

2021
GALA &
CONFERENCE

CODE RED

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON ADDRESSING THE
CLIMATE EMERGENCY

SUMMARY REPORT

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OVERVIEW

In August 2021, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) confirmed what many in the environmental sphere have long suspected - that climate change is widespread, affecting every region of the planet. The IPCC said that the chance of exceeding tipping points, such as sea level rise due to collapsing ice sheets or ocean circulation changes, cannot be excluded from future planning. Many changes will be irreversible; however, with decisive action we can avoid or limit some of the worst effects. In the words of the IPCC, “strong and sustained reductions in emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gases would limit climate change” and “benefits for air quality would come quickly, [though] it could take 20-30 years to see global temperatures stabilize.”

The 2021 Gala explored the socio-economic and environmental implications of a changing climate for Canada, as well as what we need to do to achieve the goal of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

The conference was organized and hosted by Probe's youth staff members: Navjot Dhaliwal, Badia Nahme, Marc Saleh and Shahreen Shehwar.



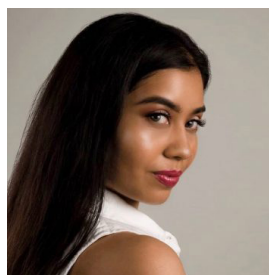
Badia Nahme
Research and Project
Assistant



Marc Saleh
Research and Project
Intern



Navjot Dhaliwal
Research and Project
Assistant



Shahreen Shehwar
Research and Project
Assistant

The conference offered a youth perspective on climate change as a point of engagement with stakeholders, Pollution Probe supporters, and the interested public, and featured a number of prominent Canadian youth who are working on solutions to the climate crisis.

The conference attracted more than 100 viewers. Video segments of the conference proceedings are available on the Pollution Probe website and on our YouTube channel ([here](#)). Ongoing promotion continues to expand the viewership.

GALA OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION: A WAY FORWARD

The Gala opened with remarks from our CEO Christopher Hilken, who highlighted Pollution Probe's track record of environmental enhancement, achieved by working productively with governments, industry, and the public, with a steadfast commitment to clean air, clean water, and a healthy planet. He spoke about Probe's roots in youth advocacy and emphasized how youth perspectives continue to inform our work today. He was followed by the Honourable David Piccini, Ontario's youngest Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks.



Christopher Hilken
CEO, Pollution Probe



The Hon. David Piccini
Ontario Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks

Minister Piccini noted that Pollution Probe has been a valuable partner to successive Ontario governments during its more than 50-year history at the forefront of raising awareness about serious environmental challenges. He discussed climate change as a generational issue, noting that decisions made today will have enormous impacts on future generations. He shared his belief that the youth of today are key to creating a cleaner, healthier environment for our province and country. He noted that Ontario leads the nation in greenhouse gas emission reductions and has reduced its emissions by 21 percent since 2005. He outlined the efforts Ontario is taking on climate change, which include: initiatives targeting large industrial emitters; new requirements to increase the renewable fuel content in regular grade gasoline by 15 percent; championing Ontario as an electric transportation powerhouse; and, supporting fossil fuel alternatives, such as low-carbon hydrogen.

The Minister concluded by talking about his experience at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (aka COP26) in Glasgow, where he went to share information on climate change policies, explore common priorities, and forge collaborations and partnerships to advance climate action. While much remains to be done, the Minister left Glasgow optimistic, largely because of the passion, knowledge, and strength of the young voices he heard.

YOUTH PANEL ON CANADA'S FUTURE

Youth have been among the most prominent voices in the fight against climate change. Our panel brought together engaged youth from across Canada to share their priorities and perspectives on the actions needed to address the climate crisis. The panel included the following speakers:



Beth Eden

National Youth Network Coordinator, SDSN Canada

Beth Eden is the Interim CEO of QS World Merit, a global charity working towards an equal world by allowing young people to access opportunities based on merit (using the SDGs as their framework for impact). She has been working United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, previously the Millennium Development Goals, for over 11 years.



Faith Edem

Policy Analyst, ECCC

Faith Edem is a change agent that champions the intersection between sustainability, public policy, and its impacts on youth and racialized groups. As a 2021 Corporate Knights 30 under 30, GreenBiz Circularity 21 Emerging Leader and climate resilience author, Faith recognizes the importance of inclusive youth-led climate action beyond 2030 and 2050.



Helen Watts

Senior Director of Global Partnerships, Student Energy

For over seven years Helen has worked and collaborated on a wide range of issues from the global energy transition, to safe & dignified human migration, to achieving our sustainable development goals by 2030. She is an experienced public speaker, youth leader, program designer, and fundraiser.



