

## White Rock student heads to Poland

by Wendy Elliott/The Advertiser

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The Advertiser

Kings County university student Thea Whitman is one of 26 members of the Canadian Youth Delegation (CYD) to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Poznan, Poland from Dec. 1 to 14.

Whitman, 22, grew up in White Rock and says she is excited to join this team of young Canadians. The CYD ranges in age from 18-26. Their work in Poznan will focus on inspiring Canadians and youth around the world to take individual action, pressuring governments to implement strong climate change policies and enhancing the global youth network on climate change.

"The environment is one of Canadians' top concerns," says Whitman. "Canadian youth are asking our government to help return Canada to its position as a positive participant in the UN climate talks and to work productively with the world's nations in Poland."

Climate change has shown itself to be far more than an environmental issue, but a human rights issue as well, she noted. The consequences of climate change are already affecting livelihoods of people around the world. Developed nations, including Canada, must take immediate and meaningful action towards both mitigation and adaptation.

"Poznan is a critical point on the way to a global climate change agreement that will replace Kyoto after 2012," Whitman said. "It is imperative that the international community use this opportunity to work toward climate security and justice."

Whitman finished a degree in environmental biology at Queen's last spring, and worked this past summer for a professor who was doing ethanol research in Québec.

Currently she has begun post-graduate work in soil science at Cornell University. "I'm studying black carbon, or biochar, as a soil amendment and carbon sequestration mechanism."

Biochar, Whitman said, is produced when organic matter is burned at high temperatures in the absence of oxygen, which is called pyrolysis.

"It was first identified in the fertile 'Terra Preta' soils of the Amazon, and is of particular interest today due to both its positive effects on soil fertility and also the stability of its carbon - longevities of over 1,000 years have been identified."

More specifically, Whitman said she will be doing lab work on the duration of carbon storage in biochar, examining its potential as a carbon offset in the Regional Greenhouse Gas In which has just recently auctioned off its first carbon credits.

She is also looking at the production of biochar for use in cook stoves in western Kenya "with a view to incorporate this process into the Kyoto protocol (or its successors) Clean Dev Mechanism."

The Canadian Youth Delegation is a project of the Canadian Youth Climate Coalition, which is a united front of youth organizations taking action on the climate crisis.

Canadian Youth Climate Coalition website: [www.ourclimate.ca](http://www.ourclimate.ca), delegation website: [www.cydpoznan.org](http://www.cydpoznan.org).

