



GREENSPACE FOR ALL

Capital Regional District Case Study Report

March 2025



STEWARDSHIP CENTRE
FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA

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I. Summary

This report summarizes the activities completed for the Greenspace for All initiative between April 1, 2024 and March 31, 2025, including developing and implementing the Capital Regional District (CRD) Case Study, work to raise awareness about the project and its objectives through outreach and engagement in target communities, and establishing relationships with local partner organizations.

The insights and lessons learned over the course of this year will inform the continued development and implementation of the Greenspace For All project in Year 3 (April 2025 to March 2026) within the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) and Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) with some ongoing work in CRD.

II. Benefits of Greenspaces

Greenspaces are publicly accessible areas commonly defined by their likeness to natural habitat – including native vegetation and tree cover – within or adjacent to urban landscapes, such as nature reserves, woodlands, regional or local parks, conservation areas, and wetlands.¹ Greenspaces also provide direct and indirect benefits to surrounding communities, including essential ecosystem services like local climate regulation, habitat provision, and flood protection, as well as benefits to human health and local economies. Collectively, these benefits improve climate and social resiliency, biodiversity, and quality of life for surrounding communities. However, these benefits are not distributed equitably and are disproportionately low in marginalized, racialized, and low-income communities, in comparison to more affluent neighborhoods.²

Research shows that the distribution of greenspaces is disproportionately low among marginalized and underserved communities due to systemic racism and colonialism.³ These communities have also been historically excluded from environmental stewardship activities and decision-making roles, further reducing their connection to and governance of greenspaces.⁴ As a result, these communities are more susceptible to the climate and health implications of climate change.

Integrating greenspaces into community infrastructure is key to achieving climate change adaptation and sustainability goals; however, effective and equitable strategies must account for

¹ Lucy Taylor and Dieter F. Hochuli, “Defining greenspace: Multiple uses across multiple disciplines,” *Landscape and Urban Planning* 158 (2017): 25–38, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2016.09.024>.

² Erin Whittingham and Vilbert Vabi, “Canada’s Urban Forests: Bringing the Canopy to All” (Nature Canada, 2021), <https://naturecanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Nature-Canada-Report-Tree-Equity.pdf>.

³ Whittingham and Vabi, “Canada’s Urban Forests: Bringing the Canopy to All.”

⁴ *Ibid*, p.15.

factors that prevent or enhance people’s access to greenspaces.^{5,6} Muñoz (2024) recommends adopting an equity-informed approach that addresses a variety of equity considerations, including those related to age, income, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation, language, and other factors associated with marginalized communities.⁷ This approach ensures that greenspace and climate adaptation strategies meet the diverse needs of all community members and achieve liveable, healthy, and resilient communities.

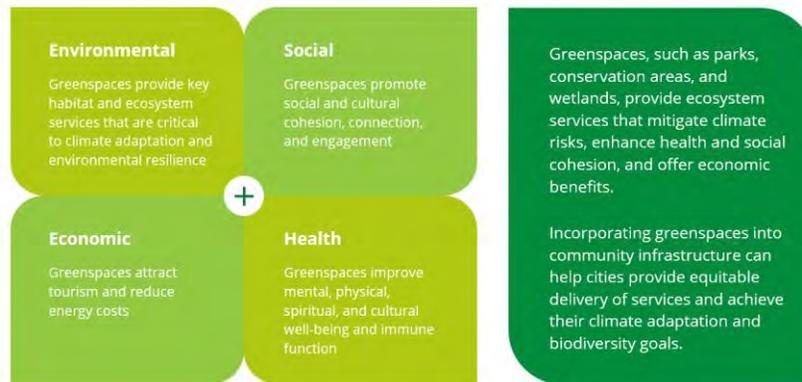


Figure 1. The environmental, social, economic, and health benefits of greenspaces. Graphic created by Ariadne Boutsakis.

Environmental

Greenspaces provide multiple ecosystem services, including erosion prevention, flood control, climate regulation, carbon sequestration, and water and air filtration – all of which are critical to community and environmental resilience, particularly in a changing climate. For example, greenspaces reduce run-off and flood risk in urban areas by increasing evaporation and the absorption of water by soils and vegetation.⁸ Greenspaces also provide crucial habitat for wildlife and the presence of diverse species is often an indicator of a healthy environment.

Social and health

Greenspaces have been shown to improve community well-being and encourage social connections between people and their environment. A growing body of evidence indicates that greenspaces support better immune function, cognitive health, cardiovascular health, mental

⁵ S. Friel et al., “Climate Change, Noncommunicable Diseases, and Development: The Relationships and Common Policy Opportunities,” *Annual Review of Public Health* 32, no. 1 (2011): 133–47, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-071910-140612>.

⁶ Jacqueline L. Scott and Ambika Tenneti, “Race and Nature in the City,” report (Nature Canada, 2021), <https://naturecanada.ca/race-and-nature-in-the-city/>.

⁷ Jenny Muñoz, “Greenspace for All Policy Review Report,” (Stewardship Centre for BC, 2024), https://stewardshipcentrebc.ca/PDF_docs/Greenspace_for_All/Greenspace_for_All_PolicyReview_Report_2024.pdf.

⁸ Whittingham and Vabi, “Canada’s Urban Forests: Bringing the Canopy to All,” p.14.

health, work and school performance, and creativity. The [Park Prescriptions program](#) – Canada’s first national nature prescription program, led by healthcare professionals – builds on this by prescribing at least two hours in nature per week with a minimum of 20 minutes intervals to experience the benefits of nature. Related benefits include improved air quality as trees help to filter particulate matter and pollution from the air. Additionally, greenspaces reduce noise pollution, promote physical activity (i.e. walking, running, biking, etc.), and foster connections with friends, family, and neighbours. In places where people have access to greenspace and understand its value, there is also a higher likelihood that community members will partake in sustainable behaviours and support the protection of existing greenspaces with their related biodiversity benefits.⁹

Economic

Greenspaces contribute to local economies by attracting tourism and reducing energy costs through natural temperature regulation.¹⁰ A study of Canadian cities found that for every dollar invested in urban forestry, residents received annual benefits ranging from \$2 to \$13.¹¹ These benefits arise from services such as stormwater management, erosion prevention, air purification, energy savings, and carbon sequestration. The urban tree canopy in Vancouver alone has been valued at approximately \$35 billion.¹² Indirect benefits also include reduced healthcare costs due to improved public health.¹³

⁹ Caroline M.L. Mackay and Michael T. Schmitt, “Do people who feel connected to nature do more to protect it? A meta-analysis,” *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 65 (2019): 101323, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2019.101323>.

