



## THE BLUE SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

### Thinking Blue – Teaching Blue

We are helping teachers tell the story of water to young people.

Blue Community Schools grows out of the international Blue Communities initiative – a network of communities protecting water and watersheds and promoting the human rights to water and sanitation. Founded by the Council of Canadians and Maude Barlow, Blue Community Schools expands this initiative to include elementary and secondary schools and provides educational resources for teachers and students to learn together about what it means to protect water as a public resource, and build an understanding that water is life.

Many universities, including a number in Canada, have become Blue Communities, incorporating water justice into their campus policies and practices. These include McGill in Montreal, St. Michael's and Victoria Colleges at the University of Toronto, Saint Paul in Ottawa and Brescia and King's Colleges at Western in London, and York University in Toronto.

### The water crisis

Our planet is running out of clean, accessible drinking water. The United Nations reports that, within a decade, the demand for water will outstrip supply by 40%.

Canada, although blessed with more water than many countries, is not immune to the water crisis. We have taken our water for granted and not properly cared for it. Canada faces serious issues of water contamination from industrial pollution, extractive industries, and factory farming. We are over-extracting groundwater, and our glaciers are melting. The western provinces are now experiencing consecutive years of severe drought, with a high impact on people and food production.

As well, Canada has the shameful legacy of human rights abuses in First Nations communities with a history of poor or non-existent water and wastewater services, a legacy only recently being addressed.



#### ENDORSEMENTS

### David Suzuki

Scientist and environmentalist

We have to educate everyone that as animals, we need clean air, pure water and rich soil to ensure healthy lives. Nature, not human technology, cleanses and replenishes these critical elements within the hydrologic cycle. As recipients of Nature's generosity, we all have a responsibility to care for them. Blue Community Schools is an important new teacher-friendly way to educate our kids to care for water and water justice, so they can also educate their parents.

## Join the movement

It's not too late to protect the planet's water resources and provide safe, clean drinking water and sanitation for all. We have a huge task in front of us – the climate crisis is bringing new pressures on our water resources, and a real urgency for us to act.

To protect water for current and future generations, young people must be educated and prepared for the challenges that lie ahead. By becoming a Blue Community School, your school will become part of a deeply rooted movement that is protecting water as a fundamental human right. You can help guide your students on their path to becoming water defenders.

## HOW TO BECOME A BLUE SCHOOL

**We invite your school to become a Blue Community School by taking these three pledges:**

- Educate about water and the need to protect it;
- Recognize the universal human rights to clean water and sanitation; and
- Ban or phase out the sale of bottled water at schools where clean tap water is available.



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## How to certify to become a Blue Community School

Most importantly, we invite your school to become a Blue Community School. Beyond accessing the resources here to do with water, we think it imperative that institutions of learning take a public stand in defence of protecting water and promoting water justice. We humans have seen water as a resource for our convenience and pleasure, and now must shift our view to seeing water as a sacred source of life.

We invite your school to become a Blue Community School by taking these three pledges:



Educate about water and the need to protect it.



Recognize the universal human rights to clean water and sanitation.



Ban or phase out the sale of bottled water at schools where clean tap water is available.

**We will help you celebrate your becoming a Blue Community School with a certificate and suggestion for next steps.**



### A useful tool for teachers

The Blue Schools program offers many resources for teachers to use in introducing their students to the need to care for water. Here you will find books, films and articles appropriate for all ages K to 12. As well, there are resources for educators to keep you up-to-date with the latest reports from the UN and others on the state of the world's water.



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## A useful tool for unions and the labour movement

Unions have been at the forefront of protecting public water utilities and have been a key ally in developing the Blue Communities program that does exactly that.

The Blue Communities Project is a joint initiative by the Council of Canadians and CUPE that encourages municipalities and communities to commit to protecting water by passing resolutions that acknowledge the human right to water and sanitation, ban or phase out bottled water on municipal facilities and events, and promote publicly owned and operated water and wastewater projects.

Now teachers' unions have an opportunity to educate a generation of students about the need to protect the human right to water and public water by sharing Blue Community Schools with your members.

