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ECAP Group Synthesis
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Initially our group had some trouble wrapping our heads around the idea of being broken in to pods. We all had built some wonderful friendships with the people in our cohorts and were reluctant to leave them behind. However, as we slowly got to know one another, a bond definitely began to form within our pod. Our trip to Thetis Island definitely helped to begin building that community. Luckily we were able to come together and learned to work well as a group making use of the different voices, opinions, and strengths within our pod.

Coming to a decision of what to do as our ECAP project was something that challenged us all. Many ideas were suggested and it took time for us to all come to a consensus on what to do. This process of suggesting project ideas definitely assisted in building our pod community as it gave us the opportunity to learn more about one another, what our interests are, and the things that we value and find important. In the end we decided to work with the grade 2 class at Fairview Elementary and introduce environmental education in their classroom. Something that assisted in this decision was the fact that one of our pod members' daughter is a student in that class and the teacher, Mrs. Sen, was planning on incorporating environmental education and responsibility initiatives in to the classroom this year. It was the perfect fit! This also increased the

connection our pod had to our project and really helped us to be invested in the process and each other.

Over the course of the past five weeks our group encountered both successes and challenges in the process of our ECAP. One of our greatest successes was our ability to come together as a group and work effectively. When working with the students we were delighted and proud to see how enthusiastic they were in learning about the environment and participating in the activities we planned. We were very fortunate to build strong relationships with the students and the classroom teacher in a very short amount of time and felt very welcomed in to their class. A large part of this comfort was the fact that we weren't complete strangers to start out with. Kent's daughter is a student in the class and he knew some of the other students already. In addition, another pod member, Isaiah, was a student teacher at Fairview last year and already had personal connections within the school community. Our ability to work together came in handy when taking students on the field trip to Buttertubs Marsh as there were many teachers and we were able to break off in to small groups with the students. This was very helpful in allowing us to get know our group of students and it also made managing the class on a walking field trip less daunting.

While there is strength in numbers on a field trip, having so many bodies in the classroom was a bit of a challenge. In addition to the six of us and the regular classroom teacher, there were also two PBED Yr5 students in the class, and our mentor Michael on the day of "The River" experiment. For the most part everything ran smoothly but there were definitely times where too many voices prevented us from being able to dig deep in the post-experiment discussion with the students. We included the classroom teacher,

Mrs. Sen, as well as the PBED Yr5 students in the experiment by giving them roles in the story and that ended up being great way to bring everyone together. Weather was a challenge on our field trip to Buttertubs Marsh. It was a very wet and blustery day but the students handled it fabulously and we were able to go out, cleanup, and get back to the school in a reasonable time. We opted to hold our post cleanup discussion at the school so that everyone could warm up, dry off, and enjoy a snack as we talked and shared about our experiences and learning together.

Moving forward we feel that our ECAP is something that could easily be expanded and used in a variety of ways within a classroom or an entire school. The idea of taking care of the natural spaces in our neighbourhood is something that transcends across the masses. In the case of Fairview, we could expand this to create a weekly classroom cleanup trip to local parks within walking distance of the school. Another option could be to partner with another class in the school and take turns caring for a selection of parks and public spaces around Nanaimo.

In the end, our ability to put our trust in one another was the key to our ECAP success. We knew that we could count on one another whether it was during the planning phase, volunteering to pick up supplies, during the field trip, or in the classroom. We all supported one another along the way and the result was six elated pod members, a happy classroom teacher, and a smiling class full of students. What more could you ask for?