



SCHOOL WEATHER NETWORK WINS KUDOS FOR UVIC CLIMATOLOGIST

A University of Victoria climatologist's mission to turn a new generation of students on to the wonders of weather science has earned him a 2006 Award of Recognition from the BC School Superintendents Association.

Dr. Andrew Weaver, one of the world's leading climate researchers and the Canada Research Chair in Atmospheric Science, will receive the award in Vancouver on May 4. The award recognizes individuals and organizations for their outstanding contributions to support and enhance public school education in British Columbia.

Weaver is the guiding force behind a unique network of weather stations installed at 50 public schools in Victoria, Saanich and Sooke. The goal of the Victoria Micro Meteorological Weather Network is to foster an interest among schoolchildren and the public in physics and mathematics the two sciences that are fundamental to understanding weather.

"Physics and mathematics are often perceived as difficult and irrelevant," says Weaver, who created the network in 2005 with UVic colleague Ed Wiebe, in partnership with Greater Victoria School District 61. "What better way to demonstrate the relevance of science to kids than weather, something we see and feel every day?"

Each weather station consists of a series of small, solar-powered instrument packages mounted on the school roof. The instruments provide real-time measurements of temperature, humidity, wind speed and direction, precipitation, solar and UV radiation, and atmospheric pressure.

Wireless technology sends the data from each station to classrooms across the school district and to a central computer in Weaver's lab at UVic. There, the information is compiled and displayed graphically via the Internet at www.victoriaweather.ca.

"Over the next few weeks, we'll be installing stations at 17 more schools," says Weaver, who, along with Wiebe and students from the UVic climate modelling lab, gives presentations to school classes on how to use the weather station data. Weaver also guided the creation of resources for teachers so that they can integrate the weather stations into their science curriculum.

"Andrew has created an incredible resource for our educators that makes science a daily topic throughout the students' year," says John

Gaipman, superintendent of schools for School District 61. "In his quest to support public education and the knowledge of science, Andrew has worked tirelessly to promote learning in our community."

The Victoria Micro Meteorological Weather Network is funded by \$108,100 from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council's PromoScience program, which supports organizations that work with youth to inspire an interest in science and engineering. NEC Corporation contributed another \$50,000 and in-kind support came from Davis Instruments Corp and School Districts 61 (Victoria), 62 (Sooke) and 63 (Saanich).

At UVic, Weaver has built one of the most sophisticated climate modelling facilities on the planet and has tackled subjects as diverse as the physics of sea ice formation, past abrupt climate change and the physics of El Niño. He's one of a handful of scientists working on the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's next climate assessment, due in 2007, which will direct international policies related to global warming.

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