

## SIGNING STEWARDSHIP AGREEMENT

# Straits Elementary students plan to protect limestone barrens habitat

**FLOWERS COVE** — Students at Straits Elementary are preparing to sign a Habitat Stewardship Agreement.

Principal at the school, Geneva Woodward, says teachers and students want to be involved in this initiative to protect the limestone barrens habitat.

She explains that the agreement, which is expected to be signed in September, is a co-operative effort between Straits Elementary and the Limestone Barrens Habitat Stewardship Program.

"We are proud to be a part of signing a stewardship agreement to help take care of our special habitat," Ms. Woodward explains. "Since the habitat of many of these rare plants is endangered, we need the commitment of our local people to ensure its protection for the future."

"This can only be achieved through enhancing the knowledge of our children and youth who will see the importance of preserving the habitat so that these rare plants will not experience habitat loss," she adds.

Ms. Woodward notes that in an area where there is great need for development, the limestone barrens habitat provides an opportunity to derive eco-tourism benefits from its unique resources.

"Just seeing what is here and knowing that it's not found anywhere else has instilled a sense of pride," she remarks. "I think both students and teachers feel a sense of ownership. Our goal is to instill local pride, to promote responsible use, and hopefully this will encourage visitors to come to our area to see these rare plants."

The principal says students and teachers have a quest to learn more about the limestone barrens habitat.

"We want to gain more knowledge about the rare plants so that we can enhance local and regional knowledge to preserve and take on the

responsibility of caring for this fragile habitat," she says.

The school recently received a presentation from Dulcie House, program co-ordinator of the Limestone Barrens Habitat Stewardship Program (LBHSP). Assisting Ms. House were two research students from Memorial University, Kim Parsons and Susan Tilley.

More than 100 students and their teachers gathered in the school's gymnasium to view a slide show, which highlighted many of the special plants and features of the limestone barrens habitat.

"We have more questions that we want answered and this shows that learning is taking place when students and teachers want to learn more," Ms. Woodward explains.

Ms. Woodward remarks that she was surprised and proud to learn that she lives in an area that has a habitat considered to be unique in the world.

"Why didn't someone tell us about the limestone barrens habitat before?" she asked. "The fact that students can experience a habitat here and not just read about it in a textbook, will have a greater impact as an educational tool."

Ms. House notes that she would also like to see more research and the development of school programs about the limestone barrens habitat added to the school curriculum.

"The resources are here to integrate this unique habitat into the school curriculum," Ms. House explains. "Once developed I believe this information could be used to educate children worldwide about why the limestone barrens of the Great Northern Peninsula are so special."

Ms. House remarks that she is looking forward to signing a stewardship agreement with Straits Elementary," she says. "We hope to have an opportunity to sign stewardship agreements with other schools."

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