

Elementary students restore, reclaim neighbourhood park

Posted by Joan Russow
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by oak bay news

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Students from Janet Langston's Grade 3 and 4 class at Margaret Jenkins elementary celebrate the school's efforts to remove invasive species from Trafalgar Park (below King George Terrace). The park was covered in gorse and blackberry and wild flowers and roses are now thriving. (Travis Paterson/News Staff)

Elementary students restore, reclaim neighbourhood park Margaret Jenkins students 2.5 years into restoration

The reclamation of Trafalgar Park continues but to anyone who has visited in the past three years, the removal of invasive species has revealed a landscape unseen for decades.

And the work has been done by a pair of Margarets.

Well known Uplands Park advocate and volunteer Margaret Lidkea helped lead a program for nearby Margaret Jenkins elementary school students. Lidkea provides the know-how and the students provide the muscle.

The park was covered with rows of entrenched blackberry and gorse.

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The students prove their knowledge by munching on a piece of Miner's lettuce growing next to the six-foot-tall wild roses in Trafalgar.

"We gave them clippers, saws, and shears, and they've done the work," Lidkea said. "It's amazing,"

[READ MORE: Student work sessions clear Trafalgar Park](#)

Vice-principal Janet Langston's Grade 3-4 class is one of the classes that makes regular trips to Trafalgar to remove invasives.

Last year Langston took it to the next level as the school received a grant from the TD Friends of the Environment, to purchase over \$2,000 worth of native plants. The native species were planted in the fall to help prevent invasives from returning and restore the pre-colonial ecosystem.

"Students have also been removing English ivy especially along the lower trail and under the native crabapple trees," Lidkea said. "The camas responded with many purple-blue blooms."

(Inset photo: Margaret Jenkins students swarm Trafalgar Park in 2017 to remove the invasive gorse.)

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They also planted grasses on the upper slopes to prevent erosion now that the heavily invasive Himalayan blackberry and gorse have been removed.

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Granted, the stubborn invasives still crop up, which is why Margaret Jenkins students will continue to be relied upon to remove gorse blossoms and other plants which crop up due to a remaining seed bank of invasives embedded on the Trafalgar slopes.

Last year Margaret Jenkins also earned one of the Staple's top 10 Superpower Your School awards for their ecological efforts.

Staples gave the school \$20,000 in new technology and the Trafalgar Park work was a major project that contributed to the win, Lidkea said.

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