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Growing Green Settlement



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Introduction

CultureLink is dedicated to facilitating the independence and full participation of newcomers in Toronto's diverse community, by enhancing skills that promote self-sufficiency; promoting positive interactions with and understanding of newcomer communities; providing innovative programming to meet the changing settlement needs of newcomers and volunteers; and promoting the well-being of all participants. We serve 16,000 individuals per year, assisting newcomers to find employment, to access education, to meet established residents and to develop their social and professional networks while getting to know Toronto.

Since 2008, CultureLink has committed to what we call Green Settlement™: promoting and fostering healthy and sustainable lifestyles for all new Canadians. Our innovative and award-winning programs developed under this umbrella have included: the Newcomer Cycling Outreach Program and the Bike to School Project (in partnership with Cycle Toronto and others); the Global Roots Garden (in partnership with the Stop Community Food Centre) and the Pathways to Green Engagement Program (in partnership with Evergreen and others).

CultureLink has committed to Green Settlement both to benefit our clients and to nurture a more inclusive environmental movement in Toronto. Half of all adults living in Toronto are born outside of Canada, and hundreds of countries and languages are represented among Toronto residents. Unfortunately, many newcomers from diverse backgrounds give up their sustainable habits in trying to adjust to the North American way of life. Often sustainability is pushed to the back of the priority list, when major concerns like job, career, housing etc. become supreme.

With this research project, we sought to identify sustainable practices and environmental interests among CultureLink's newcomer clients, in order to support ongoing development of our Green Settlement initiatives.

The project was carried out by Pallavi Roy, a Metcalf Foundation Intern working with CultureLink, with additional support from the RBC Immigrant, Diversity and Inclusion Project at Ryerson University.

Literature review

Citizenship action for environmental sustainability

The need for change to the consumer lifestyle has been long acknowledged. This has been mainly done through technological innovations which lead to more efficient use of resources. However, environmental citizenship is fast gaining popularity and the emphasis placed on encouraging action by individual citizens for sustainability has grown. Various studies have emphasized the significance of active engagement by all citizens in the environmental debate. This shift in attitudes towards citizen participation has been characterized as a rejection of the top-down policymaking approach: “Sustainable development cannot be imposed from above. It will not take root unless people across the country are actively engaged” (Barr, 2003)¹.

Thus this project understands and re-iterates the need for citizenship action in environmental sustainability and aims to promote citizenship participation in environmental initiatives. Citizen participation is not only important from the perspective that our consumer lifestyle needs a change but also from the perspective that citizen participation leads to change in the policy level as well. As Arnstein said in her 1969² paper, “Citizen participation is citizen power”. The Arnstein paper went on to describe a ladder of citizen participation as depicted in Figure 1. As stated in the paper, the eight-rung ladder is a simplification, to understand the crucial point that there are significant gradations of citizen participation. This ladder endorses the fundamental idea that the citizens need to have a say in decision-making that directly affects them, in order to avoid future chaos and anarchy. The following diagram represents the citizen power ladder.

¹ Barr, S. (2003). Strategies for sustainability: citizens and responsible environmental behaviour. *Area*, 35(3), 227-240.

² Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35(4), 216-224.

