Aboriginal Health Garden Core: Alannah Young
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Lee Brown
Hannah Lewis

Landscape Design Facilitator: Alexander Suvajac
SALA Faculty Mentor: Patrick Mooney
OBJECTIVE

To design the Aboriginal Health Garden at UBC Farm to better reflect the spiritual and physical use of the space by its community members.

GOALS

1. Understand the spiritual and physical uses of the space by its community members and use the design process to provide a design that improves the quality and function of the spaces both spiritually and physically.

2. Explore the desire to incorporate a medicine wheel somehow into the design, at least for the section of the garden that the medicinal plants are in. (Could be a circle with four quadrants, a spiral, or something else)

3. Move away from such a linear design to better reflect Aboriginal and ecological principles, much like permaculture landscape design.

4. Provide a design/proposal that can be shared with community members and commented on. This draft will be a product of the design process and based off of existing suggestions from elders/community members as well as research into Aboriginal and health-focused garden designs.

5. Refine the draft with knowledge gained from presentation into a final design completed by mid-March.

6. Help support the construction of the garden in any capacity possible.

7. Gain knowledge of aboriginal garden design potentials and community interactive design processes to share and promote through future experience and work.

8. Build a new network of friends and contribute to the creation of a successful project and loved space to be shared with all.

SITE DESCRIPTION (VIA UBC FARM)

“Our garden specifically is the Institute for Aboriginal Health garden. The garden is approximately 800 square metres (8700 square feet) in size and is currently set out in 16 rows, each about 2.5 feet wide with a 2-foot alley between, currently cover cropped with grass and white clover. The rows are approximately 60 feet long but the plot widens towards one end, and is generally rectangular in shape. 6 of the rows are dedicated to perennial medicinal plants (most of which are native to this region), 7 rows are dedicated to annual vegetables that we use for our community kitchen, and 3 are dedicated to our youth program for the kids to experiment with growing different annuals. We also have a small 10 square foot half-moon-shaped garden bed we’ve made in the forest edge adjacent to the garden, for native medicinal plants that require full shade.”

For a description of the programs see: http://ubcfarm.ubc.ca/research/land-based-aboriginal-strategy/

LOT SIZE

Approx. Current Area
790.82 m²
0.20 acres
0.08 hectares
8512.36 feet²
CONSIDERATIONS

* Elders and community members use the space regularly and so should be a central part of the consultation, but also don’t have unlimited time to devote.
* Important to keep walkways throughout for visiting, harvesting, and tending to the plants.
* Any kind of collaboration, at whatever scale is most relevant and interesting is welcome.
* Look for opportunities to engage Aboriginal participants in the design process and research phase, increasing the opportunities for community-based learning.

PROGRAMS

Teaching garden - walks and workshops, can have a space that those can move through
Intentional space for ceremony - Not just about the medicines, but everything that comes with them: ceremony, community, supporting and fostering them
Feast Bowl community meal, in partnership with the First Nations House of Learning.
Medicine walks
Workshops held by elders and other knowledge-keepers focused on salve-making, Tea-making, and tobacco pipe mix making.
Youth program - Culturally Relevant Urban Wellness
Partnering with the community-based research projects
IAH Summer Science students at the Farm
Food security and access to traditional plants
Work in the garden - Promoting the health of Aboriginal student volunteers, and the IAH/College of Health Disciplines staff through access to healthy foods
Watch people at work
Hub for outreach on issues related to health and aboriginal healing tradition

OPEN SUGGESTS FOR DESIGN PROCESS

Spatial design that reflects values and community (interest in more organic forms, circle, spiral, web, clusters
Place Making - Creating entrance/threshold/ceremony space/social space/work
Creating an inviting and peaceful space to promote the IAH intentions
Make the space more a beautiful garden not so farm.
Add Berry bushes (at least 4)
Unify garden with adjacent facilities ie, fire pit, tool shed, dry house, future building
Educational signage, information and wayfinding
Planting work bench/table areas in garden
Place for berries, sweet grass etc.
More art type of statues, carvings or pottery
A pond yellow pond lily would be nice.
Have the shelter and a sacred fire as discussed
Plan for some trees to give shade where needed and buffer unsightly views ie. tractor shed
Reference Musqueam, streams and sea, find ways of bring elements/spirit of water and sea life into garden
It’s about Holistic health - spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual

DESIGN ELEMENTS

Clustered beds
Clear path circulation
Relate entrances to other areas of important use
Ceremony space
Food to medicinal ration 3:1

Extras
Rain/ shade cover area (consider plants that pref those enviro to surround)
Seating
diffused edge - create a sense of place and spatial enclosure (consider- evergreens, structure, art etc, to frame space)
SPATIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Form that references the micro/macro cosmos relationship. ie. spiral, medicine wheel, web, network.
- A layering of plant associations
- Grouping related to what the plant aids in healing ie. cancer fighting, flu fighting.
- Grouping related to ecological needs ie. soil type, exposure, water regime etc.
- Clustering medicines as they grow together and help each other
- Something circular (if not a perfect circle); something that gets people thinking about circles/cycles in our lives, spirit, environment
- 3 - 4 foot wide meditation space in the centre of circle?
- More clusters and spirals, less a straightly-cut circle
- Plants and space arranged to reflect spiritual, social and functional use

PLANTS

We were looking at what medicines we have and what we might need for the camps so we can organize the rows. I’m sending out some of the medicines (ones that we have at the farm or can get locally) for each health area: please feel free to add what you want

Diabetes: Blueberry, bearberry, Labrador tea, mint, St John’s wort

Heart: Hawthorne, blue Elderberry, yarrow (angina), wild ginger root, motherwort, valerian, strawberry

Arthritis: balsam, goldenrod, willow, devil’s club, comfrey, willow, poplar buds

Blood: red clover, yellow dock, red dock, Echinacea, oregan grape, burdock, stinging nettle, raven’s beak

Cancer (different types- lymph, adenomas, sarcomas, carcinomas): yellow water lily root, raven’s beak, balsam, red clover, alder, burdock, sheep sorrel, yellow dock, Chaga

Colds/coughs: colt’s foot, elecampane, pleurisy root, wild ginger, wild cherry bark, cotton wood buds

Central Nervous system: Valerian, St John’s Wort, Lemon Balm, Lavender, Rosemary,

of course we can still do the skin salves, muscle injury, liver and kidney cleanse and teas

DESCRIPTIVE WORDS

welcome, guide, support, share relationships, value, practice, time, process, integrate, inspire, nurture, love, safety, health, meaning, medicine, food

GARDEN SYMBOLOGY

ORDERING VOCABULARY

heart, hands, senses, bowl, circle, sun, plant life cycle, elements, seeds, seed pod, energy flow

SACRED STRUCTURES

current: the plants themselves, fire pit, dry house, smoke house, the act of being in the garden

proposed: entering the garden, the center of the garden, medicine wheel, forest grove
CONSTRUCTION RESOURCES

_People ready for Work parties
_Excavator and UBC tools
_Small stone unearthed from garden now at forest edge
Possibles to look out for
_Cedar for signage/ structure/ raised beds
_sand and crush for soil amending (plant types needing good drainage, ie rosemary, lavender, sage, grasses.
_Free Bark Mulch for walking paths
_Large beach Rocks ( land ocean connection)
_driftwood logs ( land ocean connection) like those of dry house
_free material from craigslist

SUMMARY

What was the most important and/or interesting part of your internship experience?

Using my design knowledge on a project I'm passionate about. Working closely with the Aboriginal Elders and Farm staff to facilitate a cooperative and inclusive design process.

Did your learning experience in this internship differ from more classroom-based learning experiences you have had at UBC? If so, please explain how?

