



# On the Pathway to Stewardship and Kinship

Raising Healthy Children for a Healthy Planet



Our journey is unfolding on Treaty 20 Michi Saagiig territory, and in the traditional territory of the Michi Saagiig and Chippewa Nations (collectively known as the Williams Treaty First Nations) who are stewards and caretakers of these lands and waters in perpetuity.

We are grateful to live in the Nogojiwanong/Peterborough region, and honour the teachings of the First Peoples every day, as we work together to relearn living in harmony and respect for each other and the earth that supports us.

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation



An agency of the Government of Ontario  
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

© 2023 Camp Kawartha



We encourage reproduction of this material for educational purposes, with acknowledgement of source.

Book design by Frolic Design

Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper.



# **On the Pathway to Stewardship and Kinship**

Raising Healthy Children for a Healthy Planet

## **Lead Writer**

Cathy Dueck

## **Advisory Committee**

Paul Elliott, Maureen McDonald, Lisa Nisbet, Kerri Riel, Jacob Rodenburg

The Pathway to Stewardship and Kinship is a community partnership centred  
in Nogojiwanong/Peterborough and directed by Camp Kawartha



# Contents

**2**

Introduction

**11**

Key Stewardship Principles

**23**

Landmarks

**87**

Program Partners

**105**

Behind the Scenes

**121**

What We've Learned

**134**

Acknowledgements

**136**

Photo Credits

**138**

Recommended Resources

# Introduction

This is the story of a community that cares about kids. It could be your community, but this story is taking place in the region of Peterborough, Ontario, Canada on the traditional lands of the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg who know this place as Nogojiwanong.

Our story is about caring and connectivity. We are working together to raise healthy, happy kids who care about the world around them, and who feel deeply connected to it. In a world obsessed with economics and productivity, we're shifting our focus to relationships - between each other and the lands and waters that support us. This shift in focus is not unique to us - indeed, many other communities are coming to the same awakening. What is unique to this story is the way we have worked together to bring a sense of stewardship and kinship into the daily lives of our children.





# Kinship

From a First Peoples' perspective, we are kin to the living and non-living world around us. The air, water, soil, rocks, plants, insects, animals are all part of our community. The term kinship recognizes that we belong to the fascinating and complex web of life, and that each strand in the web is equally important. It is crucial to respect the right of other species to exist, acknowledge their place in the world, and be ready to learn from them.

Fostering stewardship and kinship is a proactive undertaking that must involve many caring mentors - educators, parents, relatives and other caregivers. These mentors provide a community network that encourages discovery, shares a sense of awe and wonder, and actively cultivates empathy and respect for all life. As children begin to learn how the world functions, they understand the impacts that people can have, and explore solutions to challenges in their community. Community mentors continue to guide youth in developing leadership skills by participating in local action, encouraging confidence, agency, hope, and belonging.



# Stewardship

An important concept in our work is the word 'stewardship.' To us, this means a sense of connection to, caring about, and responsibility for each other and the natural world that supports us. It involves personal action to protect and enhance the health and well-being of both natural and human communities, which are in fact interwoven. It also recognizes that human health and survival is entirely dependent on flourishing ecosystems.





## Indigenous Knowledge

As we continue to look for guidance in making wise and responsible lifestyle, education and parenting choices, we are grateful for the wisdom of Indigenous cultures that have lived and thrived in a reciprocal and sustainable relationship with the land for millennia. We have consulted with Elders and Knowledge-holders from this part of Canada. Members of Curve Lake, Hiawatha and Alderville First Nations have provided guidance and shared their wisdom in developing the Pathway Project, as well as Indigenous leaders and teachers affiliated with Trent University, local school Boards and local urban Indigenous agencies. Miigwech for your advice and generosity.

## Challenges and Research Trends

Concerns about children's increasing physical and mental health challenges have led to a flurry of research into the causes and potential remedies. Anxiety, depression, attention deficits and feelings of alienation are all too common, as are anti-social behaviours. Health care providers are concerned about children's fitness and physical health, resulting from too little physical activity and too much screen time. A sedentary, indoor lifestyle can contribute to a variety of health challenges including heart disease and Type 2 diabetes.

Happily, an enormous amount of research suggests similar solutions - that plenty of childhood time spent in unstructured play in natural outdoor environments has many benefits, including:

- reducing stress,
- improving physical and mental health,
- stimulating creativity,
- enhancing concentration and conflict resolution skills,
- building self-esteem,
- encouraging co-operation, collaboration and self-regulation,
- developing problem-solving abilities, and
- sparking a life-long interest in learning.

Giving children many opportunities to have positive experiences in the natural world, especially at a young age, is the most powerful way to stimulate a sense of community, of belonging, and responsibility towards the world around them. And, with caring mentors to encourage a sense of wonder and to model respectful relationships, the benefits of outdoor play are even greater.





## Our Process

Our initial goal was to create a simple 'roadmap' for our community to help take manageable steps towards a culture of stewardship and kinship. We asked ourselves, "Are there key experiences that kids need to develop positive lifelong relationships with the natural world and their human community? If so, how can we identify them and make sure every child has equal opportunities for these experiences as they learn and grow?"

Our vision included involving the whole community in building the roadmap: all socio-economic groups, all racial, cultural and religious backgrounds, all genders, ages and interests. We all share a love of our children and a desire for their healthy future. This is a powerful unifying force, and a strong incentive to undertake this big challenge. The process of developing our plan is described in detail in the [project guidebook](#), released in 2017 after several years of consultation and research.

In brief, a steering committee of representatives working in education, health and environment interviewed 80 community leaders to learn what formative childhood experiences shaped them and to hear their suggestions for today's young people.

These interview results were integrated with peer-reviewed research to develop a simple series of age-linked 'Landmarks' that emerged as powerful steps on the journey to stewardship and kinship.

More than 50 local community groups and agencies have contributed towards developing and implementing the Pathway Project since initial discussions in 2014. Camp Kawartha has played a pivotal role in initiating the project and acting as lead partner throughout the process. The Ontario Trillium Foundation has been a generous supporter and mentor throughout the project development, which has benefitted not only our local community, but allows us to share this important learning with other communities who also care about their kids and our shared future.



# Key Stewardship Principles

# Key Stewardship Principles

During our research, it became evident that some opportunities to nurture stewardship are more important at certain stages of child development. For example, developing leadership skills is more important for older children and youth than for very young children. These age-related principles are the focus for the 'Landmark' activities that are presented in the following section of this book.

