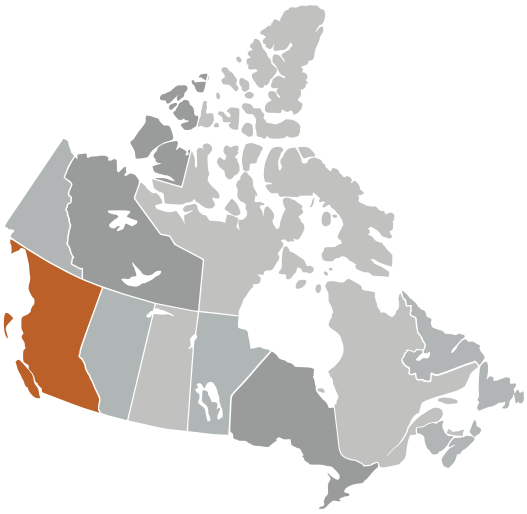
Sarah together with Melissa Mrus (ECO Canada-funded summer Science in the Park Nature Guide, and former CPRA-funded student in 2022). Providing science interpretation at Maffeo Sutton park in Nanaimo, BC, attracting over 450 people on Canada Day and nearly 4,100 over the summer.

YEE funding helps Nanaimo Science grow Science in the Park program

THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER OF 2023, Nanaimo Science's "Science in the Park" program brought children and their families to beautiful locations – like beaches and forests – to teach them all about the area's precious wildlife and greenspaces.

They learned about rock erosion along the Pacific Ocean. They studied trees and plants, and how to tell the difference between honeybees and hoverflies.



NANAIMO SCIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY SOCIETY, BRITISH COLUMBIA

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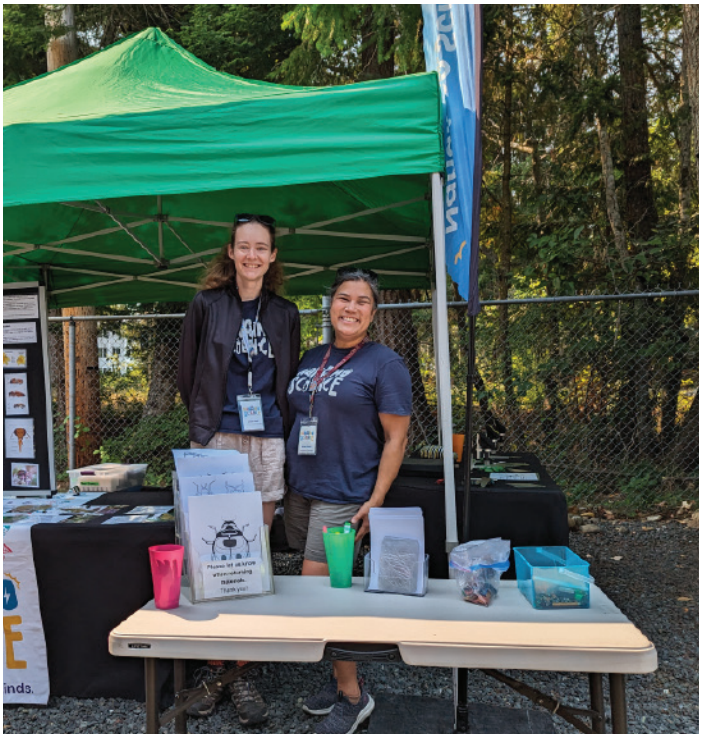
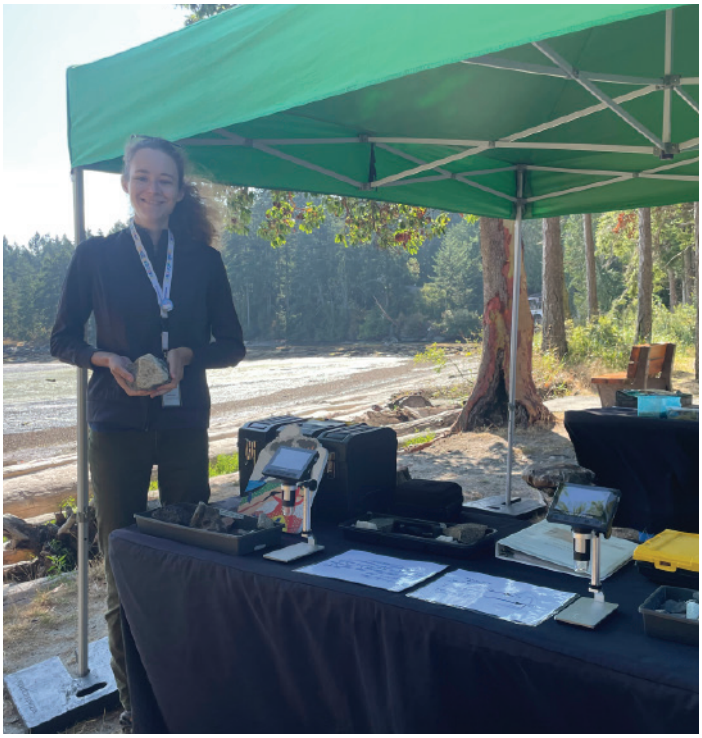
This project is funded by the Government of Canada



