Activity #6: Helping Hands

When we think of the word "conservation" animal conservation is often the first thing that comes to mind. There are definitely lots of animals that can benefit from human help, but what about trees? The same factors that are causing animals to decline can give trees lots of trouble.

Goals

- Value trees as organisms that can benefit from human help
- Understand that everyone can have a positive impact on nature

Materials

- Native Tree Leaves in your Neighbourhood biodiversity sheet

Exercise 1: Brainstorm. Invite the students to brainstorm how humans might negatively impact trees. The following prompts may help students add to their lists.

Prompts:

- Habitat loss: Humans take up a lot of space. From housing to agriculture needs, we occupy land that used to be forested.
- Invasive species: Humans sometimes move plants and animals to new places. When a species grows in an area where it's not supposed to it can become invasive. Invasive species are often able to spread quickly and aggressively, out competing native plants and animals for resources that they need to grow.

Exercise 2: How can we help? Invite the students to brainstorm how they can help trees. The following prompts may help students add to their lists.

Prompts:

- Plant native trees: Native trees benefit their ecosystems in many ways. Why?
- Stay on trails: When walking in a forested area, it's always best to stay on the trail. Without realizing it, when you walk off the trail you might step on young trees trying to grow.
- Keep local greenspaces clean: Pollution can hurt trees. Picking up litter is a great way to keep your local greenspace clean
- Learning: Learning can be a powerful way to help nature! Knowing and caring about trees will make you more inclined to take action. You can also share your knowledge with your friends and family to encourage them to help nature.

Exercise 3: Be aware of the Rare. Species at risk are organisms that need help. The number of individuals present is low, and without human help they may continue to decline and eventually cease to exist (go extinct). You may be surprised to find that there are species at risk growing in your neighbourhood! Using the Native Tree Leaves in your Neighbourhood biodiversity sheet try to find a species at risk like:

Kentucky Coffee tree, Elm, Honey Locus, Ash, Butternut