

# Natural selections

R. Brown  
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Queen Elizabeth Elementary School in Kensington received a P.E.I. Environmental Award on Monday. Presenting and accepting the award were, from left, Kensington-Malpeque MLA Matthew MacKay, Grade 3 students Taylor Beamish and PJ Paugh, and Environment Minister Richard Brown.

## Kensington school plus two others, land P.E.I. Environmental Awards

BY COLIN MACLEAN  
JOURNAL PIONEER

KENSINGTON

Hundreds of little voices cheered at Queen Elizabeth Elementary School Monday morning as the school was announced as winner of a 2018 P.E.I. Environmental Award.

One of those voices was Grade 3 student Taylor Beamish who, along with fellow student PJ Paugh, got to accept the award plaque and \$3,000 in award money on behalf of their school.

Queen Elizabeth Elementary was chosen as a winner because of its efforts to connect students with the environment. Some of their efforts include raising and releasing salmon and trout, raising butterflies, doing garbage pickups, holding classes outdoors and planting trees and flowers around their building.

Taylor's favourite was doing the planting.

"I like getting my hands dirty. It's fun feeling the dirt on your hands. It's exciting," she said.

The Kensington school was one of three P.E.I. Environ-

mental Awards this year, taking the prize for an educational facility.

The two other winners were Wayne Gairns, of Envyale, in the individual category and the Eastern Kings Senior Neighbours Club in the organization category.

The Eastern Kings Senior Neighbours Club started an organic community garden in 2017 to help educate young people about where their food comes from and to promote organic crops.

Gairns is a long-time environmental volunteer in the community, having worked with the Department of Fisheries and Ocean's Adopt a River program, helping to create the P.E.I. Federation of Fly Fishers to help oversee work on the West River, and working with the Central Queens Wildlife Federation and island Nature Trust on various projects.

Gairns said there a lot of Islanders who do a lot of good work for the environment and he's happy to be counted among them.

He's seen attitudes about the environment change drastically for the better here in the 30 years since he got involved in his first project, but it's been a long road to get where we are, he said.

"The change in environmental attitude is making headroads, but it's a slow process. We're all reluctant to change. We all want to see things improve - but it takes time," he said.

All three award winners received their plaques from Environment Minister Richard Brown, who asked the students to take what they learn about the environment, home to their parents. He also used the opportunity to inform the students

about the province's recently passed legislation to phase in a plastic bag ban.

"Your parents will listen to you. Make sure they are recycling and make sure when you go to the grocery store from now on you encourage your parents not to use plastic bags," said Brown.

"The future of Prince Edward Island lies in your hands and your minds."

The P.E.I. Environmental Award winners are chosen from a group of nominees by a provincial committee. The awards have been handed out annually for 31 years.

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