



Front Cover





The importance of sharing knowledge and passing down wisdom about the natural world around us can not be understated, especially in today's plugged-in world where hand-held devices are revered more than the life-giving oxygen that trees provide or the beauty of nature that has inspired artists, inventors, architects, scientists, philosophers and millions before us.

When parks fill with discarded trash and trees are vandalized, everyone suffers - it is a sign of a disconnected society. But when one finds community pride in a jewel like Highrock Park, healing takes place and communities grow to become healthier and happier as crime reduces with even the simple act of understanding how garbage is created and disposed of.

Respecting the planet naturally grows respect for each other. It all begins from the ground up!

It's said that it takes a village to raise a child. Our thanks go to the Township of Esquimalt and the Rockheights Middle School Project Learning Team (led by David Futter, Beth Mann, Liana Ruffolo, Principal Maryanne Trofimuk and Vice-Principal Joanna Snow) for their spirit of collaboration and desire to see a world rooted in respect for nature for generations to come.

Frances Litman  
Community Connector, 2012 CRD EcoStar Community Leadership Award Winner  
on behalf of Creatively United For The Planet Society and Vancouver Island Green Scene

## Rockheights Middle School

1250 Highrock Avenue  
Victoria, BC

The Raven's Code: "I Can... We Will... Be Respectful, Responsible, Reflective"

During the 2013-2014 school year, the Rockheights Middle School Grade 6 team (SD61 Greater Victoria) worked in collaboration with the Creatively United for the Planet Society to study a nearby Garry Oak ecosystem to understand the connection and importance of nature to the 4 R's: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.

Over six months, as this Project-Based Learning Model evolved within an imaginative education framework, classes interacted with various community organizations and community partners who helped to shape and capture the ongoing thinking and learning that was taking place.

Our community and Creatively United partners included Frances Litman, a local award-winning professional photographer and coordinator for the Creatively United for the Planet Society, Dorrie Murphy from Persona Video and Nelson Dewey, artist and cartoonist. These three professionals cartooned, photographed and shared their creative skills, equipment and experience with the students during various stages of the project.

The culmination of learning from the project was showcased at the 2014 Creatively United for the Planet Arts and Sustainability Festival where the students not only took part in the opening ceremonies, but had their work on public display during this free community Earth Week celebration.

Community connections to school projects, like this, enrich learning, and extend the walls of the classroom well beyond the school yard.

We thank our innovative teachers, our willing community contributors, our committed community partners, our supportive parents and most of all we thank the insatiable curiosity of our students who breathed life into the project.

Maryanne Trofimuk  
Principal, Rockheights Middle School



## Opening Ceremony

Despite the rain and fog, spirits were high as we gathered on top of the Highrock Cairn in Esquimalt for a ceremonial introduction to this creative collaboration that included a First Nation's blessing.

Esquimalt Songhees children were involved in the pageantry which included them drumming on their own hand-made instruments and the singing of the *Mother Earth* song.

Special thanks goes to Anishinaabe traditional teacher/Elder/drummer Louise Milburn for her inspired guidance.







## Sharing Skills

Internationally published cartoonist Nelson Dewey explains the tools of his trade and how his craft as an illustrator has included storyboards for movies, comic books and educational books.

Meanwhile Dorrie Murphy of Persona Video explains how her professional equipment operates and her role as a professional videographer and editor.





## Hartland Landfill

There's nothing like a visit to the Hartland Landfill in Victoria to understand the size and scope of how our buying habits impact where we live.

Once a pristine, forested lake much like Victoria's Thetis Lake Park, the landfill is now nearing capacity and the hunt will begin for more land to convert to such a use unless we find ways to put to practise the 4 R's: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.







### Education, Education, Education!

The landfill, and its accompanying education centre, is a shining example of how such an operation should be run.

Sadly, many places in the world don't have anything more than a dumping ground where toxins leach into ground water and create havoc with the ecosystem and community health.

Here students learn about what resources go into creating products that end up in landfills for a lifetime, many of which are in our hands for but minutes.

To learn more about this trip and the Rockheights School project, please visit our website at [www.creativelyunited.org](http://www.creativelyunited.org) to watch the video.





## The Wisdom of Stewardship

Visits to Highrock Park with other community partners included First Nations wisdom from Mark Albany who shared knowledge about the importance of ecosystems, stewardship and the healing qualities of trees and plants.

Esquimalt Parks and Rec staff also provided insight into the challenge of invasive plant species in local parks and wild areas.





## Seeing In New Ways

What a joy it was to see how these students lit up when given the opportunity to look through and have hands-on experience using professional equipment. They didn't miss a thing when given this chance and revelled in sharing what they saw.







## Through The Student's Eyes

Near and far, nature offers plenty of enjoyment and the students had the opportunity to understand more about the impact people and animals can have on an area, resulting in a greater appreciation for the importance of park stewardship.





## Putting Things Into Practise

A beautiful spring day made everyone happy to get outside and into the park for an assignment that included having the students try out their interviewing skills to learn more from each other about the park, plus experience it through drawing and other hands-on activities.







## Huge Learning Moment

One of the biggest learning moments was when the kids discovered a hummingbird resting in its nest on a branch they had previously been pulling and swinging on.

Despite being warned that this could be potentially harmful to both them and any nests that might be in the tree, they were adamant that a nest wouldn't be in the branch *they were playing with.*

Upon further inspection, much to everyone's surprise, there *was* a hummingbird nestled in a crook on the branch looking right at us as if to say: *"Please be careful this is my home too!"*

The tree branch melee became a learning moment for embracing nature.



