

The **Otesha**
Project



ANNUAL REPORT 2005



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ABOUT THE OTESHA PROJECT

Otesha is a Swahili word that means “reason to dream”. The Otesha Project was created to enable and empower our generation to take action towards a sustainable future. It is based on the belief that there are alternatives to our society of over-consumption, and that each one of us has the opportunity to have a positive impact, every single day.

The Otesha Project was founded in February 2002 by Jocelyn Land-Murphy and Jessica Lax, both 21 years old, who met while studying in Kenya. Their first project as “Otesha” was to organize and lead a cross-Canada bicycle tour, in which 33 young volunteers biked from Vancouver, BC, to Corner Brook, ND, between May and October of 2003. Along the way, they presented to over 12,000 youth, using theatre and interactive workshops to teach about the impacts of our everyday choices — and the many opportunities we have for sustainable consumption. Since then, the Otesha Project has blossomed into a youth-run registered charitable organization, with over 200 dedicated volunteers and twelve full-time staff members in 2005.



“Thus, the strength of Otesha is not solely in their message and delivery, but in the passion and most importantly in the actions of its members. We have a profound amount of respect and admiration for Otesha’s members and their work. They have proved to our students that they have the power to bring about change.”

Cheryl Carr, Teacher, Norman Bethune CI, Toronto, ON

A RECAP OF THE YEAR

This year has surpassed all of our hopes and expectations, and has challenged our pre-conceptions about what young people are capable of achieving when they work together for a common purpose.

When the year began, our “office” was a cramped apartment that four of us worked and lived in. Having completed only one cycling & presenting tour in the past, and with very little confirmed funding, we were revving up to launch four new tours before the year’s end. We had never trained school groups to deliver Otesha presentations, yet we had eight teams of enthusiastic high school students from across Ontario signed up for the brand new Hopeful High school Hooligans (“Triple-H”) program. We had never published anything, but were just about to see our full-length book, *The Otesha Book: From Junk To Funk*, go to print. We knew that 2005 was going to be an unprecedented challenge, but the potential it held only invigorated us more. And what a year it was!

It began with the launch of the Triple-H program, which trained eight teams of high school students to present the entertaining and informative “Otesha Morning Choices” skit in their own communities. Over weekend training sessions, the teams were immersed in the issues of sustainable consumption, and trained to engage the public and catalyze action. These eight teams presented to over 5,000 people in their communities. Each team’s presentation was enhanced by the creativity of these young actors, veritably bursting with enthusiasm and passion! The program ended in April with a rousing Triple-H retreat in Ottawa. All eight teams re-applied to the program for the 2005-2006 school year, and they, along with two new teams, are ready to spread Otesha’s message of hope even further.

Meanwhile, the nine coordinators of the “On Two Wheels” cycling & presenting tours were busy recruiting team members, developing presentation content, planning routes, and booking presentations and accommodation. The first two tours came to life in May, as the Prairie Tour and Coast 2 Coast members hopped on their bicycles and got the wheels of inspiration rolling! Their close-knit mobile communi-

ties, explosive youthful energy, and inspiring presentations set the tone for tours to come. They were followed by the Great Lakes Tour, which covered southern Ontario in July and August, and the B.C. Tour, which spanned September and October. Six months after leaving Victoria, the Coast 2 Coast Tour finally reached Newfoundland in October, to the cheers of “Oteshaites” everywhere. Together, these four tours covered approximately 12,000 km by bicycle, and made over 600 inspiring presentations to more than 28,000 young people! Once the dust had settled, 25 touring team members gathered in Ottawa in November to celebrate, reflect, and brainstorm the possibilities for future tours.

Both the Triple-H program and the cycling tours were strengthened by *The Otesha Book: From Junk to Funk*. This book, distributed on tours and to each Triple-H participant, explores the opportunities we all have to change the world through our daily choices. Extensively illustrated, creatively arranged, and fabricated entirely from re-used materials, the book was written by 17 authors and edited by 23 separate volunteers. To date, 2,000 copies of the book, in both English and French, are in circulation. It has received rave reviews from students and teachers alike.

Other highlights of the year included: moving out of the cramped apartment into a beautiful house in downtown Ottawa, graciously offered at a discounted rent by the Fraser family; the translation of our website into French; CBC-Television beginning to film footage for an Otesha Project feature on the show “*Make Some Noise*”; being featured in the book *Our Time is Now: Young People Changing the World*; and participating in a U.S. speaking tour to promote this book.