Sarah Hunt, a CPRA-funded summer Science in the Park Nature Guide, with Elaine Parker (Executive Director) at a Qualicum Beach public event, assisting in developing interpretative resources, demonstrating insect collection creation, and teaching about leaves.



Sarah with one of our rock specimens visited Gabriola Twin Beaches for Science in the Park, focusing on landforms and earth science. The visit was made possible by funding received this summer, as Twin Beaches is an isthmus connecting two larger landmasses.

Sarah Hunt helped lead and plan these nature excursions in her role as a Science in the Park Outreach Educator – a position that was funded from the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association's Youth Employment Experience (YEE) program. This program, funded by the Government of Canada, is designed to build skills and remove barriers to employment for youth. The program further builds capacity in the parks and recreation sector by providing mentorship support to each youth throughout their work experience.

"We've run Science in the Park for over 10 years. However, because of the substantial funding CPRA was able to provide, it meant we could go to more locations, reach new communities, and say yes to more large community events," says Elaine Parker, Executive Director of Nanaimo Science.

Parker served as a mentor to Hunt and worked closely with her to develop themes for programming in different areas across Nanaimo. For example, Hunt helped plan and lead a Science in the Park program at Gabriola Island – which is surrounded by the Strait of Georgia and is a landmass that experiences erosion from tides and heavy currents.

"It's a very unique place so we talked about land formations and the rock cycle, and how this particular location came to be," explains Parker.

As an Outreach Educator, Parker says Hunt also led field trips, provided nature interpretation, created handouts and information displays related to the parks, and helped promote programs to the public which helped them enjoy their green spaces in a new way.

"A lot of people visit these places already, and enjoy the facilities that are available there. But they're not necessarily thinking of them as a unique riverway, or taking the time to inspect the wildlife that's there," Parker says. "Science in the Park offers a way to engage with their natural spaces in a different way."

She adds that Hunt even brought a collection of insect specimens from her entomology course at university, and explained the differences in each insect to the younger program participants.

Hunt's great communication skills - and love of biology - made her perfect for the role, says Parker.

"She was great at explaining concepts at levels that each person could understand," she says. "Sarah had a real passion for the science she was sharing with people."

Thanks to the YEE funding from 2023 as well as 2022, Parker says that the program was also able to offer Science in the Park sessions to local elementary schools going on their year-end field trips.

Overall, Parker says the funding also helped the program reach over 4,050 people throughout the summer of 2023 – up from more than 2,500 in 2022 when the program first received funding, and 800 people back in 2019.

"Because of the CPRA's help, we've really been able to Science in the Park a huge program over the summer," Parker says.