

July 31, 2013

Centennial Park's late summer upgrade to build multi-use court, natural playscape

Upgrades to Centennial Park scheduled to begin later this summer will provide a revamped multi-use court and a natural playscape in this popular neighbourhood park.

"The final design is a blend of elements from each of the conceptual designs and public input," says Lynn Wark, the City's parks project supervisor. "Feedback from public consultation indicated a strong desire to keep the swings, retain all trees and protect the eagle tree, keep the tennis practice wall, develop a multi-sport court in between the two tennis courts and increase accessibility, all of which will be done."

Design details were determined after extensive public consultation, including two focus groups: one with kids who use the park, and another with people who use the park for a variety of activities, including working with children. Online and door-to-door surveys, a public open house and a neighbourhood open house were other methods used to gather public feedback about potential changes.

Using natural elements, the park revamp will create a playscape designed to change from day to day and season to season. The Centennial Park natural playscape will feature a large wooden eagle nest structure, wooden cookie stepping stones, boulders for climbing, a hand water pump and a small cobblestone water channel feature with movable walls for building dams. A play mound with a rock scramble and slide, fort structures and plenty of native plants will add different smells, textures and colours. There will even be edible berries and flowers that will attract butterflies and other creatures. A small amphitheatre will include seating and create an area for presentations.

"Unstructured play spaces that integrate natural elements are now recognized as powerful – some research suggests critical – in assuring children's physical and mental health, and intellectual development," says Joyce McMann, Family Place Coordinator for Campbell River Family Services Society. "As backyards get smaller and public neighbourhood spaces are increasingly groomed, a trend back to natural play space is a vision to celebrate for a child-friendly community. The City's initiative to think about playgrounds in a much broader way than 'simply play equipment outside' is very exciting."

The central practice court at Centennial Park will be upgraded with a freshly paved and painted surface, new fencing and the addition of basketball hoops. The old playground equipment will be removed after the pool closes on August 25, allowing construction to begin in September.

An environmental and tree protection plan will be in place for the trees and resident eagles.

Construction is expected to be completed by the end of November.

Funding for this project is through a grant from the Community Infrastructure Improvement Fund (50 per cent) and from the Parks Parcel Tax (50 per cent).

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