

PJ Outdoor Learning & Community Park - Introduction

Back in December 2012, three moms from Pauline Johnson School PAC met to decide on a 'legacy project' for the school playground. After pricing climbing-towers and jumbo slides, they quickly realized the steep price of another piece of equipment was frankly not worth the expense for the value.

The PJ Moms began to research the value of a child playing outdoors and different needs the children might have. Studies have shown that children today more than ever, need to play outside... to run more; develop better strength; cooperative skills; to feel unselfconscious or inhibited; and to feel happy and included. Moreover research shows that for children, learning is playing.

https://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id=9NFluO7WrdwC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=learning+through+play+-+early+childhood+education&ots=DOI4WU8J0F&sig=Hy-ZKa-OjNGWZv4HKl6mB6_AQ_M#v=onepage&q=learning%20through%20play%20-%20early%20childhood%20education&f=false

The question was, how to connect the PJ children to all the benefits of free play and enrich their learning outdoors.. and with the best bang for the buck?

Some very big answers were found along the edge of their school playground, on a hill, nestled in a small grove of trees.

In observing the students and neighboring children at play, it was observed that the small forest always attracted the longest bouts of happy, imaginative, multi-styled play. Investigation revealed how important this space really was. Researching "why" the children loved it, turned into "how" to capitalize on it's important philosophy. Reconnecting kids with nature for free-play.

Through lucky circumstance, this quest caught the attention of Canada's premier landscape architect, Cornelia Oberlander, <http://www.sala.ubc.ca/people/affiliates/cornelia-hahn-oberlander> who was part of a very exciting UBC research project collaborating with a team of BC Children's Hospital



health professionals studying exactly this. Lead by Mariana Brussoni, UBC Professor of Medicine & Pediatrics, of Population and Public Health, Child & Family Research Institute/ BC Injury Research & Prevention, invited the PJ Playground committee to participate in a discovery panel workshop. This was the beginning of a prominent UBC study that argues today's 'helicopter parenting' & bubble-wrapped urban playgrounds, along with our technological age, are robbing our children of healthy emotional, physical and social development and creating a disconnect in our children.. and many argue this is part of a disconnect in society as a whole.



Pauline Johnson Elementary is a French-immersion public school in West Vancouver with a surprisingly large array of ethnic backgrounds. Though PJ educates quite a wide range of socio-economically placed families, it is without a doubt privileged by world standards: For starters, the school possesses a play ground, while we know other's do not - it even boasts a small forest. Hence, this project became a larger responsibility: to better utilize the privilege of natural outdoor space and make it far more impactful to the whole community - to make a philosophical difference to society.

With this quest, the group of these PJ Parents have now grown in numbers and become the "PJ Outdoor Learning & Community Park Committee" and over the last two years have developed a long-range master plan for the school's outdoor space, creating learning opportunities and closer, more meaningful integration with the greater community.

If the PJ kids' positive connection to their woods could be enhanced and expanded throughout a community park, full of educational exploration and social- collaboration, it would impact our whole social structure and how we connect.

A staggering amount of studies show how much everyone benefits from time outside close to nature. There is "copious writing and thought over the last decade which has shown how important it is to be close to nature in our densely populated urban areas," states Oberlander who has designed

the PJ Community Park concept plans largely pro-bono. In fact, there is an international movement to re-introduce society to nature, much credited to Richard Louv's internationally acclaimed "Last Child in the Woods", which points to attention disorders, obesity, a dampening of creativity and depression as just some of the grave issues resulting from a nature-deficient childhood.

With the help from the UBC research team, expert architectural visioning, and community collaboration lead by Stanley King's workshops <http://youthmanual.blogspot.ca/p/stanley-king.html>., the community park designs came from the whole community. Starting with the students and teachers, the net was thrown wide, gathering community solutions everywhere. The neighboring seniors, households, sport teams & art-classes; the WV gardeners & streamkeepers – all potential stake-holders have been hopping on board.

The PJ Outdoor Learning & Community Park will create a forward-thinking, environmental shift for Parks & Playgrounds. It will be a learning grounds and sanctuary with flagship design for educational innovation, environmental stewardship and community inter-connection.



Phase 1 - Scheduled for Fall 2015

1. Outdoor Classroom

A woodland classroom allows PJ students & neighboring community-center classes to learn through nature. Accessing the extensive benefits to children & adults alike of hands-on, outdoor learning. It is multi-sensory; helps reduce stress and anxiety and increases focus and attention.



Budget

Site prep

- machine time for boulder and log placement est. \$10K
- removal of invasive species est. \$1K

Building materials

- granular base, standard drain rock (road base) est. \$2K
- 18 rough granite stones square shape (150*600*600mm) est. \$9K
- 15 Natural, irregular shape granite field (1400*1400*600mm) est. \$4,500
- 8 salvaged beach logs (min 450 mm dia.) est. \$7,200

Subtotal \$33,700

The following preliminary budgets for Phases 1 & 2 are based on the estimates provided by and Enns Gauthier Landscape Architects, June 2015.

Phase 1 - Scheduled for Fall 2015

2. Community Gardens

Eight community garden-beds have already been built this June, 2015 as part of this initiative. These gardens are the big first step in bringing the community together as we partner with neighboring Senior Centers & preschools. This rejuvenated space will provide multiple avenues of learning for young and old: gardening/food production, weather, math and science.



