



GentleWays
for OurPlanet

2023-2024 IMPACT REPORT

All beings on Planet Earth
co-exist and thrive through
sustainable collaboration





GentleWays
for OurPlanet

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GentleWays
for OurPlanet

Our Vision

All beings on Planet Earth co-exist and thrive through sustainable collaboration

Our Mission

To inspire individuals to make a positive environmental impact and leave a gentler footprint on the planet, with our useful tools, concrete initiatives, and trustworthy information about climate action

Our Gift

1. Evidence-based information for pro-environmental individual decisions & actions
2. Opportunities to participate in impactful local pro-environmental projects
3. Concrete tools that enable individuals to adopt and champion sustainable living



GentleWays
for OurPlanet

Our Team

Board of Directors

Aïda Warah, Founder and Executive Director

Sharon Messerschmidt, Director

Teke Rerri, Director

Communication and Environmental Advisors

**Students who completed full practicum courses as part of
their university degrees:**

Dhruv Vallath (Carleton University)

Gwendelyn Hanna (Ottawa University)

**Students who are currently volunteering as Environmental
Engagement Advisors:**

Leen Aboujaish (Ottawa University)

Christine Lee Slew (Ottawa University)



GentleWays
for OurPlanet

Our Team

Consultants

Anne Biason-Hart

Jorja Darrington

Kritika Gupta

Tree Planting Steering Committee

Ashley Janna

Carole Nehme

Colette Corban

Hashem Hashem

Mounir Gedeon

Webmaster

Brian Pirie

Accounting

Elias Abou-Hamad



GentleWays
for OurPlanet



Dear friends & supporters of GentleWays,

As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with gratitude for the progress we have achieved together. 2023 marked a significant milestone for GentleWays for OurPlanet, as it was the first year since our organisation was founded that we were able to participate in several in-person events. This allowed us to deepen our connections with the community, expand our projects, and make a greater impact with our mission to protect the planet. In this report we will share our accomplishments under three projects and five ongoing activities.

*Sincerely,
Aida Warah, Ph. D.
Ottawa, Canada*

Projects

1. Tree Planting
2. Championing the Green Bin in Multi-Unit Residential Building
3. Changing Our Menus

Ongoing activities

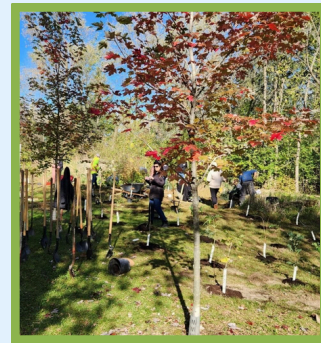


1. Advocacy
2. "Show Your Love" Interviews
3. Tabling
4. i4ThePlanet
5. Practicum opportunities for university students

PROJECTS

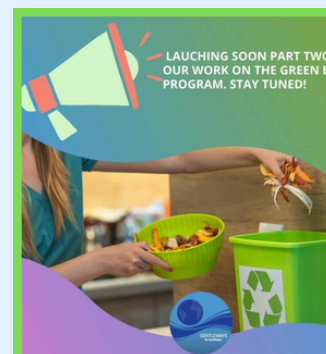
Tree Planting

In October 2023, GentleWays for OurPlanet held a tree-planting event at the Mowat Farm Park in Barrhaven (Ottawa) titled "Rebuilding Ottawa's Forest Canopy" in partnership with the City of Ottawa. Approximately 35 volunteers, mainly youths from the Lebanese Canadian community came together to plant 350 trees in an area that has the lowest tree canopy in Ottawa. This initiative was a great opportunity for us to give back to our planet and contribute to the local ecosystem. We thank the City of Ottawa for the opportunity to contribute to greening our city and the Ottawa Citizen for their media coverage of the event. Also, thanks to the outstanding steering committee, our sponsors and community members for their time and donations. Our sincere appreciation to the Josette Robertson and Joan Johnson Family Foundation who supported this event with a very generous grant.



Championing the Green Bin in Multi-Unit Residential Buildings

We promoted in our tabling the tool kit we developed in 2022 to support individuals who wanted to champion the green bin in their building at our tabling events. Eight individuals engaged their property managers with communication support from GentleWays. We also held one meeting for champions and kept in touch with three champions who were motivated to pursue the mission. As we write this report, our champions are still attempting to convince their property managers to sign up for the program. Many managers expressed concerns that since the program was not mandatory, they were not going to implement it.



