Executive recorded short answers, which were subsequently reviewed by TRCA's Marketing team and then posted on TRCA's social media. This promotion had the benefit of allowing the Youth Council Executive a platform to address their audience personally, and also to generate some excitement for the event.



FIGURE 7: IMAGES FROM ASK ME ANYTHING SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN FEATURING PHOTOS OF THE YOUTH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

This event was very well received with 25 participants. The Youth Council Executive each presented their own journey from high school to university, and for some, the transition into their early careers. A lengthy discussion took place following the presentation, where participants were invited to turn on their mics to engage with the group directly. There was enough interest in the event that the Youth Council Executive decided to host a second event in September, which saw 13 participants.

Youth Council Executive Monarch Tagging

In the Summer of 2021, gathering limit restrictions were eased and TRCA was able to commence some in-person activities. As such, we held an in-person event for the Youth Council Executive at Tommy Thompson Park in Toronto with the Monarch Teacher Network. This activity included training and a demonstration of how Monarch butterflies are tagged and released, and a lesson on Monarch biology and conservation efforts. This was the first and only in person event held with the Youth Council Executive this year, and it was a great team building and experiential learning opportunity.



FIGURE 8: YOUTH COUNCIL EXECUTIVES AND TRCA STAFF AT TOMMY THOMPSON PARK

Developing Your Environmental Career Online Event (February 2022)

The Youth Council Executive held an online event on February 17, 2022 to help support young people, students and young professionals interested in entering the environmental field as a career. The event was divided into two components. In the first part, Executive members walked participants through tips and interactive exercises on finding, applying and interviewing for jobs of interest. Executive members were supported by TRCA staff in Human Resources and Education Training who provided resources to be shared and incorporated into the event. In the second part of the event, Executive members facilitated a panel discussion with five professionals in different sectors of the environmental field who spoke about their career path and answered attendee questions. Over 60 people registered for the event, with 19 attending live.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Structure

The structure of the Youth Council has seen some minor adjustment since the program's inception, but the delivery of the program has changed most significantly to adapt to an online framework as a result of COVID-19. There are now two seats reserved for high school-aged candidates, and new members have an opportunity to continue their term for an additional year. This helps to maintain some institutional memory across years and provides an opportunity for returning members to mentor incoming members. Furthermore, this strategy allows the continuation of events at the outset of the new term. For example, the climate change movie night was organized chiefly by returning Executive members and provided an opportunity for new members to engage in event organizing as soon as their term began rather than waiting until the work planning discussion were

complete. This reduced the learning curve for those new members and allowed the Executive to deliver more events during the length of their term.

Goals and Objectives

Build youth capacity and learning opportunities

Capacity building amongst the youth council executive has been significant. Extending the terms of some of the Executive has resulted in strong peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and mentorship, which has increased the overall capacity of the Youth Council Executive. The returning Executive members set expectations and norms that helped to ensure that the 2021 Executive remained consistently engaged throughout their term.

Furthermore, the mentorship and expectations set by the group helped to provide an atmosphere where new members were comfortable sharing ideas and taking the lead on new activities and initiatives.

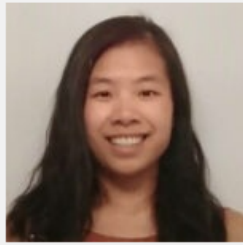
The activities held by the Youth Council Executive were empowering not only for the participants, but also for the youth organizing the event. The Ask Me Anything activity helped the Executive learn how to plan and deliver events, and also learn from each others' experiences. The Come Learn With Us series, while it saw little participation from General Membership, was an important learning experience for the Youth Council Executive. It provided a deeper understanding of Indigenous experiences and issues in Canada and helped to provide more context and capacity for the Youth Council to continue to address issues of reconciliation in their future work.

One of the recommendations from last year was to explore new methods of communication with General Members. The Come Learn With Us and Ask Me Anything events both promoted two-way conversation between Youth Council Executives and General Members. While participation levels varied for these events, the increased communication has been a great capacity building opportunity for the Youth Council.

