

BC Green Games highlight school environmental projects

By Marlyn Graziano, Editorial Director for Canwest Community Publishing

If you're looking for a little eco-inspiration, check out the BC Green Games website at www.bcgreengames.ca.

There you will find an online gallery of the 140 environmental projects submitted by students in schools across the province as they competed in the very first BC Green Games. In all, schools from 34 districts took part in the competition, which was open to students from kindergarten to Grade 12 and was "designed to motivate action, enable sharing and reward and celebrate the green efforts of schools in B.C."

And if you're wondering what young British Columbians are doing to reduce their impact on the environment, all you need to do is visit the website.

For BC Green Games project manager Kate Henderson, the legacy component of the competition is important.

The website is now a repository of the projects and so will continue to inspire others, says Henderson. Going forward, for example, a Grade 4 teacher can take a look at what other Grade 4 students are doing to make their schools greener. The ideas are there to be shared and can form a foundation for future initiatives. That's already happening, she says.

But there was more than inspiration behind the competition -- there was also \$50,000 to be won. A judging panel made up of 47 environmental professionals and educators chose 12 elementary and 12 secondary school winners, and each winning school received \$2,000. Two viewer's choice awards (one each for elementary and secondary) came with \$1,000 prizes. As well, three of the winning schools were randomly selected to win solar panel systems donated by Solar BC to be installed at schools.

BC Green Games is a partnership between the Ministry of Education and Science World. It was developed in collaboration with the North Vancouver and Richmond school districts and the Environmental Educator's Provincial Specialist Association. Projects had to be action-oriented and had to be told digitally, using PowerPoint or video, for example.

Composting and recycling were common themes, says Henderson. Projects ran the gamut from those that were just getting underway to those in which a school-wide program already in place and students could document how it had worked so far and where they wanted to take it next.

"There were a few projects that really blew us away," says Henderson. "Kids showed they know who to talk to (about environmental issues)."

Students were also involved behind the scenes.

A Youth Advisory Group made up of 15 students from five Lower Mainland schools met four times at Science World -- twice during the development period and twice during the application period.

They helped with high school outreach and felt great that they were listened to, says Henderson.

And hearing what kids have to say is important, she adds, relating a comment made at a recent Green Schools Conference: "Listen to the kids, because they're coming up with great ideas."

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In all, the B.C. Green Games attracted 140 entries from 34 school districts across British Columbia. A panel of environmental experts selected 24 winning projects, with each winning school receiving \$2,000. In addition, two \$1,000 viewer's choice awards were given out, with a total of 9,000 votes being cast online. Three school names were drawn from the list of winners and these schools will receive a solar photo-voltaic system donated by SolarBC.

Elementary School Winners:

Tuc-el-Nuit Elementary

T M Roberts Elementary

Westwood Elementary

Kelset Elementary

Telkwa Elementary School

Admiral Seymour Elementary

Kersley Elementary School

W D Ferris Elementary

Erma Stephenson Elementary

Bench Elementary

Chartwell Elementary

Dogwood Elementary

Secondary School Winners:

Reynolds Secondary-Zero Waste

Reynolds Secondary-Courtyard

Robert Alexander McMath Secondary

Dover Bay Secondary

Killarney Secondary

Royal Oak Middle School

Nakusp Secondary

Windermere Community Secondary

New Westminster Secondary

Fraser Heights Secondary

Rockridge Secondary

Burnaby Mountain Secondary

Viewer's Choice Winners:

Chartwell Elementary

Windermere Community Secondary

SolarBC Prize Winners

Admiral Seymour Elementary

Reynolds Secondary-Zero Waste

Dover Bay Secondary

(source: www.bcgreengames.ca)

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