

**For immediate release
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**SECOND PHASE OF CHILDREN'S NATURE PLAY PARK AT PEMBERTON & DISTRICT
COMMUNITY CENTRE TO BE INSTALLED MAY 2-9:**

***Community members invited to kick off Screen Free Week and anticipate the new patio
space at a free family Unplug and Play day, May 1, 11am – 2pm***

Pemberton, BC – Just in time for patio season, the Pemberton and District Community Centre will debut its own, with the installation of a 900 square foot interlocking brick viewing patio, during the week of May 2 – 9 beside the water-wise grass maze that was created last summer.

Envisioned as an area for families to sit, enjoy picnic benches and the natural shade provided by a planting of thornless honeylocust trees (*Gelditsia Triacanthos* var *Inermis*), and to watch children as they move through the various elements of the outdoor playscape, the patio is the second phase of a Children's Nature Play Park designed for the Community Centre.

This phase provides a central anchor between the Water Spray Park, the Grass Maze and a future Sand Play area, and has been made possible through funding from the SLRD, Village of Pemberton, the Rotary Club of Pemberton and Rotary District 5040.

The Nature Play Park was originally conceived after the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District and Sea to Sky Community Services Society decommissioned an aging preschool play structure from the Pemberton and District Community Centre site in April 2014. As funding is secured to complete additional phases, the Children's Nature Play Park will expand around the Cottonwood Street Community Centre facility, eventually repurposing and transforming the location of the former playground into an integrated play park with tee-pee forts, a reading nook, tractor tire, sandbox, water feature, logs and balancing stumps.

"There is growing evidence that lack of time in nature is linked to rising rates of depression, attention deficit disorder, child obesity and other health conditions," says Pemberton and District Recreation Services Manager Angela Barth. "Nature is meant to be our first teacher and interaction with the natural landscape has been shown to be crucial to the mental and physical health of children. Connecting with nature can improve memory and mood, concentration in older children, and help reverse the effects of overstimulation from technology."

"The Children's Nature Play Park is an exciting vision and community amenity and we're happy to see a new component that will likely be a prime piece of recreational real estate for a lot of families added before the start of summer!" says James Linklater, Chair of the Pemberton Valley Utilities and Services Committee. "Every opportunity we have to support local families to raise healthier, more nature-loving kids is worth embracing."

"The Community Centre is really the heart of all the communities in the region," says Rotary Club of Pemberton President Pat Mackenzie. "Our Club was ready to focus on a project closer

to home after several years championing international projects and these first two phases of the Children's Nature Play Park seemed like a natural choice because they positively impact so many people. The Water Park is always so well-used, so we were pleased to support a shady gathering place that all ages can enjoy and that helps to enhance the enjoyment and quality of life and healthy lifestyle of local families and build on what was already created with the Grass Maze."

The Rotary Club of Pemberton was able to leverage their own fundraising contribution by successfully securing a grant of matching funds from Rotary International. Members also contributed labour to round out the support, working alongside Club and Pemberton Secondary School Interact Club members in the fall to clean and trim the grass maze, putting it to bed for the winter.

The installation of the patio will coincide with Screen Free Week, a week long initiative taking place around the world to encourage families, schools and communities to replace digital entertainment for screen free activities.

Research indicates that the more time children engage with screens, the harder time they have turning them off as they get older.

To kick off Screen Free Week, the Pemberton and District Community Centre will host an Unplug and Play event on Sunday, May 1, from 11am to 2 pm. Coordinated in partnership with the Putting Children First ECD (Early Childhood Development) Initiative, Unplug and Play Day will include free active games, music, story time hosted by the Pemberton and District Library and nature activities hosted by Stewardship Pemberton, for kids under 12.

Unplug and Play shares the philosophy of the Children's Nature Play Park, encouraging families to become 'Screen Smart', stash the phones and balance 'screen time' with 'real time', connecting with nature, and interacting with one another. For more details about the Unplug and Play event and the Children's Nature Play Park, visit slrd.bc.ca.

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The Pemberton and District Recreation Service is operated and funded by Area C of the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District and the Village of Pemberton. It operates and programs the Pemberton & District Community Centre, the REC (Youth and Senior Centre), Pemberton Meadows and Signal Hill fields, as well as the Gates Lake Community Park. The Pemberton Valley Utilities and Services Committee (PVUS) is a committee of the SLRD Board convened to discuss recreation and other shared services between SLRD Electoral Area C and the Village of Pemberton.

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