

WEB RELEASE

For Immediate Release

November 26, 2009

NWCC pitches in to pitch resource management

SMITHERS – Every fall, the Council of Forest Industries (COFI) puts on a Natural Resource Management Career Awareness Camp to encourage students in Grades 10-12 to consider forestry related careers. This September, Northwest Community College (NWCC) University Credit instructor Rick Budhwa and Regina Saimoto, Smithers and Houston campus principal, provided workshops in the Bulkley Valley related to fisheries and archaeology to 42 high school students from the area.

Hands-on workshops delivered by local experts enabled students to try out equipment, to collect data, to identify fish and to talk to professionals in the industry to see what it takes to work in forestry.

The camp brought students from various schools together, including three foreign exchange students from Norway, Sweden and Brazil respectively, in an effort to broaden their understanding of the forest industry and the natural resource industry as a whole.

“It made students more aware of the balancing that occurs between development and the protection of natural and cultural resources,” said Saimoto.

The annual event also provides an excellent opportunity for post-secondary institutions— NWCC representatives were joined by counterparts from the College of New Caledonia and from the University of Northern British Columbia—to talk about the value of post-secondary education.

“The camp also encourages students to consider post-secondary education, and especially options closer to home,” added Saimoto. “By involving community experts, post-secondary institutions and schools, the camp helps build community and relationships.

In addition, the camp introduces students to instructors and staff at local colleges in an effort to build connections with high schoolers and potentially ease their transition to post-secondary studies. It also helps students see the connection between what they are learning in secondary school and how it is relevant to careers in natural resource management.

“Not all of these (students) will necessarily consider a career in forestry,” said Jon Goalder, a career counsellor at Smithers Secondary School. “But providing opportunities for forest-related employment to students can only serve to get students more interested in working in resource sectors.”

Chris Lear of COFI sets up the camp, with help from local groups. In addition to the post-secondary institutions, West Fraser Mills arranged for field sites, permits, and some experts to provide workshops. Budhwa arranged for the assistance of a member of the Wet’suwet’en, and a representative from the Bulkley Valley Research Center to help deliver his portion of the program. The Ministry of Forest and Range fire protection branch also provided workshops.

Resource North Association (Prince George) and COFI financed the camp, which is held annually. NWCC has been a participant since 2003.

Photo cutline: Northwest Community College Anthropology and Archaeology instructor Rick Budhwa talks to high school students from the region during a workshop that was part of the Natural Resource Management Career Awareness Camp put on by the Council of Forest Industries.

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Northwest Community College is an accredited post-secondary education institution that offers a range of comprehensive courses and programs to the northwest region of British Columbia. It serves this area through campuses in Haida Gwaii (Kaay Llnagaay, Masset, Queen Charlotte), Hazelton, Houston, Kitimat, Nass Valley, Prince Rupert, Smithers and Terrace. NWCC celebrates the diversity of its northern and First Nations populations and reflects this diversity in its programs, services and workforce.