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WSÁNEĆ ETHNOBOTANY TRAIL & RESTORATION PROJECT **at the** **Horticulture Centre of the Pacific** **Annual Report 2021**

The WSÁNEĆ Ethnobotany Trail & Restoration Project is a partnership project between the PEPÁKEN HÁUTW Foundation and the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific (HCP). Located at HCP, this project is an amazing opportunity to educate visitors, students and community members in WSÁNEĆ territory about the cultural and ecological importance of native plants and ecosystems. The foundation for this project is the deep acknowledgement of WSÁNEĆ knowledge keepers past and present who have stewarded these native plants and ecosystems since time immemorial. We intend to foster connections between the WSÁNEĆ community and this special place in their homelands, named HELENIKEN in SENĆOTEN to honour the headwaters of many tributaries in this area. It is our belief that the development of these connections can support a greater respect and understanding for WSÁNEĆ culture and history from settlers and visitors to this territory, as well as affirm the resiliency and vibrancy of WSÁNEĆ culture.

This project also emphasizes the incredible amount of work that has been accomplished in the natural areas at HCP and provide the space to raise awareness about the role that functioning native ecosystems have to play in mitigating ecological challenges. The project area consists of diverse and unique ecosystem types which offer a chance to explore important topics such as hydrology, ecological trail building, extirpated species regeneration, persistent invasive species removal, and the restoration of ecosystems that are likely to extend their ranges into our region due to climate change.

Background

The WSÁNEĆ Ethnobotany Trail & Restoration Project is located at the Horticulture Center of the Pacific, in the Douglas fir biogeoclimatic zone. The natural area currently under the purview of this project consists of a forested area, wildflower meadow demonstration garden, a lakeside wetland, a pond, and a swale ecosystem. Specific environmental conditions for the project area can be found in the HCP Restoration Plan (Berch & Holcomb 2008).

The first WSÁNEĆ Ethnobotany Trail was in place though the former Harvest Woods from 2009-2012. During this time the trail won a Conservation Award from the municipality of Saanich and received positive engagement from HCP visitors and students. Upon the dissolution of the trail due to disruption from septic tank installations, remaining members of the Harvest Woods

volunteer group and the W̱SÁNEĆ Ethnobotany Trail volunteer group made plans for the development of a new series of connected ethnobotany trails throughout the HCP property, to be implemented in phases (The Ethnobotany Trail at HCP, Arney 2014). Due to ongoing concerns at that time, plans for this trail were suspended in 2014.

Between 2014 -2019 Hoke Holcomb has continued to do restoration work in the areas previously designated for the ethnobotany trail, in particular the wetland area adjacent to the lake, frequently referred to as the ‘Waterfront’ in his extensive planning documents. Jane Hunter, former Harvest Woods volunteer, has shifted her efforts to a section of the former Harvest Woods to develop and steward the Garry oak Meadow Flower garden which is growing quite successfully.

In 2019, the partnership between the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific and the PEPÁḴEN HÁUTW Foundation was created and a contract developed to revitalize the former W̱SÁNEĆ Ethnobotany Trail, create educational opportunities for PHC students and HCP visitors, and plan for the trail’s expansion over successive years.

Objectives

Trail: The first phase of our project includes the restoration of the former Harvest Woods and maintenance of a trail system which connects to the Garry oak Meadow Flower garden. The second phase of the project will be to address the wetland areas and mitigate persistent invasive species and hydrology concerns to extend the trail along the waterfront from the first section of the new trail. The third phase of this project will link the trail to the pond and swale (located west of the formal gardens perimeter fence). The fourth phase of this project will be to examine further aspects of connectivity that are possible throughout the HCP property, for example to create a loop which includes the Garth Homer Woods and Native Plant Demonstration Garden or to connect the trail to the larger Conservation Area.

W̱SÁNEĆ Ethnobotany Trail	
Phase One	Forest and Meadow section (former Harvest Woods)
Phase Two	Wetland section (Willow Waterfront Trail)
Phase Three	Pond and Swale section (connecting wetland to swale)
Phase Four	Connectivity (linking the trails)

(for full description of all phases, please see the W̱SÁNEĆ Ethnobotany Trail & Restoration Project report by JLA Arney, submitted to HCP Dec 2019).

Education: Aside from the physical development of these trails, we also have the objective of deepening education and awareness about native plants, ecosystems as well as W̱SÁNEĆ culture and their long history of land stewardship at HELENIḴEN and throughout W̱SÁNEĆ territory. Each new section of trail will include signage and a pamphlet so visitors can do a self guided tour to learn more about this important element of each trail section. We also intend to foster opportunities for W̱SÁNEĆ community members to share knowledge though paid tours of the trail or community events at HCP, and it is our hope that W̱SÁNEĆ people will feel increasingly interested and comfortable returning to HELENIḴEN as a place to gather foods, materials and medicines.

2021 Work Summary

During 2021 we were able to resume some of the momentum we lost due to the onset of the covid19 in 2020. Working with PHC students, we accomplished a good deal of trail maintenance, established a lovely new area in Phase One of the trail, and made a good start at planning the restoration work for Phase Three. We were happy to work with the PHC students to do hands on education in restoration as well as cultural education from our indigenous staff.

We definitely noticed a lot of attention to the trail since the signs were put in in October 2020! Please check out the [Media](#) page on our website to access articles and podcasts about this project.

Trail Maintenance

From April through to October we were able to work with the PHC student cohort to do trail maintenance on the Phase One section. One of the most important annual trail maintenance tasks in this section is refreshing the wood chips on the trail, as they get worn down quickly due to the weather, wet ground and foot traffic. This year we chipped the trail in April and June, but in future years we could probably include a November date as well. We also gently cut back some of the plants along the trail that prevent people from walking down the path.

