

Part 1 (1-2 pages): Project Activities

What activities did you complete during your project?

Activity 1: Raven ReCentre contracted two artists, Cheryl McLean and Nicole Bauberger, to construct an educational display in Raven's depot. The artists worked at Raven over a period of 6 days: June 16-17, 19-20, and 23-24.

The display used waste stream plastics and tanned fish skins, among other materials, to depict the Yukon River, the fish within it, and the many sources of plastic waste that contribute to pollution. Some of the sources noted were house paint, synthetic clothing, adhesives (glue and tape), among others.

The artists made a pointed effort to integrate solutions to these sources into the display, such as a paint using flour and water, and an adhesive using corn starch and water (this mixture was used to help hang parts of the display; in some cases, it worked better than tape). Raven contributed to this display by creating a series of small posters that explained the microplastic sources and alternatives.

The construction of this display took place during the Depot's opening hours, meaning that the public could interact with the artists as they worked.

Once completed, the display remained up at Raven until the end of July.

Activity 2: We brought the artists and elements of their display to a booth at the Fireweed Market on July 3rd. As part of our booth, we also included an info board on microplastics in the Yukon River, a couple of related crafts that the artists could lead, and cookies shaped like credit cards (a credit card being the amount of plastic that humans on average consume on a weekly basis).

Activity 3: On December 2nd, Raven partnered with the Yukon Science Institute and Yukon University to participate in a lecture on microplastics in the Yukon. The lecture included presentations from three scientists. Their bios are as follows:

Mary Gamberg is a research scientist, based in Whitehorse, specializing in contaminants in the Arctic Environment. She will discuss two long-term monitoring programs in the Yukon measuring contaminants in the Porcupine caribou and Lake Trout in Lake Laberge and Kusawa Lake.

Tara Stehelin is a researcher and faculty member at YukonU with a long history of research and field work focused on biodiversity and conservation in the North. With students helping, she has a long-term project investigating microplastics in Yukon snow.

Paul McCarney is a conservation scientist working at Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and YukonU. He spoke about research monitoring plastics in wild food in Nunatsiavut, a project which is co-led by Inuit.

How did your activities contribute to your goals and objectives?

As per our application, our goal was to bring attention to the plastic pollution crisis and create conversation around its impacts on our local ecosystems, specifically our river systems, the fish species that inhabit those waters, and the people who care for and rely upon those fish. Therefore, we kept track of the number of people who engaged in our activities.

While they were setting up in our Depot, the artists estimated that, per day, they had anywhere from 10-20 people approach them to see what they were doing and engage in conversation. Cheryl also noted that "A lot of Indigenous people came forward I think for two reasons - one because I was a familiar face and they could ask me what I was doing there without feeling out of place and two, because of the tanned fish skins."

For the month of July, we were not monitoring the display to keep track of interactions, but we are able to share the number of transactions that happened in Raven's Depot and in our Reuseful Thrift Store. The Depot saw a total of 3,784 customers, and the Store saw 1,312. It is likely that there is some overlap between those numbers, but we estimate that roughly the same number of people were exposed to the display, even if they did not directly interact with it.

At our booth at the Fireweed Market, we estimate that roughly 40 people interacted with our booth, either by directly engaging with Raven staff or the artists, or by checking out our display.

The lecture with Yukon University and Yukon Science Institute had 45 participants attending in person, and 17 participants online.

Note any variances to your goals, objectives or work plan and explain why they occurred.

The major variance that occurred was that we had initially planned for all events to take place in June and July of this year. However, what we didn't account for was that most biologists are out in the field during the summer months, and thus not available for in-person lectures. We therefore had to switch gears a bit and wait until the fall.

This actually turned out to be for the best, as we were able to connect with the Yukon Science Institute (YSI), who serendipitously were planning a microplastics presentation as part of their lecture series. This was an ideal partnership for many reasons, including that it gave us access to a larger and guaranteed audience (YSI's lecture series are well-established and usually sell-out), and it increased the credibility of our message to be partnered with the science community.

We were able to contribute funding from Enhancement Trust to help secure a venue and cover one of the speakers.

Explain how the results of your work contributed to the protection, enhancement or restoration of fish, wildlife or their habitat.

