

Eco-health, Ecosystems, and Watersheds Workshop

Merritt BC, October 19 & 20, 2011

Ellen Simmons

Eco-health, an emerging term that might be obvious to some, denotes the health of an environment or ecology of a region (either human, environmental, or both). According to findings from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (initiated by the United Nations Secretary in 2001), humans have changed ecosystems more rapidly and extensively over the past 50 years than in any comparable period of time in human history, largely to meet growing demands for food, fresh water, timber, fibre, and fuel. The result of this is a substantial and largely irreversible loss in the diversity of life on Earth. This very topic was discussed at the recent “Eco-health, Ecosystems, and Watersheds Workshop” held at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology in Merritt on October 19 and 20, 2011.

The workshop was initiated by Scotty Holmes, Water Stewardship co-ordinator for the Coldwater Indian Band and facilitated by Mike Simpson, of the Fraser Basin Council. Funding acknowledgment for the workshop goes to Health Canada, Coldwater Indian Band, Southern Interior Beetle Action Coalition, Stuwix Resources Ltd., and the Upper Nicola Band.

The focus of the two-day gathering was to probe some of the watershed issues in the Nicola Valley. In achieving this focus, the workshop addressed similar themes on the topic of eco-health, ecosystem restoration, and watersheds. There were a number of presentations that were delivered to help achieve some of the goals that included

- The sharing of traditional ecological knowledge and western science approaches to ecosystem and watershed management.
- Exploring the connection of ecosystem and watershed management to human health.

- Increasing the knowledge and capacity of First Nations to participate in research, studies, and management of watersheds.
- Exploring how the integration of traditional ecological knowledge and modern science can expand the awareness of sustainable ecosystems and watershed health.

A list of the presentations included

- The Nicola User Water Management Plan (Elizabeth Salomon-de-Friedberg, Nicola Watershed Community Round Table)
- The Okanagan Watershed (Anna Warwick-Sears, Okanagan Basin Water Board)
- Watershed Hydrology and the Ecosystem (Don Dobson, Urban Systems Ltd.)
- Ecosystem Restoration and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (Ellen Simmons, En'owkin Centre and FORREX)
- Traditional Ecological Knowledge (Mary Sandy, Esh-kn-am Cultural Resources Management Services)
- Four Components on the Degree of Acuity (Scotty Holmes, Coldwater Indian Band)
- Ecohydrology: Sustainable Water Resources and Ecosystem Management (Kevin Bladon, Thompson Rivers University)
- Assessment of health risks from environmental contaminants: three examples from British Columbia First Nations communities (Andrew Jin, Consulting Epidemiologist)
- Linking health, ecosystem, and society in Northern BC watersheds (Margot Parkes, University of Northern British Columbia).

The two-day gathering built on previous workshops that have been held in the last year in respect of the Nicola Watersheds and the Fraser River Basin. It was clearly evident that the individuals involved in this workshop all seemed to share a unanimous care and determination to work together in making a change for healthier ecosystems and watersheds.

For a summary of the workshop and speaker presentations, please visit the workshop's website (Fraser Basin Council 2011).

Reference

Fraser Basin Council. 2011. October 19-20 2011, Merritt, Eco-Health, Ecosystems and Watersheds Workshop. http://www.fraserbasin.bc.ca/programs/tr_nicola_workshop_presentations.html (Accessed December 2011).

Contact information

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