

Ocean Networks Canada joins the excitement in Prince Rupert

Submitted by Virginia Keast Fri, 2016-02-26 10:21

By Mercedes McLean (Indigenous community learning coordinator) and Jessica Brown (Indigenous community liaison)

The All Native Basketball Tournament is an event that is highly anticipated each February and transforms the regularly tranquil coastal city of Prince Rupert, British Columbia into a hustling, bustling gathering spot. This year was no exception! The event is a cultural gathering of First Nations and basketball enthusiasts that attracts over 2,000 people and around 60 teams from as far north as Alaska and as far south as Ahousaht on Vancouver Island.



The opening ceremonies of the 57th Annual All Native Basketball Tournament in Prince Rupert, British Columbia.

We were thrilled to return to the northern British Columbia coast to represent Ocean Networks Canada (ONC) at the 57th annual All Native Basketball Tournament and weeklong celebration of sport and culture. The tournament originally started as a result of segregation, when Indigenous players and teams were not permitted in basketball leagues.

Now, the event is a unique opportunity for First Nation communities to gather and discuss important issues while also enjoying some good basketball. ONC joined the conversation by hosting an information booth where we were happy to inform community members of the soon to be installed Prince Rupert Ts'msyen Territory Community Observatory!

Jessica and I have been engaging with communities along the British Columbia coast about proposed ocean monitoring installations. Through our meetings with community members and leaders, ONC has earned the support of decision-makers in the City of Prince Rupert and the Port of Prince Rupert, and leaders from the surrounding Ts'msyen Nations (Metlakatla, Lax Kw'alaams, Kitselas, Kitsumkalum, and Gitxaala). The Tournament was a great opportunity to reconnect with and update community members on the community observatory project. Between games, visitors to ONC's booth escalated and interest was keen. We were pleased to see the many familiar faces and meet new folks from all over British Columbia who were interested in learning more about ocean monitoring! It was especially wonderful to have teachers bring their students to our booth so we could demonstrate some of the ocean observing technologies we will be using on the community observatory as well as promote the Ocean Sense education program.



Ocean enthusiasts explore hydrophone clips at the All Native Basketball Tournament.

On our first day in Prince Rupert, we made the trek down to the harbour front to scoop up a pail of sea water amidst some serious Prince Rupert rain! Bringing this sample of sea water from the local ocean environment was a unique opportunity for students to see how water quality can be monitored using a conductivity-temperature-depth instrument provided by AML Oceanographic.

The colouring and listening stations were, as always, a massive hit for children who were looking for a break from basketball. Both children and adults were amazed to hear the underwater vocalizations of familiar ocean animals and earth processes like earthquakes.



Jessica Brown and Mercedes McLean at the Prince Rupert harbour collecting a water sample while getting drenched by the Prince Rupert rain.

We were pleased to be able to tell visitors about the broad suite of instruments that will be on the Prince Rupert Tsmsyen Territory community observatory! The community observatory will be equipped with a camera and weather station on shore, along with subsea instruments that track and record local water quality, the underwater sound of whales and vessels, and live-stream video from an underwater camera. All data collected will be made freely available over the Internet.

The installation of the community observatory has already begun, and will be completed in March 2016. We are already looking forward to returning to the area to host a launch event for the observatory. That visit will be an opportunity to continue our engagement with local schools and our collaboration with Wap Sigatgyet Aboriginal Education to bring local place-based knowledge and language into the Ocean Sense education program.

We are also hoping that two students and a teacher from the Prince Rupert area will once again attend the upcoming [Ocean Science Symposium](#), an annual two-day event hosted by ONC at the University of Victoria featuring interactive presentations, hands-on activities and engaging challenges to explore the mysteries of the deep blue sea.

Stay tuned; live data will soon be flowing from Prince Rupert ? Ts?msyen Territory to scientists and citizens around the globe!

For more information about ONC?s community observatories: contact [Maia Hoeberechts](#), Associate Director, User Services

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