

2005 Newfoundland and Labrador Envirothon Final Report



The Western Newfoundland Model Forest (WNMF) Partnership was pleased to sponsor the fifth annual Newfoundland and Labrador Envirothon, an environmental education competition for youth that raises awareness of environmental issues through hands-on learning and outdoor competitions in five subject areas: Aquatics, Soils and Land Use, Forestry, Wildlife, and a theme topic that changes annually. This year's theme was Managing Cultural Landscapes.

Envirothon encourages young people to learn more about the environment both in and out of the classroom. In a group setting, participants learn from one another, from resource professionals, and from nature itself. Envirothon competitions provide young people with opportunities to meet others who share their interests. Envirothon is open to young people enrolled in Levels 1, 2 and 3, and youth of eligible age who are members of community youth groups with an environmental focus. Students from a school's junior high feeder school may be eligible to compete.

Winners of the provincial competition are eligible to compete in the 2005 Canon Envirothon at Southwest Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri July 18 - 24, 2005.

The 2005 Newfoundland and Labrador Envirothon challenge was held at the Lavrock Camp and Conference Centre on Salmonier Line on the province's east coast. For the first time ever, Envirothon was hosted in a camp setting, allowing members of teams from across the province to interact both in competition and socially.

Envirothon Committee

In January 2005, an Envirothon committee was formed through the Western Newfoundland Model Forest to help develop and plan the 2005 Envirothon. Representatives of the committee met on an as-needed basis via conference call to go over budgeting issues, sponsorship, school participation etc. This committee was of great assistance to the staff at the WNMF in developing, and providing guidance for, the 2005 Envirothon. It made the recruitment of judges an easier task and highlighted some potential funding sponsors that otherwise may have been missed. It is

recommended this committee stay in place for next year's Envirothon as well. The Envirothon Committee was composed of members of the following organizations:

- The Western Newfoundland Model Forest (Linda Skinner)
- Atlantic Coastal Action Program - Humber Arm (Sheldon Peddle)
- Provincial Department of Education (Brad Clarke)
- Newfoundland and Labrador Conservation Corps (Darren Feltham)
- Jacques Whitford Ltd. (Caroline Hong)
- Natural Resources Canada - Canadian Forest Service (Paul Carter)
- Western School District (Dan Murphy)
- Department of Environment and Conservation – Inland Fish and Wildlife Division (Lucy O'Driscoll)

School Participation

The WNMF and its partnership recognize the importance and significance of Envirothon to the growth of environmental stewardship in youth across the province. Work started in November 2004 to recruit teams from as many provincial schools as possible. Posters supplied by Canon Inc. were circulated throughout high schools in the province and a Newfoundland and Labrador Envirothon poster was developed in-house at the Western Newfoundland Model Forest. This poster informed schools of the date of the 2005 NL Envirothon and how to contact the WNMF for



more information. Information on all aspects of Envirothon was also posted to the WNMF web site.

Starting in late-February, a full time coordinator was hired to organize preparation for the Envirothon, taking place in April. An intense school recruitment drive took place with faxes sent to all high schools in province, informing them of the Envirothon and approaching deadlines. E-mails were sent to all high school science teachers, principles, vice-principles, and science department heads informing them of them of the Envirothon competition and how to get involved.

An effort was made to arrange school visits in the local area to try to generate more interest in the provincial Envirothon competition. Most of the schools declined the invitation, mostly due to lack of available time at that particular point in the school year. Many schools had lost time to make up due to snow days, professional development days, exams etc. As the school year was drawing to a close, many teachers simply didn't have the time to spare to have some one come into the

classroom and present on Envirothon. Many schools expressed an interest in the program and requested more information if the competition was to take place in 2006.

In the end, we had the same number of schools register for this year's Envirothon as we did in 2004.