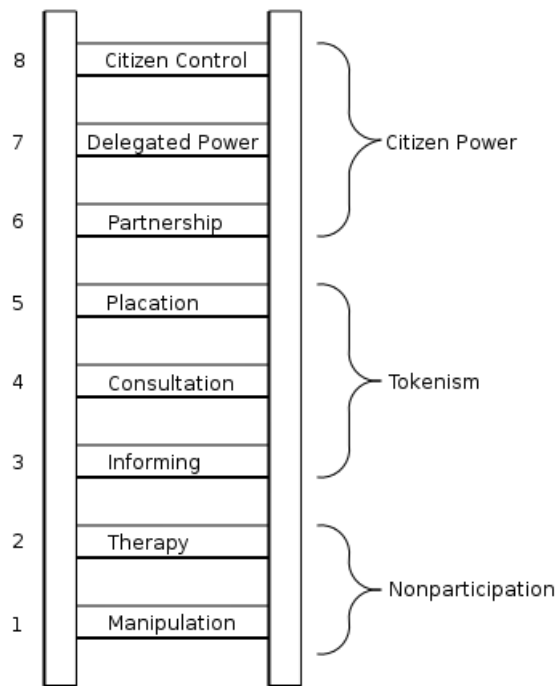


Figure 1 Ladder of Citizenship Participation

Inclusion

As the need for environmental citizenship is emphasised upon we realise that in Canada the environmental movement is not completely representative of the diversity in the population. CultureLink being a settlement organisation, sees participation by residents of the community and city (irrespective of their legal citizenship) as a basis for settlement. When terms like “citizenship” and “citizen power” are used in this document, it is to express the nation-building aspect that all residents in Canada need to be a part of, to create a thriving nation.

It has been recognized by previous works that the environmental sector has made progress in its efforts to reach and engage mainstream Canadian society in environmental initiatives but has been challenged to include the environmental knowledge, skills and experiences of diverse ethno-racial communities in Canada. An Earth Day Canada research project was conducted in 2012, aimed at addressing this gap and to identify the opportunity to build knowledge-sharing networks and collaborative practices that can transform the sector so that it truly reflects the cultural and ethnic

diversity of Canada. The present work takes the same approach and aims to understand the environmental interests and consciousness among CultureLink's client base, which consists of newcomers and first generation immigrants to Canada.

Change in attitude

Environmental attitude and ecological behaviour has been the subject of many studies (Kaiser, F.G. et al., 1999)³. Ecological behaviour can be predicted from environmental attitude. This is assessed by: 1) attitude towards the environment or some aspect of it like quality of air; and 2) attitude towards ecological behaviour like recycling, activism against air pollution and others. Ecological behaviour is influenced by wide range of factors, for example storage space and type of residence affect recycling behaviour. Similarly community related influences and political measures like paying for garbage disposal, reduced waste generation and recycling (Reschovsky and Stone, 1994)⁴. Thus various socio-economic constraints influence ecological behaviour. Figure 2 shows the how different levels are related in creating change in behaviour.

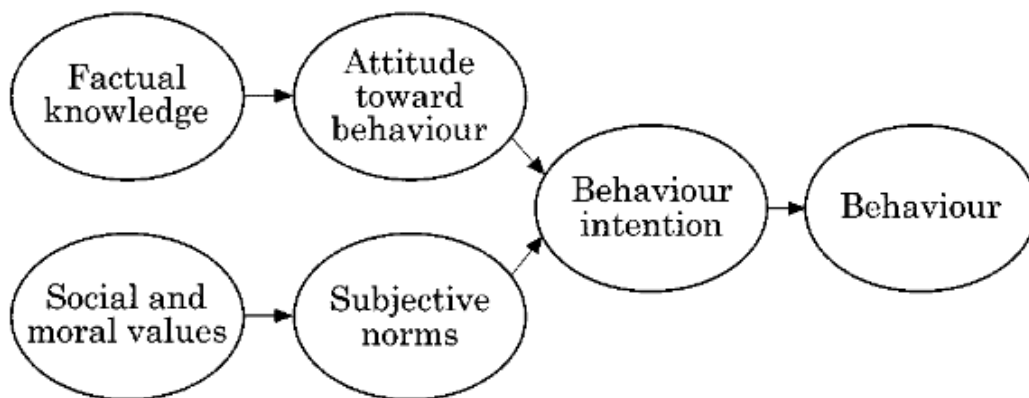


Figure 2. Factors affecting behaviour modification (Kaiser et al., 1999)³

Kaiser *et al.*'s 1999³ work argues that attitude influences behavior and attitude is in turn affected by knowledge and values. Therefore, what is important to gauge from this section is that knowledge by itself doesn't affect environmental attitude and behaviour.

³ Kaiser, F. G., Wölfling, S., & Fuhrer, U. (1999). Environmental attitude and ecological behaviour. *Journal of environmental psychology, 19*(1), 1-19.