There are clear benefits to the Youth Council Executive for participating in the program. The Youth Council Executive has used their experience to help advance their own careers and interests. Over the last two years, members of the Executive have secured jobs with Credit Valley Conservation, Nature Conservancy Canada, and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority using their direct experience with the Youth Council on their applications. We have also had one member use their experience on a successful graduate school application for York University. In an effort to recognize the hard work and dedication of the Executive volunteers, we have been looking for opportunities to nominate our Executive for awards. This past year, we were pleased to announce the Wai Ying Lam was the successful recipient of the Water Canada Waters Next award. This type of recognition is not only a boon for the Youth Council program but will also provide individuals with valuable experience and recognition that will help them in their own careers.

Category—People: Young Professional

Wai Ying Lam—PhD Candidate, Environmental Science, University of Toronto



Wai's research focuses on the hydrological impacts of forest harvesting on mercury in headwater streams. She is dedicated to science communication and has shared her master's research on road salt in the Three Minute Thesis competition and her PhD research on mercury at Soapbox Science. She was also an early member of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's Youth Council and has played a significant role in its development.

FIGURE 9: WAI YING LAM'S PROFILE ON THE [CANADIAN WATER SUMMIT'S PAGE](#)

Build youth network

The youth network continues to grow as more groups reach out to learn about the Youth Council, and more events are hosted with various different partners. Hosting events in partnership with other groups has been a crucial part of youth network development. By extending our audience through partner networks, we reach groups that may not have been previously aware of TRCA. The shift of the program to an online format has helped to strengthen and broaden the youth network. Events now more accessible and can reach a larger audience.

Learn about what is important to youth

The entrance survey continues to provide the most robust data indicating the most important issues to youth. As was discussed earlier, some changes in the most frequently selected topics changed from year to year, which has been reflective of the current situation that has arisen from the pandemic as well as growing social movements in diversity and inclusion, as well as Indigenous reconciliation. The Youth Council will continue to collect this data to inform their, and TRCA's, programming.

Create fun opportunities for youth

The Youth Council Executive have continued to pursue diverse fun opportunities for youth. Of the activities that were delivered online, follow up surveys were used to measure participant engagement. Feedback from the surveys suggested that the participants enjoyed their online experience. The platform used also tracked attentiveness, that is, how much the participant continued to engage with the webinar and did not switch to a different window on their computer. Overall attentiveness score for all online events was 100%--which means that the audience stayed engaged with the content.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the Youth Council program continues to reach program goals of creating fun opportunities for youth, building capacity, identifying youth perspectives, and building a youth network. The following is a summary of the recommendations for program improvement through the evaluation of meeting goals and objectives:

