



wildsight

For Immediate Release

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1,800 kids say “thank you” to sponsors

Wildsight’s Classroom with Outdoors program wraps up its ninth successful season

Columbia Basin —This spring, approximately 1,800 students took part in Wildsight’s Classroom with Outdoors program across the Columbia Basin and the Crowsnest Pass. They went on day-long field trips that featured games and activities in wetlands, forests and grasslands.

“This was our ninth season delivering Classroom with Outdoors,” said Monica Nissen, Wildsight’s education program manager. “I’d like to thank our sponsors on behalf of the 89 classes and 1,800 kids who participated this year,” Nissen said. “Our main supporter, Columbia Basin Trust, has been a great help, as have the BC Gaming Commission, the Shell Environmental Fund and Unilever.

“We are extremely grateful to local businesses, private donors and Parent Advisory Councils throughout the Basin who stepped up and supported the program so students could benefit from it.”

Nissen said teachers, principals and parent volunteers can also feel good about their contributions, “They were instrumental in making this season’s Classroom with Outdoors a success.”

Nissen said that Classroom with Outdoors aims to help kids develop *ecological literacy*.

“Ecological literacy means learning how nature works,” Nissen said, “and how human societies and economies depend on clean air, water, soil and other resources. Students learn how our interactions with the natural world can have both positive and negative impacts.

“Ecological literacy gives kids a lifelong advantage—and going outside to BE in nature is the first step to developing it.”

The program is wrapping up as schools wind down for summer vacation—which is perfect timing, Nissen said. “Summer is a good time for parents to build on what their kids have learned by taking them outside to explore nature in respectful ways,” she said. “Nature walks, camping, bird watching, swimming in lakes: these experiences in the great outdoors help build a community of people who care about the environment.”

Nissen said teacher feedback has been positive.

“I liked that the students were turned into teachers and had to teach certain things to their peers. Excellent learning strategy,” said Sarah Rota, a teacher at Mount Begbie Elementary in Revelstoke.

“This program creates a strong impact on students’ attitudes towards the outdoors and creates a strong awareness about how one should behave and act in the outdoors to protect the environment,” said Amber Nielsen, a teacher at Kimberley’s McKim Middle School.

Teachers see Classroom with Outdoors as having an impact on the skills, awareness and behavior students have around environmental stewardship. Mrs. Davidson, a teacher at Isabelle Sellon School in Blairmore, Alberta, said, “Students share their experiences and learning with their parents.”

As for the students themselves: “They just love to get outside, to learn and to have fun,” Nissen said. “To them, Classroom with Outdoors is one the year’s highlights.”

For more info, check out the website: <http://www.wildsight.ca/programs/education>

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About Wildsight

Wildsight works locally, regionally and globally to protect biodiversity and encourage sustainable communities in Canada’s Columbia and Southern Rocky Mountain region. This area is internationally recognized as a keystone to conservation in western North America. For more information, please visit www.wildsight.ca.

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BACKGROUND: CLASSROOM WITH OUTDOORS

Classroom With Outdoors is an award-winning environmental education program providing an opportunity for Grades 4 to 7 students to spend a day in a natural ecosystem near their school. Students receive lessons in science and nature through experiential learning and physical activity.

The 5-hour, curriculum-based field trip supports concepts taught in the classroom with practical applications outdoors. Students have fun while exploring the components of wetlands, grasslands, forests and old growth forests and learning about the natural world. Each grade has a specific program, exploring ecosystems with different themes and lessons. Teachers are provided with resource materials, and all field instruction is delivered by local environmental educators throughout the East and West Kootenays.