⁴ Reschovsky, J. D., & Stone, S. E. (1994). Market incentives to encourage household waste recycling: Paying for what you throw away. *Journal of policy analysis and management, 13*(1), 120-139.

Outdoor engagement

Consequently, since just knowledge isn't entirely sufficient for behaviour modification, another aspect looked into this study is outdoor engagement as a basis for environmental consciousness. Studies show that there is a correlation between outdoor education and pro-environmental perspectives. Studies show that outdoor environmental education provoked favorable shifts in individual behavior towards the environment (Bogner, 1998)⁵. A study conducted by David Suzuki Foundation, *Youth Engagement with Nature and Outdoors*⁶ highlights many important points about barriers to outdoor engagement: "Nearly half of the youth surveyed between the ages of thirteen and twenty feel they don't have enough time to join programs that get them out into nature. They say school, work, and other chores make it difficult for them to take part in outdoor programs". The study finds that youth previously involved in outdoor programming were more likely to spend time outdoors exploring nature. It also shows correlation with changing youth perspective and age.

Shepard and Speelman in 1986⁷ conducted a study to determine whether any measurable impact on environmental attitude occurred as a result of outdoor engagement in the form of camping. Results indicated that conceptually a positive learning experience took place. The data gathered were analysed to suggest three specific results:

- 1) There is a relationship between program length and conservation attitude development;
- 2) An initial acclimatization period for urban campers is desirable before implementing conceptual activities; and,
- 3) There is greater opportunity to develop positive conservation attitudes in first-time campers.

⁵ Bogner, F. X. (1998). The influence of short-term outdoor ecology education on long-term variables of environmental perspective. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 29(4), 17-29.

⁶<http://www.davidsuzuki.org/publications/downloads/2012/youth%20survey%20findings%20summary.pdf>

⁷ Shepard, C. L., & Speelman, L. R. (1986). Affecting environmental attitudes through outdoor education. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 17(2), 20-23.

Primary Research: Method

The research focus for this project is aimed towards environmental program planning for the settlement sector. Thus, surveys and focus groups were chosen as the best way to get information and feedback from CultureLink's clients. The primary research was carried out between May 12, 2014 and August 29, 2014 and 130 unique individuals participated.

Designing and implementing surveys is a systematic process of gathering information on a specific topic by asking questions of individuals and then generalising results to the groups represented by the respondents. The process involves five distinct steps as exhibited in Figure 3:



Figure 3. Survey design steps

We created two surveys: “Environmental Habits” (EH) and “Outdoor Engagement” (OE). Survey questions can be found in Appendix A. All participants were asked to complete the Environmental Habits survey. Only program participants who were or going to partake in outdoor engagement activities were given the Outdoor Engagement survey. As detailed in Figure 4, there were 70 respondents to the Environmental Habits survey, of whom 30 also completed the Outdoor Engagement survey.

To carry out focus groups, we coordinated with existing CultureLink programs to schedule time for discussions during existing CultureLink programming. Focus group participants were asked three questions:

- 1) What environmental issues are you most concerned about?
- 2) Name a sustainable habit we should adopt in our daily lives to help protect the environment.
- 3) What barriers do you face in adopting these sustainable habits?

87 people participated in focus groups, from a wide range of age groups and countries of origin as detailed in Figure 4. 27 of these also completed surveys, bringing the total number of unique participants to 130.

Research participants	Date (2014)	EH survey	OE survey	Focus group	Country or countries of origin
Summer Settlement Program: Youth in the City	July 20	17		17	China, India, Iran, Georgia, Philippines
Newcomers Explore and Appreciate Toronto (“NEAT”)	July 22	14	14		Indonesia, China, India, Ukraine, Mexico, South Korea, Pakistan
Newcomer Seniors Centre: Polish Seniors	July 23			10	Poland
Summer Settlement Program: Bruce Trail Walk	July 26	10	10		China
Bike Host at Kensington Pedestrian Sundays	July 27	5			China, Canada
Newcomer Seniors Centre: Spanish Seniors	August 6			15	Columbia, Ecuador, Argentina, Chile
Citizenship learning circle		6	6		Pakistan, Sri Lanka, South Africa
Youth leadership group	August 8	10		10	Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia
Youth Growing Green Roots	August 19	4			India, Russia, Ecuador
Bike Host picnic	August 23			35	India, Philippines, China,
Job Search Workshop	September 4	4			Iran, Ukraine
Totals		70	30	87	22 countries

