



Metchosin Muse

A N O N - P R O F I T C O M M U N I T Y P U B L I C A T I O N

Federal Minister Visits Pearson College

Morgan Yates

As part of a three day visit to BC to help advance public awareness of her Ministry's priorities in nature conservation and climate action, Canada's Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Catherine McKenna, visited Pearson College on November 13.

Minister McKenna's afternoon visit included a one hour walk to the College observatory and surrounding forest. Joining her on the walk were about four dozen participants, including Pearson students, students from Sooke's high school and faculty members from both Pearson and Royal Roads. The outdoor setting helped to establish an informal atmosphere, wherein students were invited to ask direct questions of Ms. McKenna. And they did, with climate change related questions in the forefront. In response, the Minister conveyed the importance of ensuring that sound policy be developed and put in place as the foundation for longer-term climate goals. She also described the importance and the art of understanding and balancing the legitimate interests of stakeholders in different

regions for any federal government that hopes to see its policies achieve enduring public support.

Following the walk, the Minister and walk participants convened in the Pearson Administration Centre, where they were joined by Mayor Ranns, Chief Russ Chipps, Pearson President Désirée McGraw and invited College



Canada's Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Catherine McKenna

patrons. To welcome everyone, and reflecting the conservation and biodiversity aspects of the Minister's portfolio, Pearson College Biology and Marine Science teacher Laura Verhegge introduced a student presentation on Race Rocks Ecological Reserve. Minister McKenna seemed captivated by the images and by the students' narrative about this remarkable corner of our region. In the open dialogue that

followed, the Minister spoke broadly about her portfolio, touching on an announcement made earlier in the day regarding an Indigenous Guardians program. This program will contribute to her government's promise to protect 17 per cent of Canada's lands and inland waters by 2020, in accordance with its commitment at the



Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, visits with students.

International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

The need to conserve Canada's biodiversity and a corresponding federal commitment to invest \$1.3 billion in conservation over the next five years provided further context for the free-flowing dialogue. Referring back to the students' presentation, Race Rocks was cited as a great example of habitat and species richness.

For Metchosin residents, in particular for those who may aspire to a conservation outcome for ecologically rich federal lands within our boundaries, the November 13 visit by Minister McKenna to Pearson College could be seen as a reason for optimism. For both Ms. McKenna and the students, her visit was very evidently enjoyed and time well spent.

November Mushrooming Madness



Photo by Kem Luther

Kem Luther

Conditions in Metchosin were nearly perfect for the sixth Metchosin MycoBlitz – a good rain and no frost in the days before the Blitz, almost no rain and warmish on the day of the count. The mushrooms were out in great numbers and so were the people – 60 people showed up outside the District Council Chambers at 9:00 am on Saturday, November 3 to help number and collect samples of Metchosin fungi. A dozen of the people on the morning hunt were invited experts from Vancouver, Victoria, and Sooke. The experts divided themselves into three groups and others in the crowd joined one of the groups. One team went to Camp Thunderbird, another to Blinkhorn Lake and a third to Pearson College. Administrators at Camp Thunderbird and Pearson College kindly gave permission for the MycoBlitzers to use their properties.

The 2018 MycoBlitz had actually kicked off on the evening before—on Friday, November 2—with a talk by Dr. Denis Benjamin that was part of Metchosin's long-running Talk and Walk series. Dr. Benjamin is the author of a book on the health effects of mushrooms (*Mushrooms: Poisons and Panaceas*) and of a collection of mushroom foraging essays (*Musings of a Mushroom Hunter: A Natural History of Foraging*). He is also past Chairman of the Toxicology Committee of the North American Mycological Association. His Metchosin talk on the Friday evening—attended by almost a hundred people—was on the use of mushrooms as food.

After the Saturday forays, the three teams brought their collected mushrooms back to the District Office. While more than forty foray helpers went to Metchosin House to see the film *Know Your Mushrooms*, experts grabbed a quick bite to eat (thanks to Karyn Woodland, Mairi MacKinnon, and My-Chosen Pizza for lunch fixings) and began to lay out the mushrooms on tables and attach labels to them.

The identifiers had barely finished at 2:00 pm when people began to stream through the door of the Metchosin Council Chambers to see the mushrooms that had been gathered and identified. Laid out on the table were over 130 different species, the cream of Metchosin's wild mushroom crop. Some visitors brought in their own mushrooms to be identified that they had found around their own homes.

In all, searchers at the MycoBlitzes and BioBlitzes have found almost 500 different species of fungi inside the boundaries of Metchosin. A few of the species have been identified at the spring and summer outings of the BioBlitz, but most of them have been found at the six MycoBlitzes. It is impossible to get a full picture of Metchosin's fungal wealth in only a year or two—each year, about a fifth of the mushroom species found at the MycoBlitzes are new to the Metchosin species database.

Members of the Metchosin Biodiversity Project thank the Metchosin Foundation for its consistent support in the biological assessments of the MycoBlitzes and BioBlitzes.

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