¹⁰ Aisha Patel, “The Economic Benefits of Urban Green Spaces: Distribution Across Income Areas and Impact on Property Values and Local Economies,” *Advance* (2024). [10.31124/advance.172249604.44639792/v1](https://doi.org/10.31124/advance.172249604.44639792/v1).

¹¹ Whittingham and Vabi, “Canada’s Urban Forests: Bringing the Canopy to All,” p.15.

¹² *Ibid*, p.15.

¹³ Aisha Patel, “The Economic Benefits of Urban Green Spaces.”

III. Greenspace for All: Project Overview

Research

In year one, working with ECCC, UBC BRITE intern Jenny Muñoz (2024) sought to identify the extent to which three local governments on the east coast of Vancouver Island have adopted equitable policies and solutions to greenspace access and climate adaptation. This analysis included a review of existing climate and greenspace strategies in the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN), Capital Regional District (CRD), and Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD). The review found that although improving access to greenspaces for persons with physical disabilities is often considered, many of these strategies do not address other equity considerations like ethnicity, gender, neurodiversity, or income. Additionally, these strategic plans are missing measurable and specific actions to address the inequitable distribution of greenspaces and climate adaptation measures.



The study also analyzed the relative accessibility of greenspaces within the CRD, RDN, and CVRD, based on underserved community demographics and proximity to protected greenspaces. This GIS analysis found that in certain areas, underserved communities were not within an accessible distance of significant protected greenspaces.

Objectives

The Stewardship Centre for BC (SCBC) seeks to equip municipal and regional governments with the evidence and knowledge required to practice equity-informed approaches when integrating greenspaces in community planning and program delivery. This goal will be met through four key objectives of the GS4A project:

1. Promote understanding of the benefits, barriers, and enablers of equitable access to greenspace;
2. Pilot strategies to address identified barriers and enablers in targeted communities on ECVI;
3. Appraise project success through an evaluation that includes performance metrics; and
4. Communicate insights gained throughout the project through outreach and knowledge mobilization.

These objectives will be realized by implementing pilot projects in three regional districts on the east coast of Vancouver Island (ECVI): Capital Regional District (CRD), Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN), and Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD).

The desired outcomes of the three pilot projects include: enhanced knowledge of the role of greenspaces in building social and climate resilience; improved access to and use of greenspaces by equity-deserving groups; and adoption of equity-informed approaches to community planning and climate action.

Project Advisory Committee

A Project Advisory Committee (PAC) was established to support the direction and implementation of the Greenspace for All initiative. The PAC met quarterly from April 2024 to March 2025 to share updates on the project's progress, connect community partners, gather insights on local contexts and provide recommendations for case study activities. Each meeting consisted of new and existing project partners from across the three target communities, including by example, those listed in Figure 2 below.



Figure 2. Organizations represented on the Project Advisory Committee.

The first PAC meeting was held on June 5, 2024. Jenny Muñoz provided an overview of the GIS analysis and policy review conducted in year 1 to provide potential partners with the context behind Greenspace for All. GS4A Project Coordinator, Ariadne Boutsakis, then shared examples of anticipated case study events to engage equity-deserving groups in greenspaces within the CRD. From discussions following this meeting, the CRD Working Group was established.

The fourth quarterly PAC meeting on March 4th, 2025, included a presentation by Laura Hergott, Manager of the BC Parks Foundation's [Healthy by Nature program](#). Laura shared evidence-based information on the health benefits of nature and provided an overview of the [PaRx: Park Prescriptions](#) initiative. SCBC has supported this initiative by distributing PaRx resources on the health benefits of nature for adults and children at outreach events.

As of March 31, 2025, the PAC includes 38 representatives from 24 local and regional governments, environmental stewardship organizations, and community organizations across the CRD, RDN, and CVRD. Invitations to join the PAC are ongoing and membership continues to grow into year 3. Participation at each PAC meeting varies and depends on organizational capacity.

IV. Case Study: Capital Regional District

The focus of year 2 was to develop a case study in the Capital Regional District. This “case study” consisted of multiple components and different approaches to foster stronger connections between equity-deserving groups and greenspaces, including collaborative partnerships, case study activities, a community-level needs assessment, outreach events, and communications.

CRD Working Group

To support the design and implementation of the CRD Case Study, SCBC established a Working Group comprised of PAC members interested in taking a more active role in the project. After the first PAC meeting on June 5, a short expression of interest survey was sent to PAC members. The CRD Working Group was then formed with representatives from the Gorge Waterway Action Society (GWAS) and the Swan Lake-Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary (Swan Lake).

Between June 2024 and January 2025, the CRD Working Group met as required to plan and organize case study activities. Working in collaboration with SCBC staff, Stephanie Gurney (GWAS), Cara Gibson (Swan Lake), and their respective staff have been integral to the success and development of the CRD Case Study. Their contributions to date include:

- Planning and participating in case study activities and outreach events
- Promoting case study activities through social media, newsletters, and distribution of physical posters
- Organizing case study activity registration, staffing, and volunteer requirements
- Reviewing and providing input on promotional materials
- Introducing SCBC to local organizations and potential project partners
- Raising awareness of the Greenspace for All project among relevant networks and communications channels

Community-Level Needs Assessment

When developing the Case Study, first steps included efforts aimed to gain a better understanding of the barriers faced by equity deserving groups to access greenspaces at the local level. This context would help guide the design and implementation of the Case Study, ensuring it aligns with the community’s needs. The Working Group recognized the importance of discovering which activities and support could enhance access to nature and its benefits, rather than assuming what people want or need.

To carry out the community-level needs assessment, the Working Group developed a set of community engagement boards and survey questions to facilitate informal discussions with community members. The objective was to understand (1) how community members access and utilize greenspaces, (2) what barriers prevent them from accessing greenspaces, and (3) how access to greenspaces could be improved. These strategies were implemented at three outreach events and case study activities, as described below.