Figure 4. Research participants

Primary Research: Findings

The data analysis was done through quantitative methods. Overall, most participants (60% <) of the surveys and focus groups showed high level of environmental consciousness. However, there was no sense of personal responsibility towards the environment.

Environmental Habits Survey

When asked whether they feel a connection with the environment, most respondents (80%) said yes. Also 60% of participants replied that they encourage friends and family to connect with the environment as well as depicted in the pie chart in Figure 5.

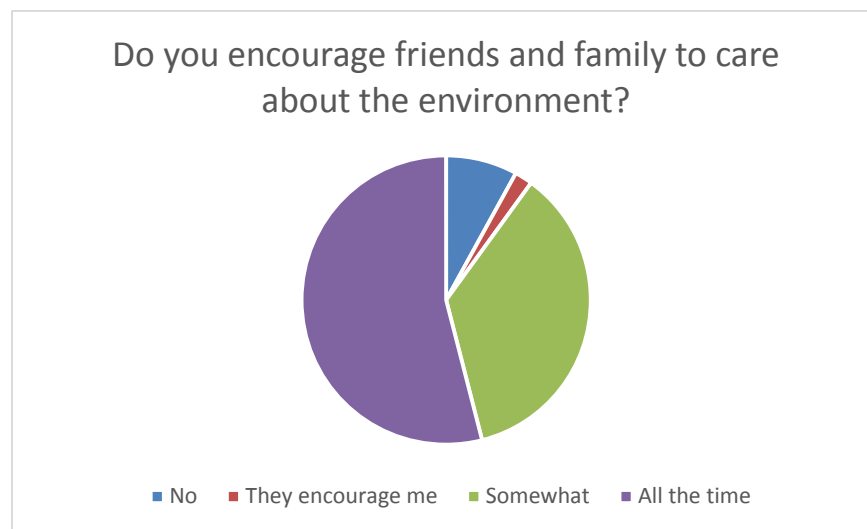


Figure 5

When asked whether they recycled, an overwhelming 80% of respondents replied that they recycled and encouraged others to do the same. The same people also said that they felt a connection with the nature.

The level of awareness regarding wastage of water, electricity is considered high among the respondents as majority (50% <) responded with answers that indicated they turned off taps and lights when not being in direct use.

The data also reveals that most people (63%) below the age of 30, said they would be interested in an environmental job or volunteer opportunity. This interest dropped in the group above 30 years of age.

It was also interesting to note that people above the age of 30 were more likely to drive a car than participants below 30 years of age. Majority of respondents below 30 years of age used public transport as their main form of conveyance. This is an interesting trend and needs to be further researched, to find correlations with changing mindsets and lifestyle from one focused on car ownership to more active means of transport.

The area of food is perhaps the most neglected when environmental habits and consciousness is taken into consideration. Most respondents informed that they didn't base their eating habits on environmental issues, and were not mindful of eating organic, GMO free or local produce. The same respondents also informed that about half of their food was packaged and/or processed. This indicated a sad lack of healthy eating habits, which has repercussions for personal health and well-being and the environment.

Outdoor Engagement Survey

The overall findings of this survey indicated that people wanted to be outdoors and more active than their current lifestyle allowed them.

How often do you spend time outdoors in nature?

