



Lawrence Grassi Middle School students Aisha Butler and Eden Burkhardt help Dave Mussell of the Pembina Institute to operate a working scale model of a wind turbine. CRAIG DOUCE - PHOTO

Canmore students green up education

TANYA FOUBERT - CANMORE

Some 360 students in Canmore received some extra 'green' education this week from a leading environmental think tank after a local environmental group set up the program to promote conservation of air quality in the Bow Valley.

Bow Valley Clean Air Society hired the Pembina Institute to conduct workshops on electricity, renewable energy, energy conservation and climate change.

"We waste a lot of energy and we want to train the younger generation to start conserving to save the planet," said the society's president Shirley Mushey. "Hopefully, it will open their minds to ways they can conserve energy."

She said they were able to bring the program to Lawrence Grassi Middle School and Canmore Collegiate High School students thanks to a \$5,000 grant from Shell Canada.

"Our mission is to improve and protect air quality in the Bow Valley and minimize regional contributions to climate change," Mushey said. "One part of that is education for the general population, and especially young kids."

Kathy Worobec and Dave Mussell were in the schools this week with three Grade 5 and four Grade 7 science classes, two Grade 8 leadership classes and three high school science classes.

Worobec, who is director of the institute's Alberta green learning program, said she was surprised at the numbers of students they are working with in Canmore, their level of engagement and the sophistication of their questions.

The two high school science classes went through a workshop on climate change covering Canada's current policies, where the Kyoto Protocol stands and updates on the current science on the topic.

"They are quite aware and have all seen *An Inconvenient Truth*," Worobec said. "There were lots of questions from the

students, who were really informed."

Building wind turbines to learn about renewable energy was the task set out for Grade 7 students.

"It demonstrates the principle of how you can generate electricity from the wind," she said. "We were not sure how far we would get with building wind turbines (but) these kids were just keen and really focused and wanted to get it completed as much as they could today."

The Grade 8 classes are going to continue their learning this week with an energy conservation project in the school.

Worobec said their goal is to focus on turning computers off in the school. That involves setting up a program for measuring the computers' wattage, current use, the difference in energy use when they are shut off and the difference in energy cost and CO2 reduction.

The Grade 5 students focused on electricity use, especially in their homes, and ways to reduce that.

Worobec said the green learning program oftentimes fits well with the current curriculum. "It is to really engage and empower youth with skills, knowledge and attitudes," she said, adding it also makes learning meaningful in the everyday lives of students.

The Pembina Institute has the learning program that actively goes into schools to work with kids, as well as perform professional development with teachers in Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario.

This was Worobec's first foray into Canmore schools since the program launched in this province in 2005.

"What we will want to try and achieve with this is continue our relationship with the schools," she said, adding it is just a first step for the group in consultation with the schools.

Worobec also said that as curriculums on a provincial level come up for revisions over the next five years, she thinks there will begin to be a shift in focus towards environmental education and sustainable development education.