Two boards displayed images of specific activities like nature walks, hiking groups, and citizen science events to gauge which activities resonate most with community members. They also aimed to explore ways to enhance the accessibility and inclusivity of these activities. The other two boards

featured four questions designed to understand what greenspace means to people, how they utilize these spaces, whether the spaces are accessible to everyone, and what changes or improvements could help community members feel more connected with nature. See Appendix A for digital proofs of the boards.

As output of this process, the key programming ideas supported by these discussions and anonymous responses to the engagement boards included:

- Walking groups for seniors and newcomers
- Interpretive signage for self-led nature walks
- Sensory-friendly programs for neurodivergent youth
- Collaborative events and programs with youth- and student-led groups
- Educational workshops or resources on outdoor safety and nature for newcomers
- Signage to promote access to greenspaces through public transit (e.g. adding the locations of greenspaces to transit maps, additional routes and stops, and “Stop for…” announcements)

Overall, responses from equity-deserving groups were limited due to the nature of the outreach events attended and their general audiences (see below for further details).

Case Study Activities

The focus of the Greenspace for All initiative is to provide opportunities for equity-deserving groups to connect with greenspaces and their benefits. These opportunities are referred to as case study activities. In total, SCBC hosted 3 case study activities in collaboration with the CRD Working Group, the Township of Esquimalt, and the World Fisheries Trust along with related outreach events. Members of the PAC and other local organizations were invited to attend and share promotional materials with their networks and members. An adaptive approach was taken to adjust communications and implementation strategies for each event.

Case Study Activity #1: Urban Community Gathering Space | August 18, 2024

The Urban Community Gathering Space, held at Esquimalt Gorge Park on August 18th, 2024, was a collaborative activity with the [Gorge Waterway Action Society’s \(GWAS\) 3rd annual BioBlitz](#). The idea behind the Urban Community Gathering Space was to create a low-barrier environment where people could gather, connect over light snacks and beverages, and enjoy nature. Through conversations with the CRD Working Group, we decided that highlighting the social value of greenspaces might create a more welcoming environment for individuals who may be uncomfortable or unfamiliar with greenspaces. In turn, the BioBlitz offered an educational opportunity for visitors to learn about the wildlife and plant species of the park, regardless of their prior experience or knowledge level.



Figure 3. From left to right: (1) SCBC's Greenspace for All team, Ariadne Boutsakis (left) and Kelly Loch (right). (2) Event participants gathered outside the GWAS Nature House for the first BioBlitz nature walk.

Invitations and promotional materials were sent to PAC members as well as through GWAS' social media and newsletter. To incentivize attendance and bring awareness of how transportation can be a possible barrier to accessing greenspaces, SCBC' Project Coordinator contacted BC Transit to acquire two free 30-day passes. These passes were given to two visitors via a prize draw.



Figure 4. From left to right: (1,2) Participants writing responses to the Community Engagement Boards. (3) Chalkboard listing the nature walk sessions for the BioBlitz. (4) Prize draw for two 30-day BC Transit passes.

At the event, SCBC utilized the community engagement boards and guided discussion questions (Appendix B) to learn more about how park visitors perceive and access greenspaces. As folks arrived for the event and returned from the BioBlitz nature walks, they approached the SCBC booth to add their thoughts to the poster boards. A few onlookers walking through the park also approached the booth, sharing their experiences with the park and access to greenspace. For example, one gentleman and his support person stopped by the booth to inquire about the project and shared how walking through the park is a regular activity of theirs and is important for persons with neurological disabilities.



Figure 5. Responses to the Community Engagement Boards.

Through conversations with visitors, GWAS staff, and general observations, SCBC learned that common uses of Esquimalt Gorge Park include family gatherings, picnics, cultural gatherings, music groups, leisurely walks, dog walking, and the kids' playground. These activities highlight the importance of greenspaces for fostering social cohesion.

Case Study Activity #2: Restoration Site Planting Parties | November 1-2, 2024

After taking an approach that sought to learn from the community, we wanted to provide a hands-on opportunity for equity-deserving groups to connect with nature. On Friday, November 1st and Saturday, November 2nd, SCBC hosted two Community Planting Parties at the [Green Shores for Shoreline Development \(GSSD\) restoration site at Esquimalt Gorge Park](#). In total, over 40 staff and volunteers helped restore the shoreline by planting hundreds of native plants in the riparian zone. This event was organized in collaboration with staff from the Township of Esquimalt Parks and Recreation Departments, GWAS and World Fisheries Trust.



Figure 6. From left to right:
(1) Township of Esquimalt and World Fisheries Trust staff preparing the planting sites.
(2) Planting stock at the restoration site.

To manage event registration, SCBC created an [Eventbrite page](#) for Day 1 and coordinated with the Township of Esquimalt's Parks and Recreation Departments to use its [event portal](#) for Day 2. To promote the event, direct invitations were sent via email to PAC members and organizations in Greater Victoria that provide services to equity-deserving groups, including the Victoria Disability Resource Centre, Foundry Victoria, UVic Students of Colour Collective, and UVic Ecological Restoration Volunteer Network. Several contacts offered to forward the event to their colleagues and members, as well as promote it on their social media, websites, and newsletters (see Appendix D for external promotion). Additionally, GWAS and the Township of Esquimalt also displayed posters throughout the park to attract park visitors. From the target group, four people registered for Day 1 and seven registered for Day 2.

On Day 1, approximately 5 volunteers and 15 staff from SCBC and the Township of Esquimalt, GWAS, and World Fisheries Trust came together to participate in the GSSD restoration project by planting the riparian and tidal marsh areas with a variety of native plants from Streamside Nursery, including pacific dogwood, sword fern, salal, flowering currant, sedges, and dune grass. Together, participants engaged in hands-on conservation work, cultivating a shared sense of purpose and community spirit.

On Day 2, around 20 volunteers participated in the planting party, including 13 community members and 7 staff from GWAS, Habitat Acquisition Trust, Friends of Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary, World Fisheries Trust, the Township of Esquimalt, and the CRD. A few park visitors stopped to inquire about the activity and join in the planting, including a father and young daughter. Two volunteers learned about the event from the posters hung near the restoration site.

Despite the great turnout, participation by equity-deserving groups was limited on both days. None of the four registrants attended on Day 1, which may have been attributed to the event timing (Friday afternoon) and inclement weather conditions.