- Regina High School - Corner Brook
- Elwood High School (2 teams) - Deer Lake
- Holy Heart High School - St. John's
- Holy Trinity High School (2 teams) - Torbay
- St. Catherine's High School - Salmonier

The WNMF received many inquiries from school in all areas of the province, but due to travel constraints and the time of year, these schools were unable to commit to participating in the 2005 event. Due to sickness, one of the teams from Holy Trinity unexpectedly withdrew on competition day.

Media Coverage

An extensive media blitz was also undertaken to get the word out about Envirothon and also arrange coverage at the actual event in April. A press release was developed and sent out to all daily and community newspapers across the province, as well as local and provincial radio and web sites (i.e. CBC, VOXM etc).

The press release ran in local papers as observed by staff at WNMF. It is unsure if all papers across the covered the story as WNMF is based in Corner Brook. Several teacher inquiries on the Envirothon via e-mail stated they had "read about it in the paper."

On another media note, Canon Canada contracted Hi-Road Communications to coordinate some media coverage for the event, which was a major benefit to the WNMF staff and the Envirothon. Having these people in place before, during and after the Envirothon made the task of coordinating media coverage much easier. Having an outside party involved in media blitzes ensured the coordinator was able to plan many aspects of the event efficiently by freeing up essential planning time that would have otherwise been used trying to contact media about the event. The Envirothon coordinator strongly



recommends the involvement of an outside party (such as Hi-Road) to help promote future events.

Judges

Having the Envirothon committee in place aided judge recruitment for the event. The WNMF partnership also provided access to a high number of trained judges for the event. Most of the judges for the 2005 event had either judged an Envirothon before or had a colleague who had previously judged. All judges agreed the Envirothon was a worthwhile event and would participate next year if time of year allows. Judges for the 2005 Envirothon were represented by the following organizations:

- Department of Natural Resources-Canadian Forestry Service (Martin Moroni, Soils and Land Use; and Reg Parsons, Managing Cultural Landscapes)
- Department of Fisheries and Oceans (Darrin Sooley, Aquatics)
- Department of Environment and Conservation – Inland Fish and Wildlife Division (Shelley Pardy, Wildlife)
- Provincial Department of Natural Resources – Forest Resources (Mike Strapp, Forestry)

Sponsor Funding

Funding from Canon and other sponsors ensures the Newfoundland and Labrador Envirothon is successful. Mini-Grants from Canon provided us with the following opportunities for the 2005 event:

- **Envirothon T-shirts** - Envirothon t-shirts with the Canon logo were given out to all participants (35), teacher advisors (7), judges (6), resource people (5) and all sponsors affiliated with the 2005 Newfoundland and Labrador Envirothon. Team Newfoundland and Labrador will also be given a number of t-shirts for exchanges at the Canon International Envirothon in Missouri in July.
- **Promotion** – Sponsor funds also allowed WNMF to create and distribute a high-color, graphic poster to high schools across the province.
- **Awards** - Awards provided by judges and sponsor organizations were given out to the first-place winners in each category and the winner of the Envirothon. Gifts were also presented to judges and teachers who volunteered their time for the event.

Prior to competition, letters requesting funding support were also sent out to many businesses and organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador. Sponsorship requests were submitted to the following organizations:

- Newfoundland Power
- Voisey's Bay Nickel Company Ltd
- Canadian Helicopter Ltd.
- Corner Brook Pulp and Paper
- Dept of Environment and Conservation
- Dept of Fisheries and Aquaculture
- Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro
- Premier Danny Williams
- Aliant Communications
- Abitibi Consolidated
- The Western Star
- Prov. Dept of Education
- Multi-Materials Stewardship Board
- Department of Fisheries and Oceans
- Prov. Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment
- Iron Ore Company of Canada
- Humber Valley Resort
- City of Corner Brook
- Prov. Department of Natural Resources
- Prov. Dept of Tourism, Culture and Recreation
- Canadian Institute of Forestry- Newfoundland Section

The 2005 Envirothon received tremendous support from many local and provincial organizations. Sponsors for the 2005 event included:

- The Western Newfoundland Model Forest
- Provincial Department of Natural Resources
- Department of Environment and Conservation
- City of St. John's - Environmental Initiatives Fund
- Canadian Institute of Forestry - Newfoundland Section
- Corner Brook Pulp and Paper
- Provincial Department of Education
- Premier Danny Williams
- Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro
- Voisey's Bay Nickel Company Ltd.



