



**Cumberland Community Forest Park & Coal Creek Historic
Park - Education & Outreach Strategy
May 19, 2023**

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1. Background:

The Cumberland Community Forest Society (CCFS) developed the **2022 / 2023 Education & Outreach Strategy** to strengthen linkages between the Cumberland Community School, local education programs and Cumberland Community Forest Park. **The intent of this strategy** was to directly engage the education community in the development of strategies and actions to support both educational objectives and the ecological health, sustainability and resilience of the Park. Funding for this work was provided by the Comox Valley Community Foundation, Cumberland Community Forest Society and the Village of Cumberland.

This funding from the Comox Valley Community Foundation was awarded for projects that responded to COVID community impacts. In this case, increased human impacts in the Park during the pandemic were significant. The cause of these impacts can be attributed to: local population increases, general increases in visitation to natural areas, and the increased focus on outdoor education by local schools, private nature programs and pre school programs.

This project is part of the ongoing commitment of the CCFS to support stewardship of the Cumberland Community Forest Park and adjacent natural areas in their role as a Community Covenant holder. The project builds on the work of the CCFS in developing community resources: a K-9 Teacher's Resource, Cumberland Forest Field Guides, Biodiversity Wheel of the Year poster, after school programs, and the Cumberland Community Forest & Coal Creek Historic Park Map.

The CCFS consulted with education leaders to develop the recommendations and strategies contained in this report. These educators are engaged in local outdoor education programs including Fianna Wilderness School, Adventure Day Care, Hand in Hand Nature Education, Lake Park Society, Cumberland Community Forest Society and Cumberland Community School. All of these programs require park use permits with the exception of SD #71 which is exempted as per the Village of Cumberland Recreation Fees Bylaw.

In addition to meeting the stewardship objectives of the CCFS, this project also responds to the needs of the Village of Cumberland to develop strategies in response to increased activity and impacts by both the general public and education programs in the Cumberland Community Forest Park and Coal Creek Historic Park.

These strategies include updated or new education programs and materials, signage, new and/or revised policy and permit processes, changes to the trail network, and/or the establishment of designated outdoor learning and gathering spaces.

This project also builds on the recent work of the Village and community partners - the creation of modular strategies that inform the development of a broader 'Cumberland Community Forest Park Management Plan'. This includes projects like the 2021 'Village of Cumberland Interim Trail Management Strategy' and its implementation.

This alignment between the goals of the CCFS and the Village led to an expanded scope for this project and resulted in the **Cumberland Community Forest /Coal Creek Historic Park Education & Outreach Project and Strategy**.

2. Project and Strategy Goals:

The goals of the Cumberland Community Forest / Coal Creek Historic Park Education & Outreach Project and Strategy were:

- To collect and collate data about current usage, practices and policies from local schools and other community education providers ;
- To gather feedback about baseline knowledge, challenges, opportunities from community education providers

- To build program leader / educator knowledge about Village parks boundaries, policies, covenants, watershed and biodiversity zones, and current management challenges and strategies;
- To develop strategies and propose projects to support the ecological health and resilience of the Cumberland Community Forest and Coal Creek Historic Park
- To develop strategies, and to propose policy and projects to address human impacts in the Cumberland Community Forest and Coal Creek Historic Park.
- To build community connections in support of the ecological health, sustainability and resilience of the Cumberland Community Forest and Coal Creek Historic Park.

3. Key Findings

a) Sense of Place

- Varying levels of understanding about park boundaries, new signage is helping;
- Limited understanding of conservation values / policy related to the lands;
- High interest in history of the lands (indigenous, industrial, geologic, community)
- Orientation of maps at trailhead creates confusion. Look at ways to flip orientation to make it more useful and add suggested loops, distances, approximate time.

b) Ecosystem Health

- Smaller programs (*less than 12*) more ecosystem centered, with seasonal awareness;
- Limited knowledge regarding species at risk and habitat fragmentation;
- Fear of cougars, bears a factor in some not engaging in the forest;
- Lack of general awareness from larger programs (*12 +*) about ecosystem impacts.

