



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
Committee

Date: December 23, 2019

From: Todd Gross
Director, Parks Services

File: 11-7200-01/2019-Vol
01

Re: Green Teams of Canada

Staff Recommendation

That the staff report titled "Green Teams of Canada," dated December 23, 2019, from the Director, Parks Services, be received for information.

Todd Gross
Director, Parks Services
(604-247-4942)

Att. 1

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Sustainability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Fleet and Environmental Programs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
REVIEWED BY SENIOR STAFF REPORT REVIEW	INITIALS:	APPROVED BY CAO

Staff Report

Origin

At the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee meeting held on October 29, 2019, staff received the following referral:

- (1) That the partnership proposal from the Green Teams of Canada be referred to staff; and*
- (2) That staff examine potential environmental-related projects in Richmond; and report back.*

The purpose of this report is to respond to this referral.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #2 A Sustainable and Environmentally Conscious City:

Environmentally conscious decision-making that demonstrates leadership in implementing innovative, sustainable practices and supports the City's unique biodiversity and island ecology.

2.1 Continued leadership in addressing climate change and promoting circular economic principles.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #4 An Active and Thriving Richmond:

An active and thriving community characterized by diverse social and wellness programs, services and spaces that foster health and well-being for all.

4.3 Encourage wellness and connection to nature through a network of open spaces.

Analysis

Background

Green Teams of Canada is a registered charity that was founded in 2011 as a volunteer-driven initiative to encourage responsible environmental behaviour. Its mission is "to inspire stewardship of nature by connecting diverse individuals through hands-on educational environmental activities." The organization seeks to advance this mission by coordinating youth volunteers to participate in environmental stewardship activities such as invasive plant removal, planting of native species, and shoreline clean-ups (Attachment 1).

The organization is currently comprised of two green teams: (1) the Lower Mainland Green Team, and (2) the Greater Victoria Green Team. Since 2011, the organization has engaged over 7,600 volunteers to participate in 630 stewardship activities in municipalities across British Columbia.

At the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee meeting held on October 29, 2019, a delegation from the Green Teams of Canada requested City funding in the amount of \$20,000 over two years to facilitate 10 community engagement initiatives (\$2,000 each).

Existing City Environmental Stewardship Programs and Community Engagement Initiatives

The City of Richmond currently administers three programs that offer opportunities for residents to engage in environmental stewardship activities: the Partners for Beautification Program, the Enhanced Pesticide Management Program, and the Richmond Green Ambassadors Program.

The Partners for Beautification Program was initiated in the late 1990s with the goal of empowering residents, schools, youth groups, businesses, strata councils, associations and clubs to volunteer to enhance the City's parks and open spaces. Volunteers adopt public spaces, participate in invasive species pulls, habitat restoration projects, and community clean-ups. In 2019, approximately 300 people contributed over 2,000 volunteer hours through this program.

The Enhanced Pesticide Management Program was endorsed by Council in 2009 to reduce the use of traditional pesticides and promote sustainable gardening practices in the community through broad-based educational programming, and initiatives such as the upcoming Richmond Nectar Trail. The program offers a series of free annual workshops, led by community experts, on a variety of topics such as small scale vegetable gardening, mason bee keeping, planting gardens for pollinators, composting, and decreasing reliance on pesticides through proper lawn care and organic planting practices. The program hosted 27 workshops in 2019 with 422 attendees.

The Richmond Green Ambassadors is an informal program that was initiated in 2010 to provide waste education and recycling support for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. The program, which is under review, provides year-round educational and volunteering opportunities for secondary students (grades 8-12). Green Ambassador initiatives include waste education and recycling support at special events, invasive species removal, hosting of educational symposiums, electric vehicle outreach, and organization of the annual Richmond Earth Day Youth (REaDY) Summit.

Environmental stewardship activities under these programs are coordinated among the City's Parks, Environmental Programs, and Sustainability Departments. Volunteers are recruited and coordinated through secondary school Green Teams and the City's Volunteer Management System ("icanhelp"), which is a database of over 11,000 volunteers. Community engagement activities are also often delivered in partnership with non-profit organizations such as the Richmond Nature Park Society, Girl Guides of Canada, 4Ocean, David Suzuki Foundation, Border Free Bees, Tree Canada, Richmond School District, and local community associations.

Community Engagement Opportunities for 2020

While the City currently offers community engagement programs connecting residents to the environment, the services provided by the Green Teams of Canada can complement and enhance the City's existing programs. Specifically, outreach can be conducted to engage hard-to-reach audiences, and there is the potential to add new initiatives.

The following projects have been identified as potential opportunities to work with the Green Teams of Canada.