However, some principles of stewardship and kinship form strong threads that link all ages, and are fundamental to everyone's life journey, regardless of age or stage of development. These are summarized as follows:



## Respect

A fundamental value in building a foundation for stewardship is the understanding that life itself is amazing and that all things – human and non-human – deserve respect. This value is especially important for everyone who interacts with children. It might take some personal reflection and resolve to overcome fears or prejudices that we adults have acquired, so that we can become effective mentors for children on the road to stewardship. A simple way to introduce and nurture respect and empathy is to provide children opportunities for positive interactions with animals, either wild or domestic.

In Indigenous views of the world, even non-living things have a spirit - a connecting thread in the tapestry of life. Water, air, rocks, as well as plants and animals all have important roles in Creation, and are equally deserving of respectful relationships.

This principle is so crucial, it is recognized in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, that "Education of the child shall be directed to the development of respect for the natural environment."



## Sense of Awe and Wonder

We are never too old to appreciate the wonders of life, or to encourage and share that sense of awe that results from truly seeing the world around us. Awe and wonder underpin a natural curiosity and desire to learn, which accompany the lifelong thrill of discovery. We forget as adults how powerful language can be. To cultivate a sense of wonder in children, it's important to use the language of wonder: "Isn't this amazing! I wonder..."

## Natural Curiosity and Discovery

It's a wise teacher who knows when to share information, and when to let natural discovery take place. When children are subjected to too many facts, the overload can actually inhibit or destroy interest and learning. The best learning focuses on the child, not the teacher. Keep in mind that the engine of learning is curiosity. As adults, we need to remember that a name or a label is merely a place to begin. It is the start of a story – an intriguing one – and it is up to you to keep the story going! A good question should invite other questions. Think about your questions as a way to encourage kids to ask why, to wonder, to marvel at the natural world and to promote further exploration.

“

Each and every time we venture into different outdoor spaces, the children seem to collect new perspectives and heightened awareness of our natural environment. Whether it be figuring out new methods of climbing over fallen limbs, observing the growth process of vegetation or discovering footprints in the snow – these cannot simply be read about, they have to be experienced through hands-on opportunities.”

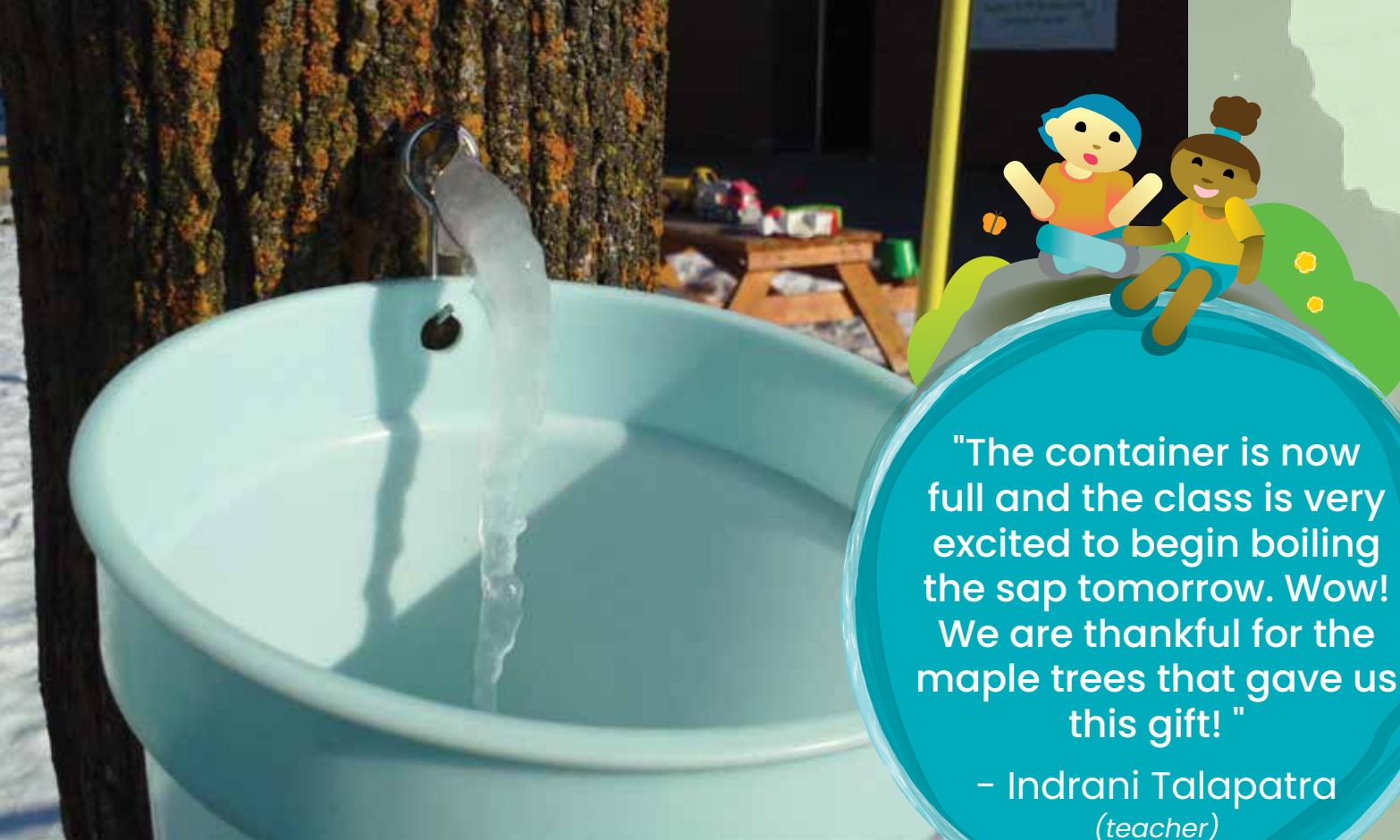
–Michelle Pritchard  
(early childhood educator)



## Sense of Place

An important part of developing a sense of belonging to a place is spending enough time outdoors in the same location to become deeply familiar and connected with it. For those who have developed an attachment to a particular place when growing up, that sense of place becomes part of their identity. It is important to give children plenty of time to develop those deep attachments to place, whether that place is a favourite park, a cottage, a camp or other outdoor place with special memories.





"The container is now full and the class is very excited to begin boiling the sap tomorrow. Wow! We are thankful for the maple trees that gave us this gift!"  
 – Indrani Talapatra  
*(teacher)*



## Interconnectedness

Children benefit from many opportunities to learn how our lives are connected to the lives of other people and other living things. We share the same air, the same water – the food we eat contains nutrients made from atoms that have circulated for aeons. This understanding reinforces the innate need to belong. Stewardship involves understanding that we belong to a community that extends far beyond our close friends and relatives and includes the living systems that are integral to health. Let's encourage our children to get to know and love our 'Neighbourhood.'

