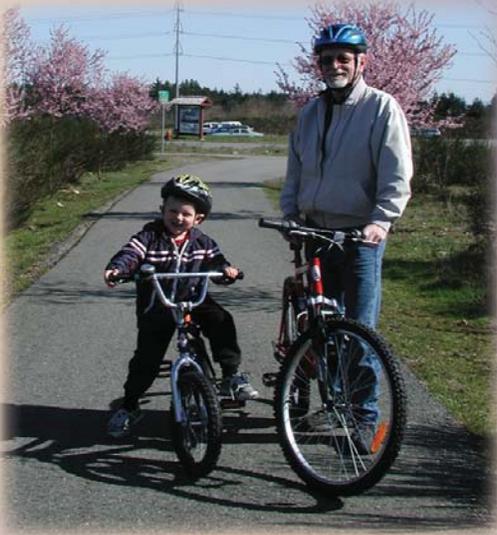


Volunteers in Parks (VIP)

Overview Package



What is the Volunteers in Parks (VIP) Program?

The Volunteers in Park Program (VIP) is a public participation program designed to bring the ideas and efforts of volunteers together with the City of Nanaimo, Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture in order to create, develop and improve our parks and open spaces. This program utilizes the talents, skills and energy of volunteers to develop, maintain and beautify Nanaimo's many new and old open spaces, parks and trails.



*Keighley Park
Playground
development
completed in the
summer of 2005.*

Who Can Volunteer?

Anyone can volunteer his or her ideas, hands, time or supplies. A single individual, a group of neighbors, clubs and even small businesses are encouraged to participate in this program.

Where can this be done?

Municipal parkland and some non-parkland may be suitable for your ideas. VIP projects can be as small as planting and maintaining a flower bed on a traffic island or can be as ambitious as developing a neighbourhood playground. If you are unsure whether or not a specific property is a park, check the City Map system at www.nanaimo.ca or call us at 756-5200.

What are the different ways to volunteer?

There are many examples of VIP activities around town.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAYGROUND DEVELOPMENT

Playground development and re-development projects occur in neighbourhood parks all over the city. Playground projects have been undertaken at over 50 neighbourhood parks including, Carmanah, Kenwill, Keighley, Arbutus, Cathedral Grove, Kinette Evergreen, Brookwood, Robin's Den, Cariboo, Rockridge and Applegreen Parks. Playground development projects are the most ambitious of all the VIP activities and require labour and financial partnering between the City and each neighbourhood.



***Brookwood Park
Playground
development
completed in the
spring of 2005***

INVASIVE PLANT REMOVAL

Nanaimo's parks are becoming infested with many invasive plants, including Scotch Broom, English Ivy, English Holly, Daphne or Japanese Spurge, Himalayan Blackberry and Japanese Knotwood. These plants have few competitors and quickly take over an ecosystem degrading the habitat for many native plant species. The neighbours of Brookwood and Roxanne Parks have successfully removed Scotch Broom and Himalayan Blackberry from their parks, while a number of high school students have cleared Daphne and other invasives from Colliery Dam and Saxer Park. The City will provide education and some tools or volunteers interested in removing invasive plants while walking through the parks and/or organizing more substantial work parties. In some cases, restoration planting will follow the removal of invasive plants to minimize soil erosion and promote the re-establishment of native plant habitat.



***High school
students removing
Daphne and other
invasive plants
from Colliery Dam
Park.***

YOUTH

Leaders in Training (LIT) and Quest are Nanaimo's premiere youth leadership programs! Teens will be trained in leadership and spend their summer volunteering around Nanaimo, gaining valuable work experience, making new friends and learning to be leaders in the community as they go. Past placements for LIT's include the Parks Recreation and Culture Summer Camps, aquatic activities, and special events and Pro-D-Day camps throughout the community.



*95 LITS
assisted PRC
in the summer
of 2010.*

PARK WARDENS

Volunteer park wardens visit a park, trail or facility to identify and report problems or issues. Invasive plant removal, litter removal, and other park maintenance may be optional activities. In some cases, park wardens educate the public about the park, its natural features and park bylaws.



