URBAN EXPLORERS 2017-2018
CHILD & YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN PLANNING
FINAL REPORT

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SCY Child & Youth Friendly Communities Projects
URBAN EXPLORERS: CHILD & YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN PLANNING

INTRODUCTION

Urban Explorers

The Urban Explorers program is developed under the Society for Children and Youth of BC’s (SCY’s) Child and Youth Friendly Communities projects, and is delivered in collaboration with various departments of the City of Vancouver (Planning, Urban Design & Sustainability, Board of Parks and Recreation, Engineering – Transportation branch) and Translink.

The program’s main objective is to provide opportunities for child and youth participation in urban planning and development through the implementation of a sustainability education curriculum. The Urban Explorers program builds on decades of research and experience from the Child Friendly Cities and Growing Up in Cities initiatives taking place internationally. The program applies a critical-constructivist pedagogy built on participatory planning methods.

For the 2017-2018 school-year the following two planning projects were the focus of Urban Explorers:

- Vanplay: The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation’s Master Plan update
- Places for People: Vancouver’s Downtown Public Space Strategy

The program also examined transportation and transit in relation to these projects, and in collaboration with the City of Vancouver’s Transportation and Engineering Department and Translink.

BACKGROUND

The Growing up in Cities (GUC) and the Child-Friendly Cities or Communities (CFC) initiatives were created with the general objective to provide opportunity for children to participate in urban planning processes, and to guide local governments in the implementation of the principles outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). CFC and GUC initiatives are part of the broader Children’s Right to the City approach that builds upon critical urban theory, and promotes not only the right to safe and healthy physical environments, but also the right to civil, political, economic, social, and cultural inclusion.

The Growing up in Cities initiative began in the 1970s with the work of urban planner Kevin Lynch, and was supported by UNESCO. The goal of this international program was to engage children, youth, and local governments in collaborative evaluation and improvement of their local communities. The GUC work was revitalized in the early 1990s by Norwegian Centre for Child Research and Childwatch International.

The related parallel Child Friendly Cities and Communities initiative, created in the 1990s, focuses on developing an improved understanding of the complex relationship between physical environments, social and environmental inequities, and children’s health and well-being, and aims to promote direct application of this knowledge in community planning and design initiatives. The emphasis of CFC work is on children’s right to play, to nature, to independent mobility, to healthy, safe and unpolluted urban environments, meaningful education, social and cultural interactions, and the right to participate in decisions made around children’s environments.

The Growing up in Cities and Child Friendly Cities movements view children not merely as future citizens, or ‘adults in the making’ but as capable, competent citizens of today who are autonomous or
semi-autonomous, and fully equal human beings with already existing and developing skills for responsible citizenship. Children therefore, are both knowledge holders and knowledge seekers, and need to be given equal opportunity to participate in social and political aspects of their community.

THE URBAN EXPLORERS CURRICULUM

Urban Explorers delivers a highly interdisciplinary Participatory Planning Pedagogy (PPP)-based curriculum designed for grades 4-7 (middle years). PPP applies a critical-constructivist approach to teaching and learning built on participatory planning methods.

The Urban Explorers curriculum provides opportunities for child participation in urban planning and development, and concurrently provides a project and place-based learning opportunity for children that meets the new BC Curriculum requirements. This in-depth engagement of young people in community decision-making is expected to empower children and youth, promoting their active engagement in local and global sustainability issues and concurrently re-connecting them to community through social and civic participation.

Curriculum implementation is most successful if undertaken over the course of at least one full school-term, and ideally two terms, or a full school-year. In the following section the main units of the 2017-2018 curriculum are briefly described.

Curriculum Units

“City-on-the-Wall” Co-design Activity

All three groups began the program with Stanley King and Susan Chung’s “City-on-the-Wall” co-design activity. In this activity the facilitator narrates the story, while participants draw elements of the unfolding scenes. The activity is designed to introduce young people to the processes of urban growth and development, urban sprawl, and how cities transform landscapes. The activity ends with a discussion about the role of urban planning and planners.
Vancouver’s History

Students explored the history of the land that is present-day Vancouver. These history explorations focused on Indigenous, multicultural (settler-immigrant), and locally and culturally relevant events through a Timeline Card Game developed by SCY, as well as through educational documentaries (“Musqueam Through Time” and the City of Vancouver’s “History of Vancouver, B.C. Canada”).

