

WSÁNEĆ Nation Website Content – From Parks Canada

The Parks Canada Agency has received funds for high priority projects that aim to improve ecological integrity, recover species at risk and improve marine health. At Gulf Islands National Park Reserve, we currently have 3 of these Conservation and Restoration (CoRe) projects underway to restore clam gardens, forests, coastal sands and Garry Oak ecosystems. We are excited to collaborate on these projects with WSANEC community members and have prepared the information below to introduce you to our projects:

Fur to Forest

The “Fur to Forest” project aims to effectively manage deer throughout Gulf Islands National Park Reserve and restore balance to forest ecosystems. The project is guided by a Steering Committee that includes representatives from WSÁNEĆ and Hul’q’umi’num Nations, Sidney Islanders, academics, eradication specialists, and Parks Canada staff.

Parks Canada is currently working with WSÁNEĆ representatives to build a youth hunting mentorship program. The program facilitates knowledge transfer to youth regarding cultural and contemporary safe hunting practices. It will help to build a foundation of Indigenous hunting capacity that will be critical for the effective management of deer within the National Park Reserve.

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Clam Gardens

Since 2014, members of WSÁNEĆ Nations have been restoring two clam gardens in partnership with the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve. Coast Salish peoples care for beaches using a suite of tending practices; together, the entire community cares for the clam garden to keep it healthy. Representatives of WSÁNEĆ Nations form a Traditional Knowledge Working Group guides, governs, and participates in the work of the project. We have spent nearly every low tide series (both summer and winter) since 2015 tending four beaches. This work improves the state of the intertidal ecosystem and acts as an example of integrated, future resource management possibilities.

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Growing Together Project

Parks Canada has received funding for a five-year project to restore priority Garry oak and coastal sand ecosystems (traditional food/medicine systems), species at risk, and species of cultural interest at Fort Rodd Hill and Fisgard Lighthouse National Historic Sites, and Gulf Islands National Park Reserve. Parks Canada will collaborate with Indigenous communities, as well as with volunteers and other partners, to integrate traditional and scientific knowledge in order to accomplish this important work.

Working collaboratively, we will ensure Indigenous voices, knowledge and cultures help guide our restoration activities and are a part of the stories and histories that are shared at Fort Rodd Hill and Fisgard Lighthouse National Historic Sites, and Gulf Islands National Park Reserve.

Some of the potential activities we are hoping to work together on:

1. Working with the W̱SÁNEĆ Environment Committee and other community members to provide guidance and advice on species at risk recovery and traditional methods of managing Garry Oak/Kwetlal or Coastal Sands ecosystems, and ways to incorporate these methods into our restoration activities, such as a prescribed burn.
 - a. Indigenous partners have expressed interest in prescribed fire and restoration using plants with high cultural interest (such as Camas/Kwetlal and Consumption Plant/q̱əχmin).
2. Working with the W̱SÁNEĆ Environment Committee and other community members to identify and provide knowledge on plant species of cultural interest and importance for collaborative restoration activities.
3. Collaboration on Indigenous-themed events such as food feasts and culture camps.
 - a. Events such as these could focus on traditional Coast Salish foods and their method of preparation, which would foster improved community awareness of Coast Salish history, traditions and practices.
 - b. Special Indigenous-themed events could be organized and delivered collaboratively to present information to Indigenous community members and to our visitors about Coast Salish ways of knowing.
4. Species at Risk in Parks program
 - a. In collaboration with W̱SÁNEĆ, we could re-tool the Species at Risk *in Schools* program (developed in collaboration with W̱SÁNEĆ and Hul'q'umi'num Elders in 2010-11) into a Species at Risk *in Parks* program. The program could allow youth to learn from Elders and Parks Canada staff about species at risk and species of cultural importance, and include traditional language.
5. Other ideas W̱SÁNEĆ may have.

We look forward to collaborating with W̱SÁNEĆ community members to achieve our collective goals.