Figure 7. From left to right:
(1) Ariadne Boutsakis (SCBC, left) and Robbie Young (Township of Esquimalt, right).
(2) Jacques Sirois, Friends of Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary.

On Day 2, an automated reminder email from the Township of Esquimalt's (TOE) Parks and Recreation Department was sent to registrants but accidentally provided incorrect location information. The issue was addressed by sending updated location details and contacting the Esquimalt Recreation Centre to inform the front desk to direct attendees to the park if necessary. In compensation for this confusion, the Township's Parks and Recreation Manager, Robbie Young, offered three volunteers a free day pass to the TOE Rec Centre. This situation highlighted the importance of clear communication with all partners and registrants regarding the location and meeting point for future events. Additionally, an event at the nearby Esquimalt Gorge Pavilion somewhat limited parking availability and may have posed an obstacle for those who were unaware of the secondary parking lot.

Through conversations with the Working Group and PAC, food and beverages were identified as key components to improving event participation. On both days, SCBC provided refreshments for volunteers and staff to enjoy. Snacks included Tim Hortons muffins, tea, and coffee; bananas; Nutri-Grain bars; Wendel's gluten-free muffins; and juice boxes. The refreshments were set up on a table near the site covered by a tent, creating a space for people to gather, socialize, discuss the restoration project and participate in a survey with SCBC staff.

SCBC surveyed three volunteers, who communicated that their participation at the planting party improved their understanding of shoreline ecosystems and that they appreciated the opportunity to interact with like-minded people in a hands-on activity.



Figure 8. From left to right:
 (1) Ariadne Boutsakis (SCBC, left), Joachim (Yogi) Carolsfeld (World Fisheries Trust, middle) and Stephanie Gurney (GWAS, right).
 (2) Refreshments for volunteers and staff.
 (3) Jen Tyler (CRD, left) and daughters.

Case Study Activity #3: Winter Bird Walk | February 1, 2025

On February 1st, 2025, SCBC in collaboration with Swan Lake and the Gorge Waterway Action Society held a Winter Bird Walk at the Swan Lake-Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary. The event was divided into a morning and afternoon session, each including a bird walk led by young ornithologist Hannah Hickli, followed by an arts and crafts activity in the Nature House. Swan Lake managed registration for each session through its [event portal](#). To promote the event, SCBC, GWAS and Swan Lake developed promotional materials and SCBC and GWAS posted event flyers throughout the community, including at recreation and community centres, libraries and coffee shops. Direct invitations were also sent to PAC members and local organizations, including the Greater Victoria Public Library, many of whom shared the event with their colleagues and communities.

In particular, the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS) and Power to Be noted significant interest from their members and clients for this event, representing two of GS4A's target audiences. SCBC coordinated with Swan Lake to ensure the event was sufficiently accessible for attendees in wheelchairs and mobility devices, sharing information on the accessibility of the trail and Nature House with Power to Be and reducing the maximum number of registrations for the morning session to allow sufficient space for participants to move comfortably with any mobility challenges. Due to the event's popularity and overwhelming interest, both sessions were fully registered. On the day of the event, however, the participants from Power to Be did not attend due to concerns regarding the overnight snowfall and potentially inclement weather affecting trail access.

At the beginning of each walk, Hannah gathered participants in the Nature House to welcome them to the space. Participants were invited to borrow a pair of binoculars, loaned by Swan Lake, as well as to utilize a species identification handout created by the Working Group, with images and names

of overwintering birds commonly found in the nature sanctuary at that time of year. In total, approximately 60 participants joined the bird walks with around 14 (9 adults; 5 children) in the morning session and 46 (27 adults, 19 children) in the afternoon session. Participants included families with young children, newcomers, long-term residents, experienced birders and new birders.



Figure 9. From left to right:
(1) Ornithologist Hannah Hickli welcoming participants in the Nature House.
(2) Hannah pointing out different species of songbirds in the tree canopy in front of the Nature House.

Throughout the walk, Hannah paused at various points to point out different bird species, encouraging participants to listen to the sounds of birds around them. Participants observed several native species, including the Trumpeter Swan, Green-winged Teal, Mallard, Marsh Wren, Song Sparrow, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ring-necked Duck and Spotted Towhee. Hannah also explained how different species are distinguished by their physical characteristics, sounds, flight patterns, breeding and migratory habits, and habitat. Providing binoculars and a visual aid was helpful for participants whose first language was not English, families with young children, and in a larger group setting where some participants wandered to observe birds on their own.



Figure 10. From left to right:
(1) Two mallards standing on a sheet of ice viewed from the floating boardwalk.
(2) Hannah pointing out birds hiding in the brush along the path.

After each walk, participants were invited into the Nature House for a bird related craft activity led and organized by GWAS with assistance from SCBC and Swan Lake. Folks were also provided with complimentary tea, coffee, and snacks, including muffins, bananas, oranges, granola bars, Baby Bel cheese, and juice boxes. Parents, staff and other participants chatted amongst themselves, connecting over food and warm beverages while exploring the nature house and getting creative.



Figure 11. Participants inside the Nature House enjoying refreshments and creating owls out of pinecones.



Figure 12. From left to right:
(1) Example of a pinecone owl and materials used in the craft activity.
(2) Complimentary snacks and refreshments provided for participants.

During this time, Greenspace for All Project Manager, Kelly Loch, surveyed nine participants on their experience with the event. Overall, feedback was very positive and highlighted the value of Hannah’s bird expertise, the importance of healthy refreshments, the opportunity to learn about local wildlife and the proximity of the Swan Lake Sanctuary as an urban greenspace. Participants also found the event well-organized, informative, and accessible for all ages. Participants also expressed appreciation that the event was free to attend, reinforcing the importance of reducing financial barriers to participation. One participant shared the following testimonial:

“Our kids were really into the birds on a recent trip and so we wanted to see if we could inspire some interest and get them off screens for an afternoon. Total win! Timing was great, extra binoculars were great, knowledgeable guide who could manage the group size. Very well done and thoughtfully planned. We will be back!”

