



ACER
ASSOCIATION FOR CANADIAN
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

ACER
35
YEARS
AND GROWING

Fall/Winter Newsletter

Greetings! Please see inside for key updates and news from ACER!

Donate Today - For Climate's Sake!




Recent ACER Events

- Oct. 1 Seniors Measure UP event at Fleetwood Park, Mississauga
- Oct. 12 GLLAF Ganaraska Planting at County Road 10 site in Port Hope
- Oct. 14 GLLAF Ganaraska Planting at Peter Huffman Trail in Port Hope
- Nov. 14 GLLAF Ganaraska Planting at St. Mary SS in Cobourg
- Nov. 14 Venture 13 3D Imaging/GIS/Drone Technology Workshop in Cobourg
- Nov. 17 P4C Planting at St. Augustine Secondary School in Brampton
- Feb. 11 Seniors Measure UP "Make Mulch Matter" Webinar

Introducing our new SENIORS MEASURE UP program!

ACER is excited to announce [Seniors Measure UP](#), a new program kicked off in 2023 that is designed to get seniors active outdoors with others of diverse ages and backgrounds while also training them how to identify, and mulch and measure trees, leveraging trees planted through other ACER programs. This program is currently being funded by the [New Horizons for Seniors Program](#), in partnership with the City of Mississauga and [Active Adult Centre Mississauga](#). In addition to improving the health and well-being of seniors and promoting environmental stewardship, the tree data collected will be added to our data repository for future analysis to assess the impacts of climate change and help develop strategies to protect our trees and develop our green spaces. Next events are the last two of our Seniors Measure UP webinars that are open to all (click [here](#) for more info.)

Another ACER Success Story: 1000+ Trees Planted in the Ganaraska River Watershed!

ACER is excited to announce completion of all tree plantings in the Ganaraska River Watershed as of November 14, 2023, for the provincially funded [Great Lakes Local Action Fund](#) project that kicked off a year prior at Sylvan Glen Conservation Area in Port Hope.

More than 300 volunteers planted over 1000 native trees across six sites in Port Hope and Cobourg, in partnership with the [Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority](#), [Sustainable Cobourg](#), and the Town of Cobourg. This project, led by ACER Program Manager Dr. Sadia Butt, could not have been completed without the help of many key people including Pam Lancaster of the GRCA, Tovan Lew, Sustainable Cobourg's youth ambassador, and Jonathan Brown, who acted as the liaison for all local coordination efforts. Community volunteers including students, town staff and councillors, and the general public also played a critical role in the project's success. And...volunteers didn't leave empty handed: all learned how to plant, mulch and measure trees, and left with a better understanding about the critical importance of planting trees to help mitigate the impacts of climate change, knowledge they can apply to their own back yards and community green spaces.

It is especially exciting that this project is a first for ACER in that it has been digitally supported throughout, including our [first-ever usage of drone technology](#) to assist with tree mapping, led by a Grade 11 student, Matthew, who we are so happy to have met! We also upgraded our GPS (geospatial positioning system) to increase the accuracy of tree mapping and had the opportunity to participate in a day-long workshop in mid-November at Venture 13, a state of the art technology centre in Cobourg. This workshop led to some great discussions and ideas for the future, for example the idea of using drone imagery to undertake "digital twinning" to create interactive 3D images for "touch-less" use by urban planners, that can help save time and save taxpayer money.

The project will be wrapping up in the spring of 2024 when we unveil commemorative signs at the planting sites to celebrate the successes achieved, and formally thank everyone involved for their hard work in helping us increase green cover in the region and promote environmental stewardship in the community!

If you want to read more about this initiative, check out the [full news article](#) on our website.



A Tree Planted for Alice!

After 35 years of planting trees with schools and communities across Ontario, ACER founder and President Alice Casselman was celebrated by Mississauga Councillors Stephen Dasko (Ward 1) and Chris Fonseca (Ward 3) with a maple tree planted in her honour at Mississauga's Fleetwood Park on August 4, 2023. At the ceremony, the councillors thanked Alice for her tireless collaboration with the City of Mississauga to increase Mississauga's tree canopy and build more resilient and greener neighbourhoods. Alice and ACER were also celebrated for the decades of work with Mississauga area students from elementary through to college/university level via ACER's Planting for Change (P4C) and Canada Summer Jobs programs, and internship partnerships with the University of Toronto (Mississauga), and Sheridan College.