Human Needs & Human Rights

The Human Needs to Survive and Thrive activity asked students to identify what they require in order to have their basic needs met (survive), and in order to live to their full potential (thrive). The discussion following the activity explains the concept of Human Rights, and leads into a dialogue on how cities can be built to meet everybody’s needs. The concluding discussion with the two school groups was about urban sustainability and the roles of various domains (e.g. housing, public spaces, parks/urban nature, transportation). Following these introductory sessions the program proceeds to delve in depth into one or more of the various domains.

Place-Based Inquiry – City and Park Evaluations

The student-led assessment of the city began by identifying young people’s important places, activities and modes of transportation, then mapping these out in order to plan field-trips.

All three groups did neighbourhood and city assessments using a method called Photovoice (taking pictures of positive and negative aspects of the built and natural environments, then adding brief notes and suggestions next to selected images displayed on a poster).
Public Space Assessments:

The two in-school groups participated in a full day City Hall and Public Space Assessment field-trip. During the morning visit to City Hall students learned about their system of local governance. This was followed by a walk around collaboratively selected public spaces downtown accompanied by city staff and planners. The students continued with photo-documentation for the Photovoice projects.

The after-school group similarly mapped out their West-End neighbourhood’s significant public spaces, then assessed and photo-documented many of these on their walk with city staff and planners.

Parks Assessments:

Along with the public space assessments park explorations were the focus of the after-school group. Photo-documentation generally focused on play affordances (or play-value) of children’s selected parks and public spaces.

The two school-groups participated in an interactive lesson on urban wildlife and biodiversity, and the grade 4-6 class enhanced this with an additional outdoor learning session on school-yard habitat evaluation and habitat enhancement planning.

Transportation – Transit

Modes of transportation to and from significant places was assessed during the in-class mapping activity. A guest speaker from Translink also visited all three groups and talked about sustainable, active, and independent modes of transportation, such as cycling, walking and public transit use. The two classes watched a documentary titled “How cities make us sick” highlighting the public health outcomes of sprawling automobile-dependent cities. The after-school group participated in focus-group sessions with two Transportation planners from the City of Vancouver to discuss safe and active routes to school, and with Translink’s representative who held a workshop on transit-route planning.

Student Projects

Sustainability Challenges

Project work for the in-school groups began with a collaborative mapping exercise. Here students’ knowledge of current global and local sustainability issues was identified. These issues were then mapped out, separating environmental and social issues both globally and locally. Next, students selected up to three local issues that they had an interest in and aimed to address in their projects. Groups were formed based on overlapping interests.

Group Models

In the final month of the program students were asked to create a model of a public space or park, and to address through their model’s design one or more of Vancouver’s previously identified social or environmental issues. The groups each decided whether this will be an imaginary park or public space, or an actual space in Vancouver.
Visioning Essays

Students in the grade seven class were asked to write a short essay describing how they see the City of Vancouver in 50-100 years (students chose the exact future date).

Photovoice Posters

Two of the three groups – the grade seven class and the after-school group – made Photovoice posters with the photographs they took on various fieldtrips. Here the task was to select their most important images, and add a note on why they took the image, what they like about the space, and what they would change or add.

RESULTS

Sample

A total of sixty children attending School District 39’s (Vancouver School Board) public elementary schools participated in the program over the course of 6-8 months. Participating students were:

- One grade 4-6 class (n=25, Brock Elementary),
- One grade seven class (n=27, Moberly Elementary) and
- One after-school group (n=8, Lord Roberts Elementary).

The three schools are located in the Riley Park neighbourhood, the Sunset neighbourhood, and in the City of Vancouver’s West End neighbourhood, respectively. Participating students’ ages ranged from 9-12. These three neighbourhoods represent the cultural diversity of Vancouver. Detailed demographic data for each school is available at the Vancouver School Board’s official website. (Brock: http://www.vsb.bc.ca/sites/default/files/school-files/03939037.pdf; Moberly: http://www.vsb.bc.ca/sites/default/files/school-files/03939056.pdf; West End: http://www.vsb.bc.ca/sites/default/files/school-files/03939031.pdf).

