

local news

ART MEETS SCIENCE

Youngsters use art to reflect local wilderness observations

By **JUDIE STEEVES**
STAFF REPORTER

Ducks and herons, woodpeckers and sandpipers, buttercups and daisies, voles and bugs are all recognizable on the 6 by 5 foot banners, and are obviously from a child's view of nature.

They surround a watercolour painting by artist Dawn Emerson, which each depict a little spot of local wilderness such as Brandt Creek Marsh or Mission Creek.

It's part of a study of local watersheds; a project called Art Meets Science, coordinated by Jennifer French of Science Opportunities for Kids, a non-profit society which aims

to spark kids' interest in science.

Last spring, students from a number of local classes and from the Young Naturalists' Club went on field trips to spots such as Scenic Canyon Regional Park, where they observed their natural surroundings and asked questions about what they saw.

"We didn't want them to get information overload, so we didn't try to lecture them. We let them lead. They asked questions. They wanted to know the names of what they were seeing," explained French.

She says it was amazing how intensely the youngsters looked at what was around

them and how closely they observed what was happening.

Then they got busy and drew some aspect of what they saw, whether it was a bug, a bird, a plant or a tree.

When they got back to their classrooms, Emerson taught them the basics of painting with watercolours and looking after the equipment, and they re-created their drawings with watercolour paints.

Those paintings now surround Emerson's impressions of the whole scene: vignettes from the children's eyes surrounding the landscape as a whole.

The four completed banners will become part of the



ROGER TEPPER/CONTRIBUTOR

JENNIFER FRENCH points to some Oregon grape that was planted by the Young Naturalists Club of B.C., Kelowna chapter behind the mural created by artist Dawn Emerson.

City of Kelowna's art collection, and before they find a permanent home, they will travel around town to be displayed to a diverse cross-section of the community, explained Sandra Kochan, the city's public art coordinator.

They will be unveiled Sunday at the EECO in Mission Creek Regional Park, where the annual Kokanee Salmon Festival takes place from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. It celebrates the return of the kokanee to the stream of their

birth to spawn before completing their life cycle.

Kochan noted that the project gives kids a voice, through art, for their concerns about the natural environment.

The project is one that French is really excited about, because it gets kids out in the natural world, focusing on what they see there, and learning about how everything is connected.

In the process, they learn about the watershed, its processes and where their drink-

ing water comes from.

She hopes to do the project again next year, but would need funding to make that possible. The city's community public art program doesn't fund repeat projects.

Any other organization that might be able to help with some funding for the non-profit society to repeat this project could contact French by e-mail at: sokstaff1@soks.ca or call 250-860-2495.

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