From left to Right: Stephen Dasko,
Alice Casselman, Chris Fonseca



Commemorative plaque for Alice
Casselman

Reflections on ACER's Planting for Change Program Nurturing Environmental Stewardship in Schools *By Sadia Butt, ACER Program Manager*

The act of planting urban micro forests has emerged over the years as a powerful catalyst for change and ACER has been working with schools to create such forests for more than 15 years through our Planting for Change (P4C) program. As the program's Project Manager for the last few years, I have personally witnessed the impact it has had on not just individual students but the school as a whole.

Planting day is like a symphony. The P4C school's "green sparks" have already worked hard to secure funding for the project, and ensure the necessary materials and resources, such as mulch, water and teachers are ready.

ACER then takes over as the “maestro”, ensuring delivery of the trees, and leading the planting process from start to finish: first we teach the students the importance of the work to follow, then we roll up our sleeves and teach them how to handle the necessary tools and properly plant and mulch trees and shrubs, all strategically placed to help ensure optimal growth. The morning hums with the clinking of shovels, the rustle of buckets, and the precision of measuring tools, all culminating in a beautiful baby urban forest that brings pride to the whole school.

The true magic lies with the students. Excitement echoes as they learn the delicate art of tree planting, digging holes with newfound knowledge and enthusiasm. The micro forest they have just planted then becomes an outdoor mini climate change lab that creates a lasting legacy for environmental education while also increasing urban forest canopy, helping prevent erosion and providing new habitat for urban wildlife.

In 2023, we were able to plant at three schools, Connaught Public School (St. Catharines) and Arnott Charlton Public School (Brampton) in the spring, and St. Augustine Catholic Secondary School (Brampton) in the fall. ACER extends a big thank you to all of the organizers and the students at these three schools, and also our funder, the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, for their part in ensuring this program, which has reached over 70 schools to date, continues on.

ACER THROWBACK: PLANTING FOR CHANGE AT SETTLER'S GREEN PS IN 2021!



Yes, we were able to plant during the COVID-19 pandemic, 5 schools in fact, but only after adapting our planting event protocols! Click [here](#) to watch a video of children from Settler's Green Public School, one of those P4C schools, perform their "Planting for Change" song written especially for ACER!

ACER Interns Update: Decades of ACER Planting For Change Tree Data Being Analyzed!

We are pleased to welcome again for the 2023-2024 school year student interns from University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM) and Sheridan College (Davis and Hazel McCallion campuses), students who are enrolled in programs in fields as diverse as environmental science to financial management that have an internship requirement.

The interns are working on several initiatives under the guidance of Dr. Sadia Butt, ACER's Program Manager and Forest Scientist, and Alice Casselman, ACER Founding President. The most exciting initiative for ACER is the rigorous analysis of the long-term tree monitoring data collected ACER has collected over the last two plus decades via ACER's Planting for Change (P4C) program and our Humber Biodiversity plots. Because ACER tree plantings and measurements over the years have followed the same strict protocols the analysis of this data will help to inform us better on the impacts of climate change, and other environmental and social factors, and ultimately help to develop strategies to protect our trees and our green spaces.

"The timing couldn't be more perfect to analyze all of the tree data we have collected over the past 25 years. Not only do we now have the student interns to take on the analysis but also accessible GIS technology to leverage which will make the analysis so much more powerful and meaningful!" – Sadia Butt, ACER Program Manager

Interested in volunteering with ACER?

New volunteers are always welcome, whether to help out in the field or work behind the scenes! If you are interested, please fill out [this form](#) or email us at office@acer-acre.ca.

2023 Canada Summer Jobs Students Update

For eight weeks in July and August of 2023, ACER welcomed 13 students from nine federal ridings in Ontario's Mississauga-Brampton area, all hired under and paid for by the Canada Summer Jobs program. Bringing much-needed skills and energy, these students worked from both their homes and in the field.

The students' job responsibilities included assisting ACER with equipment inventory and organization; auditing ACER's website; writing potential blog material, articles and press releases; social media outreach and marketing; and supporting ACER's Planting for Change (P4C) program. Under the guidance of ACER founder and President Alice Casselman and ACER Program Manager Dr. Sadia Butt, students gained valuable work experience (for some students, this was their first paid employment), and contributed to ACER's efforts to protect the environment and promote environmental stewardship.