*Park Warden
talking to other
park users and
keeping parks
clean.*

PUBLIC ART

VIP public art projects can be as small as creating stepping stones or mosaics for a pathway, or can be ambitious such as painting murals and designing interesting benches or park features. The artwork must be suitable for a public space and it must be safe and vandal resistant. The goal is that it makes your neighbourhood park a special place and reflects the efforts and character of your unique community.



The Art At Play Project got community members involved painting pieces that are displayed along the fence of Deverill Square Park.

GATEKEEPERS

Volunteer gatekeepers assist the Parks Operations Department in reducing night-time vandalism and misuse in parks by closing and/or operating park gates on a regular basis. Municipal parkland and some non-parkland may be suitable for your ideas. VIP public art projects can be as small as creating stepping stones or mosaics for a pathway, or can be ambitious such as painting murals and designing interesting benches or park features. The artwork must be suitable for a public space and it must be safe and vandal resistant. The goal is that it makes your neighbourhood park a special place and reflects the efforts and character of your unique community.



Park gatekeeper program.

PARK NATURALISTS

Park naturalists assist the Parks Operations Department in building appreciation and awareness of the environment and cultural assets in Nanaimo's parks. Naturalists use their unique skills and talents to design interpretive signs, walks, brochures and give informal presentations to park users.



Park Naturalist program.

COMMUNITY GARDENS and BEAUTIFICATION

Community Gardens are widely regarded as a positive park amenity that creates a safe and healthy recreational activity within our park system and on other city-owned lands. They allow for local food production and can become a gathering place in a neighbourhood.

Group interested in gardening apply for seed money through the VIP Program, and are facilitated in the initial setup of the gardens. Edible and aesthetic gardens can be created on underutilized city property, traffic circles, and in neighbourhood parks.



DIGS
community
garden on
Protection
Island at
Smuggler's
Park



BOULEVARD TREE PLANTING

Nanaimo's urban forest and aesthetics are an important part of creating a great sense of place. Neighbourhoods in the Old City Quarter, Haliburton and Craig Streets have planted street trees along their boulevards. Each of these projects is careful to avoid utility lines, and heed traffic visibility. In most cases, the City provides the plants and trees, while the neighbours provide installation, labour and maintain the vegetation.



**Street tree planting
on Craig Street.**

HOSTING A BLOCK PARTY... A FUN WAY TO GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOURS!

Some neighbourhoods enjoy hosting block parties as a great way to meet other neighbours and/or to celebrate a neighbourhood volunteer efforts as a finale to a completed project. Block parties generally consist of barbecues and playing games with a group of neighbours. They can be held on part of a park, street or cul-de-sac and may or may not involve road closures. The neighbourhood organizes the event through the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture. A separate block party kit is available by phoning 756-5200.

How do I start?

Once you have an idea, contact the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department and explain what you would like to do. For more information about the VIP Program or how to begin your own VIP initiative, please call 755-5200, write to VIP c/o 500 Bowen Road, Nanaimo, BC, V9R 1Z7 or e-mail parks@nanaimo.ca.

What happens next?

If you are initiating a project, once your call or letter is received, the Parks Department will contact you to further discuss your ideas. Generally, a neighbourhood meeting is held to see if there is support for your ideas. If there is local support, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture will assist you in working towards achieving your neighbourhood goals.

The City may supply you with the following:

- Technical assistance
- Supplies and materials
- Manpower
- Training and instructional workshops
- Financial aid
- Recognition for your efforts

If you would like to be part of the Park Warden, Naturalist or Gatekeeper programs, an application package must be completed and training received.

What are the benefits of the VIP Program?

VIP activities get people outside and involved in improving Nanaimo's parks. Equally important, however, is the community development efforts. Without exception, neighbours who often have not even met before work together to improve their community.

Typically, a neighbourhood meeting at the site begins a VIP project process.

