

Northern Outdoor Studies showcases program



Caelum Lockau, who is planning to train as an arborist at Fleming College, explains making a shelter to Kelly Waterbury, as Sophie and Thomas Love explore the lean-to with Laura Vance

By Tony Pearson

Last week, the students of the Northern Outdoor Studies (NOS) program at North Hastings High School brought their semester to an end with an open house display, showcasing their equipment and learning.

NOS is a four-credit package open to senior students who want to acquire skills needed to work in local resource-based industries, such as forestry, environmental management, and eco-tourism.

The students study ecology, resource and forestry management, outdoor recreation programming, wildlife (including invasive and at-risk species), and also develop their leadership skills.

The learning is mostly hands-on and very practical, so they can work in a variety of outdoor occupations.

The students receive certification in a number of relevant areas, such as mapping and guiding, chainsaw and cable skidder operation, first aid and workplace safety, canoe tripping, and survival techniques.

They have canoed and camped out in Algonquin Park, trapped and skinned, harvested trees, and plotted their way through a forest.

Each student has also put together a portfolio of their achievements, in preparation for employment applications.

All in all, they have readied themselves for a career in the natural resources of the area.

The program and its companion program NERDS (Northern Environmental Research and Development Studies), which will run in the second semester, have often been rumoured to be on the chopping block as the school board looks for savings.

However Lucille Kyle, deputy chair of the Hastings-Prince Edward District School Board, led a delegation to the Open House which included the director of education and three other trustees.

The director, Mandy Savery-Whiteway, affirmed loudly and clearly to Bancroft This Week that the programs would continue as long as students continued to enrol. Given the importance of resource industries to this area, it was a welcome reassurance.