IISD Experimental Lakes Area

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Keeping Our Freshwater Lakes Free of Plastics:

An essay/visual contest for IISD-ELA

You would have to have been living under a rock for the last few years to have missed the international uproar about the impact of plastics and microplastics on the health of the world's water supplies.

Plastic pollution is one of the greatest threats to aquatic ecosystems in the world, so much so, in fact, that we have just launched an unprecedented research project to find out how much microplastic is in our lakes, and the impact it has on the lake health.

We are asking Canadian school students (under 18 years of age) to submit an essay or a visual entry in which they **(1) research a freshwater lake from anywhere in the world and (2) depict (a) technological solution(s) to manage and reduce plastic/microplastic pollution in that lake.**

The top entries from both categories will win an all-inclusive trip for two to IISD Experimental Lakes Area to learn, first-hand, how we carry out our unique brand of freshwater research.

Contest Rules

ELIGIBILITY

The IISD Experimental Lakes Area "Keeping Our Freshwater Lakes Free of Plastics" essay or visual contest is open to residents of Canada who are currently enrolled in Grade K–12 at a Canadian institution and are returning to school in the fall of 2020. Students should have a designated teacher to guide them through the process and review the materials before submission.

CONTEST PERIOD AND ENTRY

To be eligible for the contest, contestants **must** submit all of the following documents:

- their entry for one of the two categories (*either* essay or visual)
- the completed entry form;
- the completed consent and agreement form.

Entries must be submitted no later than **April 20, 2020, at 11:59 p.m. CST.**

The contestant must submit either a written essay or a visual that follows the following guidelines:

If you choose to submit a written essay:

1) The contestant must:
    - Choose a freshwater lake from anywhere in the world;
    - Consider the whole ecosystem and explain how plastic pollution may effect the different aspects of lake ecology (water chemistry, algae, insects, zooplankton, fish, etc.);
    - Depict a technological solution to help combat plastic or microplastic pollution within that lake;
    - Relate the technological solution to an aspect of lake ecology (e.g. water chemistry) and describe its potential impact.

2) The essay entry:
    - must not exceed 2,000 words in length (excluding references);
    - should be written in 12-point font, single space with one-inch margins and numbered pages;
    - should include scientific references of resource material used in a standard format;
    - should include a cover page;
    - must be submitted as a .pdf file to education@iisd-ela.org; and
    - must be in English or French.

3) Only one entry per person is permitted.

If you choose to submit a visual entry:

1) The contestant must:
    - Choose a freshwater lake from anywhere in the world;
    - Consider the whole ecosystem and explain how plastic pollution may effect the different aspects of lake ecology (water chemistry, algae, insects, zooplankton, fish, etc.);
    - Depict a technological solution to help combat plastic or microplastic pollution within that lake;
    - Relate the technological solution to an aspect of lake ecology (e.g. water chemistry) and describe its potential impact.

2) The visual entry can include:
    - A short video; **OR**
    - An infographic

3) A short video:
    - must not exceed three minutes in length;

- must be uploaded to YouTube, either as a public link or private link; and
- must be in English or French.

4) An infographic:
    - must be one page; and
    - must use both visuals and text

PRIZES

There are two prizes up for grabs this year:

1) There will be two individual winners selected, one per category. This years' prize is an all-inclusive trip for two (winner + guest) to IISD-ELA! We will cover the cost of flights to Winnipeg, transportation to the IISD-ELA facility, meals and accommodations, and educational programming. This experience will offer a unique opportunity to interact with our researchers, scientists, and students working at IISD-ELA. You will receive hands-on experience in environmental science – notably: limnology, the "whole-ecosystem" concept, chemistry, ecological interactions and more! – boosting your resume and post-secondary applications!
2) Honorable mentions for the runner-up in both categories will also be selected. They will be awarded with a participation certificate, and their visual/essay will be published on our website.

JUDGING THE ENTRIES

Entries will be judged by a panel of judges comprised of IISD-ELA researchers and scientists.

JUDGES CRITERIA

Below is the rubric by which essays will be graded. The description provided applies to the desired minimum standard for each set of criteria.

Criterion	
The issue (/10)	The author/videographer explores relevant aspects of plastic pollution and their lake intelligently. A strong understanding of the potential issues discussed informs relevant and appropriate inferences.
Science (/10)	The author/videographer explains the potential impact on the lake

	using scientific evidence. Considers other effects that could influence the identified impact.
Creativity (/5)	The author/videographer creatively describes the lake, the issues and the science, engaging the reader/viewer and inspiring them to learn more or get involved.
Format (/5)	Narrative and flow is concise and well organized. Understanding of scientific topics is apparent, and science is discussed intelligently in the context of the topic. All scientific claims and citations are referenced in a consistent format.

FINALISTS AND WINNERS

The two individual winners will be notified no later than May 8, 2020 that that they have been selected, and of the procedure to follow to claim their prize.

QUESTIONS

If you have any further questions, please contact Sarah Warrack at education@iisd-ela.org.

IISD Experimental Lakes Area (IISD-ELA) is a world-renowned freshwater research facility located in northwestern Ontario, Canada. IISD-ELA is an exceptional natural laboratory composed of 58 small lakes and their watersheds set aside for scientific research. It is one of the only places in the world where it is possible to conduct experiments on whole ecosystems. Operated by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), a policy think-tank headquartered in Winnipeg. In its 50+ year history, IISD-ELA has served as the site for landmark whole-ecosystem studies focusing on the causes and ecological impacts of eutrophication, acid rain, heavy metal contamination, and hydroelectric damning, among others.