

City of Nanaimo

Community Environmental Sustainability Grant REPORT

January, 2026

Learning in Place - Wardropper Park Restoration Project

This report summarizes the activities carried out by staff, students and families from the Departure Bay Elementary School (DBES) community towards our education, restoration, and reconciliation goals at Wardropper Park, Nanaimo, in 2025.

Originally, our project plan involved 3 phases:

1. Spring 2025 - invasive plant species removal by Departure Bay Elementary School (DBES) staff, students, families and community members
2. Summer 2025 – wetland construction by professional herpetologist and City of Nanaimo excavator + operator **Supported by Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant*
3. Fall 2025 – boardwalk construction by City of Nanaimo parks staff and native planting by DBES staff, students, families and community members **Supported by Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant*

Ultimately, our project involved:

1. Spring, Summer, and early Fall 2025 - invasive plant species removal by Departure Bay Elementary School (DBES) staff, students, families and community members
2. Fall 2025 - collaborative design of a park restoration plan, created by Kelsey Cramer, Kinglet Consulting (August - December 2025) **Supported by Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant*
3. Fall 2025 - native planting by Departure Bay Elementary School (DBES) staff and students, in partnership with City of Nanaimo parks staff Patrick McIntosh, Glenn Mullett and Kitina Munroe
4. Efforts to build relationships with Snuneymuxw community members (ongoing)

Activity	Description	# of People Involved	Cost
Invasive plant removal work party (March 23 and 29, 2025 - Spring Break)	DBES students, staff, and volunteers from the Departure Bay Neighborhood Association	32 adults and children total	\$100 children's work gloves
Invasive plant removal (April - June 2025)	Teachers and students worked during class time to remove garlic mustard, blackberry, and ivy	100 students, roughly 1 hour each	0
Invasive plant removal work party (Sept 28, 2025 - NDTR)	DBES students, staff, and volunteers from the Departure Bay Neighborhood Association	80 adults and children	\$200 refreshments
Park Planning (August - October, 2025)	Kelsey Cramer - Kinglet Consulting Landscape Design, created a parks plan based on the best of her VIU students' (2024) plans and her own surveys and knowledge	20 school staff surveyed for park design input	\$1500
Native plant planting (November 2025)	Native planting in collaboration with City of Nanaimo Parks staff	100 students, 45 m ² area planted with 105 trees and 60 shrubs	\$200 for Plantskydd to protect plants from deer browsing

Over Spring Break (March 2025) Departure Bay teachers led two separate work parties, inviting students and their families to play, learn, and put some muscle into our continued efforts to remove invasives in Wardropper. We cleared ivy and blackberry from an area adjacent to a small wetland that we plan to protect and enhance.

Teachers and students continued invasive removal in the spring of 2025, including tackling a small but significant patch of invasive garlic mustard at the top of the park. City Parks staff alerted us to the presence of garlic mustard, which isn't yet common in Nanaimo, so controlling its spread is important. Students felt proud to be part of this early response to an invasive plant.

On the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (September 28, 2025) school staff invited students and their families to our fourth annual work party in Wardropper Park, removing invasive plants with the goal of restoring ecological integrity and biodiversity to Wardropper Park. We had 80 children and adults from the school community, Departure Bay Neighborhood Association, and Departure Bay Streamkeepers contribute their time to clearing invasive Himalayan blackberry, Holly, and Daphne from an area that we hope will become a food forest representing the shared history of the relationships between people and plants in Departure Bay/St'liltup.

In October 2025, Kelsey Cramer, Kinglet Consulting, completed a parks plan for Wardropper Park that combined the results of consultations with Departure Bay Elementary school staff, designs from VIU students in the horticulture program - landscape design class that Kelsey taught in 2024, and Kelsey's own surveys and knowledge of native plants, ecological restoration, and indigenous cultivation/relationship with plants. Having a plan to bring forward to City of Nanaimo Parks has been the main barrier preventing us from applying for Partners in Parks funding to make bigger changes to the park, to better enhance biodiversity and learning opportunities. *Being able to use the Sustainability Grant to engage Kelsey was a watershed moment for us, providing the momentum for us to continue improving the space in partnership with City Parks staff. We are very grateful for this grant and the leverage it provided.*

In November 2025 DBES staff and students collaborated with City of Nanaimo Parks staff to continue planting established restoration areas, using the plant list in Kelsey's plan as a guide. Patrick McIntosh helped us order plants from Greenthumb Nursery, and Glenn Mullett and Kitina Munroe provided onsite support with plant placement and mentorship to students about the purpose and process of native planting.

We have also been working hard to establish relationships with the Snuneymuxw community to involve them in what the space could become. The primary and huge task towards revitalizing the park continues to be invasive plant species removal. While there's still an overwhelming amount of invasive species to replace with native and nourishing plants, we've made impressive progress towards our goal in the last 8 years. This fall we made a connection with Hannah Paulson with Snuneymuxw Lands (thanks to David Stewart!). After a phone conversation about our work so far and future goals, Hannah discussed our project with members of the Snuneymuxw nation. She let us know that our work is in line with their objectives and that we have their support. If we proceed with excavation for wetland enhancement we may need to go through the official engagement process, or we may be able to invite an observer on a less formal basis. Either way, we should be prepared to compensate them for their time. Kitina

Munroe (City of Nanaimo parks staff) previously worked as an indigenous support teacher with SD68, and is working on establishing culture and language learning opportunities in City parks. We plan to continue to build on these relationships and learning opportunities.

The biggest change to our planned grant spending compared to what we actually spent money on was postponing the wetland enhancement project. At Kelsey Cramer's advice, we submitted a request for archeological information for Wardropper Park, because of the proximity to St'lilup/Departure Bay. The Provincial Archaeology branch replied that we don't need a permit to do any excavation work in the park, but they recommend engaging an archaeologist and/or indigenous observer for land altering-activities. We're still planning to use an excavator to remove 5 - 10 cm of soil to enhance an existing wetland, and will follow the process set out by the province and Snuneymuxw if this part of the park plan is approved by City council. The remaining unspent grant funds are earmarked for compensating an indigenous observer, or biologist Elke Wind for guidance on wetland enhancement.

We really appreciate your support of our work. The Sustainability Grant allowed us to make important progress towards our goals, and involve many people in environmental restoration. Thank you!

Please don't hesitate to contact me for clarification on any of our activities.

Alex King, B. Sc, B.Ed
SD68 teacher
On behalf to the Wardropper Park Committee of teachers at Departure Bay Elementary