c) Human Impacts

- No clear / shared understanding re:: leave no trace / human impacts;
- All programs engage in off trail activities;
- Smaller programs in Coal Creek Historic Park have far less impact on the landscape;
- Large school and preschool programs had highest impact;
- Degree of impact is relative to the amount of time spent in the forest.
- Shorter visits (time constraints) impact entrance / lower areas of the forest most;
- Erosion areas significant at primary entrance points;
- Fear about dog interaction with kids and dog waste were big issues.

d) Share the Trails

- 2021-22 trail designation (Nature; Multi Use, and Gravity) project and signage installation very helpful - teachers feeling safer, lots of curiosity;
- Many still fearful of interaction / accidents with bikes at high speed;
- High appreciation for Nature Trails.

e) Share with Nature

- Current access to the forest is trail based, this implies motion and movement;
- Clear impacts due to off trail activity;
- Focus of community work to date has been sharing with each other (human centered) not sharing with nature;
- Little knowledge or understanding on conservation values that informed the park's creation;
- All programs indicated the value / importance of off trail activity for nature education.

f) Building Community

- Project itself built relationships and connections between programs and between programs and the CCFS;
- High enthusiasm for being ‘part of the solution’;
- Lots of creative input, ideas and suggestions from educators.

4. Project and Strategy Recommendations and Implementation

**Implementation of several of the projects outlined in this Strategy require prior written permission from the Comox Valley Land Trust and Cumberland Community Forest Society under the terms of the Covenants on title for the properties. These organizations are also actively engaged in Village of Cumberland's Parks Management Planning Process as members of the staff working group.*

A. Education

ACTION	WHO	WHEN
Development of a one pager orientation document to the Cumberland Community Forest	Cumberland Community Forest Society w/ Village sign off	April 2023
Orientation for Summer Program leaders for VOC camps	Delivered by the CCFS for the Village of Cumberland	Spring / Summer 2023
Ongoing (twice annual) ProD for Cumberland Community School educators	Cumberland Community Forest Society.	Spring / Fall
Update Educational Resources, development of resources page on CCFS web.	Cumberland Community Forest Society	Update by Sept 1 2023
Update Biodiversity Wheel of the year to include seasonal impacts due	Cumberland Community Forest Society	Update complete by Sept 1 2023

to mating and nesting, new growth, life systems		
Once a year ProD offering to other education and program leaders	Cumberland Community Forest Society	Starting Fall 2023
Create a “Friends of the Forest” program. Badges relate to units of learning including habitat trees and stumps lesson, species at risk, history, engage in a restoration project, be bat friendly, leave no trace, share the trail, share with nature etc	Cumberland Community Forest Society and Education partners (working group)	2024

B. Signage and Mapping

ACTION	WHO	WHEN
Trailhead signage update - as part of a larger Park Management Planning Process.	Village Led with Conservation Covenant Holders as part of Parks Planning Process.	As part of Parks Management Planning and Implementation
Signage for restoration areas	Village signage , partners referenced	As required
Signage for classroom areas	Village signage, partners referenced	As required
Park Map Updates (could include switching orientation)	Cumberland Community Forest Society	Underway, summer 2023
Watershed / Riparian Signage at Potholes and Creek Access Points utilized by education groups(link to online content)	CCFS provides files, content. Village to produce and install	Fall 2023
Development of new interpretive signage inside the park centered on ecology.	CCFS led, Village to support	2024
Development of wildlife viewpoints and associated signage along wetlands (Wellington, Josh's, Coal Creek) to inform public about local	CCFS led / Village to Support	2024

ecosystems and human impacts (nesting times etc)		
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C. Policy and Permitting

ACTION	WHO	WHEN
Update Village Park Permitting process with the addition of a new Education Users portal and application. (will include orientation document)	Village with support from CCFS	Initiate in 2023
Develop policy re: disturbance activities / modifications of the natural environment (structure building, habitat trees/off trail activities, habitat impacts)	Parks Management Planning Group	Parks Management Planning Process
Explore placing limits caps of the # of parks permits being issued for education programs / # of students	Village of Cumberland	As part of Parks Management Planning and Implementation
Review fee structure for educational use as part of broader Recreation Fee Bylaw Review	Village of Cumberland	2024
Monitor compliance with the Village Parks By Law to ensure operators have permits in place	Village of Cumberland	As part of Parks Management Planning and Implementation
Development of risk assessment education materials as part of the park permitting process.	Village of Cumberland	As part of Parks Management Planning and Implementation

