

**Grant to help students learn about protection of the Shuswap Watershed**  
*by Barb Brouwer, Shuswap Market News*  
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The Shuswap watershed will be getting a lot more attention in School District #83 and the community, thanks to a \$5,000 grant from RBC.

Wendy Gaudet, manager of client care at the local branch happily handed over the cheque last Wednesday, saying School District #83's proposal is a perfect fit with the parameters set by RBC's Blue Water Project Community Action Grant program.

The proposal submitted by Kim Fulton, a retired teacher and Shuswap Watershed project education co-ordinator, is intended to make students (and the community) aware of the critical importance of water in general and the watershed in particular.

Students will engage in hands-on projects Fulton describes as science in action, with older students mentoring younger, projects such as replanting riparian zones, marking storm drains, doing water quality testing, wildlife inventory, monitoring minnows and salmon and taking part in public education initiatives.

"Living in the Shuswap and Okanagan, and in Canada, we have a myth that there is an abundance of water," he says. "Every time we send contaminants down the drain, it goes to the ocean."

Salmon Arm Secondary science teacher Dave Ramsay is excited as he describes a major curriculum project he created as part of his masters program in leadership and administration. "I designed it in pieces to share and as a whole course," he says, noting his work integrated some of Fulton's previous work and forms a full-year curriculum. But individual sections can easily be used in several different courses – sociology, geography, geology and others.

"Kids will be learning about the bigger picture with local application," he said with enthusiasm. "I've got a lot of ideas to make this thing go."

Acknowledging Fulton's past work as a teacher, and with the Kingfisher Interpretive Centre, superintendent Dave Witt called the plans "a great recipe for engagement, with local applications kids can feel, touch and taste."

"The criteria is open-ended so classes can choose their own projects," said Ramsay, noting students will also educate their parents. "We're not going to tell kids what is, they're going to find out for themselves."

Saying the project "has legs of its own," Ramsay easily envisions Okanagan College specializing in economic sustainability with a focus on water.

Fulton agrees, calling the study of water a "natural interdisciplinary theme."

“The beauty of a watershed as a curriculum focus is it crosses cultural boundaries, relates to different disciplines and allows for a wide range of subject matter, including economics,” he said.

The program will roll out in schools throughout the Shuswap Watershed in partnership with the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), Columbia Shuswap Regional District, Salmon Arm Fish and Game Club, Kingfisher Interpretive Society, Shuswap Watershed Poster Project and Wild BC.

Schools will provide in-kind support for supplies and materials.

The RBC Blue Water Project is a 10-year, global commitment to help protect the world’s fresh water.

The commitment is extended through provision of \$50 million in charitable grants to non-profit groups that protect watersheds and provide or ensure access to clean drinking water. Since 2007, RBC has committed more than \$28 million in single and multi-year grants to more than 380 organizations.