Another participant spoke to SCBC about their appreciation for birds and how they often enjoyed birdwatching back home in Columbia. Since moving to Greater Victoria two years ago, they have been focused on settling into their new home and welcoming their newborn daughter. As a result, they did not realize the diversity of bird populations in the area or the popularity of birdwatching in the community. This exemplifies the barriers faced by newcomers when settling into new communities, including the lack of awareness of outdoor recreation opportunities and conflicting priorities.¹⁴ After learning about the event through the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS), they were excited to discover a free, family-friendly birdwatching event and expressed interest in attending similar activities in the future.



Figure 13. From left to right:
(1) The afternoon attendees following Hannah down the path towards Swan Lake.
(2) Hannah and participants observing birds from the bridge on Swan Lake.
(3) Greenspace for All resource display and surveys inside the Nature House.

Overall, this event was the greatest project success in terms of reaching target audiences and connecting them with urban greenspaces. The event highlighted the popularity of birdwatching among diverse equity-deserving groups and the opportunity to learn about native wildlife and ecosystems in a family-friendly, accessible environment.

Case Study Outreach Events

The Greenspace for All team attended seven community outreach events and organized one pop-up booth to engage with the public and raise awareness of the Greenspace for All project and its objectives in each target community. In total, SCBC engaged with approximately **490 people**.

¹⁴ Immigrant Welcome Centre, “2023 Newcomer Needs Assessment Report” (2023), <https://immigrantwelcome.ca/new-research-looks-at-what-prevents-the-full-integration-of-immigrants-in-comox-valley-and-campbell-river/>

“Reach” refers to the total number of *estimated* visitors to each event, while “engagement” refers to the number of people directly engaged through conversation and resource-sharing at the booth.

Date	Event	Location	Reach	Engagement
April 12-14, 2024	Vancouver Island Outdoor Show	NanOOSE, BC	4,000	100
April 19-21, 2024	Comox Valley Spring Home Show	Comox, BC	8,000	125
June 8, 2024	World Oceans Day	Fort Rodd Hill and Fisgard Lighthouse NHS, Victoria	350	80
August 10, 2024	Comox Valley Farmers Market	Comox Valley Exhibition Grounds, Courtenay	1,450	25
August 11, 2024	Cedar Farmers Market	Woodbank Primary School, Cedar	2,300	30
August 19, 2024	Uptown Pop-up Booth	Uptown Shopping Centre, Victoria	3,000*	50
February 5, 2025	Newcomer Wellness Fair	Beban Park Social Centre, Nanaimo	240	40
February 17, 2025	Welcome Day Celebration and Newcomer Expo	Saanich Commonwealth Place, Saanich	250	40
Total: 8 events			19,590	490

*A rough estimate of the number of shoppers and visitors passing by the booth.

At each event, the GS4A team spoke with community members about the project and its objectives; the benefits of greenspaces; and queried how locals utilize greenspaces in their area. It was clear that those who approached the Greenspace for All booth were passionate about the outdoors and accessed greenspaces regularly. People who shared their experiences highlighted the proximity of greenspaces to their homes and how their vehicles were important to access greenspaces. One gentleman expressed how getting out into nature was instrumental to his mental health during the pandemic, while others participated in hiking, walking, bicycling, running, and other outdoor physical activities regularly.



Figure 14. From left to right: (1) A father and son sharing how they utilize greenspaces at the Cedar Farmer's Market. (2) SCBC's Greenspace for All booth at the Comox Valley Farmer's Market.

A common concern raised by visitors at both farmers' markets was the loss of greenspaces due to urban development and the recent introduction of Bill-44 requiring local governments to create more housing; potentially on areas that are currently greenspace. Many visitors were receptive to the idea of *improving* access to greenspaces but seemed more concerned with *maintaining* access by protecting greenspaces against deforestation and housing developments.

It is important to note that representation from equity deserving groups appeared to be limited, as the predominant attendees at both farmers' markets were white, middle-class and able-bodied families and individuals. Only one individual with a visible disability approached the booth and shared their passion for insects and biology. As an alternative approach to reach a wider potential audience in an urban setting, SCBC organized a pop-up booth at the Uptown shopping centre to connect with the community. By choosing this alternate location, we sought to reach individuals who potentially do not visit greenspaces or face barriers to accessing them.



Figure 15. Map indicating the location of the Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary in proximity to Uptown (red location point) and the surrounding urban environment. Map by Tourism Victoria.

To increase engagement, the Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary and GWAS partnered with SCBC to add an interactive and educational component to the booth. Swan Lake supplied a variety of specimens and resources about local wildlife, which attracted interest from children and adults, proving to be an effective engagement strategy. Additionally, the pop-up was an opportunity to promote the Swan Lake and GWAS nature houses as areas of greenspace in their local communities.



Figure 16. Community members engaging with Swan Lake and GWAS staff at the Uptown pop-up.

SCBC also attended two outreach events for newcomers, immigrants and refugees in Victoria and Nanaimo. The Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society’s Newcomer Wellness Fair took place on February 5th, 2025. At this event, SCBC invited Joani Litchfield, Registered Nurse and founder of [SeaStrength Health](#), to raise awareness of the health benefits of nature. Joani took a unique approach to attracting and engaging eventgoers by inviting them to touch and smell items like pine branches and pinecones – emulating the 5-4-3-2-1 approach to reducing stress and promoting mindfulness. Their combined efforts were featured on the Nanaimo News Bulletin’s front page.¹⁵ Eventgoers who approached the booth included newcomers from Ukraine, Russia, and Iran. Although language sometimes posed a barrier to engagement, most people took home a copy of PaRx’s resources on adult and pediatric health benefits.^{16,17} This demonstrates the importance of providing resources in multiple languages to ensure key messages are understood.



¹⁵ Nanaimo News Bulletin, <https://issuu.com/docs/263c74bce5f07b29a7a06fc540b71916>

¹⁶ Park Prescriptions, “General Adult Health” handout, https://bcparksfoundation.ca/site/assets/files/1697/parx_adults_handout_oct20_-_ml-1.pdf

¹⁷ Park Prescriptions, “General Kids’ Health” handout, https://bcparksfoundation.ca/site/assets/files/1697/parx_kids_general_health_handout.pdf

Figure 17. From left to right:
 (1) Joani Litchfield (left) and Ariadne Boutsakis (right) at the CVIMS Newcomer Wellness Fair in Nanaimo. Photo by Chris Bush.
 (2) Kelly Loch at the Saanich Welcome Day Celebration and Newcomer Expo. Photo by event organizers.