- Invasive plant removal at Richmond Nature Park, Bath Slough, and along the Railway Greenway.
- Litter clean-up at Triangle Beach, Mitchell Island, and along arterial roads.
- Assisting with Earth Day initiatives.
- Education and awareness on sustainability practices.
- Assisting with waste reduction and recycling at community events.
- Habitat restoration projects in natural areas.

Under the umbrella of the Partners for Beautification program, staff will work with the Green Teams of Canada to develop and implement community engagement initiatives, and will report back on the success of the partnership after two years.

When opportunities to contract the Green Teams of Canada arise, funding will be provided through existing operating budgets. As the City has an existing database of volunteers and in-house staff resources dedicated to community engagement, the scope of work and fees for service for each project will be negotiated with the Green Teams of Canada as required.

Financial Impact

None.

Conclusion

The City of Richmond offers programs that provide residents opportunities to participate in environmental stewardship activities. Partnering with the Green Teams of Canada can enhance the services the City currently provides by attracting new audiences to a broader range of initiatives.



Paul Brar
Manager, Parks Programs
(604-244-1275)

Att. 1: Green Teams of Canada Background Information



WHY GREEN TEAMS OF CANADA WAS FOUNDED

Green Teams of Canada (GTC) is a community engagement charity that started with a call to action in 2011. Young Canadians were invited to participate in hands-on environmental action projects like removing invasive plants, planting native species and cleaning shorelines in green spaces.



Canadians spend up to 9 hours a day sedentary in front of their televisions, computers and phones. This means less time connecting with others in person, less physical exercise and less time in nature. Then they hear about the climate crisis and find themselves feeling overwhelmed and helpless to do anything about it. To address climate change, we must respond to systemic root issues, such as:



Increasing sedentary lifestyle



Lack of sense of belonging



Lack of knowing what to do locally to address climate change

GTC has two programs in BC:



Lower Mainland Green Team



Greater Victoria Green Team

IMPACTS MADE BY GTC BETWEEN 2011-2019

Human

- Grown to:** 7,600+ volunteers, 4,700 of whom are youth (largest environmental volunteer group in BC)
- % of first timers:** 65% of participants have never been engaged in these type of activities before
- # of activities run:** 630 volunteer activities in 150 green spaces in 30 municipalities
- Collaborators:** 100 (environmental, stewardship and streamkeeper groups and governmental agencies)
- Schools engaged:** 65
- Action influenced:** Encouraged responsible environmental behaviour. In an online survey, 94 out of 100 volunteers responded that their GTC participation led them to engage in more responsible environmental behaviour (e.g. recycling, riding their bicycle, using less water and energy)
- Level of Outreach:** Raised awareness about environmental issues facing parks to 1 million people. Highlighted in over 100 media outlets, including television, radio, magazines and newspapers



We transform and empower people to address climate change



Ecological

- Invasive species removed:** 88,000 pounds (9 elephants) and 4,050 cubic metres (1.5 Olympic size pools)
- # of native plants planted:** 23,650 native plants, shrubs and trees
- Garbage removed:** 7,000 pounds of garbage, especially from shorelines



Before invasive plants removed



After



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GreenTeamsCanada.ca

OBJECTIVES

Young Canadians (aged 12-40) are engaged in environmental actions in their communities to help them to:

- Develop a sense of belonging to community and place
- Improve physical and mental health
- Feel empowered, gain a sense of ownership, and pride and improve self-esteem
- Build life skills (critical thinking, working with others as a team, leading)
- Learn about biodiversity and environmental issues
- Gain outdoor career experience and consider higher education in natural resource fields
- Cultivate a deep respect for nature, which is a pathway to responsible environmental behaviour
- Restore ecosystems and increase biodiversity



**Mental
Health**



**Physical
Health**



**Community
Health**



**Environmental
Health**

When people come together to increase biodiversity locally in a fun engaging way, they connect with nature and with others. This enhances their overall well-being, raises their environmental awareness and empowers them to contribute to a healthy planet.

AWARDS RECEIVED

BC Achievement Community Award	2019
iATS Innovator Award, Local Hero	2018
District of Saanich Environmental Award	2017
Vancity Social Innovation Award	2016
Volunteer Victoria Award	2016
YWCA Environmental Sustainability Award	2014
Recycling Council of BC Award	2014
Restoration Catalyst Award	2014
Earth Day Canada Hometown Heroes Award	2013
Nature Vancouver Frank Sanford Award	2013
Jane Goodall Institute Recognition	2011





Getting close to nature is a great change from screens. This is really valuable work as our forests are vital to the health of the planet. This helps build community spirit as well.

Jill Bauer,
Green Team volunteer



Before invasive plants removed



After. Trees rescued!



Before invasive blackberry removed



After
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