Ricky-Lee Watts

Youth Program Manager, Indigenous Clean Energy

Ricky-Lee Watts (Quu-as name Aamiitlaq) is the Youth Programme Manager at Indigenous Clean Energy (ICE), and oversees Generation Power at ICE, an Indigenous youth clean energy and career training programme. He is Nuučaan̓, from Pacific northwest in Canada, and is a councillor for the Hupačasath First Nation.



Stella Bowles

Environmental Citizen Scientist/ Student

Stella Marguerite Bowles, MSM, ONS is a Canadian environmentalist, author, and the youngest recipient of the Order of Nova Scotia. Canada also recognized Stella with a Meritorious Service Medal. In her campaign against straight pipes in the LaHave River she was able to generate over \$15 million in funding across three levels of government.

OVERVIEW OF DISCUSSION

The panel members shared their knowledge and insights on a range of topics, including how they got engaged in environmental and sustainability issues. They spoke to what Canada should be doing to limit global warming, and where they see Canada positioned by the year 2050. They also explored how youth can get involved in climate-related action, as well as in climate politics. They offered views on how Canada can balance its economic interests with the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and they profiled success stories which build confidence that progress on climate change can be achieved in Canada and globally. They also talked about ways to reach out to people in power. Finally, they gave advice to Prime Minister Trudeau on how to bring youth voices to the climate and energy conversation. This overview highlights the substance as well as the optimism and hope that the youth panel contributed to the climate change debate. Their views and discussion can be watched online on Pollution Probe's YouTube channel [here](#).

The panelists became active on environmental issues in various ways including: connecting with the beauty of nature and natural spaces, championing local pollution problems, working with youth-led organizations and communities, researching, writing, and speaking about climate change, engaging with governments, and participating in international events such as COP26. The panelists have grown up in an era of increasing climate impacts, including sea-level rise, fires, floods, and hurricanes. They noted that these are terrifying to many young people. And yet the panelists have all adopted a positive outlook and a 'we can do it' conviction that we can achieve a healthy, productive, and sustainable future.

The panelists recognized the need to take urgent action, including rapid decarbonization of the economy, but they are concerned that Canada is not on track to meet its 2030 and 2050 greenhouse gas reduction targets. They are also concerned that young people face significant barriers to getting involved in senior-level policy conversations, and they are not getting the jobs and careers they want in the environmental and clean energy sectors. One of the systemic

barriers mentioned by panelist Beth Eden included the education system, in which universities and colleges concentrate more on 'theories' than on developing the 21st century skills that young people need. She said that inquiry-based learning should be incorporated throughout the school system, and much more information should be provided on what is happening to the environment and to people globally. Ricky-Lee Watts added that there is a requirement to provide more capacity-building opportunities for young people, and to link these opportunities to greater investment in research and development as well as the deployment of clean energy technologies.

Ricky-Lee highlighted the need to recognize and nourish the reciprocal relationship that exists between people and natural spaces. To get successfully to 2050 and beyond, we need to prioritize the value of nature, connect with it, and think holistically, and we should never lose sight of the value of sustainability initiatives at the local level. Young people should be engaged and act at the scale they feel most comfortable with, whether community-based or at the international level. They should contact organizations that work in their preferred space, then determine the best role they can play, which could be technical, artistic, administrative, or something else.

These thoughts were reinforced by Stella Bowles whose personal experience included bringing an entire community together to clean up a river. In the end, the community itself became a success story, along with having a cleaner river. And Beth shared her experience in working on a documentary film on declining salmon stocks. This was done in concert with a First Nations community and included connecting with the Tribal Council. The initiative brought together a range of skillsets and ideas and was a big success as an 'impact production' in which people learned together while dealing with the emotional aspects of the issue. It also involved provincial and municipal governments as well as conservation organizations, and the initiative was showcased at COP 26.

The value of success stories was discussed by the panelists, who emphasized the power of film, as well as incorporating the media and arts dimensions and engaging the communities that may be involved. The need for sharing positive stories with oil and gas communities in

the transition to a greenhouse gas constrained world was identified, to show the positive economic and social results that sustainability-oriented communities have achieved. Faith Edem talked about the value of Our Climate Our Stories which is a compilation of essays, stories and poems written by Black, Indigenous, and youth of colour in Canada on their emotions related to climate change. This reinforced the point that publishing small success stories can provide opportunities to be part of the broader climate change conversation.

Helen Watts said that Canada should create more safe spaces for youth to lead on sustainability issues, and be trusted to contribute to decision-making on what our future should be. And panelists were in agreement that a conversation reset is needed on climate, clean energy, and decarbonization. That must include being honest about what hasn't worked and why we are not on track to meet the GHG targets that have been set. It's shameful that after holding 27 COPs, things are still not working, and the climate crisis is growing scary. Therefore, we have to broaden the global tent on who can be part of the conversation. We have to hold our leaders more accountable. And we have to ask the right questions. Most importantly, we have to make climate and clean energy a nonpartisan issue, to move beyond political cycles so that when commitments are made, they are not at risk of being lost.

