

Need for water supply connects all communities

“Water is Life.” This simple but powerful statement captures the essential role of water in supporting biological diversity – the earth’s variety of species and ecosystems.

In its third month, the Chemainus Biodiversity Education Project initiated activities to explore biodiversity of local rivers and the social and cultural significance of water.

The riparian focus complements previous activities involving forest and marine ecosystems.

“Whether we are talking about turning on a tap in our homes, getting caught in a rain shower, or the flow of our local rivers, water is something that connects us to one another and to the ecosystem,” said one of the project coordinators, Dr. Kelly Bannister. “How we steward water affects all life.”

The project recently partnered with the Halalt First Nation to learn about stewardship of the Chemainus River. An invited group of naturalists, consultants, biologists and cultural experts took a guided walk along the river with Halalt’s Herman Thomas and Dave Bodaly in

mid-August.

Walking along a traditional fishing trail, participants learned about plants as medicines and the interconnectedness of plants, fish, animals and people with the river.

The importance of giving young people first-hand experience in the outdoors and teaching children respect for nature was emphasized. Halalt involves school groups in releasing salmon fry into the river.

Also stressed was the importance of history to understand the river – and Halalt’s concerns about the river’s health.

“People who have moved here recently think it is a beautiful place. They don’t realize all the changes that have happened,” Herman Thomas explained. “Our elders remember when the waters of the river were deep and swift. The Chemainus River used to be like the Cowichan River. Now it is more like a creek.”

The Halalt community is located on an aquifer that is connected to the Chemainus River. The aquifer is the source of Halalt’s drinking water. Halalt opposes the Municipality of North



Dave Bodaly (second from right) co-led the Chemainus River walk

Cowichan’s application under review by BC’s Environmental Assessment Office to extract water from the aquifer to supply the growing town of Chemainus.

Herman Thomas commended the Biodiversity Project for its work and issued the following challenge: “Do what you can to educate your community to be more thoughtful about change – the meaning of environmental changes and the need for political changes that are thoughtful about the next generation. Water is at the heart of all issues for Halalt.”

The biodiversity project is one of several supporters of “Honour Our River Day” being hosted by Halalt in September to raise awareness of the biological and cultural importance of the Chemainus River.

The Chemainus Biodiversity Education Project is a pilot collaboration between local communities and the POLIS Project on Ecological Governance at UVic.

For information see <http://www.polisproject.org/projects/biodiversityeducation>.



Bill Yarbrough
Deli Manager



Armed with a solid background in the grocery business, Bill Yarbrough is hoping to enhance the products and services offered in the deli department at Chemainus Foods.

“We’re going to be bringing in lots of new cheeses and different products,” says Bill, who joined the staff at Chemainus Foods in early August.

“And we’re going to start doing custom catering for dinners and special occasions.”



Bill is also hoping to build the party tray side of the deli business in the coming months. Currently living in Crofton, Bill would like to move a little closer to work and is hoping to find a home in Chemainus.

“It is a very close-knit community and I really like it here,” says Bill who is originally from Vancouver.

“The biggest part of my job is talking to people and that really is the most enjoyable part.

“I’d like for people to come in and give us a try.”

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