D. Restoration / Regeneration

ACTION	WHO	WHEN
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Scope and initiate targeted restoration project at Space Nugget / Big Log corner	CCFS to scope, Village to advise and support	2023
Scope and initiate restoration of high impact corner on Tied Knot	CCFS to scope, Village to advise and support	2023 / 2024
Scope and initiate targeted restoration and trail delineation on Mama Bears, Big Log and Space Nugget /Kitty Litter intersection.	Parks Management Working Group	As part of Parks Management Planning and Implementation
Develop priority list for targeted restoration projects, develop partnership with CCFS on approach to restoration, volunteer engagement	Parks Management Working Group	As part of Parks Management Planning and Implementation

E. Trails

ACTION	WHO	WHEN
Explore shorter 'loops' in the lower network (i.e. connecting Josh's to Lower Space Nugget to mitigate braiding)	Village of Cumberland	As part of Parks Management Planning and Implementation

F. Gathering Spaces

ACTION	WHO	WHEN
Scope and initiate gathering space at Big Log / Space Nugget entrance	CCFS Scope, Village implementation	2023 - pending field visit
Scope and initiate gathering space east side of trail on Tied Knot (logs delineating, minor restoration, log seats only)	CFS Scope, Village implementation	2023 - pending field visit
Develop gathering space on east side #3 Mine Road (disturbed site)	Cumberland Community Forest Society	2023 - pending site visit and plan with VOC
Explore location for gathering place on Mama Bears	Parks Management Planning Group	Integrate into the Parks Management

		Planning Process
Explore location for wildlife viewing spots / platforms on Josh's, Wellington	Parks Management Planning Group	Integrate into the Parks Management Planning Process
Explore the #3 Mine location for gathering space educational use	Parks Management Planning Group	Integrate into the Parks Management Planning Process
Identify potential education space(s) further south in the park or off trail areas (older kids) Review fee structure for outdoor education programs / permitting	Parks Management Planning Group	Integrate into the Parks Management Planning Process

5. Resources:

Implementation of this Education & Outreach Strategy will require resources from parks and recreation operations, special projects, grant funding and community partnerships with education programs and the conservation and trails community.. CCFS is committed to participation through staff and resource allocations in parks management planning process and select projects

6. Appendix Documents

- A. Education Programs Inventory
- B. Process Summary
- C. Map with proposed gathering spaces / projects
- D. Education Framework sketch
- E. Surveys and list of stakeholder meetings
- F. Current Cumberland Community School documents related to Forest/Park Use
- G. Photos
- H. Code of Conduct and Etiquette current documents
- I. DRAFT Orientation Document for Parks Permit and Education Resources
- J. DRAFT Community Agreements

APPENDIX A - Education Programs

Interviews we're done with 22 educators representing 9 different education programs

Program Name	Program Notes	Outdoor Programs Operating Location
Fianna Wilderness Education	6-12 youth participants per program, distributed, year round	Japanese # 1 Townsite, Lower Perseverance
Hand-in- Hand Nature Education	6-16 children per program, distributed, year round	Coal Creek Historic Park / Lake Park
Euphoria Nature PreSchool	6-16 kids, mix of before and after school and day time preschool programs	Cumberland Community Forest
Adventure Forest School / Daycare	Current daycare plus new joint facility, second largest group after SD 71	Cumberland Community Forest / Lake Park
Cumberland Community School	Large numbers of individual and team teaching classes, up to 55 any single visit to the forest	Cumberland Community Forest, Coal Creek Historic Park
Lake Park Society	Deliver programs at Lake Park (outside of strategy area) but lots of opportunity for synergy	Lake Park
DV8 Education	Private programs and as VOC contractor	Cumberland Community Forest, Coal Creek Historic park
Cumberland Community Forest Society	After school programs in partnership with CCSS, community guided walks	Cumberland Community Forest , Coal Creek Historic Park
Cumberland Community School Society	Variety of after school programs, hiking club, mountain biking programs	Cumberland Community Forest, local parks, network
Village of Cumberland-Recreation	Variety of after school, spring break and summer programs	Village Park, #6 Park, Cumberland Community Forest