Monies received from sponsors help to offset the cost of hosting the Envirothon competition. Funds from sponsors were used for details such as, faxing information to schools, designing and sending out Envirothon promotional materials, meals and accommodations for students and judges, prizes for teams and thank you gifts for judges and teachers, snacks for student, teachers, judges on competition day etc.. Funds were also used to purchase hardware for the event such as paper, pencils, markers, Bristol board etc.

Without these sponsors, the Newfoundland and Labrador Envirothon would not be possible. The Newfoundland and Labrador Envirothon Committee recognizes the support of all organizations involved and seeks their continued support in the organization of future Envirothon competitions..

Recommendations

In most aspects, the 2005 Newfoundland and Labrador Envirothon was a great success. While the Envirothon committee would have liked to see 10 teams participate, organizers were overall pleased with the number of teams that registered and the number of inquiries regarding Envirothon. Hopefully, as the word spreads throughout schools, Envirothon will become a stable platform in many schools such as basketball and volleyball. With this in mind, the following recommendations should be considered when planning future Envirothon competitions.

1. Hosting an Envirothon at a venue such as Lavrock or Killdevil (outdoor camps) is an excellent idea and proved to be quite successful. There are many sites close to nature to conduct field tests, dig soil pits, and conduct tree identification and stream classification etc.

Camp accommodations are quite suitable in that students and teachers alike have an opportunity to interact with each other. The idea of getting students and teachers the opportunity to interact among each other is an integral part of Envirothon.

2. For the past five years, the provincial Envirothon competition has taken place in late-early April/May. Many teachers, including those who registered teams and others who inquired about Envirothon, suggested changing the time of Envirothon to the mid/late fall. This would give teachers a chance to get the word of Envirothon out early in the school year and many teachers would be able to fit the event into their school plans.

3. More work is needed to help get the word of Envirothon out to schools. The informational DVD received from Canon is a big help for this. The Envirothon committee has suggested developing a "how-to" guide for teachers to supplement the DVD, explaining how to implement an Envirothon program in schools. Getting the word out to teachers could provide them with alternative educational activities. For example, suggestions can be offered to teachers to have students

participate in Envirothon instead of completing a major paper in biology. Or, teachers looking for extra-curricular activities may be interested in creating Envirothon clubs in their schools.

4. Several teachers and students suggested modifying the learning objectives for the field tests and theme issue to make them more practical and relevant to Newfoundland-based issues and biological species. The learning objectives are taken from the International event, and teachers and students would like to see them narrowed down to fit Newfoundland and Labrador.

5. Students and some teachers expressed they would like to see more hands-on work during field testing. Some field testing for the 2005 event had to be modified as a result of landscape. This was an unforeseen problem as judges and coordinators were unfamiliar with the site before field testing day. Judges are always encouraged to incorporate as much hands-on field work as possible into their field tests.

6. If necessary, provide a map relevant to the annual problem scenario for the oral presentation. This gives the students a better idea of scale and makes developing a more comprehensive plan for the oral presentation much more viable.

7. If the competition is taking place in a camp away from urban areas, try to provide an in-service for teachers during the sequestering down time. Teachers have four hours to wait while teams prepare their scenarios, and many teachers would like to see better use of that time. Guest speakers could be brought in to talk about program development in schools or other topics.

8. The NL Envirothon Committee is a great resource and beneficial to future organizations and individuals planning Envirothon, and should be kept in place.

9. Having an outside organization (such as High Road) help with media coverage and school recruitment is a great boost for organizations with a small number of staff to coordinate Envirothon events. This enables the event coordinators to focus on planning the event, but still ensures it remains in the media spotlight.