The insights and feedback the students shared at the end of their term clearly demonstrated the contributions made to their personal and educational development by their experience with ACER. One student specifically noted the emphasis on teamwork, which "allowed us to pool our knowledge and skills...and reinforced the importance of effective communication and cooperation in achieving our goals."



Canada Summer Jobs Celebration - August 2023, Humber Arboretum

Interested in applying to be an ACER Canada Summer Jobs student?

ACER plans to hire eligible students under this program once again for summer 2024. If you are interested or know of someone else who might be, please contact ACER at office@acer-acre.ca.

THE MULCH “DONUT” — THE KEY TO MULCHING SUCCESS!

Spreading mulch around the base of your trees is a good thing to do— mulch adds nutrients to the soil, helps aerate it, regulates its temperature, holds in moisture, and discourages weeds and fungal growth. Unfortunately, many people do not know the proper technique and doing it right is important, because the features of mulch that protect a tree can also damage it, when added incorrectly.

The most common error is forming a thick mulch “volcano” directly touching the tree base (a practice that is unfortunately all too commonly seen in public boulevards and parks), instead of the correct “donut” structure that nourishes roots further away from the tree trunk while still providing “breathing space” between the bark and the mulch. Although the volcano structure may seem to be the best way to mulch, it leaches nutrients too close to the tree, encouraging the growth of small, vulnerable roots in the mulch above the soil surface, and keeps the bark it touches moist and warm making it susceptible to rot and fungal growth. These effects over time are detrimental to the health of the tree. It is also important to remember that mulch should not just be added in spring, but also in the fall, to “refresh” the flow of nutrients and insulate the tree’s root structure over the cold winter months.

If you want to learn more about how to mulch trees correctly, check out ACER’s Mulching 101 guide [here](#).





SPOTLIGHT: THE MOCCASIN IDENTIFIER INITIATIVE

Carolyn King, a community development worker and former elected chief of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation wants to cover Canada in (stenciled) Indigenous moccasins. The idea first came to Carolyn in 2011 while watching the clearing of a property that once belonged to a pre-Confederation Indigenous rights activist, when she realized that an electronic record was not enough to identify and spread awareness about the history of the property. What a researcher or student might easily learn via a coded marker on an online map would be invisible to any future inhabitant, user or visitor to the actual property. She realized that a tangible link to past and living Indigenous cultures was essential. And, what better link than a visual “footprint”? An image of an indigenous moccasin, stenciled on a wall, floor, sidewalk, road or building, can tell all who see it, that Indigenous peoples previously owned, lived on, and cared for the land.

So, partnering with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and the Greenbelt Foundation, King started the Moccasin Identifier initiative, an Indigenous-led education and place-knowing initiative that aims to educate students about the 23 treaties signed in what we now call the Golden Horseshoe area. To date, the initiative has reached over 10,000 students, providing curriculum and materials for schools to use to teach kids about their area’s treaties, and kits to mark Indigenous sites at their schools and in their communities with one or more of four culturally accurate First Nations moccasin images.

The initiative has since expanded to also involve colleges, universities, community organizations, businesses and institutions that want to take part, resulting in numerous larger moccasin “installations”. And, King doesn’t want to stop there - her ultimate goal is to extend the program across the country, to help make all Canadians more aware of their Treaty responsibilities and help restore harmony between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples across Canada.

Note: ACER is not affiliated with this program. If you want to learn more about it and/or how you or your school or organization might get involved, listen to Carolyn’s 2021 Heritage Bytes podcast [here](#), visit the Moccasin Identifier website at moccasinidentifier.com or email moccasin.identifier@mncfn.ca.



Moccasin Identifier Installation at Trillium Park along the William G. Davis Waterfront Trail in Toronto

2023 was a productive year for ACER and we could not have done it without help! Special thanks goes to:

Great Lakes Local Action Fund (Government of Ontario)
New Horizons Seniors Program Fund (Government of Canada)
Canada Summer Jobs Program (Government of Canada)
TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
2023 Canada Summer Jobs Students
Our interns from Sheridan College and University of Toronto Mississauga
Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority
Sustainable Cobourg
Town of Cobourg
Venture 13 Centre, Cobourg
City of Mississauga
Active Adult Center Mississauga
Brampton Environmental Alliance
Local community volunteers, educators and students
ACER donors (thank you for your generous support!)

Our Mission

As our climate changes, ACER supports communities with grassroots initiatives to plant trees, and educates on how to measure, monitor and report on tree health and growth.



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