

Conserving and Discovering the Beautiful Okanagan

August 17, 2017

Penticton, BC— Throughout the summer while other young people were relaxing, The Nature Trust of BC Okanagan Conservation Youth Crew was hard at work. “I was interested in the position because helping sustain and monitor the rich diversity of plants and animals and their habitats for a better future would help me to utilize my education,” says crew member Chantel Beierle.

The Nature Trust of British Columbia hires young people each summer to tackle a wide variety of conservation activities on properties across the province and learn valuable skills for future employment. Training includes First Aid and Bear Aware as well as the safe handling of power tools. “I learned the extent of The Nature Trust’s conservation efforts in the province but more notably the South Okanagan. I hadn’t realized just how much land was either owned or leased by The Nature Trust in the Okanagan,” explains crew member Kieran Braid.

“My favourite activity was hiking and exploring Nature Trust properties throughout the beautiful Okanagan,” says Chantel. “Getting the opportunity to see a variety of wildlife and plant species gave me a much greater appreciation for The Nature Trust and the conservation they are continuing to provide to keep the land protected.”

The crews perform on-the-ground work as well as attending workshops from specialists in the field on topics such as bird counts, and forest and wetland ecology. “After eight months of being somewhat lazy and busy with studying, the first month of hiking around the various properties was fairly difficult, but an awesome way to get back in shape quickly,” says Kieran.

The crews also contribute to the local community in a variety of ways. “Being a part of The Nature Trust team, I posted multiple signs around local hiking trails informing individuals and groups of the surrounding habitat and vegetation conservation that is taking place. We are hopeful that this will create awareness to the sensitivity of these areas,” explains Chantel. Kieran added, “I enjoyed digging burrows for the Burrowing Owl Conservation Society. It was a great way of helping an awesome organization that is trying to re-establish Burrowing Owl populations in the Okanagan.”

When asked about future plans, Chantel who is from Penticton said she will be attending the University of British Columbia Okanagan Campus in the fall for her final year and graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree with a specialization in zoology. Kieran who is from Summerland will be heading back to BCIT for his second and final year in the Fish, Wildlife, and Recreation program.

In 2017, Conservation Youth Crews are operating on Vancouver Island, Lower Mainland, South Okanagan, and East Kootenay. The Nature Trust is pleased to have the support of BC Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, Canada Summer Jobs (Service Canada), Caritate Foundation, Great-West Life, the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, and The Tony Cartledge Fund to help fund the crews.

The Nature Trust of British Columbia is dedicated to protecting BC’s natural diversity of plants and animals through the acquisition and management of critical habitats. Since 1971 The Nature Trust along with our partners has invested more than \$95 million to secure over 71,000 hectares (175,000 acres) across the province.