The Urban Explorers curriculum was fully implemented with both in-class groups. The after-school group’s program incorporated approximately 40% of the full curriculum’s activities. The rest of the time the group focused their effort on evaluation of play affordances in Vancouver’s West End Neighbourhood.
Sustainability Challenges

Brock elementary students identified the following social and environmental issues:

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENVIRONMENTAL</th>
<th>SOCIAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top 4: Pollution (22); Cars (5); Climate Change (5); Wasting Resources (5)</td>
<td>Top 4: War (15); Money (11); Discrimination (10); Politics (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 5: Pollution (10); Litter (6); Cars (3), Traffic Congestion (2) &amp; Wasting Resources (2)</td>
<td>Top 6: Discrimination (7); Homelessness (6); Crime (4); Drug Use/Overdose (4); Insufficient Social Places (4); Racism (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Under the theme ‘pollution’ students talked about air pollution such as smog, industrial emissions, and water pollution, with examples of fish-stocks getting negatively affected, plastic waste in the ocean, and pollution from storm-water runoff in local aquatic habitats.

Within the discrimination students mentioned LGBTQ rights, diversity, fairness, bullies, skin colour, and how “people with money think they are better than other people.” It is worth noting here that students’ concern was not solely the lack of money (poverty) but more so the issue of inequity: extreme wealth and poverty side by side. The word ‘money’ was generally grouped with ‘unfairness,’ ‘power’ and ‘politics,’ rather than with issues of affordability and housing/homelessness.

Racism would also fit under the discrimination category – however as it was mentioned a significant number of times it is left as its own category in the above WordCloud.

Many of the terms ‘war,’ ‘politics,’ ‘power,’ ‘money,’ ‘corruption’ and unfairness were grouped together, and on a few occasions also grouped with ‘Trump.’ Crime included issues with robberies, gang violence and to some extent drugs. However ‘drug use’ was more often grouped together with ‘overdose crisis’ (and hence was grouped together with this during coding). Housing crisis was described as high rent, and too expensive houses. Insufficient social places included comments on lack of fun public outdoor spaces in every neighbourhood and not enough community centres.

Figure 2. Mapping Brock students’ knowledge of social and environmental issues
Moberly elementary students identified the following social and environmental issues:

Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENVIRONMENTAL</th>
<th>SOCIAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top 5: Pollution (29); Climate Change (17); Deforestation (7); Forest Fires (6); Resource Overconsumption (6).</td>
<td>Top 4: Bullying (12); Sexism (11); Social Media/Technology (8); Racism (6).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most common environmental issue identified was pollution, and this included land, air, and water pollution such as plastic waste in land and water, oil spills, industrial and motor vehicle emissions. The population growth category included crowding and congestion. Extinction included overhunting, ‘bees are dying,’ and concerns with endangered and invasive species. Resource overuse, if not stated as a general concern, mainly focused on fossil fuels and deforestation (logging). Natural disasters included earthquakes, and to some degree wildfires, mudslides and floods. However, these later three overlapped with the Climate Change category that also included melting icecaps.
The most common social issues listed were drugs, crime and gangs. The crime category mainly included vandalism and trespassing, and once again drugs may be included in this group, but here instead included terms such as overdose, addictions, downtown, and smoking.

Racism, sexism, sexual harassment, women’s equal rights, homophobia, excluding others, hate, fat or body shaming are all part of the larger umbrella-theme of discrimination, and this would then be the most frequently mentioned social issue (akin to the other group). However these various categories were left separate so the world-cloud can better portray the specific concerns students had.

Politics included terms such as ‘government’ ‘corruption’ and ‘trump’ as these were generally clumped together.

After having identified these issues we examined the online information of the two planning projects (Places for People and VanPlay) to see what the City identified as major current and expected challenges within Vancouver. As a result Growth (i.e. urban growth and population growth), Indigenous Culture and Heritage, Public Art and Affordability (as an umbrella term) were added to the ‘Social and Environmental Issues’ map.
Once major social and environmental issues in the world and in their community were identified, students were asked to choose up to three of the local issues – the ones they found most concerning or had an interest in researching in more depth – for their projects (see WordCloud images below).