## Gratitude

Often, we become so preoccupied by daily pressures and challenges, that we become oblivious to the many wonders and gifts around us. Wisdom from many Indigenous teachings, Faith communities and others remind us to take time every day to recognize and appreciate the many gifts of the natural world. This can begin with being more aware and mindful of the world around us – taking time to be calm, quiet and present in the moment and seeing the wonders around us.

It is important to also practice gratitude. The act of giving thanks can help us to strengthen our connections to each other and to the special places that are an integral part of our community. This is a tool for cultivating mental health at all stages of life.



"Grade 5 students have been learning about the relationships that exist between Indigenous peoples and their traditional territories. They have been reflecting on their own appreciation for the land. Students wrote personal land acknowledgements as a way to celebrate the land and express gratitude to those who have lived and worked on this land historically and presently. Their next step is to share their land acknowledgements on the morning announcements."

– Amanda Hipgrave *(teacher)*



## Mentorship

Both in research and discussions with community leaders, it is evident that having access to a caring mentor is critically important in developing a sense of caring and connection. In the early years, this is often a close relative such as a parent or grandparent who spends time with the child, exploring together and sharing the delights of discovery. As a child grows older, the mentor may be a teacher or other youth leader who becomes a trusted and admired role model. While having knowledge to share with a child is helpful, it's more important to share an interest and enthusiasm to spark curiosity. Seniors can be valuable mentors for children, and opportunities for inter-generational learning can be of mutual benefit.



## Overcoming Fears

Not everyone feels comfortable and safe outdoors – especially in natural areas. Building comfort and security outdoors is something you can learn, with patience and practice. This can begin by dressing appropriately for all weather, so you feel comfortable in all conditions. The real dangers (falling over cliffs, drowning etc.) are important to learn, as well as knowing how to handle them (stay away from the edge, learn how to swim etc.). Fear of the dark and animals such as insects, spiders and snakes can be overcome with patience. Working on our own fears as adults can help our children become more confident and less anxious and fearful. Getting scrapes is a normal part of growing up, and letting children take reasonable risks (jumping, climbing) helps them to stretch their abilities, learn their limits and build resiliency. Learning to overcome fears literally opens the doors to a world of wonders.

## Accessibility

Differences in physical abilities need not deter anyone from enjoying time in nature. Tools such as all-terrain wheelchairs may be available from local children's service providers and many outdoor centres are integrating accessibility into their programs such as lifts to transfer children into boats and custom harnesses for climbing walls.



## Limits to Screen Time

Another recurring recommendation, both in research and feedback from community leaders, points to the benefits of limiting screen time – television, computer and cell phones. Too much screen time severely limits physical activity, social and creative development, as well as causing a sense of separation from the natural world. While technology can offer many benefits, too much of it can be toxic to healthy development. Some apps are very helpful in enhancing outdoor knowledge and skill and if used with discretion, can be powerful learning tools for youth. Apps such as iNaturalist can help with identifying natural features, and Citizen Science apps such as eBird can encourage young people to participate in collecting information about wildlife to assist with conservation efforts.



## Action and Giving Back

Everyone, no matter what their age or ability, can do something positive for the world around them. Tending a garden, raising butterflies, caring for a natural area, reducing our energy consumption, are just some of the simple ways we empower our youth to make a positive impact right here at home. A foundational stewardship principle is considering how we can give back to the earth that supports us. Kids can solve a problem provided they are given the right tools and strategies for their age. Every positive action leads to a sense of hope and every bit of hope is empowering. As kids grow older, they can begin to explore the idea of sustainable living: reducing their carbon footprint, exploring alternatives to fossil fuels, learning about product life cycles and social justice issues. Our aim is to help young people develop a sense of agency, empowerment and hope.



## Creative Expression

The arts provide one of the most powerful ways of developing morals and values – a foundation of mental health. Research refers repeatedly to the importance of providing opportunities at all ages to express feelings. Discussion, painting, drama, stories, dance, poetry, photography, sculpture and music are a few examples of the ways we express ourselves and learn from others. The arts are also an important vehicle for developing empathy and sympathy by imagining ourselves inside the lives of other beings. While young people may prefer certain ways of expressing themselves at various ages, creative expression overall remains an important factor in healthy development throughout life.

## Never Too Late

What if you've just moved to town, and your kids are already in their middle years or teens? Is it too late to start the Pathway Landmarks and activities? It's never too late – even if you're an adult who has rarely been outdoors and has many fears. This program is for everyone, at all ages, regardless of when you start on the path. The key is to support each other as we learn new ideas and skills for responsible and rewarding involvement with our community and our world.



"We visited our outdoor learning space and explored new trails. We also noticed how we felt when we were outside!"

- Shayla Bush (teacher)

## The Power of Joy

All of the suggested activities are grounded in the knowledge that great joy can be found in nature and being outdoors, and that joy is contagious. Laughter is an excellent way to relieve stress, and a sense of fun is infused through all the Landmarks in this document. This Pathway to Stewardship and Kinship is an enjoyable journey for every child and their mentors. We all benefit from raising healthy children for a healthy planet.

# Landmarks





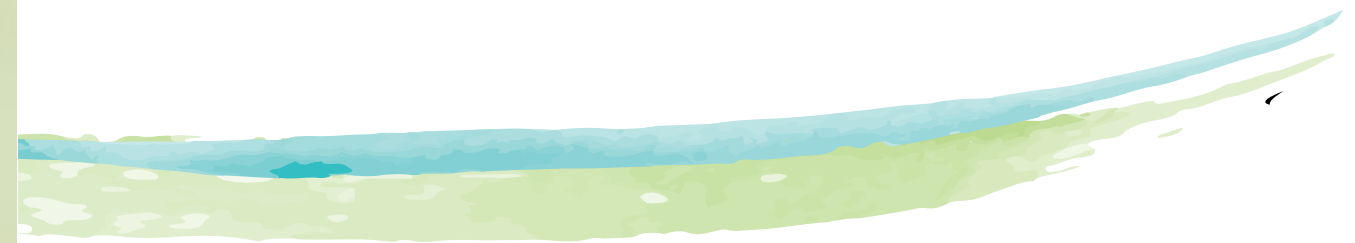
## Landmarks

---

After reviewing our research, interviews and community feedback, we needed to distill the vast array of information into manageable, bite-sized actions for each stage of child and youth development. Our goal was to create a simple framework of critical experiences for each age group to help nurture a sense of caring, connection and responsibility.

The result is the Pathway's 30 'Landmarks' - a shared foundation for anyone with children in their lives to practice together at home, at school and in the community. There are generally 3 or 4 Landmarks for each age group, and each builds on skills developed in earlier Landmarks. The Landmarks span the time between birth and the late teen years, and can easily be integrated into any program for young people. Many wonderful parents and educators reach far beyond these Landmarks every day, and that's great! In essence, these Landmarks are a common place to begin, regardless of your experience or background.