## Seeing Beyond The Obvious

The art of seeing is very gratifying as is evidenced by the fact that photography is one of the fastest growing hobbies in the world now that people have cell phones with cameras and easier and cheaper access to quality equipment.

Seeing beyond the obvious is when the fun and connection really begins.

The base of this tree, for example, looks like a bear when the viewer goes beyond looking at just a tree trunk.

The students learned to look closer and observe the details of living organisms at work through line, form, shape, colour and texture - enhancing their appreciation for the beauty and life-force of nature.





Hanna

cool fun good for game calm place  
full good memories

I liked being with people that are  
like me because

moose Bug birds Deer squirrels eagle racoon  
hamburger robin

I would like it if the school was  
tree house like on tree house masters  
and animals walk around with us

Michael

Calm in cairn I saw a humming bird  
and I want to have a jungle school  
so I can pet the animals and become  
tarzan

marlina

In the Cairn I had lots of fun  
taking pictures and exploring the  
different parts of the Cairn

I like the Cairn park because  
it's really calm and peaceful.

In the Cairn I saw dogs, humming  
birds, robins, and heard a Raven.



Ivy

What i like about the cairn is  
the moss. I enjoyed use the zoomy  
camera. I like the cairn because it is  
calming. I saw a humming bird I heard  
a raven. I would like animals to live  
in our school.



Alex

It's good for building.

25% of the cairn park is left of what it  
was in the late 1800s.

Without nature there would be no animals for  
humans to eat and the food chain would be  
broken and could not be fixed



## Finding Peace & Comfort

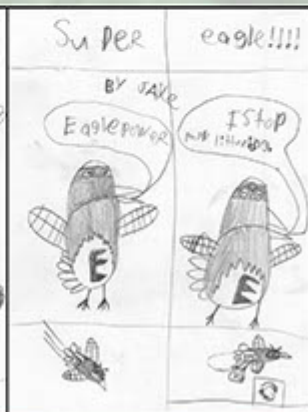
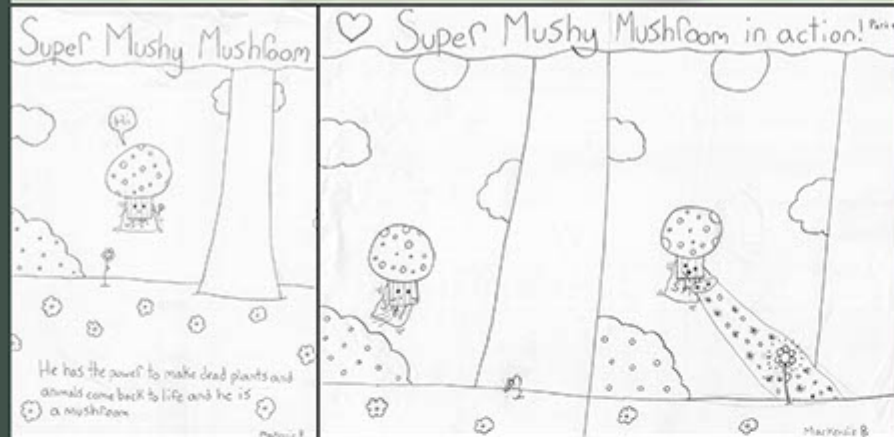
Many people find peace and comfort in nature. It's well-documented that time spent outdoors is good for the body, mind and soul.



## Drawing From Nature

Students interested in drawing were given the opportunity to create cartoons about nature.

They came up with environmental superheroes, commented on things they experienced on treks through Highrock Park and created images of themselves in the natural world.





## Importance of Art

Creativity abounds in every child.

Nature has been a source of inspiration since time began. From patterns and colours to structure and design, it forms the basis of everything that surrounds us.

Art also has the incredible power to heal, expand the way we see the world and create connections.

These students are working on art that formed part of their exhibition at the Creatively United for the Planet 2014 Arts & Sustainability Festival.





## Earth Day

Earth Day, April 22, 2014, was celebrated in Highrock Park with students enjoying all kinds of activities coordinated by Esquimalt Parks & Rec.

The day included invasive plant removal, a hands-on look at a watershed model, speeches by the Township Mayor and local officials, plus a variety of displays.





## Coming Together In Creative Collaboration

After working together for several months, Rockheights Middle School students and staff brought it all together for an incredible display at the Creatively United for the Planet Arts & Sustainability Festival held outdoors April 26, 2014 at St. Ann's Academy during Earth Week.

The sun shone brightly as the students, their teachers and First Nations mentors played and sang songs for the Opening Ceremonies. They also showcased their art and findings about Highrock Park.

Another highlight enjoyed by both Rockheights Middle School students and staff while at the festival, was the opportunity to take part in an intimate lecture by world-renowned artist & conservationist Robert Bateman.

Everyone was able to experience first-hand the power of creative community collaboration.





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Esquimalt has over 40 hectares (108 acres) of parkland consisting of sport fields, trails, horticultural sites, and natural areas. As well, the municipality is blessed with a number of pocket parks on small coves along both the Gorge Waterway and the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

[www.esquimalt.ca](http://www.esquimalt.ca)



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*Creatively United for the Planet is a registered not-for-profit society dedicated to environmental protection through community connection.*

*Through arts programming, business and zero-waste community events and collaboration we bring people of all ages together in support of a world rooted in respect for nature to ensure where we live, eat, play, work and study remains beautiful, resilient, healthy and happy... starting from the ground up!*

Photographs and text by Frances Litman  
Pages 15-16, photos by: Hanna, Michael, Ivy and Frances. Page 31-32, photos by Bob Orchard & Frances







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