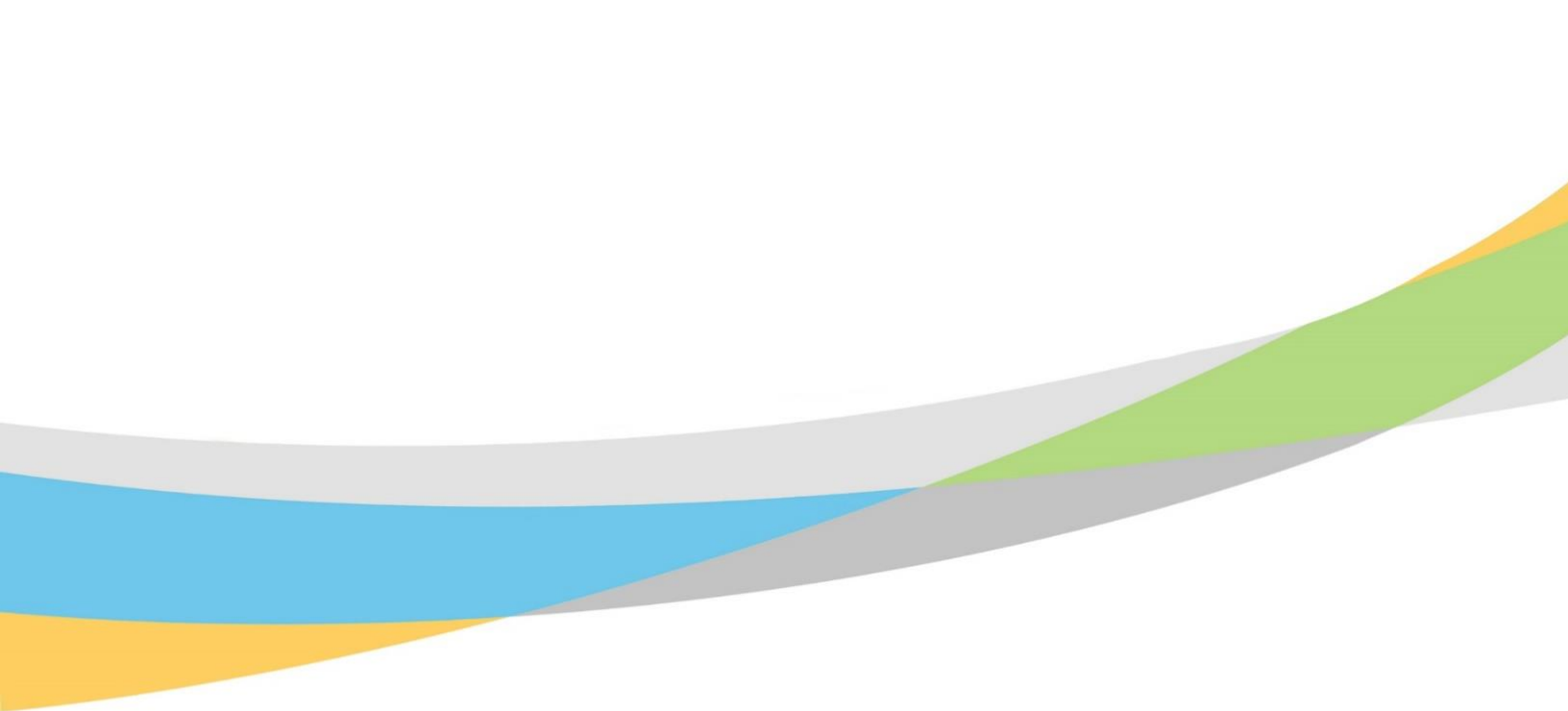
- Continue online program delivery, and/or a hybrid model (as restrictions allow)

- Consider new methods of network building, such as LinkedIn or tapping into existing youth networks through TRCA's municipal partners and the RWA
- Continue efforts to broaden the recruitment of the Youth Council to include more members from diverse communities through more deliberate recruitment strategies with different groups/agencies who work in target communities.
- Continue to identify synergies between TRCA's work and strategic goals/priorities and the work of the Youth Council
- Identify how to build stronger connections between the Executive and General Membership in order to better involve the General Membership in the development of Youth Council initiatives, where appropriate.
- Consider soliciting testimonials from previous Youth Council Executive members to use for promotion of the program
- Ask participants if they knew about the Youth Council or TRCA when they register for events

CONCLUSION

The TRCA Youth Council program seeks to engage youth aged 16-30 in TRCA's jurisdiction. It is a program that is led by Youth under the mentorship and guidance of TRCA staff. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the program has shifted to an entirely online format. This change has had some net positive impacts on the program as it has reduced the barriers for youth to participate, and has help to expand the youth network. The events and initiatives of the 2021-2022 term are demonstrative of the drive and passion of the 2021-2022 Youth Council Executive. We are pleased to see how the Executive has been able to achieve progress towards the goals set out in the program framework. Above all, the positive impact of the Youth Council program for Executives has been an important achievement. Members have been able to use their experiences on the Executive to help further their own goals and aspirations in the environmental field.

With these successes in mind, there is always room to improve program delivery. A number of recommendations have been provided, including the continuation of online or hybrid event and program delivery, broadening the network to include more recruitment with different groups and agencies who work with target communities (e.g., Indigenous youth, newcomers, or other under-represented groups), better integrating the Youth Council with TRCA staff work, exploring improved connections between the Youth Council Executive and General Membership, and using testimonials from previous Youth Council Executives to help highlight the benefits of their experiences in the program.



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