PROJECTS

Changing Our Menus

GentleWays for OurPlanet, with a grant from the City of Ottawa CEPGP (under Sustainability) completed major components of a project focused on advocating for sustainable, plant-based food choices in Ottawa. This initiative involves collaborating with local restaurants to augment the availability and appeal of plant-based options on their menus. Individuals' dietary choices are influenced by the options presented to them. Through this project, our goal is to make sustainable choices more accessible and appealing to people in Ottawa. Plant-based diets are not only healthier but also have a lower environmental impact, requiring fewer resources such as water and producing less pollution. This project highlights the significant impact that consumer decisions, supported by businesses, can have on reducing our carbon footprint and promoting a more sustainable future. So far, we approached and made presentations to seven local restaurants and all but one expressed interest in participating in our project. We designed two brochures, including one with tips for restaurants on how to successfully add more plant-based items to their menus, we researched and developed a script for a three-minute video, and we made a presentation to one of the networks we belong to, and were well received. We are moving to the next steps of this project over the next summer months.

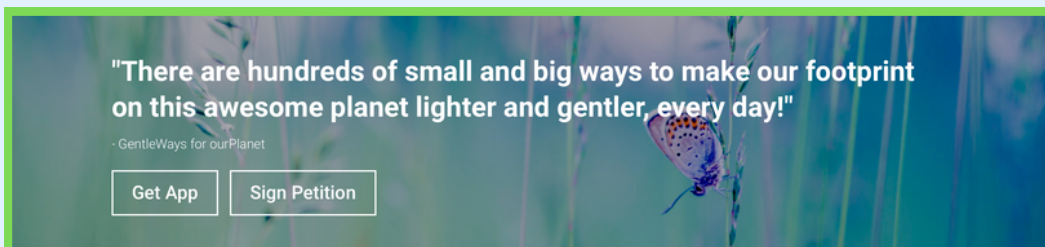


ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Advocacy

GentleWays joined the efforts of two local environmental organisations in support of climate change action: Fridays for Future and Ecology Ottawa. We posted on our websites template letters to be sent to Minister of Finance, the Honorable Freeland and to Ottawa Mayor Mr. Sutcliffe. As an organisational member of Community Association of Environmental Sustainability and the People Official Plan Coalition, GentleWays attended meetings and contributed to responses to various city of Ottawa decisions and actions. We also made in May of 2024 one delegation to the Environment and Climate Change Committee of the City of Ottawa in response to their Multi Residential Waste Management Strategy. We advocated that the Green Bin program onboarding strategy be accelerated from the proposed four years to one year.

GentleWays also continued to lead a petition in support of animal welfare standards. Our petition via Change.org aims to include crustaceans under the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act (PAWS). Since the initiation of this petition, we gathered over eight hundred digital and hard copy signatures. CentreTown MPP Joel Harden has committed to submitting our petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario once we reach one thousand signatures. The Sustainability Centre, University of Ottawa Student Union, was instrumental in having a large number of their members sign the petition. Tabling at various community events, the Glebe Garage sale and the Sandy Hill Eco fair, and at a Hamilton art fair have also been extremely helpful. The support of Ottawans and people from Hamilton at those events has been extraordinary and we are grateful.



ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Advocacy (cont'd)

Under Advocacy, we also achieved success by contributing to one Ottawa grocery store's (The Independent Massine) decision to stop selling live lobsters. GentleWays volunteers also visited on two occasions four Loblaws store and two Metro stores that had tanks with live lobsters for sale. On our second visits, in May 2024, the tanks in all three Loblaws stores were empty and the managers informed us that the store's decision was to stop selling live lobsters altogether. We wrote to Loblaws head office to verify this decision. We are highly motivated to continue this work until crustaceans' sentience is recognized in law and eventually the practice of boiling them alive and conscious banned. We are inspired by the success achieved by our friends from Crustaceans Compassion in the UK whose advocacy work helped having decapod crustaceans recognised as sentient beings under the Animal Welfare (sentience) Act in the UK, in April 2022.

GentleWays for OurPlanet's founder and executive director Aïda Warah was one of nine local artists who through their art, aim to raise awareness about local and general environmental issues.

The group called themselves Art for a Livable Planet. The group will exhibit their work during the month of July 2024 at a local popular bakery (Wild Oat Café) that holds monthly art exhibits.



