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The Northern Connector

Free

Published by Black Press Ltd. at 3210 Clinton Street, Terrace, B.C.

FRIDAY, February 19, 2016

Volume 10 Issue 35

TMC 20,200



SHANNON LOUGH / THE NORTHERN CONNECTOR

Madison Watkins shows off her project on fishing. Madison was a Northwest delegates to the 2015 Provincial Heritage Fair.

Heritage Fairs Program receives B.C. award

By Shannon Lough
THE NORTHERN CONNECTOR

PRINCE RUPERT - The annual Heritage Fairs Program, where students showcase a story steeped in Canadian history or their own history, received a nod from Heritage BC.

The province-wide program has been held at the North Pacific Cannery in Port Edward since 2014 for the Northwest region. There are 14 regional fairs in total and at each event five students are chosen to participate in the provincial fair.

On Feb. 10, Heritage BC announced that the BC Heritage Fairs Program will receive an award for Outstanding Achievement in Education and Public Awareness. The fairs began in 1994 and run annually with more than 6,000 students.

Last year, the cannery had 82 projects and 200 people showed up when the fair opened for public viewing. Regional coordinator for the Northwest regional fair, Leslie Moore, said that this year eight schools are participating in the event including schools from Hartley Bay, Port Simpson, Metlakatla, Kit-

*"Even after the fair is over they
become guardians of those stories
for years afterwards."*

- Michael Gurney

sumkalum, the city of Prince Rupert and the district of Port Edward. A school history club from Terrace will also join the fair.

"The whole heritage fair program supports the new curriculum that the province has introduced because it's geared towards getting the students out in their own communities and learning out there in real life and so these projects are a way of linking the kids to that as well as their formal learning," Moore said.

She has been involved in the history fair for 15 years and has watched the event grow and the students discover their voice when they present their own inspired project. It has also become a great way to make use of historic

centres in the community.

"Museums and galleries love it because so often the students use their collections. It's another way to make public and share those resources," Moore said.

The president of the BC Heritage Fairs Society, Michael Gurney, is honoured that Heritage BC is presenting the award to the program on Feb. 18 in Vancouver.

"This really recognizes the educational aspect of heritage fairs and the development of young people who are interested in museums and history. When it comes to using heritage fairs in the classroom it is a potent tool," Gurney said. "It teaches project based learning, it teaches a historical consciousness and great critical thinking skills."

He said the event is familiar to a science fair, with project boards and students often come dressed in costume to be ambassadors for their story.

"Even after the fair is over they become guardians of those stories for years afterwards. It's amazing to have these young people teaching adults and often teaching teachers about Canadian history," Gurney said.

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