

## NDG's youngest delegate to COP15

By Joel Ceasu The Suburban  
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Willingdon grade 6 student Violet Lamoureux with teacher Kathleen Usher

When tens of thousands of delegates, global stakeholders and decision-makers descend on Montreal for the CBD COP15 conference on Biodiversity next month, one of the locals in attendance will hail from NDG's Willingdon Elementary School Green Committee.

On Monday, December 12, Grade 6 student Violet Lamoureux will join the UN Environment Programme's (UNEP) main finance negotiator Jessica Smith at the conference. Violet will livestream her experience back to the Grade 6 Green Committee, its partner school in Kunming, China, and to others across the English Montreal School Board network.

Organized by Willingdon teacher Dr. Kathleen Usher, the project goes beyond a day at the conference. In advance of CBD COP15, Usher worked with Hanying Li, Regional Vice-Chair - East Asia for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Commission on Education and Communication (IUCN CEC), on a project to connect primary school-aged children from host cities Montreal and Kunming and with international delegates attending the conference.

In preparation, the Willingdon Grade 6 Green Committee and primary school students in Kunming have been learning about biodiversity, biodiversity loss and the COP15, and making videos about their fears for biodiversity loss, hopes for a brighter future and what message they want to send to leaders at COP15. The video will be shown at the conference and on the IUCN CEC youth television channel.

Given that COP15 started in Kunming, said Usher, "the idea of twinning primary schools in our respective cities presented itself as an opportunity to provide conference attendees with a youthful reminder of why their commitment to setting ambitious targets is so important."

Over the school year Willingdon's Grade 6 Green Committee will stay in touch with their Chinese counterparts as well as with Hanying li and Jessica Smith. Willingdon students will also explore how they can contribute to biodiversity protection projects in their neighbourhood and commit to supporting NGOs promoting awareness around biodiversity loss such as the Nature Conservancy Canada and the World Wildlife Fund.

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