As we reflect on 2005, we look back with wonder at how many amazing people made this year possible. Our gratitude extends to our hardworking staff —tour coordinators, Triple-H coordinators, book designers, web programmers, and more — and to the dedicated volunteers who formed the Triple-H and touring teams. We are also indebted to all the community members who housed and fed the touring

“Today, I bought a composter and set it up in my backyard. Also, I plan on saving all of my empty peanut butter jars (and ask my friends and family to do the same) to make toilet dams! I’ve also been taking staggered showers!”

Sandra, 16, Barrie, ON

teams, the teachers and school administrators who invited us to deliver Otesha programs, the many NGOs that mentored us and provided feedback, and the parents who supported their children in getting involved. And last, but definitely not least, we are incredibly grateful to our donors and funders, who believed in us when our programs only existed on paper.

Already, the impacts of each of Otesha’s 2005 programs have become evident. Testimonials from Otesha team members tell us how life-changing their experiences have been. Postcards from audience members who have begun taking daily actions to improve their environmental and social impacts are strung up around our office. Enthusiastic emails from parents and teachers show how much of a difference our programs have made in their children’s lives. And with

more than 80,000 visitors to our website this year, plus 84 media stories covering the Otesha Project, we can only begin to guess how many people are being reached by this revolution of hope and empowerment.

Now, as we begin planning for the year ahead, we are again exhilarated by the possibilities. This fall, we underwent an intensive research period, which included longitudinal surveys of program participants, qualitative and quantitative evaluation of our programs, reflection and feedback from staff and volunteers, an exhilarating visioning retreat here in Ottawa, and research into possible new programs. We’ve emerged with a renewed faith in the potential for widespread attitude and behavior change amongst young Canadians. May the wheels of change continue to spin!

THE YEAR IN NUMBERS	
Full-time staff members	12
Triple-H teams	8
Cycling & presenting tours	4
Volunteer team members	216
Distance bicycled	12, 066 Km
Community partners	93
Presentations made	722
Presentation audience	34,385
Copies of <i>The Otesha Book</i> in circulation	2,181
Website hits	Over 1 million
Media Stories	84

“Since seeing your presentation in early June I have not driven my car in almost 3 months! It needs repairs and I have opted instead to use bikes and buses, thereby reducing pollution and saving lost of money. A very empowering presentation. Thank you!”

Sandy, 58, Nelson, BC

“Last week I found 2 bikes in the garbage and me and my uncle fixed them up. Now we both have bikes to ride around town.”

Katie, 14, Ottawa, ON

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

ON TWO WHEELS: CYCLING & PRESENTING TOURS



Otesha ran four separate cycling & presenting tours in 2005, collectively covering over 12,000 kilometers:

- Coast 2 Coast Tour (April-October 2005):
Vancouver, BC to Corner Brook, NFLD.
- Prairies Regional Tour (May-June 2005):
Calgary, AB to Yorkton, SK.
- Great Lakes Tour (July-August 2005):

Niagara Falls, ON to Windsor, ON.

- British Columbia Tour (September-October 2005):
Prince George, BC to Victoria, BC.

In total, these adventures brought together over 60 young people to give inspiring Otesha presentations and workshops to their peers across the country. Each cycling and presenting tour consisted of 15-20 young people who truly worked as a team – supporting one another, sharing responsibilities and presentation roles, operating by consensus when possible, and engaging in mutual learning about environmental and social issues.

Each tour had its own sustainability mandate: a commitment to reducing the tour's ecological and social footprint.

As part of this mandate, most tours decided to eat local, vegetarian food, to compost, to wear used clothing, to reduce water use and waste, to enjoy electricity-free entertainment, and of course, to bike everywhere! These teams were not only "walking their talk," but were also showing Canadians that a globally conscious lifestyle is both possible and great fun! Over the course of the four bike tours, more than 28,000 people participated in Otesha Project education programs, including theatre presentations, workshops that focused on specific issues (from climate change to sweatshop labour), and hands-on bike repair sessions.

Communities across Canada were engaged and inspired by these touring Otesha teams, while the team members themselves gained innumerable skills, renewed energy and self-confidence, and a supportive community for years to come.

My experiences will be carried through into my life in many forms, from the way I open my ears and listen, to the clothes that I wear, to the way I look at PB & J. But most of all to the way that I believe that I can be one of the people who make a difference, as this trip has empowered me to push, push, and keep pushing."

Nathan, Tour Member

"I know this experience will have a lasting and deep effect on my life when I go back home. I will take further action in my life to live more sustainably and I will be empowered to continue making a positive impact on the world. This is only the tip of the iceberg, only the first few steps in a lifelong journey. This is only the beginning."

