



Name of Organization: Kitsilano Neighbourhood House; Dunbar Residents Association; South Granville Seniors Centre

Name of Project: Fireweed Club (Outdoor Programming)

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What happened last year: During the summer months of 2021, a partnership between Kits Neighbourhood House (KNH), Dunbar Residents Association (DRA) and South Granville Seniors Centre (SGSC) successfully hosted several outdoor activities, collaborating on staffing, marketing, and helping provide transportation to bring participants to their outdoor events. For Kits House these were hosted in the park and several plazas along 4th Avenue and Broadway. For SGSC, the activities took place at Granville Park. And the DRA events happened at Balaclava Park in Dunbar, and at Aberthau Mansion. These were great opportunities to connect with the larger community and build new connections with people living with dementia in the community. People of all ages joined the programs, which featured exercise, dance, art (including eco-arts), and pollinator planting, engaging with Chalmers Lodge, the assisted living residence next door to South Granville Seniors Centre. The initiative was originally envisioned as an opportunity to build new connections with people with dementia, but while we suspect that people with lived experience joined the program, they didn't disclose this. We ended the summer with the beautiful Dementia Ventures celebration on October 1 at Balaclava Park.

Challenges and opportunities: The passion these three organizations share for outdoor programming strengthened their partnership and their collective connections with fitness instructors and artists. As this was a first-time initiative, it took some time for participants to learn about the events and the new locations. The weather was also a barrier, given the extreme heat events that happened throughout the summer. One other main challenge was being inclusive of people with dementia without singling people out. For next year, the focus will be on attending each other's events and on joint marketing and branding using the fireweed logo to raise awareness about what the Fireweed Club is all about: creating a safe group for people with memory loss to join and participate.

What's envisioned for next year? The objective of the Fireweed Club for the coming year is to create awareness in the community and build capacity across community agencies for hosting a series of seniors-focussed, dementia-inclusive events. Sharing resources, knowledge and experiences creates capacity within the organisations across the west side of Vancouver. Together, we can learn, brainstorm challenges and problem solve as we seek to help seniors including people with dementia make connections and participate together in meaningful, fun, and creative activities within and across all of these neighbourhoods. We will be looking at building on last years' experience hosting different activities in the park and at several plazas in the neighbourhood, focussing on stimulating the mind. These programs will take place during the summer months when the weather allows us to be outside. Different activities will include singing/dancing; arts and crafts; exercise; and outdoor games. We will also explore opportunities for outings like trips to city-wide pollinator gardens, museum visits, and history walks. To engage people with dementia, our initiative will develop a strategy for making our events dementia-inclusive (e.g. providing buddies), and branding the events as dementia-friendly using the Fireweed logo.