

Muskwa-Kechika inspires artists

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DAILY NEWS

Twelve artists of varying mediums and two aspiring youth artists spent a little over a week of their summer camping.

Not unusual for many perhaps, but this group – led into the wilderness of the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area by author/photographer Wayne Sawchuk – camped in a remote wilderness unlike any that most will experience in this lifetime.

The Muskwa-Kechika Management Area spans 6.4 million hectares (double the size of Vancouver Island) and is located in northeastern British Columbia. The land has been designated for varying levels of protection, conservation and use (e.g. economic development, research, backcountry recreation, Alaska Highway travel). It serves as a model for the future, enabling economic development while protecting a large and intact wilderness that predominantly has no roads.

The goal for Sawchuk – and poet Donna Kane, who organized the Muskwa-Kechika Exploration Camp – was two-fold, according to Kane.

"It was exciting to think of bringing artists of varying mediums together. The other was to bring awareness to the Muskwa-Kechika. A lot of people do know about it, but this was a different segment of society I think with the

one set up camp with tents at Mayfield Lake, taking day trips from there with the exception of the two-day trip up to the alpine areas. Sawchuk led the group on horseback – packhorses in tow – into the alpine region that would give the artists one of the most spectacular views in the world.

"That was amazing, when you're that high up you're above the trees," said Kane.

Each evening, the artists gathered near the campfire and two individuals would give presentations. With the varying mediums, it proved to be educational and dynamic.

Although not part of the original plan, the two youths (also aspiring artists) who came with family members, added a different perspective – especially during the evening discussions.

"They were very excited and I think sometimes just bewildered that this group (of adults) was getting so excited over a subject like say graffiti. They would see something in a very different way.

I think the adults got a lot out of it too. Even what seemed a straight-forward discussion on 'what is art' created some fierce debates," said Kane.

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Special photo

A unique retreat into the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area saw artists, writers and photographers share more than just camping out and open fire cooking.

artists. So it was exciting to see what kind of awareness they would take away with them," she said.

Three floatplane flights saw every-