

[2017 John B Holdstock Scholarship Recipient \(1\) \[1\]](#)

Congratulations to Michelle Walsh, one of two successful recipients of the 2017 John B. Holdstock Scholarship!

"I truly agree with [John B. Holdstock's] motto that "The world is run by those who show up", says Michelle, "and I have truly tried to show up and be a part of the conversation on fisheries conservation. By being active in hunting, fishing and other wildlife and fisheries activities, you are on the land and the water and by connecting with these resources we are all likely to grow passionate about them and care for their protection and sustainable use. I am a strong advocate for respecting our resources so we can enjoy them for generations to come."

Michelle's interest in fish and wildlife conservation was sparked as a young girl on a fishing trip with her grandparents. Michelle recalls the excitement of bringing home salmon, "many of which were chinook bigger than me." She recalls, "My little brother and I were in awe of these strange, slimy, silver fish and watching the cleaning and preparation of them, it was a fun time seeing everyone working together." Michelle has since been focused on pursuing a natural resource job in fisheries. During her undergraduate years she worked throughout the province on federal fisheries assessment projects. Next she worked in the Lower Fraser with the Pacific Salmon Commission salmon test fishery gillnet boat; "It was intensive data collection (scales, lengths, proportionate sampling) and a huge responsibility for me but I really stepped up to the plate and felt I did a great job. Working closely with a gillnet boat operator taught me a lot about fisheries management and commercial fishing." She has also worked with Endangered white sturgeon with a consultant and local First Nations. "I was so happy to learn boating skills, rigorous field data collection, and how to work with folks from all walks of life. Furthermore, helping these beautiful gentle giants of the river was phenomenal." As well, Michelle has volunteered with many local groups doing sensitive habitat area (Lac Du Bois) clean-ups (Kamloops Naturalist Club, see photo left), Thompson Rivers University Youth Science Fair judging and youth science camps, and also making you-tube videos to encourage youth to pursue natural resource careers.

"In the short term my academic goal is to complete my thesis and graduate with a Master's of Science in Environmental Science. I hope that my research on salmon habitat use of thermal refuge in an interior stream will be useful for habitat managers to make informed choices on strategies to restore salmon habitat and in-kind restore salmon populations." Michelle adds that being book-smart is one thing but not the entire picture. "I'm hopeful that (through) the field experience and research experience I gain from my school I'll be able to lead more research to the benefit of the community and their fish and fisheries. I've developed a lot of partnerships to date through my project and seen first-hand the power of working with others towards a common goal. There are truly so many issues facing salmon and the resource users such as climate change, reduced productivity in the ocean, and cumulative effects. The more we can do to work together the better off we will all be. Ultimately long term, I hope to achieve a senior biologist position and work in the interior on these fisheries conservation issues. Furthermore, I'd love to work with youth more as they are the future and getting them on the land caring about the resources and understanding the importance of the resource can go a long way in the future to conservation and sustainable use. If kids don't see or experience things they won't matter to them."

Congratulations, Michelle, and good luck in your goals!

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