

GREENEST

Emma Melis (Individual)

City: Montreal

Username: emma.melis@rogers.com

Province: Quebec

Email: emma.melis@rogers.com

Country: Canada

School: McGill University

Up to 200 points will be awarded for excellent work.

Challenge

We named it Project Green Network – driven, bold and empowered young leaders who aim to propel powerful action, tangible change and quantifiable outcomes on campuses across the globe. Now we want to develop the goals, leadership and potential outcomes. In the process we want to build momentum with each of you and many of the TG alums who have been such an integral part of our journey. We want to create significant positive impact that will happen when a lot of committed students come together with a diverse collection of skills.

Our questions :

- **Do you think such a network would be beneficial to you and to your fellow student leaders?**
 - Yes! It would! I've been a part of a province-wide environmental youth council now for three years, and it's been *the best* addition to my life. My fellow teammates are my rocks, and two of them are my closest friends. The organisation itself is called Ontario Nature, and it has a Youth Council. We call it the Nature Youth Network – it's made up of about 200 youth from all across Ontario. Together, we organised annual Youth Summits for Leadership and Biodiversity for 100 young environmentalists. We planned the schedule for the three-day event, found speakers to lead workshops, ran our own workshops and activities, and led nature hikes and wilderness classes. We also ran campaigns for pollinators and changed government legislation to protect them.
 - Even though most of the Council's members lived anywhere between 1 and 7 hours apart from one another (we're now spread out all across the country/world at different universities!), and we couldn't meet up regularly, we still managed to make things work by having Skype conference meetings, regular emails, constant campaigns on the go, a need for regional representation on large-scale issues, and in-person meetings/retreats when/where possible.
 - We all became very good friends, and, to this day, support one another in their environmental efforts and projects in their new communities outside of Ontario:

PICTURED: Some members of the Ontario Nature Youth Council at Winter Retreat and Summer Summit!



- **Would you have an interest in joining or taking a leadership role in such a network bringing together student leaders from all over the world working for positive change?**
 - As someone who is already an [ambassador](#) for the Europe-based environmental organisation Green Teen Team, I see how great it is to have contacts in the environmental movement all across the globe. Each person brings their own perspective and experiences into the discussion about this international crisis. I think that worldwide issues like climate change, global CO2 output, and pollution cannot be solved within a small radius of influence. I'm constantly learning from others' ideas and sharing my own knowledge in return, and it makes me realise that it's important to meet many people to expand the entire sphere of environmental activism in our world today. Grassroots can only spread so far – the environmental challenges we face today sometimes require us to spread our wings. We need more environmentalists working together, so why not start young?

- **If yes, what do you imagine that might look like and how might you be willing/able to contribute? Be as specific as you can.**
 - Things to do:
 - Forms of communication: Facebook group, Facebook group chat, email listserv., shared GoogleDrive.
 - Request biographies and write-ups from participants/members so they can get acquainted with their peers.
 - Frequent check-ins.
 - If there are some people within a close geographic region, arrange for meet-ups in person, then have that group represent their region to the others.
 - Have Skype conference calls or phone conference calls.
 - Campaigns should be structured in such ways that people from all across the world can contribute and apply it in their home community.

- **Let us know if you are all in and ready to roll up your sleeves and help write the slate for our journey forward.**
 - Oh, definitely!! After having invested so much time and emotion into the PGC of 2018, I definitely feel connected to the other PGC participants and to Turning Green. I think it's rare to feel so intimate and important a connection to people and a 'panel' of judges whom you don't know in real life, and such strong alliances among environmentalists are rare so it's important to protect the bonds when formed. I also have some environmental interests and sub-interests in categories (ie – urban food waste as a

GREENEST

subsection of food waste, to name one) which weren't really brought forward during the PGC, so I'd love to share some of those with the planners of the Challenges.

SUBMITTED AT: 2:20 am ET 29 October 2018