The following pages show the Landmarks in action as our community worked together to integrate these activities into daily life. There are so many ways to interpret each Landmark! These are some of the wonderful ideas submitted by the more than 14,000 people who participated in the Pathway Project between 2017 and 2023.



AGE 0-3 YRS

# Landmark 1

Explore outdoors together at least an hour each week.



## How?

### Infants

- Walking outdoors, using a stroller or baby carrier, can have a wonderful calming effect on babies and their parents!
- Give babies opportunities to touch and smell things in nature: bare toes in the grass, touching tree bark, branches and leaves, smelling herbs and flowers.
- Babies can lie on a blanket and watch the sky in all seasons.

### Toddlers

- Go for walks together, covering short distances, but taking lots of time to stop and explore.
- Put on your raingear and go out in the rain; feel the raindrops on leaves; splash in the puddles.
- Turn over rocks and logs to see what's underneath.
- In winter months, try hiding frozen coloured ice cubes in the snow for toddlers to dig up.
- Make a 'snow kitchen' outdoors in winter, with pots, spoons and cups to dig and mix the snow.

## Why?

Visiting natural areas regularly benefits everyone - adults and children alike. Regardless of the weather or the season, outdoor time makes everyone healthier and opens our eyes to nature's wonders. Helping a child feel at home and comfortable outdoors, even from their earliest hours, prepares a life-long foundation for caring, connecting and belonging. Parents and care-givers are important role models to encourage discovery and to show respect for the natural world.



“

The rain spattered our play and the wind was wild! This weather didn't interfere with our fun though, and our climbing feet were eager and our minds were curious.”

-Emily Warren  
(early childhood educator)

## AGE 0-3 YRS

# Landmark 2

**Have positive experiences with animals at least twice each month.**

## How?

### Infants

- Show infants how to pet friendly dogs, cats and other pets.
- Point out and listen to bird song when you walk together outdoors.
- Watch local squirrels when you're outdoors, and say hello!
- Imitate animal sounds together.

### Toddlers

- Watch ants. Where do they go?
- Dig in the soil to look for worms; hold them in your hand.
- Help to take care of a family or classroom pet.
- Watch birds and squirrels and other nearby animals; what are they doing?
- Visit a nearby farm to visit with a variety of friendly animals.
- Make simple pinecone feeders for birds and squirrels.
- Watch baby animals in nature, and talk about what they're doing.

## Why?

Positive experiences with animals help children understand the needs of other living things. This helps prevent fears and develops a sense of caring and respect. Children can develop loving relationships at an early age with many different animals - mammals, birds, insects, reptiles and amphibians. They can be encouraged to be gentle and kind.



“

“We practiced being kind to our pet rabbit. We talked about how to pet nicely and help to feed, and not to mix food and water together.”

- Matthew Walmsley  
(parent)

“

“As we ventured through a new path, we were absolutely delighted to find the tiniest toad we had ever seen!”

- Matt Warren (parent)



## AGE 0-3 YRS

# Landmark 3

## Exercise the senses every day.



## How?

### Infants

- Provide sticks or dowels to bang on various surfaces to make sounds.
- Sing calming songs and action songs together.
- Wiggle toes in the grass, in the sand, in puddles, in the soil.
- Smell ingredients while preparing for a meal.
- Touch tree leaves in all seasons.

### Toddlers

- Play in the mud after a rain, or with sand at the beach.
- Rub and smell herb leaves in the garden.
- Make a simple see-saw with a board over a log.
- Walk in the woods after a rain - feel and smell bark, moss, twigs.
- Splash in puddles!
- Bring basins of snow indoors in winter to feel and shape.

## Why?

We experience the world through our senses. From the earliest years, we need many opportunities to see, hear, touch, feel and smell. The natural world provides rich opportunities to exercise the senses and make deep connections with the world.

Look for daily opportunities to exercise a child's senses through temperature (weather and seasons), music, rhythms and rhymes, birdsong, feeling textures, noticing smells in the sunshine or after a rain, balancing to walk across a log; feeling and tasting the snow- the possibilities are endless!



“

The ability to touch, see, smell and freely explore with our hands and bodies, brings not only joy but engages the soul and grounds our bodies.”

-Stephanie Springett (early childhood educator)

AGE 4-5 YRS

## Landmark 4

### Visit a favourite outdoor place each week throughout all seasons.

Talk about what you discovered with a supportive adult.

### How?

- Visit a favourite climbing tree or balancing log throughout the year.
- Build a fort with found materials; sticks and branches are wonderful for this!
- Look for places to hide in your favourite place; play hide and seek.
- Find new ways to travel to your favourite place; try sliding on an icy day.
- Visit the beach in the summer. How does it change in the winter? Have a winter picnic at the beach!
- Explore a favourite trail in a magical forest; make up stories.
- Lie on your back in your favourite place; watch the clouds in the day and the stars at night.



### Why?

A sense of connection develops through repeated visits to a favourite place. Parents and teachers can promote a sense of awe and wonder by exploring together and marveling at nature's wonders. When children are dressed for the weather, they can enjoy the transformations in their favourite places in the rain, snow, sunshine, fog, wind - in all weather and all seasons. A sense of security and safety can grow in familiar places when we let the land be the teacher.



“

Every day we explore our Habitat area on the school yard together. This is an ongoing daily activity. We use our wonder wagon complete with magnifying glasses, tape for nature bracelets, bungee cords and skipping ropes for tying, mud kitchen accessories, clipboards, paper, crayons to document our findings.”

-Jackie Mercer  
(teacher)

## Help to plant or harvest a garden and/or look after an animal.

### How?

- Help to plant some simple vegetables with big seeds: beans, zucchini and peas are great plants for a young child to grow.
- Help to feed the family pet.
- Try feeding chickadees with sunflower seeds in your hand; it takes patience to win their trust at first, but later they will visit eagerly!
- Grow an indoor pot of spring bulbs for beautiful flowers.
- Hatch chicken or duck eggs and care for chicks before returning them to the farmer.
- Care for worms in a classroom vermicomposter.
- Care for and release a butterfly and its caterpillar.

### Why?

Watching and caring for the needs of living things is a wonderful way to develop empathy. Children can be encouraged to expand their understanding of well-being by thinking about the needs of other things to grow and thrive. Young children have a limited sense of time, so helping with short-term tasks are perfect at this stage of development. They can begin to understand that we all need similar things: food, water, a safe place to live, exercise, companionship and kindness. Caregivers are important mentors in modelling caring relationships.