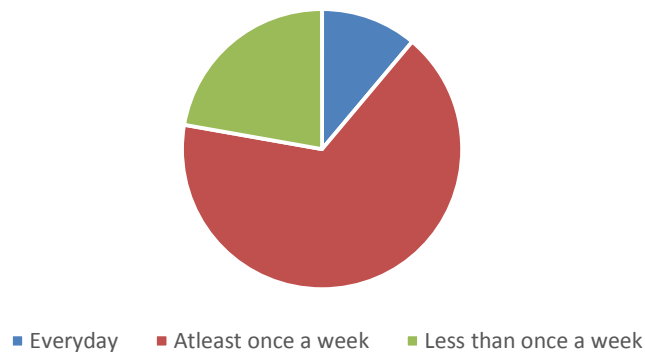


Figure 6.

How much time do you ideally want to spend outdoors?

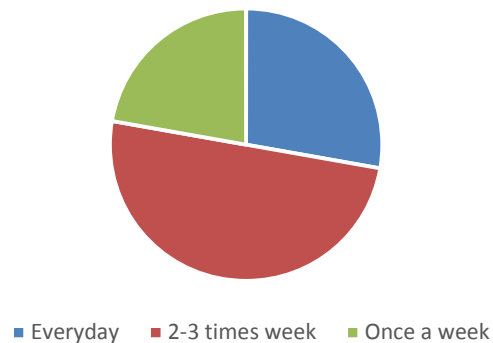


Figure 7.

Nearly everyone surveyed indicated that they would like to spend more time outdoors than they do currently. Most respondents (>50%) spend time outdoors at least once a week in nature. When asked how much time they would ideally like to spend in nature, the most frequently given answer was 30 minutes - 1 hour, 2-3 times a week would be ideal. It was interesting to note that respondents who said they spend less than once a week outdoors in nature would like to spend time outdoors at least once per week.

It was interesting to note that those participants who spend more time outdoors in nature (more than one or twice a week) also said that protecting and preserving the environment was important to them.

The data also indicates that for many people (60%) the outdoor activity has reduced after coming to Canada. The main reasons given were that they moved into a very urban environment with lack of outdoor green space. Increasing work commitments was another major reason for change in outdoor activity behaviour.

The participants were also asked about the barriers they faced to being outdoors, and most replied with work as being the reason which restricts them from being outdoors more. This was closely followed by family responsibilities. Few participants pointed out that they don't have access to green space nearby which stops them from being outdoors in nature. Cost was another consideration that was indicated in a few of the surveys as being a barrier to outdoor activities.

Focus groups

Of the five focus groups conducted, two were held with participants in CultureLink's Newcomer Seniors Centre. According to an old Polish proverb, a healthy body is a temple for healthy spirit. The Polish-speaking seniors were very concerned about the quality of food and water being consumed by themselves and the society. There were concerns of pesticides in food and contaminants in water. Solutions suggested were composting, container and community gardening. Also biking and walking to promote health and avoid use of cars was suggested as a sustainable habit that they practiced in Poland. However, due to old age long distance walking and biking were not possible anymore.

The Spanish-speaking seniors group had different concerns for the environment. When asked about environmental issues, most of them cited people using bottled water instead of tap water as a major problems. Un-recycled bottles from bottled water, polluting seas was mentioned as an important concern. The topic of garbage was an overall important concern. Recycling and awareness about recycling was listed as a sustainable practice. It was also mentioned that boiling water and using water filters and carrying water from home in re-useable bottles should be promoted.

The environmental concerns of the youth and youth and adult groups were different from the seniors groups, which focussed more on health and environmental concerns. The problem of climate change was frequently mentioned by the youth participants. Smoking and air pollution was also listed as problem. The sustainable habits suggested were turning lights off when not using them and recycling. The main barriers listed were lack of time due to school work and hectic lifestyle.

The mixed group of youth and adults, had a more varied response to the question of environmental concerns. The most frequently mentioned topics were deforestation, air and water pollution and improper garbage disposal. Many different sustainable habits ranging from biking, reducing use of paper, recycling, re-using water were suggested. Work and family responsibilities were listed as the most common barriers to participation.

The youth participants of the focus group were also asked if they would be interested in a leadership course that focused on environmental issues and they all were interested in such an initiative if the opportunity arose.

Notes from the focus groups can be found in Appendix C.