Budget

Building materials

- Construction galvanized steel frames, 10 units @ \$750 est. \$7,500K
- Timber beams for steel frames est. \$7K
- Old timber feast table(sawed in half, 4' dia.), sits 20 est. \$4,500
- 2 heartwood square/whole log bench for under table est. \$3K
- Delivery of boulder and timber est. \$3K
- 15 espaliered trees along ball stop fence est. \$1,125
- 2 Custom wrapped sheds est. \$5,000
- 6-10 rounded boulders exterior to ball stop fence est. \$3,800
- 12 salvaged beach root wads, 900mm length, 600mm dia, buried 1/3 depth est. \$3,600

Subtotal \$38,525

Phase 1 Scheduled for Fall 2015-Spring 2016

3. Kindy Area

The vision is to create an inviting, greener space, rather than the continuous concrete. An dedicated space the teachers can offer their youngest students to actively learn in a nurturing and explorative outdoor environment.



- Plant Trees and greenery on street Level
- Create outdoor blackboard & outdoor class seating
- Create innovative play areas with 3 trees
- Build bench system for both kids and parents

Budget

Site prep

- Saw cut, remove existing asphalt (76 sq m) est. \$2,660K
- Removal and dispose of bike rack est. \$500

Building materials

- Elastomeric paint (40 sq m) est. \$1,600
- Seed & bulb (includes 150mm soil depth) est. \$640
- Play sand (6 cu m) est. \$210
- Compacted fill for berms (125 cu m) est. \$2,500
- Poured in place, fall surfacing and prep (65 sq m) est. \$7,150
- 2 Custom bench and planter tables est. \$4,000

- 1 Custom curved bench seating system est. \$5,000
- 20 Concrete sonotubes (varying dia 2' lengths) est. \$5,000
- CIP concrete beams (9 sq m) est. \$4,500
- Custom graphic wrap on shed est. \$2,500
- Plants (includes border for Garden) est. \$2,000
- Soil includes border for Garden (50 sq m) est. \$1,500
- 3 Deciduous specimen trees, 10' est. \$3,000
- 3 deciduous specimen trees, 10' est. \$2,100
- Dog hitching post est. \$250

Kindy subtotal \$45,110



Phase 2 - Scheduled for Spring 2016

5. Grande Allée

The Grande Allée was first created over a decade ago meant as a place for quiet reflection and community gathering. It provides a beautiful, much needed space for parents to watch their children play & the seasons change. It draws older students to “hang out”. We would like to resurrect it to its full potential.

- Replace unhealthy trees
- Create more seating opportunities
- Create a crushed-stone path

Budget

- Crushed granite path the length of the Allée
- 4 Cherry trees with compaction tree guards
- Architecturally designed bench system

Subtotal \$8,250



est. \$3,750

est. \$4,500

(\$30K - if funds raised)

Phase 2 - Scheduled for Spring 2016

5. Biodiversity Rain Garden

This Scientific Component demonstrates the power of nature to cleanse polluted run-off rainwater and brings children into the process, ankle deep. The basin will be a mini ecosystem for study and allow water-exploration (except for very dry seasons).



- Create a biodiverse area with native species using natural drainage techniques

Budget

- | | | |
|---|------|---------|
| • Seeds & bulbs (incl 150mm soil depth) | est. | \$4,400 |
| • Deciduous specimen trees, 10' | est. | \$3K |
| • Coniferous specimen trees, 10' | est. | \$2,100 |
| • Plants | est. | \$4K |
| • Soil, 150 cu m | est. | \$4,500 |
| • Salvaged beach logs (min 450mm dia) | est. | \$7,200 |
| • Salvaged beach root wads, 900mm * 600mm dia | est. | \$3,600 |
| • Site prep, machine time for boulder/log placement | est. | \$10K |
| • 30 Stone boulders | est. | \$6K |
| • granular base, standard drain rock | est. | \$12K |
| • Boardwalk and bridge | est. | \$10K |

Subtotal \$66,800

Phase 2 - Scheduled for Summer 2016

6. Performance Amphitheatre

The amphitheater is designed to embrace the arts and elevate them in our school's curriculum and identity. The vision is to accommodate a host of social functions: theatrical & musical arts, guest speakers, outdoor cinemas and providing a grand space to gather, play or picnic. It would also allow neighborhood and team social gatherings (ie: scouts, beavers).

- Seating to accommodate 100 with additional seating on the slope
- Concrete pour with performance stage
- West Vancouver Foundation has contributed funds towards this amenity
- Estimate not complete at this date.

Phase 3 - Scheduled for Spring 2017

7. Bird Sanctuary

This will be a special place for the entire community to interact with the living things of a forest. The children could actively contribute to the care and preservation of a small ecosystem. Our senior community members have offered to help build birdhouses and observation platforms.

Bird-watching provides a unique introspective study, while fostering children's responsibility for smaller creatures. This haven is intended to bring nature together with the young and old and offer respite and healing.

- Planting of trees
- Building of bird houses and platforms
- First Bird Sanctuary in Western Canada in a school property
- Estimate not complete at this date.



Cornelia Hahn Oberlander

“A Place for Learning, Playing and Discovery for the Community”

This park is to create an environment away from our technological age and bring the students and visitors close to nature. It should encourage absorption in activities and unselfconscious concentration.

The design of this space should sharpen our abilities to communicate effectively and reflect social graces as well as aid body development. Providing a stage for self-expression through drama, and opening the doors of the scientific world by exploration in woodland and wetland.

Whatever we do we must help the young to develop a feeling of self-fulfillment and self-confidence.

It is important today for the whole community to participate in a place where everyone will feel at home, away from the technological intrusions, and learn about the beauty of nature.

Cornelia Hahn Oberlander O.C. FCSLA FASLA BCSLA



Sponsors Supporting The PJ Outdoor Learning and Community Park:

- West Vancouver Foundation
- Whole foods
- Toyota Evergreen Learning Grounds School Ground Greening Grants