Figure 18. Community members participating in a traditional dance at the Welcome Day Celebration and Newcomer Expo. Photo by event organizers.

On Family Day, February 17th, SCBC also attended the District of Saanich’s Welcome Day Celebration and Newcomer Expo. Across these two events, SCBC reached approximately 80 newcomers and community members, sharing evidence-based resources on the health benefits of spending time in nature and raising awareness about Greenspace for All project objectives.

V. Communications

From April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, SCBC implemented several outreach and engagement methods to raise awareness of the Greenspace for All Project and enhance knowledge of greenspaces’ social, ecological, and economic benefits among project target groups and the general public. Efforts included social media and blog posts, presentations to local partner organizations, newsletters, and website updates.

Presentations

On June 6 and November 25, 2024, SCBC presented to the Greater Victoria NatureHood, a collective of local stewardship organizations, to introduce the Greenspace for All Project and to provide updates on project progress.

Social Media

Digital outreach and engagement via social media allowed SCBC to promote case study activities and outreach events and raise awareness of the benefits of greenspaces. Across three platforms, SCBC created 41 social media posts, reached 8,562 accounts and engaged 769 accounts. See Appendix C for examples.

Platform	Followers	Posts	Reach	Engagement
Instagram	1,260	14	5,533	416
Facebook	1,015	16	1,124	152
LinkedIn	357	11	1,905	201
Total:	2,632	41	8,562	769

Blog Posts

SCBC published four blog posts on the website highlighting case study updates and activity summaries.

Date Published	Blog Title
July 24, 2024	Greenspace for All Summer Outreach Events
November 10, 2024	Community Planting Party at Esquimalt Gorge Park
February 7, 2025	Winter Birding and Crafts in Saanich
March 7, 2025	Newcomer Wellness Festivals – Connecting Communities with Nature on Vancouver Island

Website

To enhance the project’s online presence, SCBC created two new project pages on the SCBC website to host project updates, resources, and background information, in addition to the existing homepage:

- [Greenspace for All Homepage](#)
- [Greenspace for All Resources](#)
- [Greenspace for All Partners and Funders](#)

Newsletters

Greenspace for All project updates were included in SCBC quarterly e-newsletters. As of March 31, 2025, SCBC had 1,298 contacts. Between April 2024 and March 2025, SCBC disseminated five newsletters featuring project updates which reached an average of 891 people and engaged an average of 360 people.

Newsletter	Reach	Engagement
SCBC AGM Meeting Notice	1,093	480
SCBC October 2024 Newsletter	1,110	401
Shoreline Spotlight Winter 2024	41	28
SCBC January 2025 Newsletter	1,104	478
SCBC March 2025 Newsletter	1,108	412
Average:	891	360

VI. Lessons Learned

Throughout 2024-25, SCBC’s Greenspace for All team learned several insights from conversations with partners and the implementation of case study activities.

Applying Community-Informed Practices: Insights from Community Partners

SCBC engaged with several organizations to learn from their experiences in organizing programs for equity-deserving groups, to help inform the creation of GS4A case study activities and events.

These included organizations that lead nature-based programming, such as Stanley Park Ecology

Society's [Birding with Me](#) and Nature Vancouver's [Welcome Walks](#), as well as organizations that directly serve equity-deserving communities, such as the Intercultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA). SCBC also met with local and regional governments, including the City of Vancouver, the City of Victoria, the City of Nanaimo, the City of Parksville and the Regional District of Nanaimo, to learn about the types of programs being offered to engage community members in stewardship activities. These conversations provided valuable insights.

For example, the ICA emphasized the importance of building trust and relationships with community members over time, as well as the value of partnering with organizations that already have established connections within newcomer and immigrant communities. The ICA also highlighted the cultural significance of food in community gatherings, leading SCBC to provide refreshments at each case study activity.

Similarly, the Stanley Park Ecology Society (SPES) recommended using clear, welcoming language in event invitations and promotional material – being mindful to avoid jargon and clarify who the event is intended for. For example, when hosting an event for a specific group (e.g. BIPOC women or 2SLGBTQ+ communities), including this information clearly in the event title and description can help participants feel more welcomed. Additionally, SPES recommended including a note to clarify that registration is intended for members of the specified community and to request that those who do not identify with the intended audience refrain from registering to support a safe and welcoming environment.

Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary further emphasized that communications and outreach must be strategic when reaching equity-deserving groups. Similarly, Power to Be recommended clearly providing any information relating to accessibility and expectations, including what to wear or bring, the availability of washrooms, parking spaces and transit routes, and the accessibility of pathways or trails.

Adapting Communications & Outreach Strategies

Through the case study activities, SCBC learned that different outreach approaches yielded different results, highlighting the importance of tailoring communications to the intended audience. For instance, promoting the Community Planting Parties by posting signage throughout Esquimalt Gorge Park primarily attracted regular park visitors and individuals who were more likely to participate in environmental stewardship activities. In contrast, to better reach our target communities and individuals who face barriers to accessing greenspaces, SCBC and GWAS distributed flyers for the Winter Bird Walk to several community hubs, including libraries, recreation centres, and organizations serving equity-deserving groups. This approach helped extend the event's reach beyond the typical park user demographic. Both of these strategies were in addition to invitations sent directly to PAC members.

Additional Factors

Participation in the case study activities was influenced by a range of external factors, including the timing of events (weekday versus weekend) and the type of activity offered (hands-on stewardship versus educational or recreational experiences). For example, the first Community Planting Party, held on a Friday, primarily attracted individuals with flexible schedules who have experience with hands-on restoration activities. In comparison, the Winter Bird Walk, held on a Saturday, appealed

to a broader audience, including families and individuals seeking a fun, educational, and family-oriented outdoor activity.

Identifying and Addressing Potential Barriers to Engagement

Recognizing that three out of the four outreach events took place in natural spaces, SCBC acknowledged a key limitation: those already visiting parks and farmers' markets are often not the individuals whose voices and perspectives SCBC sought to learn from. To better understand the barriers faced by equity-deserving groups, engagement efforts must facilitate creative opportunities for activities within greenspaces and through dedicated communication with those that serve equity deserving groups as their clients.

