STUWI(x) Naturalization Project

sʔuyuʔsúps tmíxʷ Urban Westside Indigenous (x) Project

The STUWI(x) Naturalization Project, located at the confluence of the Coldwater and Nicola Rivers in Merritt, BC, is a transformative Indigenous-led initiative focused on restoring a vital natural landscape that weaves together local Indigenous knowledge and stewardship.

STUWI(x) Naturalization Project

Overview

STUWI(x) brings together a dynamic partnership, uniting key representatives from local Bands and a Merritt community member to advance the restoration and stewardship of the river confluence and its floodplains. This area has been long affected by changes in the land and urban development.

Key Project Directives

- **Aligned with regulatory requirements**
- **Shared Use**
- **Free of permanent built structures**

STUWI(x) Naturalization Project

A Different Kind of Process for a Different Kind of Project

Phase 1

Phase 1

Property Acquisition

In the first phase, the focus was on acquiring flood destroyed properties within the floodplain that were essential for the implementation of the project. Securing these key locations created the foundation for future phases.

Phase 2

Phase 2

Steering Committee ~ Creating the Vision

This phase advances a dynamic partnership, bringing together representatives from local Bands and a Merritt community member to develop a naturalized floodplain design, balancing ecological restoration and flood protection, guided by Knowledge Keepers, Elders, and field experts.

Development Focus: This phase includes engaging engineers and advancing design work, sharing insights, education, and regional stories, and supporting informed decision-making and project oversight. Committee members also communicate back to their Bands and help showcase the project through Open Houses and community events, while providing direction throughout the process. Supporting roles include a Biologist, Facilitator, and Chair.

Phase 3

Phase 3

Preparing the Path Forward

This phase includes preliminary heritage discovery, environmental assessments, final design, and permitting.

It also focuses on clearing the project area of permanent structures and invasive species, preparing the site for natural restoration and supporting culturally significant plantings and ecosystem revitalization.

> Let's figure out how to continue to protect because that is where we are now; we have to have some compromises, and we have to have some agreements with each other on how we do this. Because we don't want to be without salmon. We don't want to be without all the animals - and we don't want to be without the trees and the plants.
>
> *Doreen Sterling,*
> *Elder, Lower Nicola Indian Band*

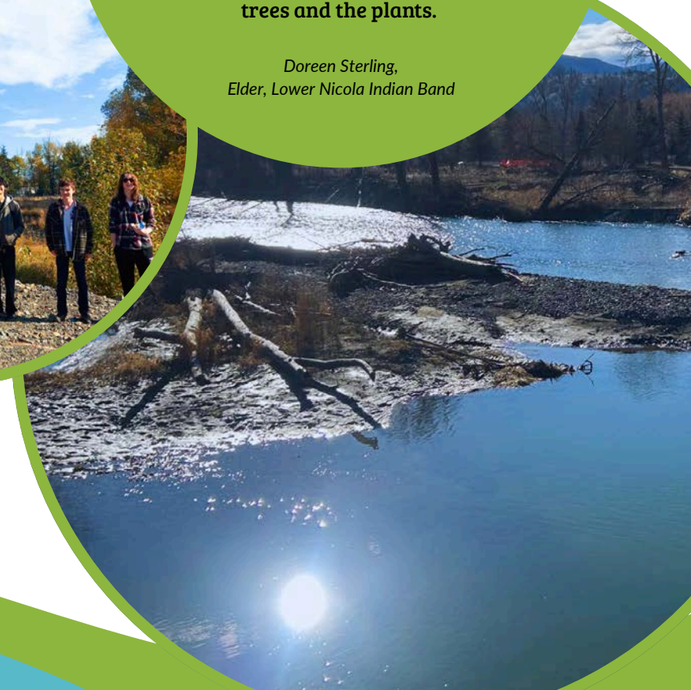
Phase 4

Phase 4

Vision in Action

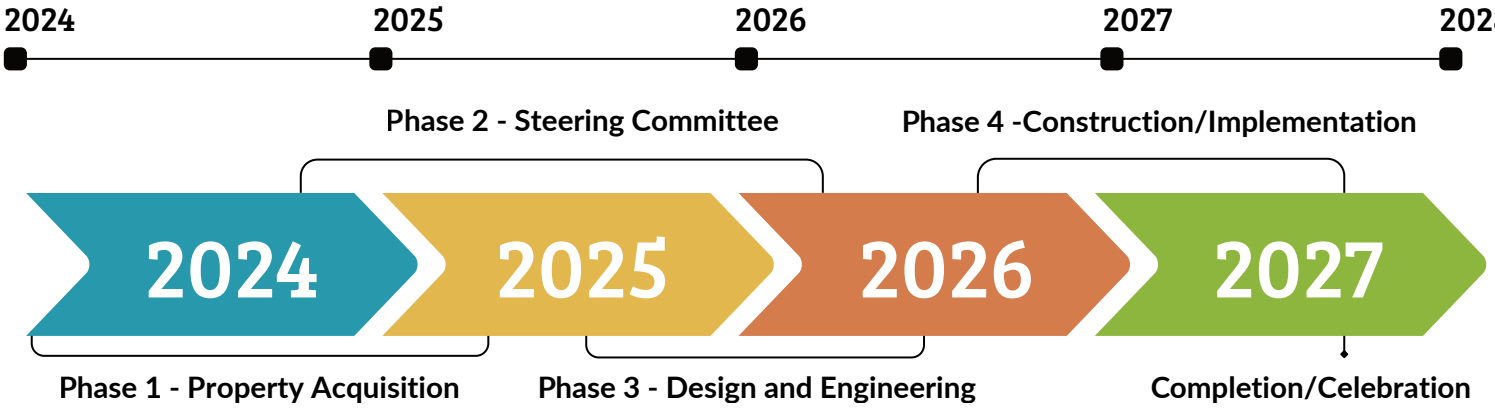
Construction begins based on Committee-driven design that allows the floodplain to function naturally while also creating long-term floodplain function of a thriving habitat in the corridor.

This phase marks the transforming of the vision into reality allowing the river to carve it's own path. Accelerating the floodplain naturalization process to a place where traditions and ceremonies are shared; and where nature and communities grow together in unity for future generations.



Timeline

Key Facts



Vision Statement

Our vision is to rewild and restore the riverscape, creating thriving habitats for all while reconnecting people with the land and its stories.

We envision a space where traditions are respected, ceremonies are renewed, and nature and community grow together in unity for future generations.

Departmental Direction

This project is part of a broader Indigenous Engagement Plan (IEP) administered by the Flood Mitigation Team, Indigenous Engagement Manager.

For more information, go to **flood.merritt.ca/ indigenous-engagement/**

Provincial Support

The City of Merritt gratefully acknowledges the B.C. Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness for its contribution to this project and for its ongoing support of the City's Flood Mitigation Plan.