## MATERIALS

We have prepared must-read reports on the essential information all teachers should have in order to better educate your students on this crucial issue.



We have curated a list of books aimed at assisting you in teaching your students about water and the pressing water crisis we face today. Included here are some highlights.



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### Fresh Air, Clean Water

As recommended by the CBC, Fresh Air, Clean Water, written by two BC-based authors, explains the meaning of the right to a healthy environment and features profiles of kids around the world who are fighting for their environmental rights.

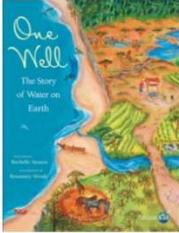
MIDDLE GRADE



### Martin and the River

Recommended by the CBC, Martin and the River is the story of a boy who moves to the city and misses his beloved river. Here he finds joy in discovering a water connection in the city. Written by an Ontario author.

AGES 3-6



### One Well

A Canadian author and British illustrator teamed up to give us this richly illustrated and popular book that explains how all water is connected, and how important it is to care for it, starting from our taps and wells. Also available as a video on YouTube.

AGES 8-12



### Hydrate the Earth

A BC author has written a compelling book, arguing that water is forgotten in much analysis and reporting on the climate crisis. By diverting and over-extracting water, humans have interrupted the hydrologic cycle that, in turn, has added to the climate burden. Water protection also plays a crucial part in regenerative agriculture, increasingly understood as the antidote to industrial farming.

FOR TEACHERS AND SENIOR STUDENTS

We have pulled together a wealth of documentaries, films, videos, and handimotions centered around water that will be helpful to you and your classrooms. We've curated a selection of excellent options for you to explore and use. Here are some highlights from the Blue Schools program.



### A Global Solution to Plastic Pollution

This is a short 2024 video that tells the story about the campaign for a global treaty to stop plastic pollution. Excellent to create political awareness in students. It was created by The Story of Stuff, an American non-profit that also produced the full length documentary, The Story of Plastic, available on their web site.

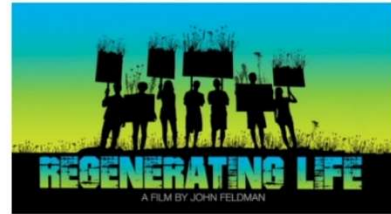
MIDDLE AND SECONDARY STUDENTS



### Eight Actions We Can All Take to Save Water

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has prepared this short video to show us how we can all save water in our day to day lives. Great discussion starter for kids of all ages.

AGES 4+



### The Story ~ Regenerating Life

This is a documentary by an American filmmaker who posits that our treatment of water, soil and forests is major contributor to the climate crisis and must be addressed if we are to save the planet. The three-part series tells how water cools the planet, the importance of protecting biodiversity and the promise of regenerative farming.

MIDDLE AND SECONDARY STUDENTS

We're excited to provide teachers with a selection of lesson plans designed to facilitate teaching about water and the critical water crisis facing our world today. Included here are some highlights of the Blue Schools resources, which are intended to enrich your curriculum and engage your students in meaningful discussions and activities.





## Back to Basics: What is a lake?

The International Institute for Sustainable Development runs the Experimental Lakes Area (ELA), a unique natural laboratory in northwestern Ontario, comprised of 58 small lakes and their watersheds, set aside for scientific research.

Here IISD helps you teach your students everything they need to know about lakes and the ELA.



## Resources for Rethinking (R4R) database

Learning for a Sustainable Future is a charity bringing sustainability into classrooms across Canada, all vetted by teachers. In Water is Life, LSF has created excellent lesson plans including treating water with respect, learning about the source of water, the human right to water and Indigenous water protectors.

LSF has many other great resources, lesson plans, outdoor activities and videos on water and sustainability for teachers.

See the full offering of educational resources at [bluecommunitieschools.org](http://bluecommunitieschools.org)

If you have any questions about the program, please contact us at [info@bluecommunitieschools.org](mailto:info@bluecommunitieschools.org)



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