

2023 Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant

Art Action Earwig's Love Tooth Nest

Report to City of Nanaimo

1-activities undertaken

Between February and April 2024, Art Action Earwig produced Love Tooth Nest, an eco-art project that facilitated active and creative ecological restoration with Nanaimo community members. Community members visiting Colliery Dam Park were invited to harvest English Ivy, a dominant invasive species at the park, causing harm to the bio-region and threatening biodiversity. During these “pulling parties” the pulled ivy was gathered and shaped into a prepared “nest.”

To learn about local ecology through an indigenous perspective, Snuneymuxw storyteller Celestine Aleck facilitated children and youth engagement, raising awareness about the cultural importance of endangered medicine plants during breaks in our ivy pulling events. Focused engagement with children and youth during the pulling sessions gave cultural context to the significance of medicinal plants, the urgency in being responsible settler allies, protecting endangered ecosystems, and improving balance in the environment.

Love Tooth Nest was shared with the public at the Earth Day celebration Pulling To Gather, taking place in Colliery Dam Park on April 27. A tooth shaped wire sculpture (Love Tooth) was suspended in the middle of the nest, with prepared tooth shaped “seed bombs” made with indigenous plant seeds clipped to the wire sculpture. Instructions were prepared on sandwich boards, prompting visitors to gather English Ivy from the surrounding environment, add it to the nest, and take a native seed bomb as a gift of gratitude, to plant in place of the ivy or to plant in a place of their choosing. Also posted on the sandwich boards was information about the various native plant seeds, including traditional uses and ideal planting conditions. Wryly and Minah also engaged visitors with a live performance that highlighted the traditional uses and ideal planting conditions for the native plant seeds. Throughout the day, park visitors helped to complete the large nest together and planted dozens of native seed bombs.

Love Tooth Nest was a component of Pulling To Gather, a community-driven eco-art project that brought together art and ecological restoration through 12 weeks (March-May) of intensive Earth Activities. It was led by Minah Lee and Wryly Andherson, Nanaimo-based founding members of Art Action Earwig (AAE), and co-produced by Michael Geselbracht of Nanaimo Forest School, who is developing an Urban Ecovillage in South Nanaimo, traditional Snuneymuxw territory.

For this umbrella project, approximately 250 audience members participated on the celebration day, about 120 people from all ages and backgrounds joined the activities leading to the Earth day. 30 volunteers and 20 artists made the project possible.

2-how funds were spent

\$1000 Snuneymuxw storyteller for orientation, youth engagement, story creation and presentation.

\$900 AAE organizing, orientation, ivy pulling, nest preparation, creating seed bombs, labels, Love Tooth Nest signage content creation, Love Tooth Nest installation and exhibition.

\$750 Co-producer's community and event organizing and coordinating of volunteers.

\$250 liability insurance.

\$100 native plant seeds for use in seed bombs.

Equalling \$3000

3-what outcomes were achieved

Our goal was to empower the community through knowledge-sharing about both invasive and native plants, hands-on experience bringing improved balance to the land, and collaborative art-action for climate resiliency. Towards this end, the City of Nanaimo grant made possible the direct implementation of creative actions on the ground, and aided the realization of neighbourhood land stewards' interests in mobilizing arts in raising awareness.

We mobilized community to remove invasive species English Ivy at Colliery Dam Park. a sizeable dent was put in the English Ivy overtaking Colliery Dam.

Visitors to the park were encouraged to practice land stewardship in their neighbourhood and think about the balance of invasive and native plants in the environment. With additional funding support from an arts council, we scaled up the project, educated community about invasive species and native species and their importance for the ecosystem and their cultural importance, including through engagement with a Snuneymuxw storyteller, signage, and live performance/interaction onsite. Bridges were built with Snuneymuxw nation and visitors were given the opportunity to think about land stewardship from an indigenous and cultural perspective.

We encouraged propagation of native species through mindful art practice, through distribution of native plant seed bombs. -the South Nanaimo community was given an opportunity to connect and celebrate their environment together.

4-pictures

Downloadable photo files:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QhE6DyhO3bYqjek6HbbM9dICNmL2z0fZ?usp=drive_link

For more photos and documentation, please visit:

www.PullingToGather.space