Brock Students’ Chosen Issues:
Moberly Students’ Chosen Issues:

Group Models & Photovoice

Student models were coded together with their written descriptions (presentation scripts of the model designs). The West End neighbourhood groups’ ideas (presented in a selection of PhotoVoice posters) were also coded. Themes from these posters overlapped to a great degree with those arising from the two other student groups, and therefore are presented together. However, one aspect of city design – climbability – be it on play structures, public art, or nature emerged uniquely within the West End student group.

The emerging themes for all three groups are described below under the categories of social and environmental sustainability.

Social Sustainability Themes

PLAY/ENTERTAINMENT

By far the most common theme for young people that emerged was their desire for ample opportunities to play and have fun in all parks/public spaces around the city.

Examples:

- Playgrounds: traditional play equipment continues to be important for children, and they would improve these structures with bigger, faster, longer & higher slides and swings,
- Water play: students presented various examples, including swimming pools, water slides, a splash park, swimming fountains, creeks and a waterfall also open to swimming and playing.
- Adventure play: a desire for unique, more risky, exciting and adventurous play amenities was expressed by most students. Examples included ziplines, treehouses (one also functioned as a free-library), wooden castle playgrounds, tunnels, leaf-pits, foam pits, paintball arena, giant hamster wheel, giant chess, a skate park, outdoor trampoline, and loose-parts play.
• Sports: opportunity for organized sport remained a high priority, especially for boys. Most specifically there was a desire to see more basketball courts scattered around the city.
• Events: Magic shows, indoor-outdoor stage for theatre and music performances, or movies.
• Nature-play: tree climbing, and interacting with flora and fauna of the native ecosystem were very important. Also a desire for opportunities to bring pets (i.e. into dog- and cat-parks) and to interact with farm animals was expressed.

FOOD

The second most common theme from students was a desire for more affordable and variable food sources within all parks and public spaces. Mixed with this was a suggestion for opportunities to grow food and sell fresh produce at the many of the city’s parks and public spaces.

Examples:
  • Outdoor or both indoor/outdoor food courts
  • Food trucks
  • Concession stand/hot-dog stand
  • Ice-cream shop
  • Candy store
  • Vegetable gardens (on rooftops in denser areas)
  • Farmer’s market

SAFETY/INCLUSIVITY

The themes of safety and inclusivity are pooled in one group here, as they have considerable overlap. Students considered issues of drug use, together with crime, gangs and violence, as a major safety concern posing a barrier for children to feel safe in a park or public space. And students also considered issues of drug use together with the overdose crisis, mental health concerns, and homelessness for street-involved populations as a social sustainability challenge that requires a compassionate and supportive approach from the city. Young people clearly understood that for many of these most vulnerable citizens in Vancouver parks and public spaces serve as a home and as respite care, and that these users of parks/public spaces not only need to be taken into equal consideration (i.e. not be excluded or displaced), but require extra support that students envision the city will provide.

Examples:
  • Safe-injection site: separate in the park, or an entirely separate safe-injection park
  • Homeless shelters in parks, with social service personnel and free food
  • Benches that double as beds (a foot-rest can be pulled out from below)
  • Hidden cameras: for security in case of vandalism, and also for first-responders to be able to immediately respond in emergencies, such as overdoses.
  • No smoking in all areas where children are present
  • Proper signage to direct appropriate and prohibited uses (e.g. ‘no smoking’).
ART & COLOUR

Students’ incorporated various forms of public art into their designs, including art that shows Canada’s Indigenous cultures and history, art that incorporates water and natural elements, and opportunities for the public to create outdoor art. A colourful city theme was dominant in all aspects of students’ design – whether these were pebbles in the water, buildings or walking paths – and students repeatedly criticized the grey surfaces they encountered in their fieldtrips.

Examples:

- First Nations Discovery Centre
- Totem poles
- Murals
- Water-activated paint on sidewalks and/or buildings
- Coloured tiles
- Colourful stones and pebbles in fountains
- Japanese garden with cherry blossoms

OTHER AMENITIES

The final theme, although the last on this list, was also prevalent in most models. Students listed basic amenities that they believe are necessary to make public spaces and parks user-friendly.