“

Watching the chicks this week has prompted lots of thinking about growing and changing. We noticed the chicks have lost their egg teeth. Some students shared how they have lost some baby teeth. We watched as the chicks cleaned their feathers with their beaks. The kindergartens talked about how they care for their own hair by brushing it. We also noticed how the chicks' wings are growing and they are now able to fly up and around!”

-Indrani Talapatra  
(teacher)

AGE 4-5 YRS

## Landmark 6

Play in nature for a full hour at least twice a week.

### How?

- Follow tracks in the snow and make up stories about what the animal is doing.
- Provide pots, pans, containers, soil and other natural materials for children to create elaborate imaginary foods - mud soup, flower decorated cakes and other wonders!
- Create a playground for a flea with found materials.
- Provide materials for building an array of outdoor forts.
- Create a fairy garden with found materials.
- Make an obstacle course with tires, logs, straw bales and whatever you can find.
- Use sticks in the snow as hammers, drills and diggers.

### Why?

Imaginative play is important to healthy child development. It takes time and plenty of opportunities for unstructured play for children's imaginations to become rich and full. A stick becomes a magic wand, a rock becomes a pirate ship and a fort of sticks becomes a castle. When children become familiar and feel safe and comfortable in a place, nature provides materials to nurture the imagination, and boundless stories begin to emerge.



“

“The puddles of our yard bring us immeasurable joy! These friends see a rainy day as an opportunity and an invitation to play as freely as their hearts can handle. Jumping harder and bigger in the puddles than the last day, running and sliding quicker and with even more exuberance. What a delight to watch these friends enjoy themselves so thoroughly!”

-Emily Warren  
(early childhood educator)



AGE 4-5 YRS

## Landmark 7

Share a nature based picture book, song, poem or game each week.

### How?

- Look for picture books with stories about a variety of animals (especially those who can live nearby).
- Learn songs and rhymes that celebrate animals, trees and the changing seasons.
- Nature-based story books are great to read indoors as well as outdoors in a favourite place at all times of the year.
- After a fresh snow, one person makes a track for others to follow; what story do the tracks tell?
- Participate in music and story-telling events at the public library, at children's centres, or invite a storyteller to visit your class.
- Ask your local librarian for suggestions for great picture books that celebrate nature or demonstrate stewardship; there are so many wonderful books to share with young children!

### Why?

Stories, pictures, songs and games help children love and understand the natural world. We all love stories - they're a wonderful learning tool that stimulates the imagination and builds loving relationships. Song, dance, rhymes and games bring joy to those relationships as we celebrate the amazing world we share.



“

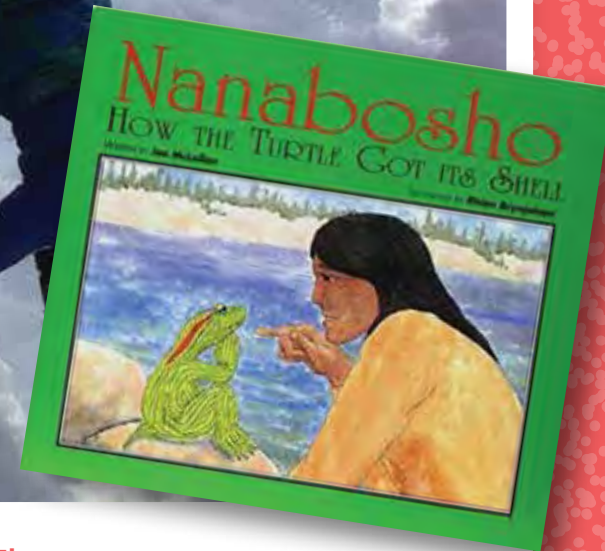
“Tracks in the snow,  
tracks in the snow;  
who made the tracks,  
where do they go?”

(from the book by Wong Herbert Yee)  
-Indrani Talapatra  
(teacher)

“

Chef Cindy created a cool hide and seek game for us with some 'pumpkin' rocks. We had to find all 15 rocks and match them to the picture. Then we could hide them again for the next class.

-Danielle Blondin  
(early childhood educator)

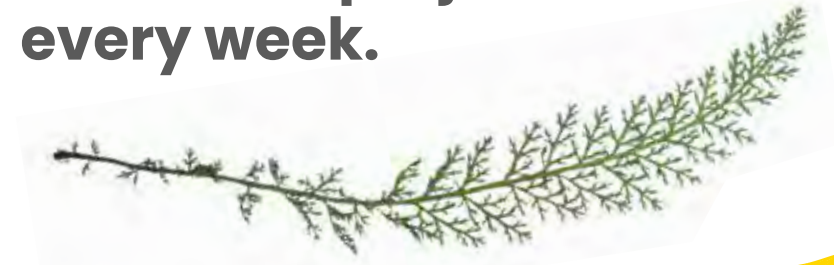


There are many beautiful picture books with Indigenous stories to share with young children.

AGE 4-5 YRS

## Landmark 8

Create at least one nature art project every week.



### How?

- Paint pieces of tree branches and use them as magic wands.
- Make a 'camera' with popsicle sticks glued into a square; use your camera to frame beautiful pictures.
- Read 'The Very Busy Spider' and make your own web using sticks and yarn, with a spider made of modelling clay.
- Make a picture or a sculpture on the ground with materials from nature.
- Make butterflies on a clothes pin and perch them outdoors.
- Make fall bouquets using a half of a small squash as a vase.
- Use scraps of cloth to make winter pictures on the snow.
- In cold temperatures, arrange natural materials on a pie plate and add water to freeze overnight; when frozen, hang from the trees as winter ornaments!

### Why?

The arts help children learn to express feelings about themselves and their world. Artistic exploration also helps to develop empathy. All children need frequent opportunities for creative expression, and the natural world can create many wonderful opportunities to explore colours, textures, shapes and patterns, and to see beauty and experience awe.



66

"We searched the schoolyard for pieces of nature that had already fallen to the ground. We then used these items to create nature art. Once everyone was finished we opened up our 'nature art gallery' and walked around to enjoy each other's creations."

