

Attention: News/Health/Environment/Assignment editors

## **ONTARIO'S YOUTH TAKE A GLOBAL STAND FOR SMOKE-FREE SANDS**

"Wake Up World Beach Day at Sandbanks"

**PICTON, ON, May 31** – Tobacco-free youth groups from communities across Eastern Ontario united at the Dunes Beach of Sandbanks Provincial Park to raise awareness about the direct impact of Tobacco Industry products and smoking on the environment and the health of young people.

"A smoke-free beach is very important for preserving our environment by reducing the most littered item in the world, cigarette butts, and to create a healthy, safe place for children to enjoy," said Jen Nurse, peer leader with UNfiltered, a tobacco-free youth group from Hastings & Prince Edward County.

In a recent Canadian coastal clean-up the by-products of Tobacco Industry Products, including cigarette butts and discarded packaging, accounted for more than 27 per cent of the litter collected. According to a recent report from the Ontario Medical Association, approximately 4.3-trillion cigarette butts are littered around the world every year and each butt can take up to 25 years to biodegrade.

Second hand smoke on the beach is also a serious issue. A recent study from Stanford University showed that a person standing or sitting near smoke from commercial tobacco outdoors can breathe in a significant level of contaminated air. The air within a few meters of the smoke is as high as 50 times more toxic as the surrounding unpolluted air.

While youth cleaned Dunes Beach of cigarette butts, beachgoers were treated to a variety of educational carnival games about the need to keep second-hand smoke and cigarette butts off of all beaches worldwide. The event opened with an aerial photograph of all youth coming together to take a global stand for smoke-free sands.

"Today is World No Tobacco Day and the theme is 'Tobacco Free Youth' said Jeffery Satchwill with the expose youth group from Ottawa. "In honour of this day, our groups are working together raise awareness on the issue of Tobacco Industry products on beaches because the stats and research show that this is truly a global issue."

"Smoking on beaches is an important issue, which doesn't get enough attention," adds Kaelyn Hunter from Raize the truth, the youth group in Leeds, Grenville, Lanark.

The Area Youth Coalition (AYC) of Eastern Ontario is a collaboration of youth who refuse to be targeted by the tobacco industry, and is comprised of Youth Action Alliances from: Hastings, Prince Edward County, Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington, Leeds, Grenville & Lanark, the City of Cornwall, the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, the United Counties of Prescott-Russell, the City of Ottawa, and Renfrew County & District. For more information visit [www.smokefreeeast.ca](http://www.smokefreeeast.ca)

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Contacts:

Kate Humphrys  
Eastern Area Youth Coalition  
613-549-1232 x 574

David Bard (Bilingual)  
expose program, Ottawa  
613-580-6744 x 30506