Most school project are hypothetical and therefore has a level of detachment. This project on the other hand was very real. The process in that regards is much more adaptive, non linear and flexible to take in all of the input from parties and people involved. This project exercised skills in working and dialoging directly with a client and tailoring the design to best suit their needs.

What part of this internship was the most challenging for you?

This project was very involved and required lots of work and care. Juggling this project along side my graduate thesis was the biggest challenge. I'm the end I complete two highly rewarding projects and would do it again in a heart beat.

Were your expectations for this internship experience met? How or how not?

Yes, working in a participatory design process at this scale was something very new to me and a huge learning experience.

Did you receive the support you needed during this internship? If not, how could we have better supported you?

Yes.

If you could change one thing about your experience in this internship, what would it have been?

I would change nothing.

How could we have improved the UBC Farm internship structure and program to better meet your needs?

More time with the elders to understand the functional and cultural process of the work they do with medicines and ceremony to better inform the design. I realize schedules don’t always permit this extra time. The more contact a student can have with the experts they are working with the better.

In the end the design process was a big success. I greatly enjoyed my time working with the farm and elders and look to continue participating in the evolution of the Aboriginal Garden and learning more about the use and production of medicinal plants for local communities.
LINKS & REFERENCES

http://www.musqueam.bc.ca/
http://www.vacfss.com/programs/guardianship/cruw/
http://ubcfarm.ubc.ca/research/land-based-aboriginal-strategy/
http://www.aboriginaltransitions.ca/
http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca/SAGE/
http://www.longhouse.ubc.ca/events.php

http://www.fullcircleperformance.ca/get-involved
http://idlenomore.ca/
http://www.fotcomplextrauma.com/biopages/alannah-earl
http://www.aboriginaltransitions.ca/sharing-stories/grad-students/alannah-earl-young/

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medicine_wheel
http://www.greenthecityvancouver.com/page/2/
google - medicine wheel gardens
google - medicinal herb gardens

BOOKS

The Sacred Tree
[reflections on Native American Spirituality]
(Book - 2004)

The Medicine Wheel
Earth Astrology
By Sun Bear

The Medicine Wheel Garden
Creating Sacred Space for Healing, Celebration, and Tranquility
By Kavasch, E. Barrie

Dancing the Dream

The Seven Sacred Paths of Human Transformation
By Sams, Jamie

Megaliths to Medicine Wheels
Boulder Structures in Archaeology : Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Chacmool Conference
By University of Calgary Archaeological Association

The Shaman and the Medicine Wheel
By Eaton, Evelyn Sybil Mary

Wolf Medicine
Native American Shamanic Journey into the Mind
By Moondance, Wolf

Harmony
A New Way of Looking at Our World
By Prince Charles

The Healing Garden
Natural Healing for Mind, Body, and Soul
By Squire, David
GARDEN DESIGN BUILD SCHEDULE

Meeting 1
February 8, 2013 (Core Group)
Meeting project intention and direction

Research & Design Concept Phase

Meeting 2
Week of February 25th (Core Group + Open to Garden Community)
Concept Designs Meeting
Show and discuss concept designs (refine and focus)
M2 - dates & time - Week of February 25th
M,T(am), F

Meeting 3
Week of March 4th (Core Group + Open to Garden Community)
Design concept refinement - Master Plan Design Proposal
M3 - dates & time - Week of March 4th
M,T(am), F

Meeting 4
March 15, 16th, 17th or 18th (Core Group + Open to Garden Community)
Finalized Design Presentation
M4 - dates & time - March 15, 16th, 17th or 18th

A written and illustrated summary and conclusion of the garden design process.

DESIGN PROCESS

(January - March)
(Observations, meetings, research, analysis, concepts and final design proposal)
Alex worked on synthesizing the input given based off of existing suggestions from elders/community members as well as research into Aboriginal and health-focused garden designs into a garden design strategy.

Building Phase
( Last two weeks of April) - physical redesign begins
(May) - most of the planting and transplanting happens

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