Alicia, Tour Member



"The presentation was awesome, the kids were still talking about it the next day. Two things "hit" the kids: the passion of the presenters, and the info on the environment which they saw in a new light. I would not change a thing ...the energy is WHAT kids love, the content was great, seeing youth take action is also important ...sometimes surrounded by the "older generation" they lose sight that all can make a difference. So it was great to see youth "talk to youth."

I hope to see you in the future."

Diane Smaggus, Eastern Shore District High School, Musquodoboit Harbour, NS

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

TRIPLE-H (HOPEFUL HIGH SCHOOL HOOLIGANS)

The goal of this pilot program was to provide a meaningful and creative way for youth to have their voices heard in their communities, while gaining leadership and organizing skills. They were taught to turn their concern about problems like over-consumption, apathy, and cynicism into positive action, using a theatre-based, peer-to-peer education program.



Throughout the 2004-2005 school year, teams of high school students across Ontario were trained to perform the entertaining and informative “Otesha Morning Choices” skit in their own communities. Each made up of 10-15 students, the teams were from the following schools:

- Lisgar Collegiate Institute, Ottawa
- Lakefield College School, Lakefield
- Applewood Heights Secondary School, Mississauga

- Unionville High School, Unionville
- Cobourg District Collegiate Institute East, Cobourg
- East Northumberland Secondary School, Brighton
- Central Peel Secondary School, Brampton
- Lincoln M. Alexander Secondary School, Mississauga

Together, these phenomenal teams presented to 5,673 of their peers!

Each team attended an intensive, three-day training session, in which the participants were immersed in the issues of sustainable consumption, and served organic, vegan food—a first for many of the students! They received intensive training in theatre, youth engagement, and program coordination. Each team took the “Otesha Morning Choices” performance and made it their own, adding new dances and raps, local references, and incredibly creative characters. With the oversight of their teacher-advisors, each team held rehearsals, booked and delivered presentations at schools and local events, and kept records for their reports. The Triple-H coordinators in Ottawa provided web and phone support, as well as an in-person support visit to each team to cheer them on through a performance.

The program culminated with a rousing Triple-H retreat in Ottawa in April. At the request of the students, the program continued again in the 2005-2006 school year, with all 8 teams re-applying! They, along with two new teams (Dr. Denison Secondary School in Newmarket and Heart Lake Secondary School in Brampton), have already begun training for the coming school year, and are ready to build on the incredible accomplishments that this program has achieved so far.

As with the cycling & presenting tours, the impacts of the Triple-H program were twofold. Audience members were inspired by seeing their own peers on stage, fearlessly sharing their hopes that a better future can result if we all make conscious changes to our lifestyles. Team Members, in turn, gained new confidence and direction as they saw the impact they were having on their peers.

“In all of these experiences I have been impressed by the professionalism, enthusiasm, genuineness and quality of the Otesha members. Both Jessica and Jocelyn have created an organization that upholds hard work, optimism, social consciousness, equity and global responsibility – all qualities that we hope our students will embody. In the end, the world will be a better place because of this work.”

Donna McAdam, Triple-H Teacher



“By being part of the Otesha experience I have become acutely aware of the effect my actions have on the world... I make better choices because of it. Even though I'd seen the skit before I'm more familiar with it now and it has more of an effect on me. Also, I've learned a lot about myself and how I come across to people. I've "loosened up" a bit and can balance work and fun better.

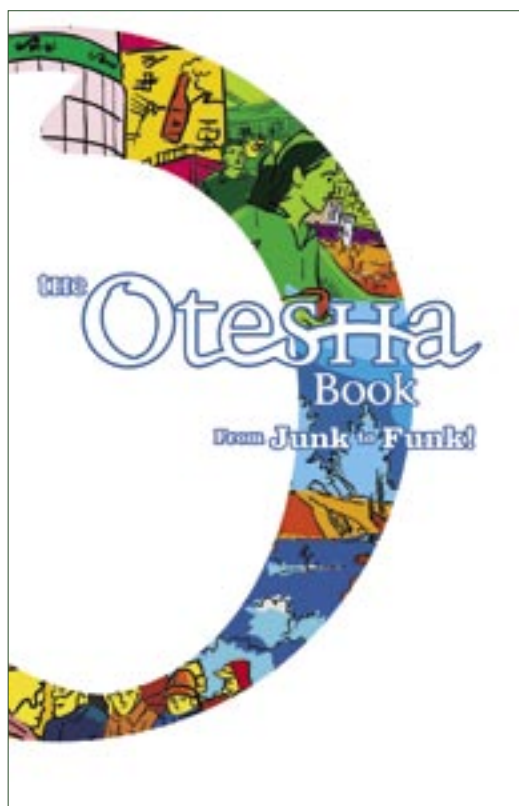
Triple-H has done a lot for me... You've changed my life!”

