

OUTDOOR CLASSROOM CASE STUDY 1: GLOOSCAP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (CANNING, N.S.)



PROJECT BACKGROUND

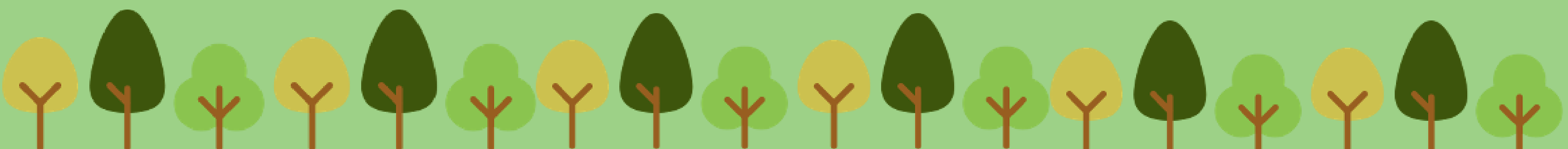
Anne Marie is a teacher and a parent at Glooscap Elementary and has children who were inspired to start an outdoor learning project at this school. She had worked with Evergreen before starting work at Glooscap Elementary School. Evergreen is an organization that actively engages Canadians in creating and sustaining healthy urban environments in schools, public spaces, housing, transit systems, and communities themselves. One major strength coming out of this school project was the level of community involvement that took place (both the school community and the greater Canning community). This project has been very beneficial for the students as well as the community around the school. It has been a great way to engage students in active learning (reading, math, etc.) while giving them the opportunity to experience nature and the outdoor environment and leave their indoor classrooms for a bit. A committee of parents (8 participants) met 2x/month starting in the fall of 2018.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

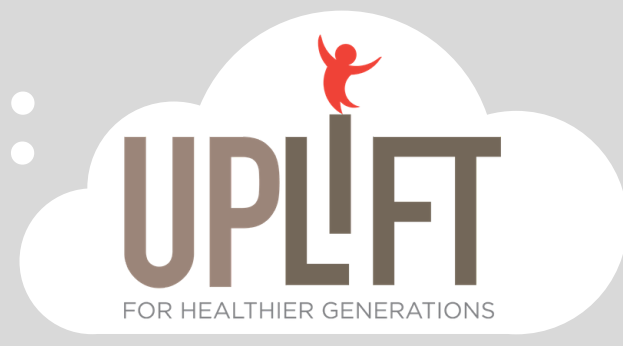
- Key champion/leader - In this case, Anne Marie Lewis
- Local expertise - retiree from NSCC horticulture program, farmer who tilled the land, etc.
- Principal
- Parent volunteers
- Teachers
- Students (tree planting)
- Regional Centre for Education
- Engineer

GRANTS

- Inspiring Schools Grant \$30,000
- TD Canada Trust \$7,000
- Teachers and grade 5 students did a fundraising grant application \$500
- Local rotary clubs (Kentville and Wolfville) \$18,000
- Canning community \$500
- Community associations \$500



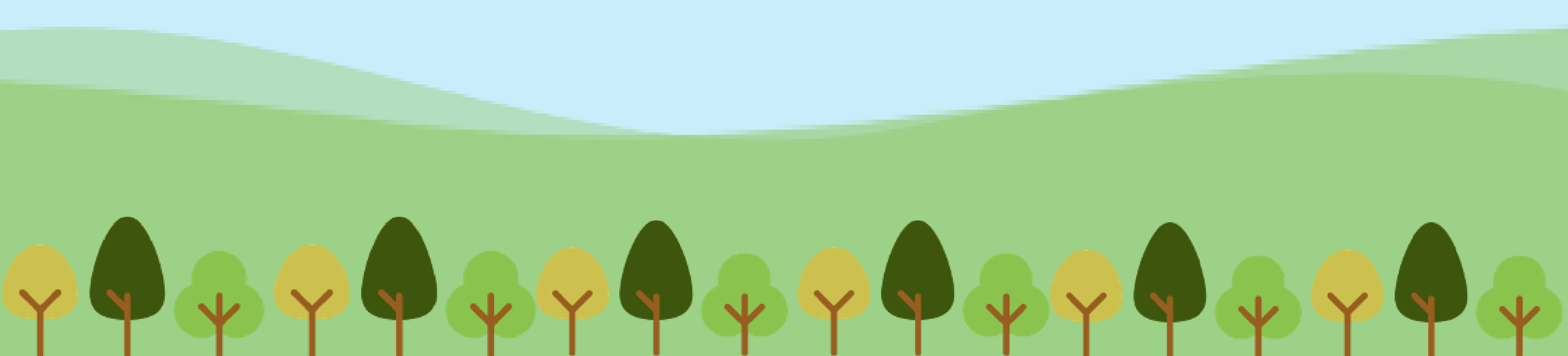
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COST

Total cost is approximately \$55,000 including in-kind and volunteering support

- Shade structure - \$20,000 (family price)
- Paths (digging paths, laying gravel, landscaping) - \$12,000
- Musical instruments - \$8,000
- Native Trees, shrubs and plants and soil amendments- \$7,500
- Garden Design and project management- In-kind
- Lots of volunteer labour – 4 day long work parties with 6-15 volunteers
- Tree logs + delivery to school – In-kind
- Other work in progress



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KEY SUCCESSES

- **Reaction from students**

Students were able to take part in the outdoor environment as it was being developed. Anne Marie mentioned that she would go out with students and learn about the plants, their botanical names, Mi'kmaw names, and the uses of the different plants. The students were very excited to have a hands-on experience and were able to learn in the outdoor as the outdoor area was being built. The space is also used outside of the school time for community use and an example was the recreation department run children's summer camps where they use the space, plant plants, etc.

