

**For immediate release
July 31, 2015**

**NEW GRASS MAZE IS THE START OF A CHILDREN'S NATURE PLAY PARK ENVISIONED
FOR THE PEMBERTON & DISTRICT COMMUNITY CENTRE:**

Grand Opening set for Tuesday, August 11, 2015 at 6pm

Pemberton, BC – The first component of a new Children's Nature Play Park outside the Pemberton and District Community Centre will be officially unveiled on Tuesday, August 11, 2015, at 6pm, during the annual Family Fun Night, which runs from 5 – 8pm at the Community Centre.

Installation of the grass maze, designed by Tom Barratt Landscaping, the landscape architect behind Whistler's natural play park, began July 27 and saw the creation of a 600 foot long trail that winds between river birch trees, ornamental grasses and perennial plantings including sage, rudbeckia, lavender, sunflower and echinacea.

795 new plants were planted as part of the installation designed to be water-wise and appeal particularly to children aged 2-6. In addition to offering a great place for the early years to explore, the grass maze is a tranquil landscaped walk for people of all ages. The grasses will eventually provide a dense colourful maze for exploration and the trees will provide much needed shade and add variety to the site.

The grass maze transforms 1,850 square feet of unused space located beside the Water Park and the Pemberton Children's Centre, and was made possible through the financial support of the Pemberton Rotary Club, Rotary District 5040, Innergex, BC Hydro, Tree Canada, as well as Electoral Area C of the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) and the Village of Pemberton.

It is the first phase of a Children's Nature Play Park designed to expand the outdoor play opportunities available at the Community Centre.

The Nature Play Park was first envisioned 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 last April. SLRD Recreation Services Manager, Angela Barth began researching funding opportunities to replace the structure with a safe, natural and fun playscape that would integrate with the water park, and serve a more diverse age-range of users.

"We wanted a place where children could play freely and connect to nature," says Recreation Services Manager Angela Barth. "Research strongly supports interaction with the natural landscape as crucial to the mental and physical health of children. This park is designed to represent the larger wild environment in a way that feels safe and manageable to young visitors.

We wanted to see a free play space which incorporated plants, logs, water, sand, mud, boulders, hills and trees, and avoid the installation of a manufactured play structure.”

The vision for the Children’s Nature Play Park will transform the space between the Youth Centre, Pemberton Children’s Centre, Spray Park, Pemberton Community Centre, and grassy knoll, into an integrated play park with tee-pee forts, a reading nook, tractor tire, sandbox, water feature, logs and balancing stumps, and a viewing patio. The next phases are funding dependent and grant applications are currently being reviewed, with the hopes of rolling out a sandbox and viewing patio in 2016.

“It’s exciting to see the playground renewal underway,” says Joanne Molinaro, Chair of the Pemberton Valley Utilities and Services Committee. “Kids in this region are going to grow up playing in the outdoors and in the mountains, so it is such a natural fit for their first sandboxes and playgrounds to be nature-based. Pemberton is surrounded by natural beauty, and this park reflects that environment. This is going to be a great addition for the community, and the phased roll-out is a financially sound way to transform the grounds around the Community Centre.”

Residents are invited to celebrate the official opening of the Grass Maze on Tuesday, August 11, at 6:00pm, as part of the Pemberton & District Community Centre Family Fun Night from 5:00 – 8:00pm.

The Family Fun Night is a yearly event hosted by the Pemberton and District Recreation Service. A free evening of music and children’s activities, with food available for sale onsite, Family Fun Night is a chance for families to relax and socialize while children participate in activities and free play.

- 30 -

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.

For more information, please contact:

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