Design Inquiry: Engaging in Ecological Restoration Through Creative Collaboration

Water Ways involves the design, creation and evaluation of an interactive media exhibition that explores the nature of human-water relationships in the Okanagan Valley.

The process includes the collection and synthesis of water knowledges of the past and present, and employs community-engaged research to envision sustainable water futures.

The research and exhibition is a place-based experiential learning environment that encapsulates multiple community perspectives, traditional ecological knowledge, the best available scientific data and local expertise on water issues such as cottonwood restoration in riparian areas.

Enowkinwixw

Enowkinwixw, as an ecological sustainability model, provides a practical procedural process toward a societal set of principles and a method to insure an environmentally centered ethic.

The Syilx view is that community can be aligned in a sustainable cohesion of harmony and reverence within the larger ecosystem only when society, in its deliberations and decisions, situates natural oppositional dynamics within community and extended family into counterbalance to include the lands requirements.

Enowkinwixw engages people at their own level of understanding, experience and interest to raise their consciousness about restorative practices. The resulting action will be to compel people to assume their responsibility and capacity in the places where they live.

Cottonwoods along Shingle Creek

Shingle Creek is a tributary of the Okanagan lake and is host to one of the last Mulx (Black Cottonwood) stands in the area. Mulx is recognized as a waterkeeper by the Syilx people.

Restoration practices along Shingle creek combine Western Science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Traditional burning is a TEK driven restoration practice utilized to preserve Indigenous plants; it creates a healthier ecosystem for species of concern and cultural significance.

Photo Credits:
Columbia River Story Telling Project, Confluence: A Women’s Water Circle Oct 2017, Kasheena BC;
Harron Hall, Michael Bezemer, Aleksandra Dulic, Sarah Ellis, Emer Symonds

Interdisciplinary Research
Collaborative practices across disciplines
Engaging in creative and artistic design, Indigenous knowledges, environmental anthropology, human-environmental systems
Encouraging dialogue across diverse community-based, poetic, traditional and scientific water knowledges
Invoking a shared responsibility to care take of water

Design Inquiry
Uses immersive media art to represent and connect multiple perspectives embedded in the land and water
Offers a critical communication space for connecting people along water ways
Restores social, cultural and ecological well-being through through multiple ways of knowing
Gathers contextual knowledge within communities, including local wisdoms, stories and interviews collected as water and land-based visual images, soundscapes and media