APPENDIX B - Process Summary

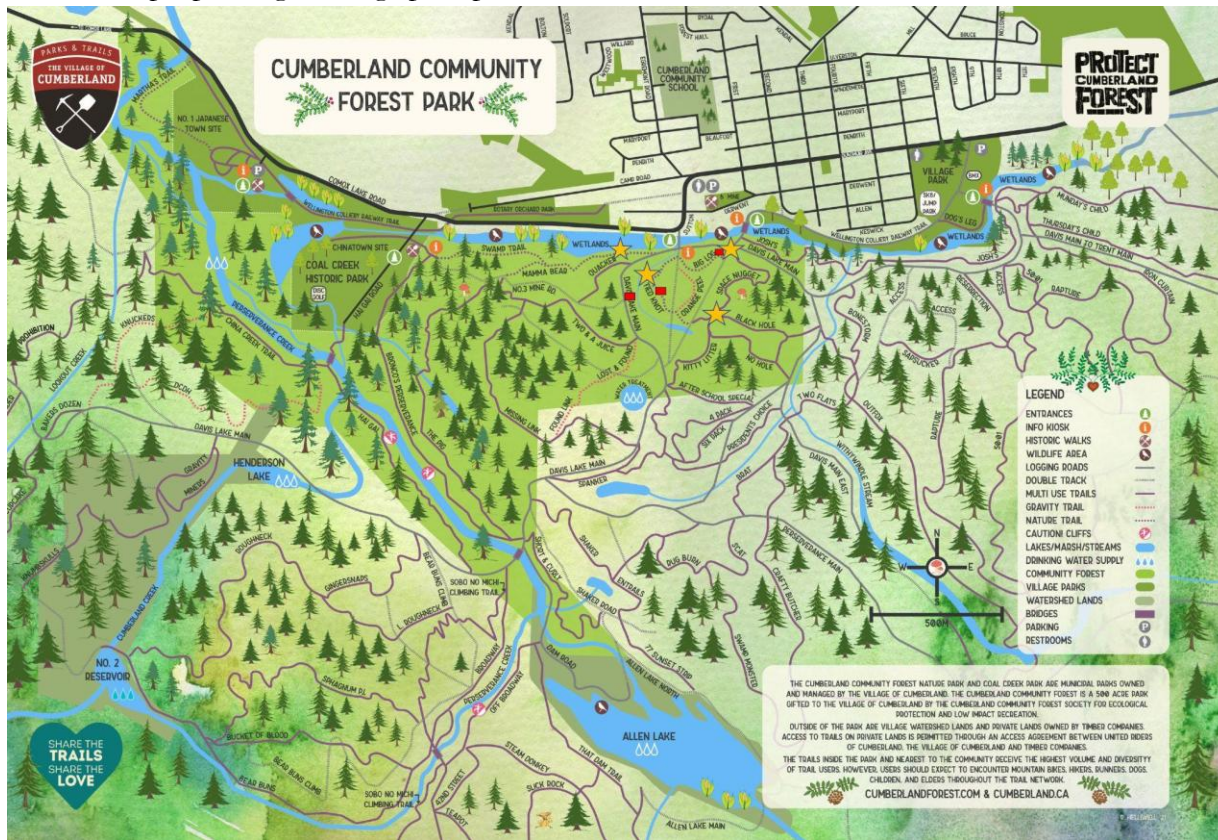
Process: Spring 2022 - Spring 2023

- Identification of programs and program leaders
- Literature review and collation
- Survey of educators and program leaders
- Development of education **framework** to build capacity with local programs
- One on one meetings and site visits with program leaders
- Guided forest walks with teachers from Cumberland Community School
- Team meetings/sharing results
- Development of Draft report and Draft content/materials
- Review by Project team, including Village Parks and Recreation Staff,
- Meeting with educators working group to develop “Agreements document (May 29)
- Submission to Village and presentation to Council’s Committee of the Whole
- Implementation

APPENDIX C. Map with proposed outdoor gathering spaces

Star = high disturbance area

Red box = proposed gathering space phase 1



APPENDIX D. - Framework for orientation to the Cumberland Community Forest and Coal / Creek Historic Park. Professional Development framework.