ART EXHIBIT BY LOCAL ARTISTS IN OTTAWA

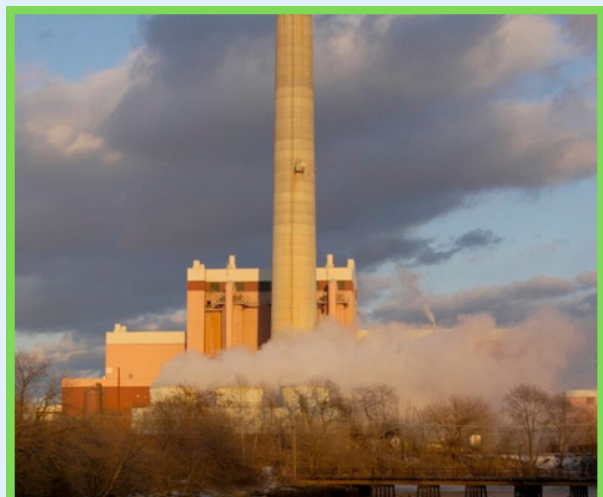


ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Advocacy (cont'd)

The artists were inspired by important local environmental issues such as forests loss, nuclear waste seeping into our water, and plastic. Aïda Warah's poster raises awareness about the dangers of incinerators as a solid waste management method. GentleWays is a great supporter of the Green Bin program in Ottawa, and has for the past two years supported individuals who wanted to champion the Green Bin in their buildings.

As Ottawa's landfill will be reaching capacity within the next ten years if our waste management patterns don't change, some city councillors have started proposing that an incinerator may be the solution. GentleWays and other local environmental organisations are very concerned about this line of thinking, given the known health and environmental dangers of incinerators. Aïda's work is intended to educate the public in Ottawa about the importance of stepping up our efforts in diversion --e.g., using the green bin and recycling - rather than investing in incineration.



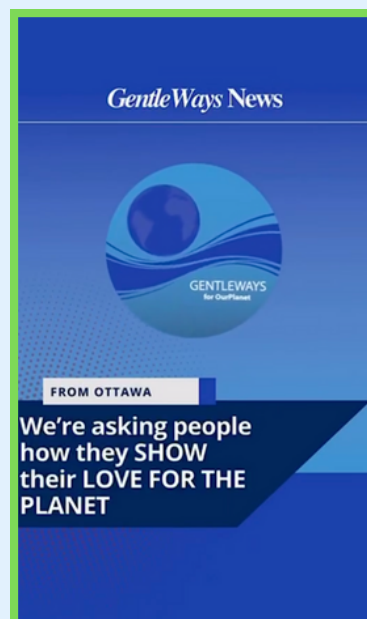
ONGOING ACTIVITIES

“Show Your Love” Interviews

In “Show Your Love” Interviews, our University of Ottawa practicum student Gwendelyn Hanna walked around UO campus and asked people how they show their love for the planet. We’ve filmed three sets so far involving fifteen individuals. These interviews highlight inspiring stories of individuals who are making a difference in their daily lives. By sharing these stories, we hope to inspire others to take action and join us in our mission to protect our planet for future generations.

Tabling

Throughout 2023, GentleWays for OurPlanet had the opportunity to participate in a total of twelve tabling events. These events provided us with valuable platforms to engage with the community, share the goals of GentleWays for OurPlanet, raise awareness about our projects and obtain support (e.g., for our petition). This was done through interactive displays, information materials, and engaging conversations; we were able to educate attendees about the importance of environmental conservation and inspire them to take action to protect our environment.



ONGOING ACTIVITIES

i4ThePlanet

We spent less time this past year promoting our mobile app the i4ThePlanet, mainly due to lack of resources. We had applied for a grant from Trillium to help us update and promote the app but were unsuccessful. We did what we could by posting on IG simple climate practical tips and ideas for sustainable living, encouraging our followers to make eco-friendly choices in their daily lives. The app and the ecological actions that it promotes continue to be relevant and useful. As the report is being written, however, no concrete action plan is being made to promote the app further.

Practicum opportunities for university students

GentleWays for OurPlanet has provided formal practicum opportunities with credits to two university students from both Carleton and Ottawa Universities during this reporting year. Our CU student came from the Psychology Department while UO student came from Communications. This partnership has given all involved parties useful, valuable collaboration opportunities.



We couldn't have done it without your generous support.



We want to express our sincere appreciation to our funders and partners for their support and collaboration in our sustainability efforts. Our funders, including the City of Ottawa, Ottawa Community Foundation, Nature Canada, and the Josette Robertson and Joan Johnson Family Foundation, have been instrumental in our ability to carry out impactful projects and initiatives.

Thanks to Our Funders!

Additionally, we extend our thanks to our partners, Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability Ottawa (CAFEs), Ecology Ottawa, Ottawa South Eco Action Network (OSEAN), Peace and Environment Resource Centre (PERC), Plant-Based Treaty, and Zero Waste Ottawa, for supporting our shared mission.

Together, we have achieved significant milestones, including tree-planting event, promoting sustainable plant-based food choices, conducting interviews to showcase positive environmental initiatives, and advocating for important legislative changes. We are grateful for the support we obtain from our volunteers and members of our community, and we look forward to working together over the next year to help protect OurPlanet.

✉ info@gentleways.org

🌐 gentlewaysforourplanet.org