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## Next generation

There is an old saying: “The best way to predict the future is to create it.” An **inspiring generation** of young Calgarians is doing just that by taking the future into their own hands and working to create the city they imagine.

Students and staff at Senator Patrick Burns School in northwest Calgary have been putting their own spin on sustainability for a number of years through energy conservation and waste diversion initiatives. In 2015, students closed the loop by using the money generated from refundable bottles and cans to offset the school’s electricity use. After 10 months, they were able to purchase green energy certificates from Bull Frog Power to support clean energy production such as wind and solar.

“The project was a huge success and one that really helped us look at the school as a whole system. It was an opportunity to get teachers, students and parents involved in action towards lasting change,” says Carlos Plata, one of the lead teachers in the **sustainability movement** at the school. “The next campaign will explore the feasibility of installing solar photo voltaic on the school roof.”

Young people are **driving change** by asking big questions and challenging current systems. “Kids have hope and optimism, and as a result they see a world of possibility and opportunity for innovation,” says Olena Olafson, Sustainability Coordinator for the Calgary Board of Education. “They are developing leadership skills and seeing the impact of their efforts beyond the classroom.”

Student **leadership and innovation** are at the heart of the Mayor's Environment Expo and The City of Calgary's EcoLeaders Program. This year, the Mayor's Environment Expo, which is the largest of its kind in Canada, celebrated its 27th anniversary. Over three days in June, 4,500 students and teachers participated in the event. Each year the event fills up faster and faster – showing a growing interest in environmental stewardship among Calgary's youth and teachers.

The EcoLeaders Program is an experiential education opportunity that culminates at the Expo. The program supports student teams in designing and implementing environmental projects that aim to solve real-life problems through mentorship and access to City experts. "This generation seems to sense the importance of becoming more **eco-literate** and learning about our relationship to the environment," says Robin Sauve, Sustainability Consultant for The City. "Young leaders get their families and communities involved in the projects and really focus on partnerships and collaboration – this is what makes the difference and is causing ripple effects beyond the classroom and the event" says Robin.

Students are tackling big issues with projects such as bike powered generators, school cafeteria gardens, and the impacts of weather on solar panel efficiency.

Ten years ago, imagineCALGARY set a 100 year vision that many Calgarians are working towards, but won't see the results of in our lifetime. This next generation is owning that vision and teaching the rest of us a thing or two along the way.

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