Examples:

- Ample seating: benches and picnic tables were scattered abundantly across all models
- Garbage-recycling-compost bins: to reduce/eliminate littering students suggested that there be more bins in parks and public spaces. One group suggested a plastic-bottle reuser that refunds for bottles immediately.
- Bathrooms: permanent structures in all examples.
- Lighting: all public areas and paths are well lit, often with solar-lighting
- Rain/Sun shelters included a gazebo, covered picnic areas, a treehouse for reading in the rain, and roof-covered sports courts (for basketball or tennis).

Environmental Sustainability Themes

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

Peer discussions revealed some knowledge of how climate change is already affecting the City of Vancouver. Students noted heavier rainfalls or ‘torrential downpours’ during the winter, and smoky skies from forest fires in the summer. During group discussion one group talked about the ocean temperatures rising, and how this influences wildlife in the Salish Sea. Student models addressing climate change most commonly focused on storm-water management through landscape design, and many integrated storm water and rain with nature-play (‘play-creek’) and art (water-activated paint).

Examples:

- Elevated sports fields (to reduce swamp-like winter conditions)
- Hills and berms
- Creeks/rivers: both natural ‘daylighted’ creeks and landscaped ones that fill up with heavy rain
- Ponds: to pool rainwater, and also to filter polluted storm-water run-off before it gets into the sea.
- Shark barriers on beach: this concern came from the discussion that warmer waters means different species will live here.

MORE NATURE-WILDERNESS

After the word ‘play’ the second most commonly mentioned word in students’ description of their models was ‘trees.’ Almost all the students suggested that more trees be planted in parks, and some asked for more shrubbery and re-wilding of some areas within parks. Grass however remained a priority as well, as students wanted the more open areas for play.

Although Vancouver may seem to be a very wild and natural city in comparison to many others around the globe, the students’ downtown field-trip revealed to them how little wilderness is left in dense urban areas. Furthermore, the majority of children in Vancouver have easy access (5-10 minute walk) to grassy sport-field parks, but not to any denser forest-like wilderness.

Examples:
- More trees planted everywhere in the city.
- Some reforestation of predominantly grassy parks.
- More shrubbery/undergrowth.
- More urban wilderness
- Ban pesticide use

Student Feedback on Projects

The majority of students’ feedback on the model building highlights the major challenge of addressing their chosen social issues. Many students reported that they struggled to come up with ideas and would have liked more time to conduct research, to talk to experts and peers, and to design their models. Furthermore, some great ideas were dismissed because of the challenges of building these (e.g. “the treehouse kept collapsing”) or due to insufficient time.

Students expressed an interest in finding ongoing opportunities to learn more about many of the sustainability challenges in the City of Vancouver. Within social sustainability this interest was most significantly to learn about drug use and the overdose crisis, homelessness, mental health issues, and crime. Within environmental sustainability students were most interested to learn more about the effects of pollution on ecosystems (“I would like to know what animals think of all the garbage in the ocean”), climate change adaptation, and how social and environmental issues interact (“How does the social issue affect the environmental issue?”). Students found the real-world learning highly motivating and developed a desire to better understand the important role of urban and park planning, including the specific tasks of planners, city budgeting, architecture/design, and how planners address the many social and environmental challenges.
**Visioning Essays**

Students’ visioning short essays were highly imaginative depictions of Vancouver in fifty to one hundred years. Nearly half of the students were optimistic about the future, a little over one quarter had mixed visions, and the final quarter had more pessimistic expectations. Table 3 highlights the major positive and negative themes that emerged from these essays.