- **Student Engagement**

In the spring of 2019, in anticipation of the building of the outdoor classroom, the "graduating" Grade 5 class helped to build a pollinator hotel to provide habitat in the garden. In the fall of 2019, every class in the school planted and adopted a tree. They planted bulbs around it and hung bird feeders on it. The goal is for each Grade 5 class to take part in a legacy project to add to the garden. This would add additional phases to the project and continue its development and sustainability.

- **Community Support**

The entire community rallied around the project providing funding (I.e, Rotary Clubs), in kind supplies (i.e. tree stumps), and time and expertise (workdays where volunteers consisting of parents, teachers and students planted trees, laid gravel, etc.). During the volunteer workdays, a key volunteer had a construction background and was able to address safety and provide instructions on how to perform the tasks and lead the group. The main shade structure was built by a professional contractor. It is estimated that an additional 30-40% of the cost was provided in gifts in kind support. Examples were the discounted (family) price provided by the contractor for the shade structure, design costs, tilling of land, laying of gravel, etc. Volunteers water and weed the garden in the summer.

- **Accessibility**

The design considered accessibility features such as all paths are manageable for wheelchairs.

TIME FRAME

Spring 2018 - Received Inspiring Schools Grant

Fall 2018 - Parent committee started meeting

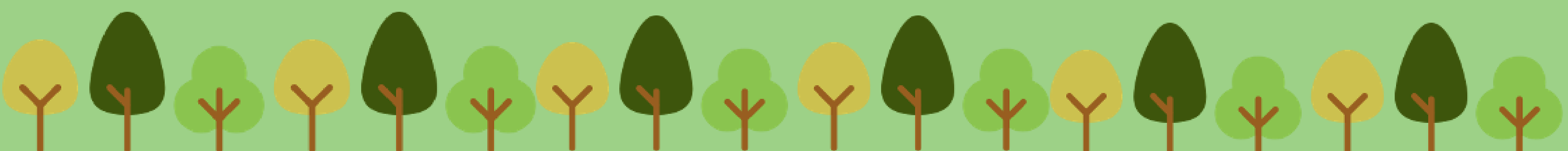
December 2018 - Design completed

Winter 2019 Presented design to RCE

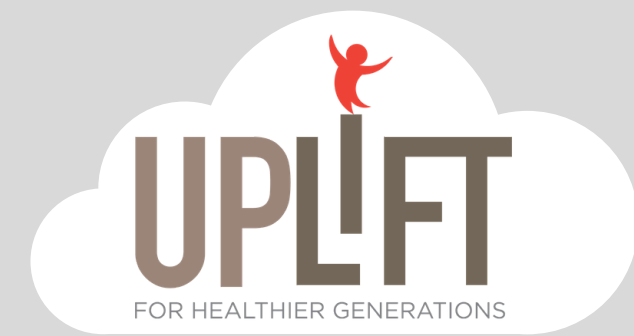
Spring 2019 Tendering process

July 2019 Construction started

September 2019 Open for students to use



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KEY LEARNINGS

- Working Relationship with the Regional Centre for Education (RCE)

A community volunteer (a retired Horticultural instructor from the NSCC) worked with the committee to design the space. This design was presented to the RCE. There was a thorough process that the RCE was required to go through which involved engineers reviewing the design and a tendering process. It is important that adequate time be devoted to allowing the RCE process to take place (i.e. 2 months). Upon the completion of the tendering process, the committee discovered that it was going to cost more than anticipated. Anne Marie and the designer had anticipated that much of the work would be done by volunteers within the community. Also, an a la carte approach was cheaper in the long run which meant separate contracts for different sections of the construction such as heavy equipment rental, laying of gravel, bringing in boulders, etc. A key learning was to check with the RCE prior to developing a project idea to make sure everything aligns with them first, then to proceed with the project keeping them informed along the way.

- Student Engagement

This project was very parent/adult led and did not have meaningful student engagement early on in the development and design process. Anne Marie mentioned wishing they could have held design workshops where students could design what they wanted to see the outdoor space looking like so that ideas could be incorporated into the final design of the project. Including students in future grant writing is also something Anne Marie thinks is very beneficial as it gives students the opportunity to enhance persuasive writing skills.

MEDIA LINKS

1. Evergreen
2. Canning School Takes Learning Into The Great Outdoors
3. Outdoor classroom at Canning's Glooscap Elementary a reality after months of work