Panelists also called for a justice reset, to put the spotlight on the people who are the most vulnerable to climate impacts and the transition to a sustainable future. We have to support the most vulnerable people, both domestically and internationally, through loss and damage mechanisms. And adjustments must be put in place for workers in the non-renewable fuel industries and the communities that support them. Indigenous communities, in particular, will be integral to Canada's transition to clean energy.

Youth, too, are trapped in a system that doesn't support the clean energy transition. They need to develop the innovation and entrepreneurial skills that will help everyone adapt to a new future. A key issue in this regard is the environmental psychology that exists behind the things we do. Why do we make bad decisions? And how can we value justice more highly; for example, to be good to the

people whose lands we are occupying? A comment was made that maybe our leaders need to do some yoga and meditate on their values.

In some polls a majority of young people have indicated that who they will vote for is influenced by political parties' climate and energy platforms. Hence, we may be moving into a generational shift in values and priorities, in which what will and will not be supported is measured at the voting stations. One immediate policy change that youth would support is to revise the current regulatory framework in which a lot of clean energy initiatives are prevented from being successful. We also need to make solar energy more accessible, and to enhance the uptake of electric vehicles, which cost more than the budget of most young people.

Our biggest challenge is thus to create a mind shift, and a related cultural shift. We can do this through collaboration, partnerships, and shared conversations. We have to get people to work towards a brighter future through enhanced education and training, as increased knowledge and understanding can lead to action. And we need to encourage young people to get more active in climate change politics. They should be able to speak up, and to know that their thoughts and ideas and their votes matter. They can sway the vote if all eligible young people participate. Unfortunately, voting isn't currently seen as 'cool' by youth, but it needs to become so. And perhaps we should lower the voting age to 16!

The panelists offered more advice on how youth can get involved in climate action. For example, they should think about what they can offer. What skills do they have or want to develop? What Boards of Directors can they get on, either as members or as youth advisors? What electoral district associations can they interact with? What political party would they like to support? What youth organizations appeal to them (for example, Youth Climate Lab, Student Energy, Indigenous Clean Energy)? Just pick a small environmental cause and take it on (e.g., promoting reusable garbage bags). Or pick a larger cause and see if they can get a mentor. Then develop a target audience in social media. Remember, each person has unique strengths, and any action, whether local or international, can be part

of creating a better world.

The question was asked on what advice panelists would give to Prime Minister Trudeau on bringing youth voices into the climate and energy conversation. Time for this question was limited, but some thoughts that were offered include:

- Be mindful of where you are investing public money. Link it to what kind of future we are trying to create.
- Engage youth more fully on clean energy projects.
- Play a role in the Beyond Oil & Gas Alliance that was launched at COP26 and is being led by Denmark and Costa Rica. This initiative is seeking to deliver a managed and just transition away from oil and gas production.

In conclusion, the panelists demonstrated that more conversations like the one they had at the Gala can help to generate new ideas and innovative solutions to the challenges faced by Canada and our youth. We have the ability to make big changes happen. Collectively, we can create a future that's more equitable and sustainable.

THE POLLUTION PROBE AWARD

Each year, Pollution Probe recognizes individuals or organizations who have made exceptional contributions toward environmental protection and sustainability. Past winners include astronaut Col. Chris Hadfield, the organization Ocean Wise, former Prime Minister of Canada the Right Honourable M. Brian Mulroney, water warrior Autumn Peltier, and climate justice researcher Larissa Crawford.

Pollution Probe board member Natasha Arsenjenivich presented the 2021 Pollution Probe award to 15-year-old author and innovator Naila Moloo.



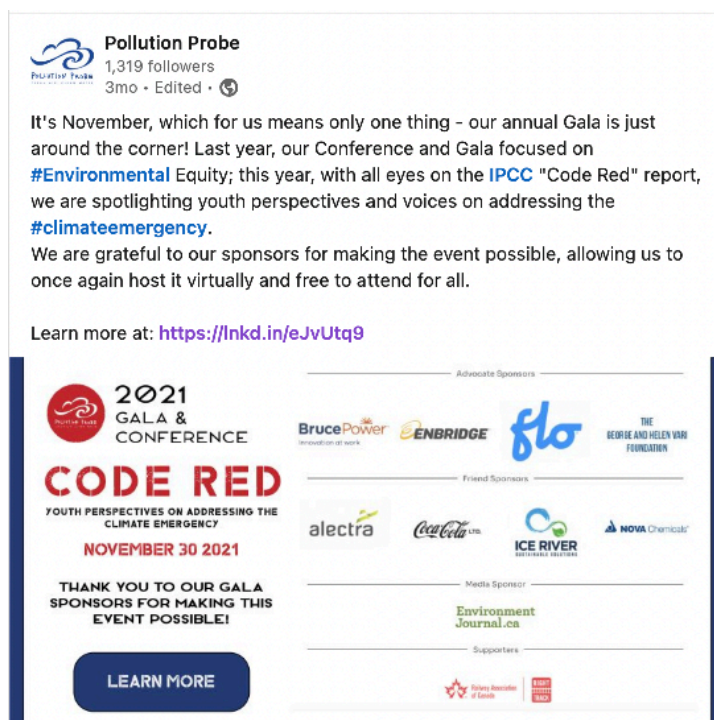
Naila is the youngest recipient of the Pollution Probe Award. She is passionate about making an impact in the sustainability sector, particularly at the intersection of sustainable energy and nanotechnology. She is developing transparent and flexible solar cells in a lab, using nanomaterials, as well as working with Pond Biomaterials to create a bioplastic from duckweed, a free-floating aquatic plant native to much of North America.