Sense of Place

- Indigenous territory
- 150+ years of coal mining + logging
- forest was privately owned
- community purchased some (park)
- protected for nature, water +
- park, access areas community coal creek.

Human Impacts

- lots of dogs, bikes, kids hikers, drought
- what impacts do we have?
- what can we see? Why?
- trail braiding, erosion, poo, widening,
- cumulative impacts structures.

Share w/ Nature

- how can we lessen our footprint?
- how can we keep habitat intact
- walking gently on the land
- helping this forest grow old
- future generations benefit
- leaving space for nature to thrive



EcoSystem Health

- beautiful mature forest
- on its way to old growth
- critical to protect biodiversity
- sequesters carbon
- cool plants, fungus, critters.

Share the Trails

- new trail designations
- to keep everyone safe + included!
- nature, multi-use + gravity - why
- respect + kindness

Building Community

- 545 acres saved
- amazing things we've achieved
- cooperation + collaboration
- protecting this forest for future generations, future Cumberlander

APPENDIX E - Stakeholder Survey and Interview Questions

*Interviews we're done with 22 educators representing 9 different education programs

1. How important is the Cumberland Community Forest Park and other natural areas in the Village to your teaching / program?
Scale of 1-10 (1 being not important and 10 being extremely important)
2. Describe your program
 - K-4 Cumberland Community School
 - Gr 5-9 Cumberland Community
 - Nature Preschool
 - Wilderness Education Program
 - Non-Profit Education Program
 - After school program - public/municipal
 - After school program - CCSS/CCS
 - After school program - private
 - Spring Break / Summer Camp
 - Other describe
3. Where do you bring your classes or programs? (Choose as many as you like)
 - Cumberland Community Forest Park
 - Coal Creek Historic Park – Chinatown Historic Site area
 - Coal Creek Historic Park – No. 1 Japanese Town area
 - Coal Creek Historic Park – Disc Golf Course area
 - South Wellington Colliery Trail
 - Wetlands along the south boundary of the Village
 - Wetlands in Coal Creek Historic Park
 - Wetlands beyond the BMX Track
 - Other Natural Areas
 - Village Park adjacent (south) of BMX Track
 - Private Forest Lands (UROC Access Agreement trails)
 - I'm not actually sure where I take them
4. How often do you bring groups into the forest/parks?
 - Every day
 - A few times a week
 - Once a week
 - A few times a month
 - Once a month
 - Seldom
 - Never
5. How big is your typical group?
 - Less than 6 participants
 - 6-12 participants
 - More than 12 participants
6. Does your program stop and do program activities?

yes/no

7. Describe the kind of activities you facilitate
 - Off trail games (capture the flag, tag, hide and go seek)
 - Mountain Biking
 - Hiking
 - Shelter or structure building
 - Art Projects
 - Science Projects
 - Quiet Sit Spots
 - Reading
 - Unstructured Play
 - Other: please describe
8. Using the attached map (describe how to markup) please show us where you usually take your class or group. Use lines for trails and 'x' for areas you stop and do activities
9. Does your program have any of the below formal policies or procedures?
 - Code of Conduct
 - Inclement Weather Policy
 - Leave no Trace Policy
 - Safety Procedures, including danger trees
 - Other (describe)
 - Attach document
10. How do you manage toileting?
 - Describe
11. Do your classes or groups play in or close to Perseverance Creek, Creek Tributaries, Seasonal Streams, Spillways or the Perseverance Potholes?
12. Are you aware of the Village of Cumberland's "[Cumberland Community Forest Park Interim Trail Management Strategy](#)"
13. Are you aware of the new trail designations in the Cumberland Community Forest Park?
14. Do you feel like you have a good sense of where the Park boundaries are?
15. Are you aware of the Village of Cumberland Park Use Permit / Special Event requirements?
16. Have you ever heard of the "conservation covenants" that apply to the Cumberland Community Forest Park Lands?
17. Are you aware of the Cumberland Community Forest Society Educator Resources?