For example, farmers' markets may attract more affluent people who are already engaged in pro-environmental behaviours and who frequently access greenspaces. This understanding was supported by on-site conversations and observations, where most visitors were white individuals or families who regularly participated in outdoor activities (e.g. Walking, hiking, cycling), and who reported few barriers to accessing nature (.eg. Proximity to greenspaces, ownership of a personal vehicle). Additionally, people may have approached the booth because they appreciated the project's purpose or were already familiar with the benefits of greenspaces. Conversely, people who do not regularly access greenspaces may not have been inclined to approach the booth and share their perspectives.

Farmers' markets also pose a unique challenge to engagement as visitors are primarily focused on food shopping rather than engaging in dialogue. The relatively small proportion of visitors who approached the booth, compared to the overall number of market attendees, reflected this potential situation. At the urban pop-up at Uptown shopping centre SCBC/GWAS/Swan Lake were able to reach a broader audience and there was opportunity to raise awareness about the nearby Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary. This demonstrated the need and value of meeting people where they are at. This event also demonstrated the value of collaborating with nature educators like Swan Lake and GWAS to help foster meaningful conversations, raise awareness, and share knowledge about local biodiversity and ecosystems.

VII. Recommendations

Based on the observations and lessons learned throughout Year 2, SCBC recommends that the following considerations for Year 3.

Target collaborative outreach and engagement activities

To more effectively understand the needs and experiences of equity-deserving groups, SCBC can reconsider where and how engagement efforts take place. Future outreach should prioritize attending events that are organized for and hosted by organizations serving equity-deserving groups. These spaces provide meaningful opportunities to connect with a more diverse audience, build trust and foster relationships in ways that are not always possible through nature-based events alone.

Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that the GS4A team does not live within the target communities nor identify with the equity-deserving groups that the project seeks to engage. This

underscores the need to continue collaborating and building relationships with local partner organizations that possess expertise in engaging these communities. Their insights are essential for identifying appropriate outreach opportunities, designing inclusive activities, and implementing effective engagement efforts.

Target communications

Creating welcoming and inclusive spaces requires intentionality when developing case study activities. In some cases, broad invitations to the public may not align with the needs of the intended audience or with the project's objectives. Instead, working directly with partner organizations to co-organize events and share invitations through their networks can help build trust and increase participation from target communities. This approach also ensures that events are designed with specific communities in mind, considering factors like accessibility, transportation, language, and financial barriers.

Build meaningful relationships and partnerships

This continues to be demonstrated as a critical element for success. Throughout the year, SCBC learned that fostering strong and effective working relationships with partner organizations is critical to project success, including time spent engaging with partners in person, attending their events, and supporting their work. SCBC will continue to prioritize relationship-building as a foundation for partnership development and ongoing collaboration in Year 3.

Utilize the communications strategy

SCBC developed a Communications Strategy to strengthen project outreach, guide consistent messaging, and support knowledge mobilization. The strategy provides a framework for how SCBC communicates about the project with diverse audiences, including local governments, partner organizations, and equity-deserving groups. It also outlines key messages, communication channels, strategies, and objectives to ensure project learnings, resources, and opportunities are shared effectively and accessible.

Engage with local governments

To support the integration of equity-informed approaches to greenspace and climate planning, SCBC will expand its engagement with local and regional governments in Year 3. Efforts to be considered may include presentations to councils, webinars tailored to local government staff, and informal dialogue sessions with senior staff to share learnings and recommendations. Engagement strategies will be strengthened by collaborating with environmental justice leaders, including Indigenous knowledge holders, researchers, and community advocates to ensure diverse perspectives inform these conversations.

In April 2025, SCBC will attend the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC) Convention to connect with local government representatives. This event will provide an opportunity to promote the [Greenspace for All: Policy Review Report](#) and encourage staff and decision-makers to consider its recommendations for advancing equitable access to nature.

Participate in Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) training

SCBC has identified JEDI training as an organizational priority to build staff capacity in cultural competence, awareness of internal biases and privilege, and understanding of systemic barriers faced by marginalized and underserved communities. This training will also support staff in applying inclusive communication practices and embedding equity considerations into project planning and delivery. For the Greenspace for All team, JEDI training is an important step toward deepening its commitment to meaningful community engagement, creating accessible and inclusive case study activities, and advancing equitable access to nature and climate solutions. SCBC is coordinating JEDI training for staff in May 2025.

Measure impact

SCBC will develop strategies to assess the impacts of the case study activities on equity-deserving groups (e.g. participation in nature-based activities or outdoor recreation, attendance rates, improved access to greenspaces) and engagement outcomes with local governments (e.g. adoption of recommendations from the Greenspace for All: Policy Review Report). Evaluation methods may include informal interviews with case study participants, post-event surveys, and other relevant feedback mechanisms. The data collected through these efforts will provide valuable insights to inform future programming, strengthen funding applications, and support efforts to influence government policies and practices.

VIII. Next Steps & Conclusion

Planning for Year 3 is well underway. Discussions with potential project partners in the RDN and CVRD began in the Fall of 2024 and are ongoing. As of March 31, 2025, the Greenspace for All team has identified several opportunities for case study activities and outreach events in these areas. After reflecting on the lessons learned and outcomes of Year 2, SCBC will also continue to build on the CRD Case Study in Year 3 by working with new and existing partners to further outreach efforts and expand community engagement through potential additional case study activities.

Additionally, SCBC will actively seek funding opportunities to sustain the Greenspace for All initiative beyond Year 3, ensuring the continuation of momentum and the relationships cultivated in the three target communities. The development of resources that support the project's legacy and enable ongoing work after Year 3 will be an integral part of the Year 3 work plan.

Overall, the progress made in Year 2 of the Greenspace for All initiative has provided valuable insights and laid a strong foundation for future work in the RDN, CVRD, and CRD. Through continued collaboration with local partners, SCBC has deepened its understanding of the barriers to equitable access to greenspaces and will continue to develop strategies to achieve project objectives by fostering more inclusive and meaningful engagement with equity-deserving groups.

Year 3 will build on the successes and challenges of Year 2 by focusing on in-person engagement, implementing new case study activities and strategies, strengthening current and new partnerships, and ensuring the sustainability of the project's impact. SCBC looks forward to continuing work with partners in the RDN, CVRD and CRD to enhance knowledge of the benefits of greenspaces, address barriers to accessing greenspaces by equity-deserving groups, and encourage equity-informed approaches to community planning and climate action.