Conclusions and program suggestions

The results of these surveys and focus groups indicate a relatively high level of information amongst CultureLink clients about environmental issues. However, there seems to be a lack of pro-environmental behaviour and very little active work regarding environmental issues. This can be related to lack of opportunities for engaging in environmental activities which promotes environmental consciousness and behaviour. The responses to survey question indicated a convenience-based interest in environmental issues. The sense of urgency or the aspect of environmental justice is something that is missing from the participants' psyche.

It is very important that this aspect be changed, to affect behaviour modification. This would be done through higher participation in environmental and outdoor participation. Family-focussed environmental activities would be a great way to initiate such efforts. Programs which combine awareness with active hands-on learning as part of activities are important.

Another important way to increase participation would be to encourage youth involvement in the environmental movement from an early age. Youth engagement is the meaningful and sustained involvement of young people in an activity. It is about youth being actively and authentically involved, motivated, and excited about an issue, process, event or program. Youth engagement is a goal for many organizations in a variety of sectors.

For CultureLink, this goal relates to engaging youth in environmental and sustainability projects and programs. Environmental concerns are numerous from air quality, toxins in our environment, to global climatic change. Many of these issues are serious and affect our health but are not talked about or discussed enough, lack of awareness leads to people continuing their harmful unsustainable habits, polluting the environment and harming their own health. Early awareness and exposure to environmental issues and interest generation translates to lifelong adoption of environmental and sustainable practices. Therefore, it is very important to expose young minds to the environmental problems of our times.

Apart from generating environmental consciousness, studies have shown that exposure to the natural environment, or so-called green space, has an independent effect on health and health-related behaviours. Nature is considered an antidote to stressed urban life and is very important in physical and

mental well-being. Studies show that new immigrants suffer a decline in their health after coming to Toronto. Thus outdoor engagement is very important, in maintaining good health and also increasing environmental consciousness and increasing the urge to conserve nature.

The second program suggestion is conducting a campaign to promote not using bottled water, and to promote tap water. A slow and steady approach, beginning with more awareness-building component and then programs increasing citizenship participation in terms of numbers and a higher level of participation (as detailed in Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation) is required.

Appendix A: Environmental Habits Survey



Green Settlement[®]

Environmental habits survey

1. **Are you mindful of your food choices based on the environment?**
 - A. No, I eat what appeals to me
 - B. Not really, I eat healthy when it is convenient and cheap
 - C. Somewhat, I try to eat locally, and sometimes organic
 - D. Yes, I only eat locally grown organic food

2. **Do you recycle?**
 - A. No
 - B. Not really, it is not my biggest priority
 - C. Sometime
 - D. Yes, and I encourage others to do so too

3. **Do you encourage friends and family to care about the environment?**
 - A. No, I have more important things to worry about
 - B. They encourage me
 - C. Somewhat, when it comes up I will suggest my opinions
 - D. Absolutely, all the time! It is the most important thing we can do!

4. **Do you turn off the lights when you are leaving the room?**
 - A. No
 - B. Not every time
 - C. Most times, sometimes I forget
 - D. Yes

5. **How much of the food you eat is packaged and canned?**
 - A. All
 - B. About 1/2
 - C. about 1/4
 - D. None

6. **How often do you drive in a car by yourself or with someone else?**
 - A. Always
 - B. Once or twice a week
 - C. Less than once a month
 - D. Never

For Office use:

Event Date:

Event Title:

Age group:

_<18

_18 to 30

_30 to 50

_Above 50

7. **How often do you travel on public transportation each week?**
- A. Almost never
 - B. Less than once a month
 - C. Once or twice a week
 - D. Almost always
8. **Do you feel a connection with the environment?**
- A. What does that mean?
 - B. No, not at all
 - C. I care about it, but do not feel connected
 - D. Yes, it is a beautiful thing
9. **When I brush my teeth, I**
- A. I splash water everywhere
 - B. I keep it running
 - C. I sometimes keep it closed
 - D. I keep the tap closed
10. **Are you interested in environmental jobs or volunteering?**
- A. No
 - B. Only if it is a paid position
 - C. Depending on the issue
 - D. Yes, very interested
11. **How often do you read an environmental related article?**
- A. Never
 - B. Sometimes for school work
 - C. If I come across it on the internet
 - D. Always
12. **How often do you shop for clothes?**
- A. Every week
 - B. Once in two weeks
 - C. Once a month
 - D. Less than once in two months
13. **How much time in a week are you willing to give towards environmental programs?**
- A. Once a year
 - B. Once a month
 - C. 2-5 hours a week
 - D. 10 hours a week or more