Naila published her first novel in 2021, and is combining her love of writing and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) into a new children's book series on technology and innovation. Naila was recently named the youngest recipient of Canada's Top 100 Most Powerful Women. She balances an understanding of the detrimental impacts of climate change with a confidence in innovation as a means for mitigating it.

In her remarks, Naila spoke about the hope and insight youth offer in protecting the environment, right now, not just in the future, as illustrated by her own work on bioplastics.

MEDIA OUTREACH AND PROMOTION

Pollution Probe launched a communications campaign a month prior to the conference. It featured the youth and climate change theme, the panelists, the award winner, and the sponsors. Social media platforms LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook were used to promote the event. A direct email campaign focused on colleagues in the environmental field, as well as our supporter base. A selection of illustrative media posts is provided below:



This [LinkedIn post](#) kicked off our social media campaign, introducing not only the theme of the 2021 Gala but also all our sponsors that made the event possible. This was followed up with posts highlighting our panellists and award recipient.



The goal for this [Instagram post](#) was to engage our audience and stimulate discussions with the panel. By including our panellists in the social media posts, they could also share this messaging with their colleagues, thus leveraging our outreach.



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2021 Pollution
Probe Award
Winner

NAILA MOLOO
*Nanotechnology Innovator
& Writer*


*"From a young age, I've wanted to play a role in ending our
global consumption of fossil fuels. Climate change is an
enormous issue that has always stood out to me."*

Naila is a 15 year old author and innovator passionate about the intersection of sustainable energies and nanotechnology. She is currently building transparent and flexible solar cells in a lab leveraging nanomaterial, as well as developing a bio-plastic from duckweed through interning at Pond Biomaterials.




In this [Instagram post](#), we highlighted the talent of our award winner. This also increased discussions as well as registration for the Gala. The post was shareable and helped to broaden our outreach.

Pinned Tweet



Pollution Probe
@PollutionProbe

Couldn't make it to the live event? Want to rewatch our incredible panelists breaking down all things [#climateaction](#)? Watch the panel videos featuring [@StellaBowles](#) [@BethEden_](#) Faith Edem [@hellywatts](#) & [@RickyLeeWatts](#) and Award winner [@MolooNaila](#) [@studentenergy](#) [@IndigClnEnergy](#)



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youtube.com
Watch the Gala Highlights!

2:58 PM · Jan 10, 2022 · Twitter for Advertisers.

Twitter was used in a post-Gala media campaign. The goal was to increase viewership and make the panelists' insightful conversations accessible to as many people as possible. It enabled the conference to have continued relevance as youth climate dialogues increase. The videos produced during the conference have been segmented to make different parts easily accessible. Additional tweets were posted on behalf of Pollution Probe by Environmental Journal, our media sponsor.

In total, the media outreach garnered more than 50,000 impressions across our social media channels – including views and likes as well as the number of times posts appeared on users' news feeds or front pages. A breakdown of the social media metrics for Pollution Probe's 2021 Gala Promotion includes:

- 4,817 views/impressions on Facebook
- 42,755 impressions on Twitter
- 9,200 views on Instagram
- 8,130 impressions on LinkedIn
- 716 views on YouTube

In addition, promotional emails sent to Pollution Probe's distribution network generated 3,411 hits to the Gala webpage.

Environment Journal also posted about the event during November to raise public awareness, and added event coverage on November 30th, with follow-up coverage in early December. These posts averaged about 16,000 impressions for the month of December 2021. Some of their twitter posts are shown below:



Additional posts were made on Environment Journal's LinkedIn (November 9th) and Facebook (November 8th) pages, as well as a post-event [article](#) on their website, which received 223 views.

SAVE THE DATE!



2022 Conference & Gala

November 22, 2022

We look forward to hosting you in-person again!

   @pollutionprobe | #ProbeGala

www.PollutionProbe.org/Gala

gala@pollutionprobe.org