Table 3. Summary of Major Themes in Students’ Visioning Essays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive themes</th>
<th>Negative themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technological advances:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Technological advances:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Self-driving electric vehicles</td>
<td>- Increased laziness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Robots</td>
<td>- Increased disconnectedness, loneliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Space travel/life &amp; alien friends</td>
<td>- Increased resource over-extraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Online/virtual schools; robot teachers</td>
<td>- No teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-oil age:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Population growth continues</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Electric vehicles</td>
<td>- Resource over-extraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ban on plastics</td>
<td>- Higher levels of pollution &amp; waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>More of the ‘good stuff’:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Loss of ecological integrity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Safer/better/bigger/cleaner parks and public spaces with more fun amenities, and in more locations</td>
<td>- Extreme deforestation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Smaller, much more affordable houses, homeless people housed.</td>
<td>- Desertification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Improved public transit and active transportation systems</td>
<td>- Mass animal extinction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Vancouver is the best and greenest</td>
<td>- Parks/green spaces no longer exist in cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Food:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Junk foods banned</td>
<td>- Farming no longer possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- All foods are processed chemicals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Earth destroyed:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Earth destroyed:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Ecological destruction (extreme pollution/desertification)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- By gamma ray bursts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- By war</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By far the most common future expectation was that of ongoing major technological advances. Students depicted both positive and negative aspects of this, but advanced robotics and electric self-driving modes of transportation were most predominant. Individual motor vehicles remained important modes of transportation for approximately half of the students, while the rest imagined a world solely with active transport and public transit.

Students who depicted better public spaces and parks described a city abundant with fun and playful parks and community centres, and one where houses are affordable – “3D printed” and “$5000-$8000 for a house” – and homelessness and crime have been eradicated. One student also mentioned that in future Vancouver city planners will “ask kids, adults and seniors what they want.”

On the other end of the spectrum some saw population growth and resource over-extraction leading to extreme shortage of natural resources, no future for trees and parks in cities, and non-existent outdoor play due to pollution. These students argued that “we should change our lifestyles now, before it’s too late. Earth might be gone [unless] we fix our problems now.”

**Transportation Assessments**

The neighbourhood mapping activity included a survey of students’ modes of transportation to school and to favourite places in the city. The majority of students in all three groups walk to school, as well as to various local parks and community centres. Riding a bicycle was deemed unsafe by many due to two factors: theft of bicycles and traffic dangers.

Student models addressed modes of transportation to and within parks and public spaces to some degree. Generally the theme was that motor vehicles would provide access to parks, but not within them, and active transport (i.e. biking and walking) would be the two modes of transportation within parks.

Examples:

- Parking lot at the edge of the park
- Road and parking lot separated with concrete barrier “to make it safe”
- Separate walking and cycling paths so cyclists and pedestrians don’t interfere with eachother.
- More bike racks so bicycles are not stolen.

The afterschool groups’ input came from the Transportation unit and workshop’s focus-group discussions and some aspects of the Photovoice projects. Active transport, especially walking and public transit were the main modes of transportation for this group. Students voiced a concern with safe cycling on the road next to vehicle traffic, even on bicycle lanes, unless these were separated with a concrete barrier.

Although the main mode of transportation for all three groups was walking, this one group was the one who had the most limited access to private motor vehicles, therefore transit use and active transport was highest. Field observations and discussions revealed that distance was a major factor (barrier) in accessing certain parks, community centres, or public spaces. This West End group lived closest to Stanley Park but rarely had the opportunity to visit it due to the distance: for this group of 9-11 year-
olds it took approximately 25-30 minutes walking from their school to the Eastern edge of the park, and it would have been about the same time taking public transit (due to lack of sufficient transit options). After having travelled so long students, especially the younger ones in this group, did not have the capacity to explore deep in the wilder forested areas of the park. These students also rarely have a chance explore Stanley Park’s wilderness with their parents for similar reasons (parental time constraints, distance, lack of private motor vehicle). In group dialogue the idea of a transit route that circumnavigates the entire park (possibly in place of or on the current road) emerged, as well as more varied routes to the park from the city. This would allow lower-income groups living in the West End to access and benefit from the wilderness that is nearly, but not truly ‘in their back yard.’ Currently this access is limited, and the existing road serves middle and high-income families best.

The transit system however, even if improved will remain inaccessible to many due to its cost. One example of how this barrier can be addressed in order to allow children, and especially low-income children, to have increased mobility around the city has been adopted in Toronto, Ontario, as well as London, UK, where young people under the age of 13 travel for free on public transit.