

BCSTA Article

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By Martin Tooms – Forestry Teacher

The Charles Bloom Forestry program is one of the most unique high school programs in all of BC and has ran for approximately 45 years. The program operated with small cut licences year-to-year until Woodlot 1908 was acquired in 2002. Since then, Woodlot 1908 has been our outdoor classroom for three days a week and an integral part of our program. Woodlot 1908 is located approximately 8.3 km north of Lumby BC, up Trinity Valley, adjacent to the Vance Creek Ecological reserve. The woodlot is approximately 6 square kilometers, or 600 hectares.

The woodlot operates, and is an example to our students and community, as renewable and sustainable resource development. Forest management is demonstrated to the students through example; the woodlot uses a cut-block layout for clear-cut with reserve. Select seed trees are left to aid with natural regeneration. Reforestation with seedlings is also implemented. The Forestry Program works closely with professional foresters and a career logger to properly manage a sustainable harvest level and reforestation.

The Lumby and area community benefits from our Forestry Program and woodlot in many ways: Harvested timber from the woodlot is sold to local mills and firewood is sold in the community. Proceeds from sales help support the program. Many of the School District 22 schools use the woodlot for fieldtrips to enhance classroom theory.

In 2013 our Woodlot 1908 received a grant from the Woodlot Product Development Council, in association with the Federation of British Columbia Woodlot Associations for the construction of two trail kiosks. This funding came as acceptance to a proposal for the educational component of the Charles Bloom Secondary School Demonstration Forest. The trail was mapped out using a Garmin GPS watch and overlaid to a Google Earth map of Woodlot 1908. The students brought much of the wood to the school from the woodlot and we designed, built, and installed the two kiosks at the trail-head and top end of a 1.5 km program cut community hiking trail.



At this time the Forestry Program recruits students from the secondary schools in School District 22. The students experience and learn about safety, critical team skills, and important characteristics sought by many employers today, such as enthusiasm, strong work ethic, initiative, reliability, and great communication skills.

To partner with the unique skills that students learn in the Forestry Program, students participate in the following training opportunities: Level 1 Occupational First Aid, safety training for shop and logging practices, WorkSafe BC presentation, ENFORM Level 1 Chainsaw Certification, chainsaw maintenance, repairs, operating and maintaining heavy duty equipment, Wildlife aware, and silviculture.

Tooms covers chainsaw safety and maintenance. This puts the students into the Enform chainsaw certification course with some confidence and prior learning. This certification is the oil and gas industry training standard which meets the BC faller training standard.



The students start every woodlot day with an in-depth student led safety meeting. Student's set-up a crew list for machine operators, buckers, chokerpersons, and a firewood crew. Communication to equipment operators is with radio and hand signals. A certified faller drops the trees. The students butt off trees to specifications, limb the trees, skid the trees to the landing, buck to sawmill specifications, and deck logs on the landing. Safety, in all aspects, is priority one.



Although our Forestry Program provides students with a broad-based practical and theoretical background in the forestry industry, and real life skills, we wanted to expand into several applicable trades areas for skills acquisition. Therefore, we adopted and adapted Skills Exploration 11-12 for a value added aspect to the existing Forestry program. This recent program expansion doubled the student intake of grade 11's to evolve into a full year. Grade 11's intake in the spring semester and finish Forestry in their Grade 12 fall semester.

Grade 11 students take the Carpentry, Electrical, and Plumbing modules, along with a common core module that runs throughout the two semesters. Grade 12 students take the Auto/ Heavy Duty and Welding modules. The two semesters when the students are not with the Forestry Program is time to complete graduation requirements.

The expansion in the scope of the skills training should better meet the student population needs. Trades as a career represents a solution to the high percentage of students who do not attend university.

School District 22 is supportive of educating students in the value of skills training and trades through hands on experience in the trade sampler provided in this program. This School District 22 Forestry program is a win-win situation for the students, district, and community.

With the future of our skilled workforce in question we believe this program's evolution and progression couldn't come at a better time.

The Forestry Teacher, Martin Tooms, graduated from UBC Vancouver with a Bachelor of Education in Technology. He also holds two trade certifications: an inter-provincial Red Seal in Metal Fabrication and is a registered 'A' welder.

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