18. What maps or map apps do you use to navigate the park and forest? (tick all that apply)
- Printed map from school
 - Google Maps
 - Trailforks
 - Alltrails
 - Strava
 - Cumberland Community Forest Park Map
 - UROC Trail Map
 - Other printed maps?
19. If you have a map that you or your organization has developed, are you willing to share (attached copy / scanned copy)
20. How well do you think we are doing as a community in having a minimal ecological footprint on the forest when delivering education / programs? 1-10
21. What kind of human impacts and observations have you noticed?
- Increased numbers
 - Dogs off leash
 - Dog Waste
 - Erosion
 - Vegetation trampling and disturbance
 - Trail braiding
 - Garbage
 - Structures (forts/fairy structures/art)
 - Invasive plants
22. Would your program benefit from dedicated and designated outdoor learning areas in the park? y/n
23. If yes, what activities would you use those spaces for?
24. If no, why not?
25. How often would you use an organized outdoor space?

APPENDIX F - Copies of Cumberland Community School Documents Re: Forest Use

Attached

APPENDIX G - Photos

Figure 1 - Big Log corner - eastern entrance (proposed restoration area)



Figure 2 - Disturbed area, behind yellow gate sign (proposed seasonal gathering space)



Figure 3 - Space Nugget Lower Entrance (proposed restoration area)



Figure 4 - Eastern Big Log - Disturbed Area



**Figure 5 - Disturbed Area / east side of Davis Lake Main across from #3 Mine Road.
Proposed future gathering space**



**Figure 6 - Tree base erosion / disturbed site / across from Big log Space Nugget Entrance
Proposed restoration site**



Figure 7 - Team Planning Session



APPENDIX H - Code of Conduct and Etiquette - Current Text

CODE OF CONDUCT

MOTORIZED VEHICLES ARE NOT PERMITTED IN THE NETWORK.

BE AWARE THAT ALL GRAVEL ROADS ARE ACTIVE RESOURCE ROADS WITH VEHICLE TRAFFIC.

KEEP YOUR FEET AND YOUR WHEELS ON THE ESTABLISHED AND MARKED TRAILS.

RESPECT TRAIL CLOSURES AND DECOMMISSIONS. DO NOT CONSTRUCT NEW TRAILS OR ALTER EXISTING ONES.

STAY ON THE TRAIL. SHORTCUTS AND GO-AROUNDS CAUSE EROSION AND TRAMPLING OF VEGETATION.

PACK IT IN AND PACK IT OUT. FROM APPLE CORES TO DOG WASTE.

KNOW THE CURRENT TRAIL CONDITIONS AND WEATHER FORECAST AND PLAN ACCORDINGLY.

NO FIRES OR FIREWORKS.

LEAVE NO TRACE.

TRAIL ETIQUETTE

RESPECT OTHER TRAIL USERS. BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER. SMILE AND SAY HELLO.

SHARE THE NETWORK. IT WAS CREATED BY AND FOR THE COMMUNITY.

COMMUNICATE. LET OTHERS KNOW YOU ARE COMING WITH A GREETING OR BELL RING.

STAY ALERT AND ANTICIPATE OTHER USERS. TRAIL FEATURES AND SIGHTLINES IMPACT RESPONSE TIME.

BE AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS AND HAVE ALL YOUR SENSES AVAILABLE.

STAY IN CONTROL. RIDE WITHIN YOUR LIMITS AND BE READY TO ENCOUNTER DIVERSE TRAIL USERS.

BE PREPARED TO YIELD TO OTHER TRAIL USERS AND PASS IN A SAFE, CONTROLLED, AND COURTEOUS MANNER.

MAKE SPACE FOR OTHER USERS AND AVOID GATHERING ON TRAILS OR AT TRAIL INTERSECTIONS.

ENJOY THE NETWORK AND FIND A WAY TO GIVE BACK.