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Shawnigan Lake School student wins prestigious global policy competition

"It is impressive that a student going into Grade 11 won a competition open to 16- to 26-year-olds"

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1 / 2 Desi Shaw, a Shawnigan Lake School student, has emerged as a rising star in the field of global policy-making after winning a prestigious competition run by the Washington, D.C.-based Center for European Policy Analysis. (Arden Gill photo)

Courtesy of Shawnigan Lake School

A Shawnigan Lake School student has emerged as a rising star in the field of global policy-making after winning a prestigious competition run by the Washington, D.C.-based Center for European Policy Analysis.

During the summer, Grade 11 student Desi Shaw submitted a paper to CEPA's Policy Pitching Competition, which was open to anyone between the ages of 16 and 26. Her submission, which focused on the threats to global supply chains with a particular focus on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, was announced as the overall winner of the competition this month. As the winner, Shaw had the opportunity to take part in the 2023 CEPA Forum this week, with the theme of "Winning the War. Winning the Peace." On Sept. 26, CEPA released Desi's virtual conversation with Stephen J. Hadley, a former U.S. National Security Advisor to President George W. Bush. Moderated by Maggie Miller, a cybersecurity reporter for *Politico*, Shaw and Hadley discussed the subject of her paper, as well as the challenges and opportunities for the next generation of national security policy-makers.

"Russia is essentially holding a significant portion of the world's food supply hostage," Shaw said during the virtual discussion. "When you disrupt the food supply chain, you are exacerbating food scarcity in the most vulnerable locations and populations."

She compared the situation to the COVID-19 pandemic, when global supply chains were shut down, leading to the unavailability of critical supplies.

"We need to build redundancy into these trade systems so that we are self-sustainable in crises," she said.

Calling Shaw an "expert on supply chains," Hadley commended her initiative and commitment to the field of global policy-making.

"When I was a junior in high school, I was working at the local YMCA, and in the summer, I worked at a day camp," he said. "That's what I was doing in high school. Here's what Desi was doing: she was working with the Model United Nations, she had a number of awards in that connection, she had an internship at Leadership Initiatives where one of the things she did was shape a security program for a state university in Nigeria, she was an intelligence support specialist for CIAT Training Partners, collaborating with the NSA and the Department of Defense — she's had mentors from both of those organizations, and to top that, she also worked at the Office of the Mayor in Woodside [California], championing impactful community safety projects."

Shawnigan social studies teacher and Model UN coordinator Paul Klassen lauded Shaw's efforts in the program.

"Desi has been actively involved in our Model United Nations program," he commented. "She is a self-starter and often seeks opportunities in so many ways outside the standard Model UN offerings. She prepares before conferences with excellent research and articulate position papers, and is an extraordinary public speaker and negotiator, which often results in awards at conferences. These are likely many of the skills she used to win the CEPA competition."

Cheryl Miranda, the director of the Head's Office and Shaw's academic advisor, expressed her pride in Shaw's accomplishment.

"Desi is a talented and exceptionally motivated member of our student community," she said. "Not only does she apply herself wholeheartedly to her studies, she is an active contributor to the Shawnigan Lake School community. She volunteers her time to worthy causes, such as the Cowichan Valley Hospital Foundation fundraising gala, training volunteers for Duke's Café (the School's on-campus coffee shop), and supporting younger and newer members in her Boarding House. I have no doubt that Desi is going places when she leaves the gates of Shawnigan. She deserves this recognition from CEPA for her project on global supply chains. As her academic advisor, I am incredibly proud of her and look forward to supporting her over her remaining two years on campus."

Head of School Richard D.A. (Larry) Lamont is also impressed by Shaw's efforts in and out of school.

"It is impressive that a student going into Grade 11 won a competition open to 16- to 26-year-olds," he commented. "Desi took the initiative on her own to enter this competition over the summer. Model UN has been her springboard into the global policy-making arena. The success in this competition is a reflection of Shawnigan's mission to spark minds and to encourage our students to be curious and to aim high."

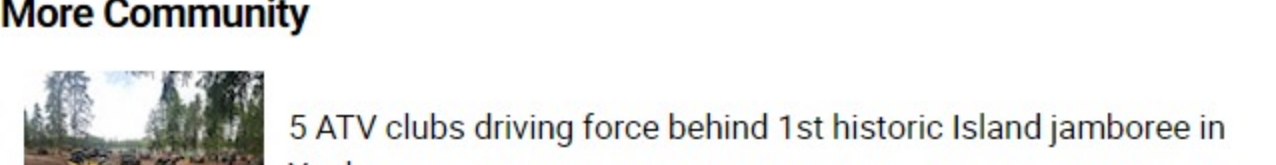
Shaw noted that she is fortunate to have family and friends she could ask for help with her project, which falls into one of her many areas of interest. These include politics, history and diplomacy.

