



WINTERGREEN
STUDIOS

Winter Tracks & Traces

Report to TD FEF

June 2023



TD Friends of the
Environment
Foundation

Wintergreen Studios

Wintergreen Studios is a year-round environmentally friendly educational retreat centre, located on 200 acres of mixed forests, meadows, and granite outcrops in the heart of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve. The reserve is part of a global network of UNESCO designated reserves—natural regions with unique geographic features, populated with people committed to sustainable community development. Wintergreen’s off-grid solar-powered facilities serve a three-fold focus on education, culture, and the environment.

What is Winter Tracks & Traces?

Winter Tracks and Traces offered a glimpse into the beauty and diversity of the winter months in the Frontenac Arch. While many think of winter as a time of hibernation—with not much going on—in fact, the winter months are filled with activity in the woods, the meadows, and the marshes and lakes.

Winter Tracks and Traces offered day-long adventures to school groups as well as to the general public from January through March 2023. Participants learned about animal tracks, took part in land art activities, and identified other traces such as scat and plants that animals rely on for food during the coldest months of the year.



Our Achievements

Thanks to funding from TD Friends of the Environment (TD FEF) and the Community Foundation for Kingston and Area (CFKA), in-kind contributions, partnerships, and volunteer support, we launched an extremely successful new program at Wintergreen Studios focusing on winter life in the fields and forests. Overall, 247 people participated in the program and 21 species were identified by their tracks and other traces.



We developed a new resource for identifying common winter species, two land art activities for the winter months, a sensory guide, and an activity and resource for tracking based on the gait patterns of animals. Through our new partnership with Tsi Tyónnheht Onkwawén:na Language and Cultural Centre these materials were translated into Mohawk by use by the participants in the program as well as the students in the Kawenna'ón:we Primary School.



Winter Species Guide in English & Mohawk



Land Art Activities in English & Mohawk



Gait Pattern Activity and Resource



Soundscape Activity & Composition

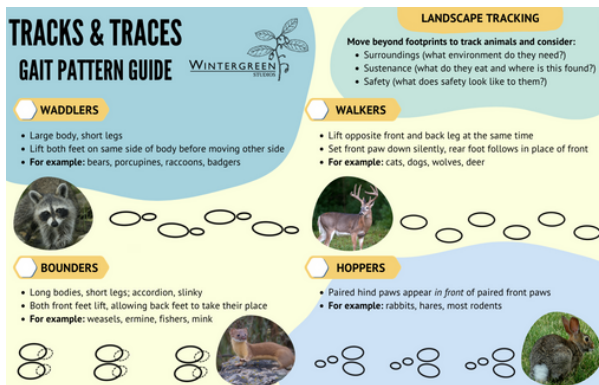
What Happened?

Despite a few re-scheduled dates due to blizzards and bus cancellations, this was an incredibly successful pilot project with hundreds of youth and adult participants travelling from Kingston, Ottawa, Sydenham, and the Tyendinaga Mohawk Reserve to learn more about winter life in the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve and the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe peoples.



The Resources

We created a parallel species key to the one we use in the spring for the Land Art BioBlitz to reflect the life in the forests, meadows, lakes, and wetlands in the winter months, in both English and Mohawk.



A new resource embodied the gait patterns of species and was used to frame an activity with participants where they imitated the gaits as well as to identify species.

We developed two new land art activities. One of these involved creating a collaborative piece that would not touch the ground, that would move in the wind, and that would change over time.



Student participants from one of the local schools created a winter soundscape reflecting the landscape that they encountered at Wintergreen.

Testimonials

Participants of *Winter Tracks & Traces* expressed their appreciation and enthusiasm for the various learning opportunities offered through this multi-faceted program.



“ I loved being on the land with four generations of Mohawk people in an amazing space, learning from wonderful people! And the soup was delicious!

– Tsi Tyónnheht Onkwawén:na Participant

“ I learned that Snow Fleas are a real thing! Who knew? My favourite thing was the variety of experiences provided for students! A little inside creative time balanced well with outdoor learning and fun.

– Parent Volunteer



“ One thing I will think about in the winter that I wasn't aware of before is how resilient the animals who stay here for the winter are.

– Challenge North Student Participant

Partners & Budget

In addition to the \$6,950 grant from the TD FEF, we received \$3,400 from Community Foundation for Kingston & Area. These grants, as well as in-kind support from volunteers from Queen’s University, the Limestone District School Board, Canadian Wildlife Federation, and Sustainable Eastern Ontario, all contributed to the richness and financial viability of the program. We are also grateful to the workshop leaders, Wintergreen volunteers, to our new partners from the Tsi Tyónnheht Onkwawén:na Language and Cultural Centre.

The total cost for the 10-day program, including bus transportation, workshop honoraria, staff time, food, and curriculum materials, was \$14,000.



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for Kingston & Area



Next Steps

We are excited to be planning the next steps! Given the overwhelming success of the inaugural Winter Tracks & Traces program, we plan to expand the offerings for 2024 as well as folding it into a year-round land-based program at Wintergreen.



01 Expanding the Winter Program

We will continue with Tracks & Traces in 2024 with plans to expand the reach to the general public and include both new and returning schools.

02 Year-round Programming

With funding in place for a fall pilot in 2023, we are planning to mark the 10th anniversary of the Land Art BioBlitz in 2024 with year-round programming highlighting the bounty of the natural world through physical explorations, art, and science.