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Collaborating to Create Meaningful Learning in Gulf Islands National Park Reserve – March 6th, 2019

Photos by Parks Canada Volunteer: [Milen Kootnikoff @miko](#) [photo](#)

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On March 6th, 2019 Parks Canada, Species at Risk staff members teamed up with Shoreline Middle School, and John Bradley (JB) Williams, a ƵSÁNEĆ Environment Committee Member from Tsawout, for a day of fresh air, coastal sand ecosystem restoration and cultural sharing by the Salish Sea. This was the first time students from Shoreline Middle School had paddled their big canoe to Sidney Spit in Gulf Islands National Park Reserve. The Big Canoe Program is about getting students and staff outside in their local community to question, explore, and learn about history, cultures, and their environment. Despite being one of the chilliest days in March complete with rain and snow flurries, everyone was excited to be outside embarking on this new adventure together.



The day began with a traditional territory welcome from JB Williams, followed by an orientation by Parks Canada and Sonya McRae, the Art and Outdoor Education Teacher and Big Canoe Team Leader for Shoreline Community Middle School.

Next, we went around the circle to introduce ourselves and establish a sense of place before beginning the paddle. Hearing each of these young students share their awareness of their own ancestry and listen intently to their peers and others, was an inspiring moment. It was evident that these students understood the significance of the journey we were collectively taking.



Docking onto Sidney Spit for the day, the students leapt out of the STA'QEYA canoe one by one. It had only taken the group an hour to cross the channel from the Tulista dock to Sidney Spit. We were all impressed and surprised by the speed and fluidity the morning was shaping into already.



As JB Williams and I watched the students tactfully haul STA'QAYE onto shore together in one motion, I could tell these students were strong leaders in their community. There's something about watching a group of young people move a heavy canoe together so gracefully and with so much focus that you can't help but stop what you're doing to take in the moment. Watching the students settle into this place as they landed onto the sand, I got a wave of excitement for what the day would bring.



Once all of the hot chocolate had been drank and the snacks were all consumed, we headed off together students, teachers, knowledge holders, and Parks Canada staff to the restoration site for some European beach grass (*Ammophila arenaria*) removal.



European beach grass is an introduced species that outcompetes native species on Sidney Spit, and other coastal sand ecosystems along the West Coast. This invasive species has displaced native plant species and changed the structure and health of these ecosystems.



A critical feature of coastal sand ecosystems is that they must be able to shift and move with the winds, changing tides, and other natural weather conditions. Non-native plant species such as European beach grass (*Ammophila arenaria*) and Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) stabilize and restrict the sands from moving and shifting as they would naturally. These introduced plant species also displace native plants that are important foods and medicines for Indigenous peoples. Working together to restore natural areas allows us to learn from one another, and deepens our connections to nature and each other.



Since 2016, Parks Canada has been removing European beach grass in the coastal sand ecosystem on Sidney Spit in an effort to restore habitat for rare species. Some of the species at risk that we are helping

to recover through restoration efforts include [Contorted-Pod Evening Primrose](#) (*Camissonia contorta*), [Yellow Sand Verbena Moth](#) (*Copablepharon fuscum*) and the [Common Night Hawk](#) (*Chordeiles minor*).



Parks Canada staff from the Species at Risk Team have been growing some of these rare coastal sand plants in a Conservation Nursery at Fort Rodd Hill & Fisgard Lighthouse National Historic Sites. In fact,

many of the [Contorted-Pod Evening Primrose](#) (*Camissonia contorta*) plants now growing on Sidney Spit, got started in the Conservation Nursery. Eventually, the seeds and plants that Parks Canada is growing will help restore other natural areas in Coastal British Columbia.







We are honoured to be working alongside Indigenous community members like JB Williams, to ensure Indigenous voices, knowledge and cultures help guide our restoration activities and are a part of the stories and histories that are shared at Gulf Islands National Park Reserve.





HÍSWĪE and Thank You to JB Williams and the Shoreline Community Middle School students and teachers for making this day so meaningful and memorable, and for supporting cultural sharing and learning in the Salish Sea.

Thank you to our talented volunteer photographer, [Milen Kootnikoff @miko_photo](#), for capturing the highlights and heart-felt moments of the day in these vibrant photographs.

