
Nanaimo Science's Outreach Educators - Nature Guides Melissa Mrus and Johnathan Holden providing a free program about ocean pollution on World Oceans Day to Grade 5/6 students at Departure Bay Beach (June 2022)

# Science in the Park: A Fun Way to Learn About Science

NANAIMO,
BRITISH COLUMBIA

**THE NANAIMO SCIENCE AND** Sustainability society aims to inspire children to become interested in science and sustainability through community outreach and conducting educational programs. A key element to achieving this goal is their Science in the Park Program. Thanks to funding received through the CPRA Youth Employment Experience Program, the Nanaimo Science and Sustainability Society was able to hire two Outreach Educators: Johnathan Holden and Melissa Mrus.

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Nanaimo Science's Johnathan Holden, Outreach Educator - Nature Guide, preparing pinecone birdfeeders for Science in the Park at Long Lake in Nanaimo (July 2022)


Nanaimo Science's Melissa Mrus, Outreach Educator - Nature Guide, sharing butterfly lifecycle and chromatography crafts with children at a large municipal gathering in Nanaimo (July 2022).

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Jonathan Holden

Each summer, the Science in the Park Outreach Educators develop and deliver science-related activities that take place in local parks, beaches, and other green spaces. As explained by Jonathan "We create a little curriculum of activities and information about different aspects of the natural ecology around here and we take that out to different parks in the science in the park program. We'll go out there, we'll set up, and we'll have a bunch of fun activities for children or families to get them excited about different aspects of our natural environment."

During this year's Science in the Park, Johnathan and Melissa try to mix both fun activities like crafts that will get the kids engaged while also creating activities that will focus more on educating people. Education-based activities in the form of a game really help to keep kids interested.

"We've done various different activities such as making maps of geological features. We've also done crafts like making bird feeders or a fun little worm stuff. Sometimes we have microscopes up so if the children find something they like, they can have a nice look at it maybe gain a curiosity about the things around them" Melissa and Jonathan noted. "We try to have other activities that are a lot more learning based as well. It's nice to mix the arts with the science. We do generally have a game that's more learning based so we've had a biogenetic matching or sorting game. We've done hover plastics so people can be educated on how long it takes things to decompose, and we've done things a little bit more on the educational side as well."

In terms of skills-building, both Jonathan and Melissa are pleased with their experiences. "This job has really helped me with my people skills and being able to work well with people from different backgrounds as well as working with children of course. Being able to really talk about these things in a way that world for everyone is very useful and I find it will most likely be very useful in my future professionally" says Jonathan.

For her part, Melissa adds "Building confidence, really good communication skills, program delivery, program preparation it's all been super helpful for my future career as well."