



Bright Future in Forestry Education

By SARA GRADY

It's not uncommon to see an ocean of grey hair at a Woodlot meeting. According to a recent survey, the average age of BC's forestry worker is 62, and the Woodlot demographic is almost certainly no exception. Strategies for drawing the next generation into the program are a hot topic at the Federation's annual meetings. For Island woodlotter Dave Younger, whose 13-year-old son Tom has shown a keen interest in continuing the family operation, and Harold Macy, who hands the reins to his son Joshua this year, the future of their tenure is secure.

While there are a small handful of multi-generational forestry families handing their licences down the line, the woodlot program is also getting a leg-up from some outside sources. Developments like a shift in education priorities at the provincial level and the revitalization of forestry-themed summer camps are creating momentum for programs that have quietly been operating for years, and inspiring new programs designed to engage youth in the natural resource sector. And that's good news for the future of woodlots.

It's been about five years since the Education Ministry introduced their philosophy of 21st Century Learning. The principle: create more nimble minds that can adapt to new technologies and the resultant change in the job market. A "student-centred" pedagogy gave rise to "Project-based Learning".

The theory: kids, in consultation with their teachers, conceive projects that require myriad skills – math, science, social studies, language arts – and conduct research, collaboratively



All over the province, youth are getting hands-on opportunities to learn more about the forestry sector, like these students in Lumby working on Woodlot #1908 as part of the Forestry and Trade program at Charles Bloom Secondary School.

or individually, then generate reports that demonstrate not only the "three Rs" of education, but also critical problem-solving skills.

The practice: elementary and secondary schools around the province are framing their project-based learning around forestry education, though its shape and scope varies from region to region.

At the elementary school level, the experience most often focuses on environmental awareness, featuring activities such as nature hikes on interpretive trails. Camps like Woodlot-based Gavin Lake in Cariboo country and Silver Lake in Peachland, as well as retreats like Evans Lake in Squamish, play host to hundreds of school children every year who spend their days learning about tree species, wildlife habitat, and

the interplay between lakes, streams and forests, and the health of our ecosystem.

Options at the high school level afford more specific exposure to the countless careers waiting in the trees. For 25 years, a Forestry program has been running at Rutland Senior Secondary in Kelowna, offering targeted training in job-ready fields like Utility Arborist, and post-secondary prep for careers in Environmental Engineering and Conservation.

Charles Bloom Secondary in Lumby has been providing Grade 11 and 12 students with the chance to learn in a woodlot-based classroom since the 70s, offering training in chainsaw and heavy equipment operation and maintenance, workplace safety, furniture building and – equally vital – team-building skills.

The School of Common Sense in Port Alberni, which resides on a working Woodlot licence, gives students the opportunity to get hands-on training operating a Christmas tree farm. As one student pointed out, in addition to the core school curriculum, they learn "how to think, how to learn, how to work."

The most recent entrant to the project-based learning model is growing at Carhihi High School in Campbell River, where students in the Forestry program choose an area of study and research throughout the year. Among other things, this year's students have examined local watersheds, visited active logging operations, and conducted stream traversing as part of an engineering module.

With the door wide open to careers in natural resources, especially forestry, it's reassuring to know there are so many students waiting to walk through.

Christmas Trees Provide Economic & Environmental Benefits

Having a real, Canadian-grown Christmas tree is a cherished tradition for many people around the world.

Real Christmas trees also play a role in Canada's economy. Around three to six million Christmas trees are cut every year from Canadian Christmas tree farms and native pine and fir stands. About half of the total harvest is exported each year, mostly to the United States, for a value of \$26.7 million (2012).

It's interesting to note that \$49.5 million is the total value of artificial Christmas trees imported to Canada in the same year, which comes with a large environmental footprint. Not surprisingly, the number of farms and the area devoted to growing Christmas trees is declining.

BC produces about 900,000 Christmas trees, most of which originate in the East Kootenay region. It's estimated that 75% are harvested from native stands grown on private lands and 20% come from Crown land, as well as BC Hydro right-of-ways. There are about 450 individual growers located in the Fraser Valley, on Vancouver Island, and in the Okanagan Thomson and Kootenay regions.

These trees are grown as a cash crop, which contributes to BC's local economy and creates employment. Trees growing in a natural forest, or on a tree farm, are an environmentally friendly choice as they produce oxygen, take up carbon dioxide and can be turned into mulch when Christmas is over.



Photo by Wim Tewinkle

Wishing you all the happiness of the Christmas Season and Best Wishes for the New Year.

SCHOLARSHIPS SUPPORT YOUTH

The FBCWA has supported education through scholarships since 2001. Initially there was only one scholarship for \$500. Starting in 2014, the Federation is happy to be awarding two scholarships, for \$2000 and \$1000 respectively. Students related to a woodlot licensee and/or private forest land owner and attending post-secondary education, preferably in a natural resource related area of study, are eligible for these awards.



Wickaninnish Community school from Tofino visited the Project Based Learning students in their 'classroom' in the woods in Port Alberni. They learned about the plants and animals and also got to choose their classroom Christmas tree.



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