Appendix A: Community Engagement Boards

1) How often do you visit greenspaces in your community, and what types of activities do you do there?

2) Do you feel that greenspaces in your community are accessible and welcoming to everyone? Why or why not?

Greenspace for All



3) What improvements would make greenspaces more welcoming and accessible for everyone?

4) How would improved access to nature impact your overall quality of life and well-being?

Greenspace for All



What types of activities would help you feel more connected to nature?

Share how the delivery of these activities can be more accessible and inclusive for you



Bird-Watching Groups



Nature Walk Groups



Hiking and Outdoor Recreation Groups

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What types of activities would help you feel more connected to nature?

Share how the delivery of these activities can be more accessible and inclusive for you



Community Gardening and Food Sharing



Physical and Mental Wellness Groups



Community Picnics and Barbeques

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What types of activities would help you feel more connected to nature?

Share how the delivery of these activities can be more accessible and inclusive for you



Volunteering and Citizen Science



Cultural and Community Celebrations



Other

Appendix B: Guided Discussion Questions

Guided Discussion Questions

We are seeking to learn how the community experiences greenspaces, and whether you feel that access to these spaces could be improved. Your participation will help guide the provision of programs that improve equitable access to greenspace for everyone.

When we use the word “**greenspaces**,” we mean areas with high ecological integrity and biodiversity, such as conservation areas and wetlands, as well as areas that are easily accessible yet provide access to nature and its benefits, such as urban parks or greenways.

Greenspaces provide a number of social and environmental benefits, including: climate adaptation and temperature regulation; air and water filtration; habitat provision and protection; community connection and cohesion; leisure and recreation; mental, physical, and spiritual wellness.

1. What greenspaces do you know of or visit in your neighborhood?
2. What benefits of greenspace are important to you?
3. How do greenspaces make you feel? Can you describe a specific experience where a greenspace made a difference in your life?
4. How do greenspaces impact your community? For example, do they contribute to environmental sustainability, community bonding, or cultural activities? Please share a story or observation.
5. If you could make one change to the greenspaces in your community, what would it be?
6. Are there any specific programs or activities (like guided nature walks or hiking groups) that would encourage you to visit parks and greenspaces more often?
7. Have you ever participated in a guided nature walk, bird walk, citizen science event, etc.? What was your experience like?

Appendix C: Greenspace for All Social Media Examples

WINTER BIRD WALK FREE EVENT

AT SWAN LAKE NATURE SANCTUARY
 11:00 AM - 2:45 PM | FEBRUARY 1, 2024

Bring your friends and family for a guided walk or roll through Swan Lake to learn about local bird species, followed by crafts and refreshments at the Nature House. Swipe for more details →

STEWARDSHIP CENTRE STEWARDSHIP CENTRE Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary THE CITY OF VICTORIA **Greenspace for All**

ACTIVITY SCHEDULE

BIRD WALK SESSION 1 11:00 AM - 11:30 AM	ARTS & CRAFTS SESSION 1 11:30 AM - 12:45 PM
BIRD WALK SESSION 2 1:00 PM - 1:30 PM	ARTS & CRAFTS SESSION 2 1:30 PM - 2:45 PM

Join a bird walk led by Hannah Hickli, an indoor arts & crafts activity, or both!
 To join the bird walk, meet at the entrance to the Swan Lake Nature House: 3873 Swan Lake Road, Victoria, BC

FOR MORE INFO & REGISTRATION, CLICK THE LINK IN BIO

WINTER BIRD WALK

MEET OUR BIRD EXPERT

HANNAH HICKLI

Greenspace for All

Joined by: **SEA STRENGTH**

NEWCOMER WELLNESS FAIR

AT BEBAN PARK SOCIAL CENTRE
 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM | FEBRUARY 5, 2025

Visit our Greenspace for All booth to learn about the health and wellness benefits of nature!

Centre for Newcomer Health Multicultural Society **Greenspace for All**

THE BENEFITS OF GREENSPACES

IN CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE

Greenspace for All

FLOOD MANAGEMENT

- Mitigates risk of coastal and urban flooding
- Absorbs water flow during extreme weather events and storms

TEMPERATURE REGULATION

- Cools local temperatures in urban areas, reducing the urban heat island effect
- Provides shaded reprieve from high temperatures

CARBON SEQUESTRATION

- Removes and stores greenhouse gases (GHG) from the atmosphere

Appendix D: External Promotion of Case Study Activities



Figure 19. Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society's November 2024 Newsletter promoting the Community Planting Party.

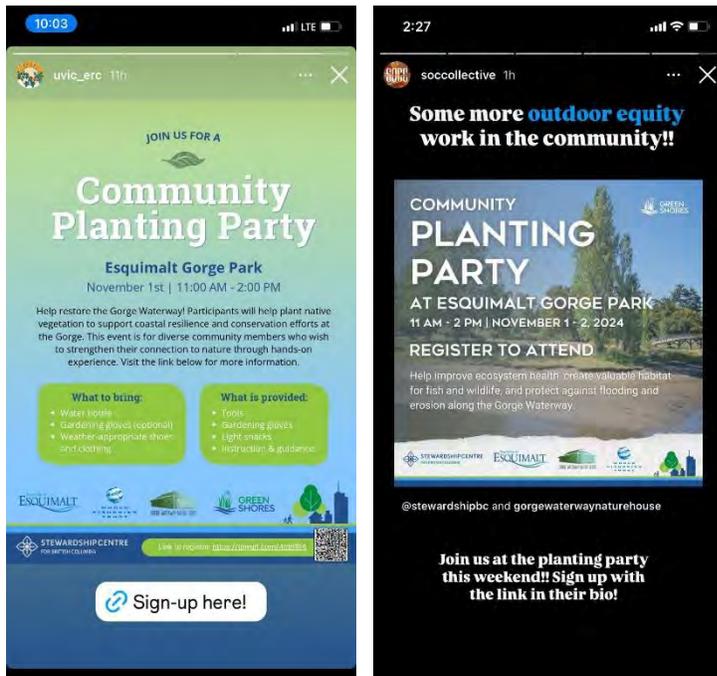


Figure 20. Promotion of the Community Planting Parties via Instagram by the University of Victoria's Ecological Restoration Club (left) and Students of Colour Collective (right).