



Students win thousands of dollars in national Earth sciences contest

Predicted shortage of geo-scientists behind WHERE Challenge

After receiving hundreds of entries from across the country, WHERE Challenge organizers are pleased to announce the contest has awarded more than \$16-thousand in three national, 33 regional and five school prizes. Sponsored by EnCana Corporation and Teck and in celebration of the International Year of Planet Earth, the first annual WHERE Challenge asked Canadian students aged 10 – 14 years to discover the answers to these questions: What on Earth is in your stuff and WHERE on Earth does it come from? Students were encouraged to use their imagination in their response to create an educational story about non-renewable Earth resources found in an everyday item.

The First National Grand prize and \$3,000 is awarded to 13-year-old Blake Nicol from Nelson, B.C. His entry was an animated video on the non-renewable natural resources required to build an MP3 player. "It was really fun to work on the project and look at the other entries on YouTube," said Nicol, after learning of his win.

The Second Grand National Prize and \$2,000 is awarded to Shirley May and Nick Riopel from Calgary, Alberta, whose entry was a video about all the non-renewable Earth resources found in a calculator. "I was really excited when I found out I won," said 13-year-old Shirley. "I started screaming and jumping up and down." Shirley plans on saving her winnings and putting the money towards school.

The Third National Grand prize and \$1,000 is awarded to Oliver Yee, a grade 9 student from Georgetown District High School in Ontario. His entry was a poster essay on pencils.

Both regional and national judging committees, made up of dozens of Earth science professionals from across Canada, deliberated entries received from as far away as Whitehorse, Yukon and Bedford, Nova Scotia. Among the submissions were essays, poems, songs paintings, posters, videos and multimedia presentations.

Judges say they were impressed with both the number and quality of entries, which included analyses of everything from pencils and light bulbs to sports equipment and mascara. "We received a tremendous diversity of creative entries from all over the country, making the judging process difficult" said Godfrey Nowlan, a research scientist with Natural Resources Canada and WHERE Challenge judge. "We were delighted with entries from all age groups."

Dozens of school classrooms and more than a thousand students participated in the WHERE Challenge. Contest organizers hope it raises awareness about the importance of non-renewable Earth resources and also encourages young people to consider a career in the Earth sciences. "The health of our sector depends upon young people entering the industry," said John Boyd, Canadian Chair of the International Year of Planet Earth (2007-2009). "If we can turn students on to Earth science at an early age, we hope to create the next generation of geologists and geophysicists."

Despite the current economic downturn, experts say a crippling labour crunch is looming for the Earth sciences sector. According to several recently released forecasts by organizations like the Petroleum Human Resources Council and the Canadian Federation of Earth Sciences (CFES), a wave of expected retirements and declining student enrollments means a critical gap could start emerging within the next few years. "We're talking about being short tens of thousands of Earth scientists by 2015," said Ian Young, past president of the CFES. "We're expecting the needs of the environmental sector alone to grow by more than 30 percent over the next five years."

All WHERE Challenge national and regional winning entries can be seen on the contest website at www.earthsciencescanada.com/where. 