Grasses and canary grasses are also present in the lower sections of the trail, which need to be regularly dug out (spring and autumn) and cut back (summer). Invasive blackberry also persists in some of the established areas of the woods along this trail, and so needs to be continuously dug out where it is found.

Elders Rest Area

We were very pleased that PHC student Chloe Guimond collaborated in the planning for the elders rest area as a student project over autumn. Linda Petite organized the two small sections adjacent to the current trailhead to be cleared of the ornamental plants that resided there, and together with Chole and her classmates we were able to plant many beautiful woodland flowering plants in these sections in October. The smaller section is at the foot of a large fir tree, and was planted completely with salal (*Gaultheria shallon*). The larger section was



planted with the assortment of plants listed in the table below. We hope to commission a bench to be placed overlooking these new sections within the next year or so.

Elders Rest Area Plantings Autumn 2021
WIWQ, IĬ Red Flowering Currant <i>Ribes sanguinem</i>
TĚSIP Licorice Fern <i>Polypodium glycyrriza</i>
SENI, IĬ Dull Oregon grape <i>Mahonia nervosa</i>
White Fawn lily (seeds) <i>Erythronium oregonum</i>
DI,LEK IĬ Woodland strawberry <i>Fragaria vesca</i>
Western trillium <i>Trillium ovatum</i>
Red Columbine (seeds) <i>Aquilegia formosa</i>

Swale Planning

Due to the passing of the illustrious Hoke Holcomb on March 4 2021, our swale restoration planning was paused for most of the year. Shannon Berch has kept up with Linda Petite and PHC classes to upkeep some of the most vital elements of the swale, and we are now collaborating together to develop a swale restoration and maintenance plan for 2022.

Education

PHC students were the main workforce for our trail this year! We had a mix of formal classes organized through the college and practical skills Friday mornings with them. During the classes we would spend some of our time with cultural learning from Earl Claxton Jr and Sarah Jim. We enjoy working with the PHC students and look forward to scheduling more opportunities for learning with them in 2022!



2022 Work Plan: Phase One & Three

In 2021, we hope to continue to improve the section of trail we describe in Phase One, and also to start research and planning into Phase Three. After discussion with HCP Executive Director Deborah Donahue, we have decided to skip over Phase Two for the time being, until we have a clearer picture of the various stakeholders in this section of trail and can meet with staff from the District of Saanich.

Trail Maintenance

Developing Phase One of the trail in 2022 will include further maintenance work on the trail and further plantings in the elders rest area and some sections of the forest trail. Ideally we can add woodchips to the trail in both early spring and mid-late autumn. Some plants overhanging the trail may need to be trimmed if they prevent people from walking the path, and invasive removal especially along the lower section of the trail and forest area will be needed.

Elders Rest Area Plantings Autumn 2022	Forest Trail Plantings Autumn 2022
Pacific Bleeding Heart <i>Dicentra Formosa</i> Vanilla leaf <i>Achylys triphylla</i>	TEX,TEX Stinging Nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i>

Signage

We have two signs in particular we would like to add to the trail in 2022. The first is a sign for the elders rest area that honours the present day connection and ancestral legacy of W̱SÁNEĆ elders that make all our work possible, as well as Hoke Holcomb who stewarded most of the native ecosystems of HCP for decades and worked so closely with us since the earliest days of the W̱SÁNEĆ Ethnobotany Trail. The second sign will be a “redo” of the sign at the current trailhead, to make the sign itself larger and adding a few adjustments so the text of the sign is more legible to trail visitors.

Swale Restoration

Shannon Berch had advised us on a restoration plan for the Phase Three swale section of the trail.

Winter-Early Spring

- clean up the field adjacent to the swale, removing garbage and litter to make mowing possible in this section
- clear around conifers between swale and forest treeline, find planted species around these conifers

Spring-Autumn

- cut back canary grass, add mulch around planted species and swale
- fix or replace tree protections along swale

Autumn

- add native plantings along swale (species targeted for shade over swale and wet/dry tolerance)

We are interested in the soil composition of this site and would like to see soil testing for texture, organic matter and pH. Once the field adjacent to the swale is mowed, we might consider a larger scale plan for dealing with the intense canary grass invasion.

Once new plants are planted in the autumn, we will need to make a plan for their regular watering for at least 2-3 years. We considered putting out a call for a dedicated volunteer or two to

take care of this area and other sections of the W̱SÁNEĆ Ethnobotany Trail, or even trying to attain resources to pay someone to do this. If we were able to recruit a W̱SÁNEĆ youth or community member for this role, that would very much be aligned with our larger objectives for this project.

We would also like to propose a few student projects that could help us with the development Phase Three, outlined in the following section on Education.

Education

We have coordinated with PHC College Administrator Jessica Lokker to schedule three class dates over the course of 2022, and Linda Petite has also agreed to include work days on the trail by request during the Friday mornings she coordinates for the PHC students. These Friday morning work days really gave us a lot of connection with the students over autumn 2021 so we are very grateful these are available again in 2022!

We also have a few ideas for student projects that could assist the trail project.

- research into canary grass suppression and removal
- research into riparian plants that tolerate both wet & dry conditions
- research into trail building alternatives to boardwalks in wetland areas

Students seemed to really enjoy learning about restoration as well as receiving cultural education from elder Earl Claxton Jr this year. We look forward to another year of connecting with students to deepen education and awareness about native plants, ecosystems, restoration and W̱SÁNEĆ culture in 2022.



BUDGET

The Horticulture Centre of the Pacific has agreed to contract the PEPÁKĒN HÁUTW Foundation for the development of this project and has issued payment according to the terms of our partnership contract.

by Judith Lyn Arney
PEPÁKĒN HÁUTW Foundation
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