Appendix B: Outdoor Engagement Survey



Green Settlement®

Outdoor Engagement Survey



Please check the most appropriate answer(s)

Tell us about yourself

Age group: <18 18 to 30 30 to 50 Above 50

Do you identify yourself as a newcomer to Canada? Yes No

1. How often do you spend time outdoors in nature?

Everyday 2-3 times a week Once a week Less than once a week

2. How much time do you want to spend outdoors in nature?

30mins- 1hr everyday 30mins-1 hrs, 2-3 times a week Once a week

Other (please elaborate) _____

3. Before coming to Canada how often would you spend time outdoors in nature?

Everyday 2-3 times a week Once a week Less than once a week

4. How did you connect with nature before coming to Canada?

5. What stops you from spending time outdoors in nature?

School work Work Housework Family responsibilities

TV/Internet Weather Health reasons Cost Lack of information

Other (please elaborate) _____

For Office use:

Event Date:

Event Title:

Survey taken at:

Beginning of event

End of event

6. What is your motivation to attend outdoor events?

- Connecting with nature Getting to know the city better Meeting new friends
 Learning new things Being physically active Spending time with family
 Other (please elaborate) _____

7. What time works best for you for attending outdoor events?

- Anytime Weekday evenings Saturday Sunday

8. Protecting and preserving the environment is important to me

- Agree Not sure Disagree

9. I will attend similar events in future

- Agree Not sure Disagree

Appendix C: Focus group notes

Polish seniors group

Three environmental issues were identified as being the most important:

- Clean air: Air that is polluted leads to more stress, asthma and other breathing disorders
- Food without preservatives and pesticides: It is hard to get affordable organic food
- Clean water: Many participants pointed out that in many areas in Toronto it wasn't safe to drink tap water.

Sustainable practices:

- Walking and biking instead of using car
- Eating fresh produce and not packaged food
- Use of natural fertilizers like compost, animal wastes etc
- Community or personal backyard gardens. Some respondents suggested even a small container garden s beneficial. It also becomes a place to relax and gardening is a good physical activity.

Barriers to practicing sustainable habits:

- Old age problems leading to physical immobility. Thus, biking or long walks is more difficult.
- Lack of community gardens
- Organic produce is very expensive

Spanish seniors group

Main problems identified

- Inappropriate recycling
- Cleaning products are full of chemicals
- Sale and consumption of water in plastic bottles
- Electronic machines and batteries are thrown to the street
- Rivers and seas' pollution

Suggestions for sustainable activities

- Raise awareness on environmental protection
- Differentiate materials in order to classify and recycle properly
- Using biodegradable materials instead of chemicals for cleaning; for instance, vinegar.
- Avoid to buy water in plastic bottles. They suggest to buy a britto jar or to boil the water
- Sign a petition asking the government to take action against

Youth group:

Environmental issues of concern

- Smoking in public areas
- Climate change
- Offshore dumping
- Plastic pollution
- Death of animals due to pollution and deforestation

Sustainable actions:

- Turning off lights when we don't need them
- Recycling
- Picking up garbage in the neighbourhood

Barriers

- Busy and hectic lifestyle
- Forgetfulness

Mixed group:

Environmental concerns

- Deforestation
- Garbage
- Pollution

Sustainable actions

- Not using paper and using electronic versions when possible
- Community gardens
- Biking
- Going outdoors in nature
- Filling the sink and washing dishes instead of running water
- Re-using water to mop the floor for flushing the toilet

Barriers

- Work
- Family responsibilities
- Lack of information