Liz, 16, Triple-H Member

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

THE OTESHA BOOK: FROM JUNK TO FUNK

After the first tour, we realized that a tangible follow-up tool would greatly increase the impact of our presentations. And so the task began of creating an in-depth, inspiring resource that would match the content of the “Otesha Morning Choices” skit.



The Otesha Book: From Junk to Funk did just that, and much more! It is the product of more than a year of collaboration between over 30 young writers and editors. Following the themes of the skit, the book looks at six different areas of consumption — water, clothing, media, coffee, food, and transport. Each chapter is narrated by a different member of the 2003 touring team. Interspersed with the narration are dozens of colourful comics, poems, journal entries,

fact-boxes, and personal stories. Each chapter is divided into four sections: “removing the blinders” (discussion of the problems, including “myth-busting” sections), “holding up the mirror” (personal stories by young people about how they realized that their own actions contribute to the problems), “empowerment” (inspiring stories that prove change is truly possible), and “action” (specific ideas on how to create change — “action recipes” — helpful print and web resources, etc.).

When it came time to print the book, we were careful to ensure that we “walked our talk,” by seeking out the most environmentally-friendly printing process possible. We found Warren’s Waterless, a Toronto-based printer that uses non-toxic vegetable-based inks and a revolutionary waterless printing process. The paper, in turn, was recycled (100% post-consumer waste), chlorine-free, and produced by a mill powered with bio-gas from a nearby landfill!

To push the envelope even further, we printed half the books “unbound”— just the pages — to allow for meaningful audience interaction through book-making sessions. Organized in tandem with Otesha presentations, these sessions taught participants how to make their own book covers out of reused cardboard and scrap fabric. Then the pages were attached to the covers with binder rings (made of recycled metal, of course!). In the process, participants really made the books their own. Book-owners were also encouraged to add extra pages to the books — with their own stories, information specific to their town, etc. — and then pass them on to others!

The book has been astoundingly popular, with more than 2000 copies already in circulation, and new orders coming in daily. Students and teachers have inundated us with rave reviews, and it is being used as a classroom textbook in at least three high school classes, and two university classes, and as a programming guide at one summer camp! Over the summer, the book was translated to French, and this fall, we wrote an additional 50-page guide for teachers using the book in their classrooms — a resource full of curriculum connections, fun classroom activities, and suggested assignments.

“ Whether it’s a cartoon about why bikes are more fun than cars or a story about how even guys who like steak can become vegetarians, you’re bound to feel more jazzed about your own choices after flipping around, reading a few facts, and feeling all that youthful energy behind you.”

Center for a New American Dream

Action Addicts FROM THE OTESHA BOOK



"Brilliant! Fun, interactive, engaging, a great balance of information with personal stories, thought provoking questions and back pocket resources. Every teacher, student, and parent needs to read this book... I'll do my best to make that happen."

Diz Glithero, EYES Project (Education Youth Environment Sustainability)

"This isn't just a book; it's a philosophy! It is a tool that provides information about 6 different parts of your life where you can make choices each day to change the world for the better: water, clothing, media, coffee, food, and transport."

Reader on Bookcrossing.com

AWARDS

This year, the Otesha Project received the following awards:

Youth Action Net Award, **The International Youth Foundation**, for emerging projects by youth that promote social change and connect youth with local communities. The Otesha Project was the lone Canadian recipient, among 12 global youth leaders.

CAMBIO Scholarship, **Environment Canada**, for youth action against climate change, awarded at the United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Montreal.

Tooker Gomberg Award, **Greenspiration**, for the person or event that most creatively and brilliantly made the news in the past year.

Honourable Mention: Me To We Award, **Free The Children and Canadian Living Magazine**, for outstanding Canadians making contributions to their communities.

MEDIA COVERAGE

Both Triple-H and the cycling & presenting tours generated an incredible amount of media interest, with at least 84 media stories this year! These included 59 print/web stories, 16 radio interviews, and 9 TV interviews. In addition, the Otesha Project received the following national and international coverage:



- Chapter feature in the book *Our Time is Now: Young People Changing the World*. This book features stories of thirty young people, in twenty different countries, taking action to improve their communities.
- Chapter feature in the book *Generation*, a collection of personal stories from Canadian youth that aims to capture our generation's vision for the future (to be published in February 2006).
- Feature on *Make Some Noise*, a new CBC-TV series showcasing youth who are pushing for social change (to be aired in April 2006).

