

## Project Description

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Under the direction of the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, the planning and construction of a fish ladder on Sturgeon Creek at Grant's Old Mill was completed in 2000/2001. The fish ladder was built to restore historic fish passage to upstream reaches. The fish ladder allows fish to have access to feeding and spawning locations as well as to nursery and over-wintering habitat. Sturgeon Creek extends approximately 65 kilometres from Grant's Lake in Woodlands to its discharge point at the Assiniboine River. The fish ladder allows fish to get to the farthest reaches of its length.

The fish ladder was just the first phase of a multi-phase project. The second component of the project was to conduct a feasibility study for the creation of an "Interpretive Parkway". This study examined how to maximize stewardship and outreach opportunities by providing safe and suitable access to the site. Now completed, this project is now ready to begin the third phase – the construction of the interpretive parkway across from Grant's Old Mill.

The Interpretive Parkway has 4 main components:

1. An outdoor classroom
2. Safe access to the fish ladder
3. Interpretive signage
4. Habitat restoration and awareness of our natural heritage

### Outdoor Classroom

The addition of the outdoor classroom will increase the number of students and community members that have access to information about aquatic habitats, the importance of our urban tributaries for fish and information about riparian areas. Teachers will have a unique opportunity to bring their students to Sturgeon Creek and fulfill their learning outcomes in a hands-on manner. They will learn about the important habitat that is in their community. This will promote a sense of pride that will play a role in their desire to be involved in stewardship activities. Current thinking has it that youth today may be suffering from 'nature deficit disorder'. This outdoor classroom will allow students to understand their role in their local ecosystem and they will no longer be passive observers.

Already, local stewardship groups like the Assiniboine Watershed Network are using the area to conduct environmental education activities. Activities such as fish sampling demonstrations, riparian assessments and creek hikes have allowed students and teachers to experience a hands-on application for their learning outcomes. Since 2006, approximately 500 students have had the opportunity to discover the importance of Sturgeon Creek for fish and the importance of riparian habitat. The addition of an outdoor classroom will enhance the opportunities students from all over the City have to participate in environmental education activities.

### Fishway Access

Currently, many people are aware of this highly visible structure but have little access to or information about it. This access will highlight and promote fishery-related issues in Winnipeg and beyond. Access to the fish ladder will be complemented with interpretive signage that shows the

structure and function of the ladder, this will allow for a more hands-on educational experience. An additional benefit of fishway access will make maintenance of the fishway easier.

### Interpretive Signage

The addition of interpretive signage will provide an opportunity for anyone visiting the site to appreciate and understand the importance of Sturgeon Creek, the fish that inhabit it as well as the function of the fish ladder no matter the time of day. Education is the key to changing people's perspective about natural areas; it will emphasize the importance of these often under-appreciated waterways and their inhabitants.

### Habitat restoration

Along with the construction of the outdoor classroom, the surrounding area will be restored with native vegetation. This will include vegetation historically seen along the rivers and creeks in Winnipeg and native tall grass prairie. This will provide additional learning opportunities that can be incorporated into the outdoor classroom activities. The native tall grass prairie species will be planted in a garden that will be beneficial to the native insects and other organisms. Educational opportunities abound – students can learn about butterfly life cycles, medicinal plants, and the impact of invasive species, the options are seemingly endless. Habitat restoration will provide an opportunity for students to learn about the rich history of their community and the Sturgeon Creek area. Students and community members can be directly involved in the process through planting events.

### Other benefits

This location is already well-visited by visitors of Grant's Old Mill and the construction of the interpretive parkway will only further encourage visitors to come and learn about St. James' rich history. The location is easily accessible by bus and is connected to Winnipeg's active transportation network. Active transportation can be promoted and encouraged when groups visit the site.

The construction of this interpretive parkway also promotes safe access to the fish ladder preventing curious citizens from trying to access the ladder as has been the case in the past. Access to the fish ladder will provide a new perspective on how it functions and provide an opportunity to satiate the curiosity of many members of the public.

The addition of a native prairie garden has educational and ecological benefits but also can include a wellness aspect. With its close proximity to the Grace Hospital, the prairie 'butterfly garden' can act as a wellness garden. Gardens such as the one proposed have been used widely around the world for promoting wellness – its simplicity has a profound effect on those who visit them. St. James resident, Darlene McPherson's experience with wellness gardens has led her to believe that the addition of a garden near the fish ladder would be a perfect compliment to Grace Hospital's patients, families and friends. She has shared that gardens of this type often promote positive patient outcomes.