"Global policy is something that I'm invested in and that I'm incredibly interested in, and my hope is to be present, mentored, and heard by experienced policy-makers like Steve [Hadley]. They have so much historical knowledge that I will never get to have because of the generation that I am in, and there is so much that I can learn from that and that I want to absorb because that would allow me to continue to formulate my own opinions and my own perspectives on politics, on global policy, so that I can continue to improve like other future policy-makers and hopefully one day enter the world of policy-making."

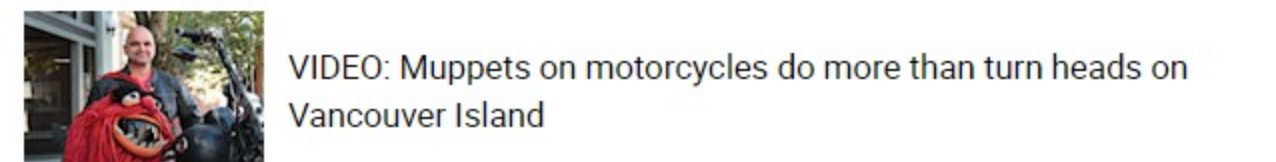
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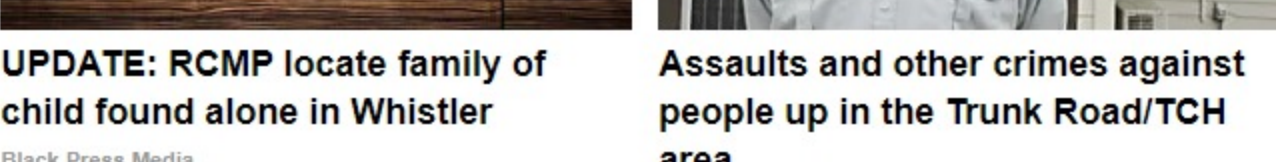
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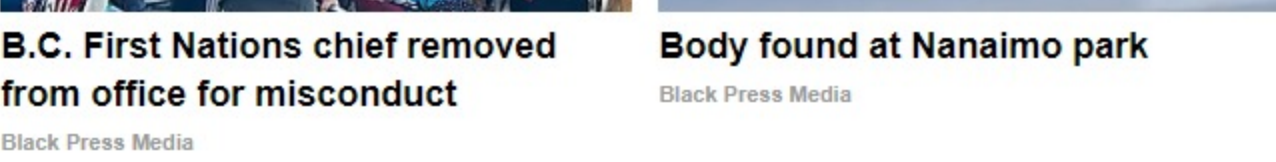
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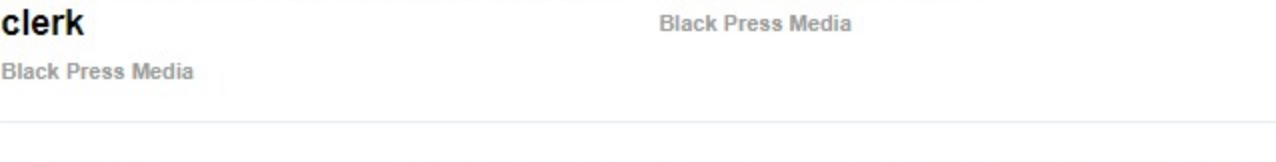
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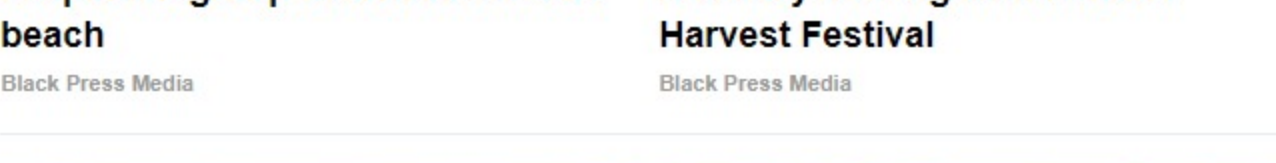
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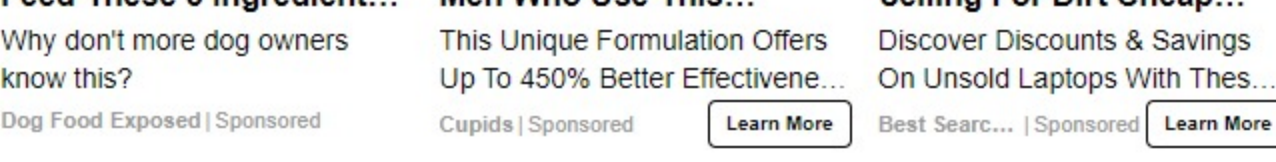
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