"Two years ago, Otesha did a presentation at UTS for our grade nine and ten students. It was superb: funny, engaging, serious, informative and empowering for the young audience. I can say without reservation that of all the programs I've seen over the past five years, Otesha's ranks among the very best."

Rebecca Levere, University of Toronto Schools, Toronto, ON

GRATITUDE AND APPRECIATION

Each day, we are inspired as young people across Canada realize their potential to create positive change. We cheer from Ottawa as taps are turned off, staggered showers are taken, bikes are dusted off, informed consumer choices are made, local, organic, fair trade and vegetarian foods are chosen, and more people are inspired to take positive actions for a better future.

The seeds of change that have been planted amaze us. We are confident that these seeds (organic, of course!) will be planted again year after year. This revolutionary process of change would not be possible, however, without the incredible support we have received from our staff, volunteers, mentors, and donors from across Canada and the world. We are more grateful than we will ever be able to convey. We look forward to seeing the youth who have been impacted by this year's programs continue their revolutions across Canada in the months and years to come.

With Gratitude and Respect,

Jocelyn Land-Murphy, Jessica Lax, and Jeff Carolin
Co-Directors, The Otesha Project



OUR STAFF

FULL TIME

Andrea Horan
 Andrea Rideout
 Brook Land-Murphy
 Ed Gillis
 Erica Mah
 Jeff Carolin
 Jessica Lax
 Jocelyn Land-Murphy
 Keli Belaire
 Lori Waller
 Mel Jellett
 Shoshanah Waxman
 Simon Moll
 Steve Parr

PART-TIME/CONTRACT:

Ben Finkelberg
 Colin White
 Dagny Punzenberger
 Heather Jorissen Small
 Izaak Branderhorst
 John Stuart
 Kevin Lo
 Natacha Perriard
 Sofian Benaissa

OUR VOLUNTEERS

Adele Woodyard	Chad Hamre
Aditi Khandelwal	Chad Walsh
Alaine Querijero	Charlene Boddie
Alex Thompson	Cheryl McConnell
Alex Way	Christian Fournier
Alicia Taylor	Christian Slomka
Alina Kinos-Varo	Colette St-Onge
Alix Morse	Dan Gravenor
Allie Hockin	Dan Teleki
Alyssa Bird	Dana Newman
Amanda Gyokery	Denise Martins
Amanda Hill	Devan Rawn
Amandeep Aujla	Devon Boddie
Ani Collins	Dhriti Chhabra
Anita Imrie	Dino Grande
Anna Vesala	Dominique Murray
Anne Thomson	Donna McAdam
Ashneet Aujla	Ed Parker
Asna Adhami	Elisha Macmillan
Benjamin Langer	Elizabeth Kowacz
Beth Mulvale	Emiliano Braven
Bo Liu	Emily Clarey
Caryma Sa'd	Emily Friestatter
Cecilia Sydor	Emma Seager



Emma Slykhuis	James Richardson
Erica Curran	Janique Dubois
Erika Fairney	Jasmine Foxlee
Francie Morgan	Jason Lancaster
Fraser White	Jeanie Morton
Gabrielle Charron-Merritt	Jeffrey Cheng
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Grace Querijero	Jenika Wong
Grant Elliott	Jennefer Barua
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Julie Graham
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Kelsey Lavoie
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Laura Cockburn
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Michelle Scuka
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Nathan Killoran
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Tanya Wood
Tara Barnes
Tia Saley
Tom Morris
Torie Patterson
Triane Tambay
Vanessa Taylor
Vanika Chawla
Veronica Persico
Vivian Chong
Xixi Dai
Yash Mamtora



"Your presentation rocked! I've had various teachers and students come up to me saying it was super funny, but they walked away having learned a ton about how to lead a sustainable lifestyle. Keep up the good work!"

Ben Rankin, 17, Victoria, BC

OUR DONORS

(\$10,000 - \$50,000)

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 Environment Canada – EcoAction Pacific/Yukon
 Environment Canada – EcoAction Prairie/Northern
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(\$1,000-\$5,000)

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 Edith Lando Charitable Foundation
 Lifebridge Foundation
 Leo and Louanne Lax
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 Team Member Fundraising – Coast2Coast Tour
 Team Member Fundraising – Great Lakes Tour
 Team Members Fundraising – Prairie Tour
 Vancouver Foundation
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(\$500-\$1,000)

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 Fraser Lake Elementary Secondary School
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 Huron Church Camp
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(\$200 and under)

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Sarah Wellwood
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