

*Creating a Culture of Stewardship* is a new program developed by the Slocan Lake Stewardship Society that was launched in summer 2014. The program is designed to engage people through a variety of place-based volunteer opportunities that encourage observation, teach about watershed ecology, and inspire ecologically informed behaviors. A key objective of this engagement is to actively build and share knowledge about the biodiversity of the Slocan Lake watershed through photography, mapping, campground storytelling and citizen science – and that this knowledge will lead to greater caring and stewardship. The various projects that comprise the *Creating a Culture of Stewardship* occur in the summer in order to maximize engagement during a time of year in which local people as well as seasonal residents and tourists spend a lot of time outdoors recreating and viewing the region's abundant wildlife.

## Program Goals

1. Deepen the culture of caring and stewardship among residents and visitors that inspires local efforts to maintain and enhance the ecology of the Slocan Lake watershed.
2. Increase capacity for participation within area residents and visitors by recruiting, training and managing volunteers to participate in ongoing education, citizen science research, conservation and restoration work.

## Five Engagement Opportunities

Public engagement is the cornerstone of the *Culture of Stewardship* program. From June through September 2014, five diverse engagement opportunities were developed and delivered by the Community Education Coordinator with support from the Culture of Stewardship Advisory Committee, partnering organizations and numerous volunteers. Each opportunity was conceived as a stand-alone project, yet the combination and concurrent delivery of the various projects produced important synergies that contributed to the overall success of the program.

The five 2014 projects were:

1. ***Eyes on the Lake*** – a biodiversity mapping project using iNaturalist.org that encouraged local citizens and visitors to collect and post on-line nature observations within the Slocan Lake watershed;
2. ***Love Your Lake*** – a contest with '12 Things You Can Do to Love Your Lake' targeting children and youth in particular to be good stewards while learning more about the Slocan Lake watershed;
3. ***Campground Storytelling Theatre*** – natural history performances held in local campgrounds starring a Western Toad and White Sturgeon delivering a message of hope for the future and the need for on-going stewardship of wild creatures and their habitat;
4. ***SWAMP*** (Slocan Wetlands Assessment & Monitoring Project) – a collaborative research initiative with two other local societies identifying and mapping wetlands throughout the Slocan Valley that included public education and incorporated citizen-based information;
5. ***Friday Markets & Festivals*** – an information table and resource hub for SLSS's projects and programs at the New Denver Friday Markets, and ToadFest and Garlic Festivals.

Financial assistance for the 2014 *Culture of Stewardship* projects was gratefully received from: *Columbia Basin Trust* and *Slocan Solutions Society*. As well, SLSS greatly appreciates the financial donations from

our local merchants for the Campground Storytelling Theatre project, namely:

*New Denver Home Hardware, Sew Much More, Rutabaga's Whole Foods, Silverton Building Supplies, New Market Foods, What's In Store? and Valhalla Pure.*

We also wish to thank the program's many volunteers and all those individuals and families who contributed to Slocan Lake stewardship this summer, including those who entered the Love Your Lake Contest.

Thank you as well to all of you who continue to upload your nature photographs to the Stewardship Society's *i Naturalist* "Eyes on the Lake" mapping project.

*Creating a Culture of Stewardship* is a continuing program of SLSS.