-Heather Snowball  
(teacher)



## Landmark 9

**Choose an outdoor place in nature that is special to you.**

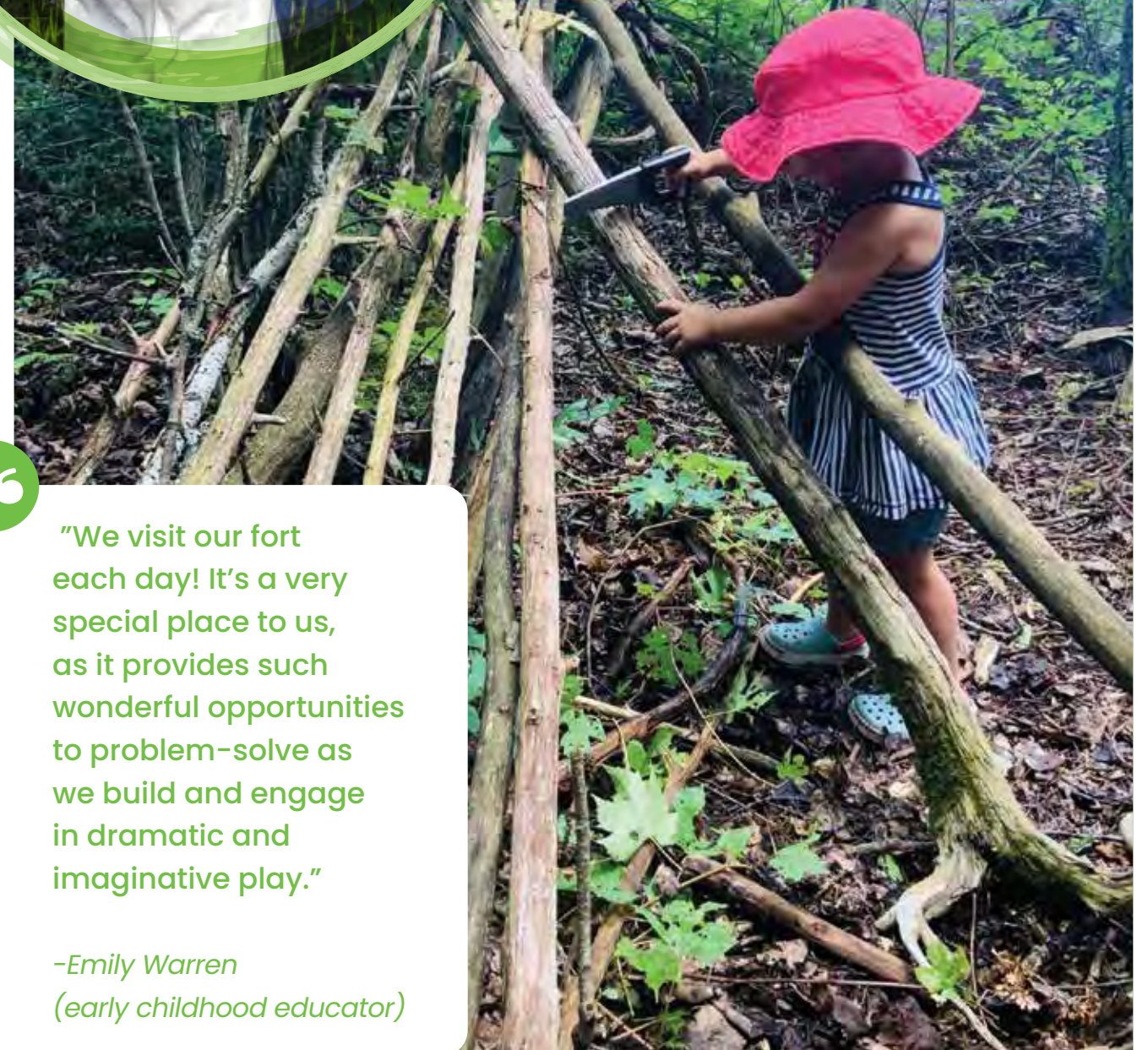
Visit at least twice every month; try to visit through a whole year.

### How?

- Provide plenty of opportunity for active exploration outdoors: climbing, jumping, balancing and taking gentle risks.
- Visit a favourite tree: how does it change from week to week? If it could speak, what would it say to you? Look for squirrel or bird nests; do any insects live here? Can you climb onto its lower branches?
- Sit quietly in a favourite place; how many sounds can you hear?
- Watch and keep a record of the animals that visit your special place (mammals, birds, insects, reptiles and amphibians); can you find evidence that they were here (tracks, scat, broken branches)?
- Use a magnifying glass - observe the veins of a leaf, the colours of a rock, the particles of soil, the petals of a flower.
- Make a colourful map or mural of everything you've seen in your special place, and keep adding to this, every time you visit.

### Why?

This is an important age for beginning to develop a sense of place - an outdoor space that is familiar and special. This contributes to their developing understanding of belonging - to a family, a school, as well as a place. Children can be encouraged to deepen their relationships with special places, explore more thoroughly and fine-tune their senses: looking carefully, waiting quietly, touching gently, listening intently. Give children plenty of room for unstructured outdoor play. Adults can be supportive and share a sense of wonder, but let children decide how their play will unfold. This is a good time to gently help children overcome fears they may have of spiders, worms, snakes or darkness, through familiarity and understanding.



“

We visit our fort each day! It's a very special place to us, as it provides such wonderful opportunities to problem-solve as we build and engage in dramatic and imaginative play.”

-Emily Warren  
(early childhood educator)

**Plant, tend and harvest something you can eat (with help from an adult).**

**How?**

- Find a sunny place for your vegetables to grow big and healthy.
- Young children can help to plant things with large seeds like beans or peas, and place pieces of potato in planting holes.
- Find a small watering can that's not too heavy when filled with water so children can help water the garden. Fill a large bucket with water from the hose, and let them dip their watering cans to fill them.
- Start a compost pile to recycle discarded plants and kitchen scraps when food is harvested. We need to give back to the earth that feeds us!
- Children can help spread mulch of straw or leaves around plants to keep their roots cool and moist; they can gently tuck the mulch around the plants.
- Grow vining plants like pole beans or morning glory over a frame or teepee of poles to make a special hiding place for children in the garden.

**Why?**

As children's understanding of time begins to expand, they can be involved in an activity such as gardening for a longer time span. Watching a seed sprout and grow seems like magic, and watching it develop through the season brings true excitement when it's time to harvest! Children benefit from exploring how we are the same and how we are different from other things. Caring for something alive involves thinking and talking about what it needs to be healthy. Can a plant be strong and healthy without any water? Does it need sunlight to grow? What happens when it freezes in the fall? Watching plants grow and develop also opens the door to thinking about the web of life and how all living things are connected.



“

Last weekend we dug up the potatoes that have been growing in our garden all summer. We've grown potatoes for years but this year they were HUGE. The kids were screaming with excitement every time they found a potato. It was the best kind of treasure hunt! Next, we will be pulling out our carrots and beets for a big Thanksgiving feast on the weekend!”