Our goal with this education campaign was to not only to raise awareness in our community, but also to inspire action, care and provide strategies to lessen individual impacts. We believe that when a community cares about the places they live, they are more likely to take action to protect those places. This is about creating a cultural shift from one that sees nature as something from which to extract value to one that sees nature as something to protect.

Based on the number of people we were able to reach with this project (noted above), we believe our reach has spread greater awareness of microplastic pollution in the Yukon.

While numbers alone don't mean we achieved our goal, we believe we managed to make an impact on a significant number of people based on conversations that came out of the project. In particular, we believe the work the artists contributed to our project had a significant impact.

Cheryl McLean had this to say about her experience:

"People were shocked by the amount of microplastics in tea bags; ... many people wondered why they hadn't thought about plastic in glue and paint and how simple it is to make our own; many folks were intrigued by Nicole's paint experiments. Many were intrigued by the charcoal pencils and we even got a comment that the little fish net and boat ... [brought] awareness to how we fish using nylon nets and fishing line litter, is impacting our environment. Why do we even need plastic netting on our produce?"

"Personally I became overwhelmed about microplastics and my personal impact as a fish tanner and how every step in my processes involve plastic. I did come away from the installation hopeful on two accounts - 1 that small actions by individuals can have a big impact and two that we need to lobby governments for regulations that reduce the food industry reliance on plastic packaging!"

The lecture we participated in also yielded some good conversation with in-person attendees. People were shocked by the amount of plastic that Raven sends out to be recycled – prior to the temporary closure of our public drop-off, we recorded sending out 200 metric tonnes of plastic per year, which is roughly equivalent to the size of a full grown Blue Whale. I believe this fact along with the findings of microplastic contamination in the snow, caribou, fish and seals that the scientists presented brought home to attendees that this is a problem that is very present in the Yukon, even if it is to a lesser degree than places with larger populations.

If you were to do the project again what would you do differently?

As part of the education display in our Depot, we had set up a poster with a QR code asking for feedback from members of the public who viewed the display. We were hoping to gain insight as to how many people actively engaged with the display and what they learned from it. However, we didn't receive any feedback through this method. We're wondering if this was a visibility issue with the poster, and/or perhaps if we had set up a comment box, or something else more physically interactive, if we would have received more responses.

At the Fireweed Market, we tried to schedule a specific time for people to gather and listen to the artists discuss their experience, but we found that this strategy didn't work that well. That said, we received a steady stream of people to our booth and the artists were able to talk about the project on a more casual basis. While we don't think we lost out much in the end, should we do a similar event at the Market in the future, we would likely forgo having a fixed time and focus on attracting the attention of passers-by.

For the lecture, we didn't take into account that most biologists would be in the field throughout the summer and would be unlikely to have time to participate in our project. We therefore had to delay this element of the project. In the future when we seek to include biologists or other field workers, we would take the seasonality of their work into consideration as we decide the timeframe for holding this project.

Part 2 (1 page): Communications

What did you do to ensure your results were shared with the appropriate groups, people or governments?

The locations of the artists' portion of this project (Raven's depot and our Fireweed Market booth) were chosen in part due to convenience, but more specifically because we knew the audience we wanted to reach (i.e. the general public) frequents these locations in significant numbers. This worked well, and we were able to share our project with a significant number of the public, as noted above.

We also utilized our social media platforms on Facebook and Instagram to share information from the educational display about microplastic pollution, its sources, and alternatives to plastic products.

Describe how you recognized the Enhancement Trust and/or its mandate.

We included recognition of the Enhancement Trust's support in all our social media posts related to the project, and on information posters that we created for the artists' display in the Depot. This included a line acknowledging this support, as well the logo for Fish and Wildlife.

Additionally, we verbally acknowledged Enhancement Trust's support during our brief presentation at the YSI lecture.

Identify any communication materials, strategies or techniques that you used to promote your project and its objectives.

We used various platforms to promote this project, including regular social media posts throughout June and July (screenshots of some of these are included in this report), notification sent through the ArtsNet email list, event listings on our website, a radio spot on CKRW, short video reels for social media, physical posters printed and posted on our community board, promotion for the YSI lecture in our monthly newsletter, etc.