

Gorge Waterway Discovery Centre

in Esquimalt



Fall 2008 Programs

Gorge Waterway Discovery Centre
Esquimalt Gorge Park, Victoria, BC

Have questions or want to book programs?

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- 1. Seaquaria** : Students observe, interact with, and learn about marine creatures and plants found in the Gorge Waterway and surrounding shorelines (Portage Inlet to Ogden Pt.). The touch tank aquarium provides a hands-on habitat where students can learn through observation and study of living marine life from our local shores. There are many other notable benefits beyond marine biology, as linkages between the Seaquarium and the local aquatic environment can inspire discussions about environmental stewardship and First Nations cultures and their relationship with marine life.
- 2. Watershed Model** : Students learn about watershed and urban development issues through hands-on interactions with a 3-D scale model of watersheds in the Gorge Waterway. Issues such as non-point source pollution, storm drain effluent, and pesticide/fertilizer use that enter the Gorge waterway are graphically demonstrated using these models. The session always ends on a positive note by leading a discussion about what each of us can do to reduce our negative impact on the watershed, and to help improve stream and shoreline health. The restoration effort started in the creek adjacent to the Centre provides an excellent opportunity to talk about stream day-lighting and other community efforts to improve the health of urban waterways.
- 3. Ethnobotanical / Cultural Tours** : SeaChange Marine Conservation Society has worked extensively with the Salish people of the Saanich peninsula, and mentorship possibilities are being pursued with First Nations students from Esquimalt High and possibly other Gorge area schools. Local students could then offer ethno-botanical tours from the Centre. Programs can meet learning outcomes in social studies, biology and history. Tours could include traditional uses of the plants and animals in this area (food, medicine, tools, etc); cultural history specific to this waterway; and social justice issues (e.g. lack of access to traditional foods like clams and oysters by First Nations people, due to contamination).
- 4. Arts & Crafts** : Students have a chance to hone their creative skills with various media that help them to express and share their learning (e.g. sketches, building mini-watersheds, window art, Christmas cards or gifts etc.). During the summer, Amanda worked regularly with the Vic West Community Y child care programs, and their art work now decorates the walls of the Centre.
- 5. Games** : Students actively learn and review concepts through games such "Naux Chum", Marine Life Bingo, Ocean Bingo, Twenty Questions, Echolocation, Food web & Predator-Prey and True-False.

6. **Treasure Hunt/Scavenger Hunt** : Students learn about natural and cultural history through active games that highlight local features and promote observational skills. Details change with seasons.
7. **Native Plant Walk** : The mature forest behind the Centre provides a natural outdoor classroom for studying native plants. There are ample opportunities here for cross-connections with other initiatives such as plant propagation, ethnobotany and restoration projects. Concepts such as nature-scaping, gardening for wildlife, and growing food in your own back yard can also be interwoven into the program. Activities can include making a bracelet or small mat from cedar bark, grass or other natural materials.
8. **Stream Studies**: An up-close and personal look at the newly “restored” creek adjacent to the Centre will provide lots of opportunities for mapping and other studies.
9. **Paddling on the Gorge** : We are actively investigating several possibilities for collaborations with clubs that can provide voyageur canoes, kayaks or rowboats for use at the Centre. This will provide students with a unique opportunity to get to know the Gorge waterway from a new and exciting perspective. It will be a great physical and team building opportunity, and will also provide the possibility for developing mapping and monitoring skills. Planning with a number of partners and possible programs is still underway, but we hope to be able to begin offering paddling activities by the spring of 2009.
10. **Environmental Monitoring**: Students learn to use scientific equipment such as plankton nets, beach seines, pH meters, dissolved oxygen meters, hydrometers and thermometers to monitor and interpret a range of physical and biological features of the Gorge Waterway. Many subject areas can be covered with this program – e.g. math (calculate the volume of water filtered by the plankton net), science (develop and test an hypothesis), language & fine arts (write and illustrate a “creature feature”). We envision a long term monitoring program that students can actively participate in. We would also like to set up a weather monitoring station at the Centre, like the ones in place in many local schools.
11. **Restoration Projects**: Hands-on opportunities to put learning into practice, in your students’ own community. Our long term goals include establishing a Garry oak meadow near the Centre, re-introducing marsh vegetation along the creek, and establishing a buffer of native plants along the foreshore area. Students can be involved in all aspects of these projects, including learning basic gardening and plant propagation techniques.

I. **What will a day at the Centre look like?**

Programs can be tailored to suit the needs and age level of each group, and the amount of time available. Classes can be split into 2 or 3 groups so that students rotate through different activities. We are looking to pilot the program with local schools (e.g. schools in the vicinity of the Gorge Waterway) initially, and increase the scope of our audience as we “evolve”. For this fall, we will offer shorter programs, and (pending funding) move to full days in spring.

Cost:

Drop-in: by donation

School Programs: \$5/student or \$150.00/class (suggested donation for 1.5 hr. & 30 students)*

*we are actively pursuing funding to help classes in need of subsidies