



## Terms of Reference

January 2024

### *Nature in the City*

*Connecting urban residents, particularly young people  
and their families, to nearby nature.*

The Greater Victoria NatureHood Initiative (GVNH) is an informal collaboration of independent groups, public sector agencies and individuals who cooperate to further the values, purposes and interests outlined below.

We acknowledge that Greater Victoria is the traditional home of the Kwsepsum (Esquimalt), Lekwungen (Songhees), the Pauquachin, and the Tsawout, Tsartlip and Tseycum bands of the WSANEC *Nation*; that these lands are unceded; and that the inherent rights and title of these nations and people remain undefined. These nations have lived, travelled and harvested the natural resources of the region for thousands of years; their oral histories, material culture and spiritual beliefs hold an abiding connection to this diverse natural habitat. We seek a relationship based on honour and respect with the indigenous people. We also appreciate that the aboriginal-federal-provincial-municipal jurisdictional landscape is complex and that there is insufficient collaboration among the governing agencies.

We are a regional partner organization of the nationwide NatureHood program developed and led by Nature Canada and funded by Environment and Climate Change Canada. It is strategically important that the funds we receive be focused primarily on programs and activities for children, youth and families that bring them into direct contact with one of the region's three migratory bird sanctuaries.

The NatureHood program was initially established in 2015 on the Saanich Peninsula only in association with Shoal Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary. In July 2017, it was expanded to include all of Greater Victoria at a ceremony at Government House with the Lieutenant Governor presiding.



*(This plaque is located on the grounds of Government House in Victoria.)*

**VISION:** To create a deep and long-standing connection to the natural world of Greater Victoria.

**MISSION:** By promoting environmental values, we encourage Greater Victoria residents and visitors to protect and restore the terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems where we live.

**PURPOSE:**

1. To inspire the residents of Greater Victoria to connect with urban nature right where they live, as a critical source to improving our physical, mental and social health and well-being.
2. To celebrate the natural world that surrounds us.
3. To revitalize the three-historic federal Migratory Bird Sanctuaries [Victoria Harbour (1923), Shoal Harbour (1931), Esquimalt Lagoon (1931)].

**FOCUS:** Through a combination of community engagement opportunities, stewardship and conservation projects, urban renewal and sustainable land-use initiatives - maintain and enhance ecosystem integrity, increase jurisdictional collaboration and reconciliation, and support community perspectives within the context of the climate change urgency that we all face.

**GOAL:** By building on Greater Victorians' high value for the environment, and by highlighting our parks, natural areas and the three Migratory Bird Sanctuaries we seek to:

1. Create a diverse coalition of groups, agencies and individuals that works collaboratively to ensure the natural and cultural values of Greater Victoria are respected and made accessible for all to enjoy.
2. Celebrate and steward the diverse and productive natural ecosystems of Greater Victoria and adjacent marine areas.
3. Increase appreciation for nature by providing opportunities for learning, sharing, and deepening our residents' and visitors' relationship with local nature.

**OPERATIONAL EXPECTATIONS:**

- We operate primarily to share ideas, provide mutual support and facilitate cooperation.
- Partners are encouraged to collaborate and identify actionable activities that aim to engage, educate and transform the younger generation, in particular.
- We operate through discussion and a consensus-based decision-making process.
- Our meetings occur every 5-8 weeks, and partners are encouraged to attend regularly.
- We align ourselves with Nature Canada's goal to advance equity and anti-racism through our programs and projects and by catalyzing improvement and learning in the sectors where we work. We are committed to advancing equity and anti-racism as an ethical imperative and as a central effort to stop species loss, climate change and other environmental harms. We recognize that a commitment to equity and anti-racism isn't a state to be achieved but a commitment to an ongoing practice that contributes to the progressive realization of equitable outcomes for Black, Indigenous and other racialized peoples and equity-seeking groups.

**CURRENT PARTNERS:**

Friends of Shoal Harbour, WWF Canada, Friends of Victoria Harbour Bird Sanctuary, CRD-Esquimalt Lagoon Stewardship Initiative, Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, Saanich Parks, Esquimalt Parks, Oak Bay Parks, Rocky Point Bird Observatory, Canadian Wildlife Service - Pacific Region, Eagle Wing Tours, NatureKids BC, Victoria Natural History Society, World Fisheries Trust, Stewardship Centre of BC, Community Association of Oak Bay, Gorge Waterway Action Society, Wild Outside (Canadian Wildlife Federation), Habitat Acquisition Trust

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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