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U of S Students Inspire Interest in Science at Northern Saskatchewan Schools

Constructing crazy kaleidoscopes, dissecting fetal pigs and learning the mitosis square dance were just a few of the hands-on activities Northern Saskatchewan students participated in as a part of an initiative to inspire young people's interest in science and engineering.

Following the success of the Northern Science Ambassadors Program initiated last year by the College of Engineering's Outreach Office, the number of University of Saskatchewan students delivering programming as "ambassadors" more than doubled. The students are from a variety of disciplines including engineering, biochemistry, geophysics, and education.

Northern Saskatchewan communities involved this year include La Loche, Cumberland House, La Ronge, Buffalo Narrows, Beauval, Canoe Lake, Dillon and Jans Bay.

"They were very enthusiastic about everything, from modeling volcano explosions to rocket launches," says Electrical Engineering student Heather Beaulieu of the high school students she worked with.



Photo by John Statton, Meadow Lake Progress



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The primary objective of the program include building relationships between the University of Saskatchewan and the schools in the North, and providing science expertise and equipment some schools may not have access to. For some of the Ambassadors, this is also an opportunity to build on the skills they acquired in the university classroom.

“I am taking the Professional Communication Option in addition to Mechanical Engineering courses,” says Tyler Beatty, who also has experience in working with kids from a stint with Sci-Fi Summer Camps. “I applied what I have learned in communications class to explain terms and concepts clearly to the students.”

For Brittney Bergen, who is studying Science and Education, the schools are ideal settings to practice her teaching skills. “My lesson planning skills are definitely improved,” she says. “The students are very gracious and I received personal ‘Thank you’s’ from students and teachers.”

According to Sally Meadows, the Outreach Office Program Administrator, the Northern Science Ambassadors Program provides benefits to all who are involved: “The Northern students have a chance to do actual hands-on science, the teachers are also exposed to a whole new set of lesson plans and skills that they can use for the next school year, and the university students develop their presentation skills and lesson planning skills (for education students).”

Heather Beaulieu has another goal in mind. She wants to inspire female students to further their studies in science and engineering. “I want them to know that engineering is very welcoming to female students and it doesn’t have to be a male-dominated field.”