-Heather Snowball (teacher)

### Find 3 ways to recognize and enjoy the change of each season.



### How?

- Build and decorate a snow fort, snow person or snow animal in winter.
- Make corn husk dolls in autumn.
- Play in the fallen leaves in autumn.
- Collect coloured leaves in autumn to create a beautiful picture.
- Play in the mud during spring rains.
- Play a 'Battle of the Seasons' game in late winter/early spring; make a list of all the signs of spring you see. Then make a list of all the signs of winter still around. Who is winning today?
- Make a scavenger hunt for each season. How many items can you find?
- Make a photo collage with images of the season; compare your collages from spring, summer, autumn and winter.
- Try making maple syrup in the spring, or visit someone who makes it.

### Why?

As a child's understanding of time expands, noticing and celebrating seasonal changes strengthens a connection with the world around them. This helps a child notice and appreciate activities that are unique to each season, and look forward to what comes next!



“In celebration of summer blooms, we designed nature clothes from our flowers.”

-Eliza and Rasi Cajindos-Henry (students)



“

“Today we welcomed August by enjoying local corn that we husked and cooked ourselves. We used the husks to create lovely little corn husk dolls. What a wonderful seasonal activity that reminds us to waste not, want not! Our creations will provide us with endless hours of imaginary fun, and allowed us to practice our tying and weaving skills.”

-Emily Warren (early childhood educator)



AGE 6-7 YRS

## Landmark 12

### Meet the friends in your neighbourhood.

Get to know at least five different kinds of plants, insects, birds and mammals that live nearby.

### How?

- Try feeding chickadees with sunflower seeds out of your hand.
- Go on a walk in your neighbourhood with a naturalist friend who can help you discover new friends.
- Look for bugs after the snow melts in spring; how many different kinds can you find?
- Visit a wetland in spring and listen for frogs; how many different frog calls can you hear?
- Wear a sock on your hand in autumn to brush plants and look for seeds with hooks that stick to the sock.
- Use apps such as Seek or iNaturalist to help you learn the names of the living things in your community. Then try to learn more about your new friends!



### Why?

A community is made up of many kinds of living things. Learning to recognize and develop positive relationships with other-than-human beings makes the world a friendlier place and opens the door to learning the stories of these new friends.



“

“We visit our school nature area at least twice each week, and take time to play in the nature playground and discover at least one new plant species each visit using the app “Seek”. We have so much fun trying to find the plants we have previously identified and make it a game to try and remember all the species names. Some of our students started the year feeling very uneasy going into the nature area as they had not had many outdoor experiences in a forest setting. There has been a complete shift and after learning about the plants in our forest, and feeling a sense of connection to the area, that is no longer a concern for us!”

- Holly Podres-Beaton  
(teacher)

## Travel a familiar route regularly by yourself or with a friend.

This can include walking, riding your bike or travelling on public transit.

### How?

- Try walking all or part of the way to school alone or with friends. If adults go along too, let the children decide the route.
- Record the types of living things you see on your route. What birds do you see or hear? Are there big, mature trees? Are there young tree saplings? What road signs do you see? Do you notice any mammals along the way?
- Go for a themed walk as a class, linking to current curricular themes: look for words on street signs; look for various shapes (circle, square, rectangle), or 3D shapes (cylinder, cube, cone); look for numbers.
- As a class or a family, find several different routes to the same place. Let the children select the route for today.
- Travel a route silently with a friend or small group. When you return to home or school, make a map of everything you remember. Later, travel the same route again and see if you can add more details to your map.

### Why?

Children notice so much more about the world around them when they make the decisions to navigate a route themselves. And, by noticing details in familiar places, children deepen their sense of connection to places close to home. Having opportunities to travel independently contributes to self-esteem, and strengthens leadership and problem-solving skills. While some parents may be hesitant to let a child travel on their own, going with a friend can be helpful, or walking the family dog with a cell phone can be good safety options. Educators can help school classes develop their navigation skills by working with the class to plan a route together and have students take turns leading the class to travel in familiar places.



“

Today we went for a neighbourhood walk. After, we looked at a map surrounding our school, traced our path and tried to remember the street names that we observed on our walks and the way the streets curved.”

-Mandy Dufresne  
(teacher)



AGE 8-9 YRS

## Landmark 14

Try at least five different kinds of outdoor recreation that don't require gasoline or electricity.

### How?

- Ride bicycles on nearby trails.
- Try paddleboats, rowboats, canoes or kayaks.
- In winter, try tobogganing, snowshoeing, skiing and quinzhee-building.
- Try meditating in a forest or field.
- Try making and flying a kite.
- Play hide and seek in the dark with flashlights.
- Try outdoor yoga with friends.
- Hunt for animal tracks in the snow.
- Hold a winter Olympics in your schoolyard.
- Try geocaching.
- Go stargazing at night.



### Why?

Children at this age are exercising more independence and are eager to try new things and challenge themselves. This is a perfect time of life to develop habits for physical and mental health and to try new types of outdoor recreation. Children can also begin to understand the factors that contribute to climate change, and to enjoy themselves in ways that don't depend on fossil fuels or electricity.



“

“This week our class built kites from a ‘Kites in the Classroom’ kit. Yesterday each student got to decorate their own kite and we assembled them this morning. The perfect breeze started up by the afternoon so we quickly headed outside to test them out! The class stayed out for over an hour flying them and would have kept flying for much longer had it not been time to go home!”

-Heather Snowball  
(teacher)

