
Multi District Outdoor Camp on Hornby Island Inspires Youth to Lead Environmental Change

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COMOX VALLEY, B.C. – Thirty-five young women from across BC came to Hornby Island 14 July for an environmental stewardship journey and left five days later with a wealth of knowledge, new insights and an abundance of inspiration that will help them implement action for a cleaner future.

Their educational experience is part of a multi-school district Ocean Literacy and Leadership Camp (OLLC), a course designed to teach secondary students ages 15 to 18 about climate issues, ocean conservation, advocacy options, and how to develop actionable goals to lead change.

The course, created by Comox Valley Schools in partnership with Ocean Wise, Tribune Bay Outdoor Education Center (TBOEC), and Navigate NIDES, is offered to all school district in the province. The curriculum combines ocean literacy with a critical leadership model called ‘The Successful Learner Traits,’ according to Serina Allison, District Environmental and Outdoor Learning Lead Teacher.

“Girls examine their inner strengths and perspectives to determine whether they are innovative or a good communicator, and to see what they bring to the group from their personal experiences or that they can reflect on from the speakers,” explained Allison. “We look at a wide variety of environmental issues from sewage run-off, marine traffic and noise and ocean debris. The girls then attached their internal strengths and passions to learn more about a specific issue and what they can do to implement positive change.”

During the six-day camp, students participated in a variety of workshops led by environmental activists and educators including Tzeporah Berman, one of the key Clayoquot Sound anti-logging campaign organizers who accomplished other environmental changes such as influencing Facebook to switch from using coal to renewable energy to fuel its data centers around the world.

Students received an inspirational talk by Talli Osborne who shared her story of learning how to adapt in life without arms and missing a portion of both her legs. Through determination, Talli discovered her gifts and embraced her talents to motivate others. She is now a renowned inspirational speaker who presents to audiences throughout Canada and the United States.

Unique to the program this year were two presentations by women who are leading plastic-free lives; one a representative of Ocean Wise’ Great Canadian Shoreline Clean-up, the other a student entering Grade 11 at G.P. Vanier Secondary who participated in the inaugural camp in 2018 and used her learning experience to create a plastic elimination initiative for her school.

Tanya Otero of the shoreline clean-up initiative led a beach clean-up along Tribune Bay helping the students amass 13 pounds of debris within 15 minutes. Hailey Renaud of Ocean Wise said the clean-up was to demonstrate to the young women that even on the most pristine beaches where marine and wildlife life live and roam, plastics continue to wash up and get trapped in shoreline vegetation and often go unnoticed.

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“I want these girls to not only be connected with nature and care about the ocean but feel empowered that they are able to make a change, shared Hailey Renaud. “Ocean Wise’s mission is really about connecting youth and trying to inspire them through nature.”

Camp participants furthered their understanding of the beach dynamics during an intertidal assessment with Deep Bay Marine Field Station, an education research center affiliated with Vancouver Island University.

For Taryn Ell, a student enrolled with Navigate NIDES, the Marine Field Station workshop was her favourite component of the program. Ell encourages anyone considering OLLC in the future to sign-up.

“[The camp] has really opened my eyes to many things. I personally didn’t know anybody but said, ‘I’m going to do it’ because it will put me out of my comfort zone and I’m going to learn so much,” shared Ell. “I would honestly say just do it because it’s such a cool experience.”

As with all Tribune Bay Outdoor Education programs, OLLC involved team-building activities including a high ropes climb, rappelling and a leap off a 25-foot pole, all of which were designed to develop problem solving skills, group communication and cooperation, and to challenge the young women’s physical and mental stamina.

In total, nine school district were represented with students from Comox Valley, Prince George, Sooke, Victoria, Langley, Nanaimo, Port Alberni, and Vancouver.

Students who successfully complete the camp and the online course curriculum will earn four Grade 12 credits toward their B.C. Graduation Certificate.

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Video coverage of the 2019 Ocean Literacy and Leadership Camp can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/ng1OjYh6PRE>

To learn more about Tribune Bay Outdoor Education Centre visit <https://www.tribunebayoutdoored.ca/>

To learn more about Tzeporah Berman’s environmental conservation organization visits <https://www.stand.earth/>

For more information about Talli Osborne visit, <https://talliosborne.com/>

To learn more about the work of Ocean Wise watch a video on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/9apX3MEw9bc> or visit the website at www.ocean.org

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