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Nanaimo News Bulletin

GHANA comes to viu



Vincent Kusi-Kyei is part of a four-member contingent from Ghana visiting Vancouver Island University as part of an ongoing five-year learning partnership.

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For Vincent Kusi-Kyei, monkeys and elephants are common sights, but seeing a whale was a whole new experience.

Kusi-Kyei, a forestry student from Ghana, is one of four students and faculty visiting Vancouver Island University this fall to learn about environmentally sustainable practices, eco-tourism development and bushfire

management.

Kusi-Kyei is joined by Alexander Baffour Afrifa, a forestry professor; Charity Agyeiwaa, an accounting student; and Kwame Ampadu Saau, a counsellor and lecturer.

The visit is part of the five-year Ghana Canada Partnership for Environmental Education, a collaboration between VIU and two Sunyani-area institutions funded by the Canadian International Development Agency. The project is entering its fourth year of exchange visits between the institutions, but this is the first time students from Ghana have come to Canada.

A team of students and faculty from VIU will return the visit in the spring to work on reducing poverty.

The visitors spent September touring many of the Island's prominent attractions, such as Tofino, Strathcona Park and Mount Washington, as well as liaising with VIU faculty and students.

Kusi-Kyei is studying the ways VIU encourages people to adopt more environmentally friendly practices.

He said plastic waste is a huge problem in Ghana – most people just throw their waste on the ground, partly because they do not understand the environmental implications and partly because the government has not provided enough recycling opportunities.

Kusi-Kyei plans to establish recycling bins on his Sunyani campus similar to the ones he sees on the Nanaimo campus.

He's also been working with a member of VIU's Solutions: A Sustainability Network.

"We've established a similar club to help educate people and reduce littering," said Kusi-Kyei. "They've helped us start a campus composting corporation."

Agyeiwaa and Saau are studying Island eco-tourism businesses and activities that could be applied in Ghana to boost tourism revenue.

Saau said like B.C., Ghana has many natural parks, but unlike here, the people who live around them are not involved in ventures that keep tourists in the area longer and encourage them to contribute to the area's economy.

The highlight of Afrifa's trip to the Island was a visit to the Coastal Fire Centre headquarters in Parksville, where he studied the fire monitoring system and talked with officials about wildfire control techniques.

"Wildfires are the biggest threat to the environment in Ghana," he said. "They destroy people's homes, businesses and even lives."

Afrifa said while three-quarters of B.C. fires are caused by lightning, all of the fires in Ghana are caused by humans, often farmers clearing land or hunters.

He hopes to copy the Coastal Fire Centre's methods for educating people about wildfire prevention and establish a better monitoring system in Ghana.

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