

First Nations Guardians and Greenways partner to revitalize the Campbell River watershed

MARC KITTERINGHAM
Campbell River Mirror

The We Wai Kum Guardian Watchmen, the We Wai Kai Guardians are working with Greenways Land Trust to revitalize the Campbell River watershed.

The project is called the "Revitalizing Campbell River" project, and it is a partnership between the three organizations funded by the provincial government's Indigenous Watersheds Initiative.

According to a release from Greenways, "the 'Revitalizing Campbell River' project seeks to restore and protect natural areas within the Campbell River Watershed, while also educating the community about the importance of our local watersheds and the role of the Guardians as leaders of environmental stewardship in our community."

The partnership has already begun. The groups have offered an education program to students at Robron Centre and Carihi Secondary School.

These included both in-school and in-field sessions.

The initial in-school sessions introduced students to the Guardians important ecological work and explored concepts of watersheds and stewardship.

Staff and students were then invited to field sessions to provide students a hands-on opportunity to work



A pile of Himalayan blackberry cane from a previous project at the Haig Brown House property. Photo by Marc Kitteringham/Campbell River Mirror

alongside the Guardians, assisting with their important stewardship activities that contribute to the revitalization of the Campbell River.

The groups have also offered an in-school session for Indigenous students, to share mentorship opportunities for any students that are interested in considering a career with a Guardians Program.

"Through our project we have also been able to remove approximately 1,500

kg of invasive plants from local watersheds, and we have identified additional project locations for upcoming invasive plant removals, natural area cleanups, tree and shrub plantings, and habitat protection measures," the release says.

One of these projects took place on Nov. 6.

The three groups invited the public to volunteer to remove Himalayan blackberry from near the Campbell

River and Kingfisher Creek. The removal helped prepare the site for future tree and shrub planting.

The Indigenous Watersheds Initiative (IWI) is funding and supporting First Nation communities in BC that are working to advance their vision of watershed health and security.

From restoring rivers and streams and protecting salmon habitat, to fostering future generations of water-

shed stewards, the projects funded by the Indigenous Watersheds Initiative will help pave the way towards a model of watershed security that is rooted in long-term resilience, local values, and Indigenous rights and title.

According to indigenouswatersheds.ca, "the Indigenous Watersheds Initiative (IWI) was created in 2022 to support and invest in Indigenous led watershed priorities for healthy ecosys-

tems and communities with \$15 million investment from the BC Government.

It is being delivered through a partnership of MakeWay and Watersheds BC.

The funding is helping communities to support, protect, and restore critical freshwater ecosystems, build climate resilience, create jobs, training opportunities, and protect drinking water."

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