AGE 8-9 YRS

## Landmark 15

### Try each of these activities:

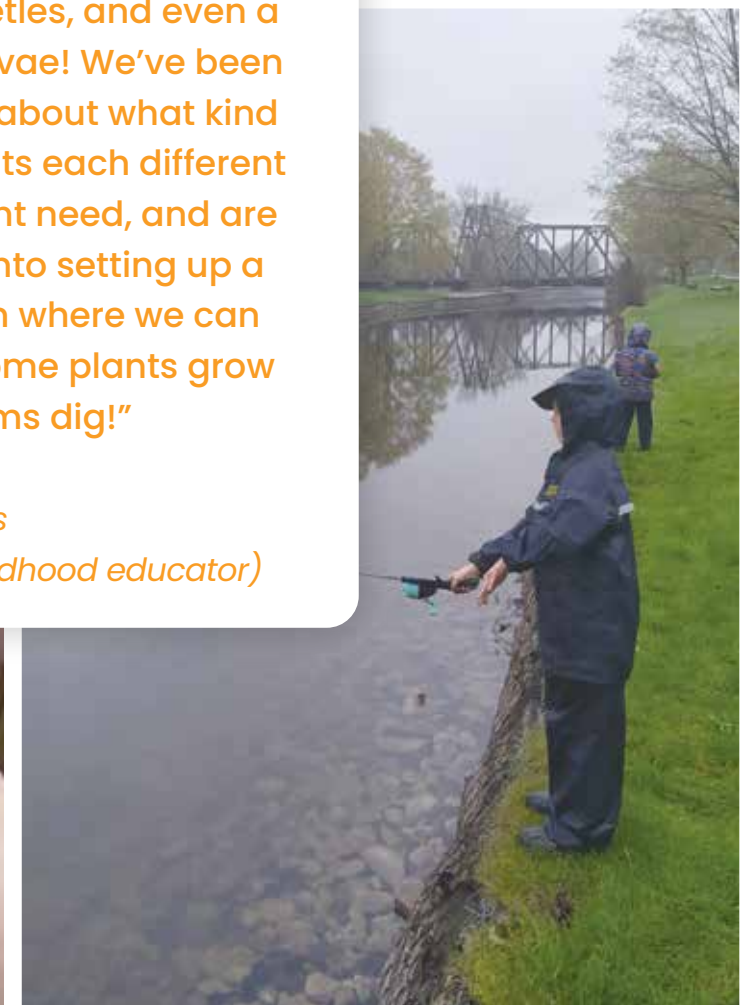
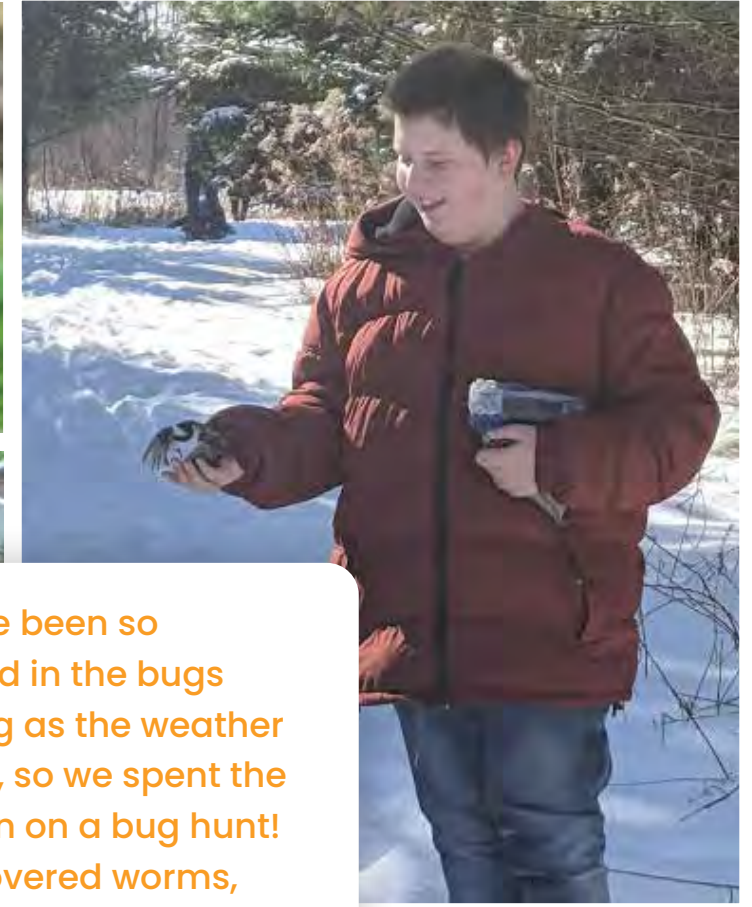
Grow a garden, set up a birdfeeder, catch insects, go fishing, get to know a habitat.

### How?

- Set up a vermicomposter (indoor composter with worms); use the 'worm soil' to fertilize plants indoors or outdoors.
- Research which plants support pollinators and start your own pollinator garden.
- Set up a birdfeeder at home or at school; watch it every day. Keep a record of who visits, what you see when they visit, how often they come, what time of day, weather, etc. How many different kinds of birds visit your feeder?
- Research the different kinds of fish that live nearby. Go fishing together. What kinds of fish do you catch? Remember to release the small ones so they can live and mature.
- Try sprouting seeds of beans or peas; eat them in a salad.
- Visit a wetland, forest or meadow. How many different living things can you find in a small area? Use the iNaturalist app to help identify what you find. Make a list of what you found there.

### Why?

This is an ideal age for deeply exploring the world and discovering your identity in the miraculous web of life. Children begin to understand that they can influence the world around them, and the importance of not only taking from nature, but of giving back as well. These are the seeds of 'agency' - knowing that you can act in ways that benefit the well-being of yourself and others.



“

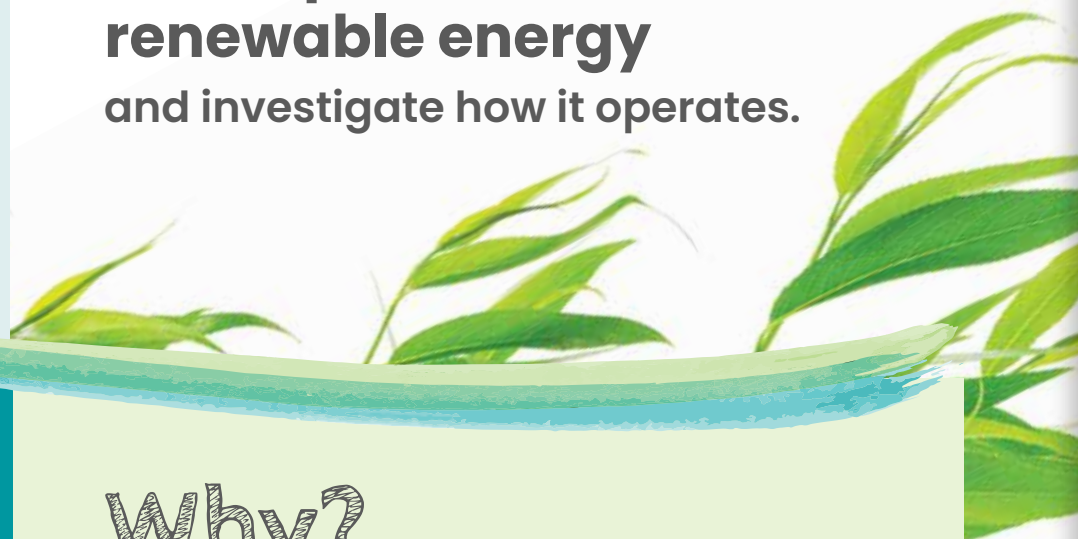
“We have been so interested in the bugs emerging as the weather changes, so we spent the afternoon on a bug hunt! We discovered worms, ants, beetles, and even a firefly larvae! We’ve been thinking about what kind of habitats each different bug might need, and are looking into setting up a terrarium where we can watch some plants grow and worms dig!”

-Cat Trites  
(early childhood educator)

## AGE 10-11 YRS

# Landmark 16

**Visit a place that uses renewable energy and investigate how it operates.**

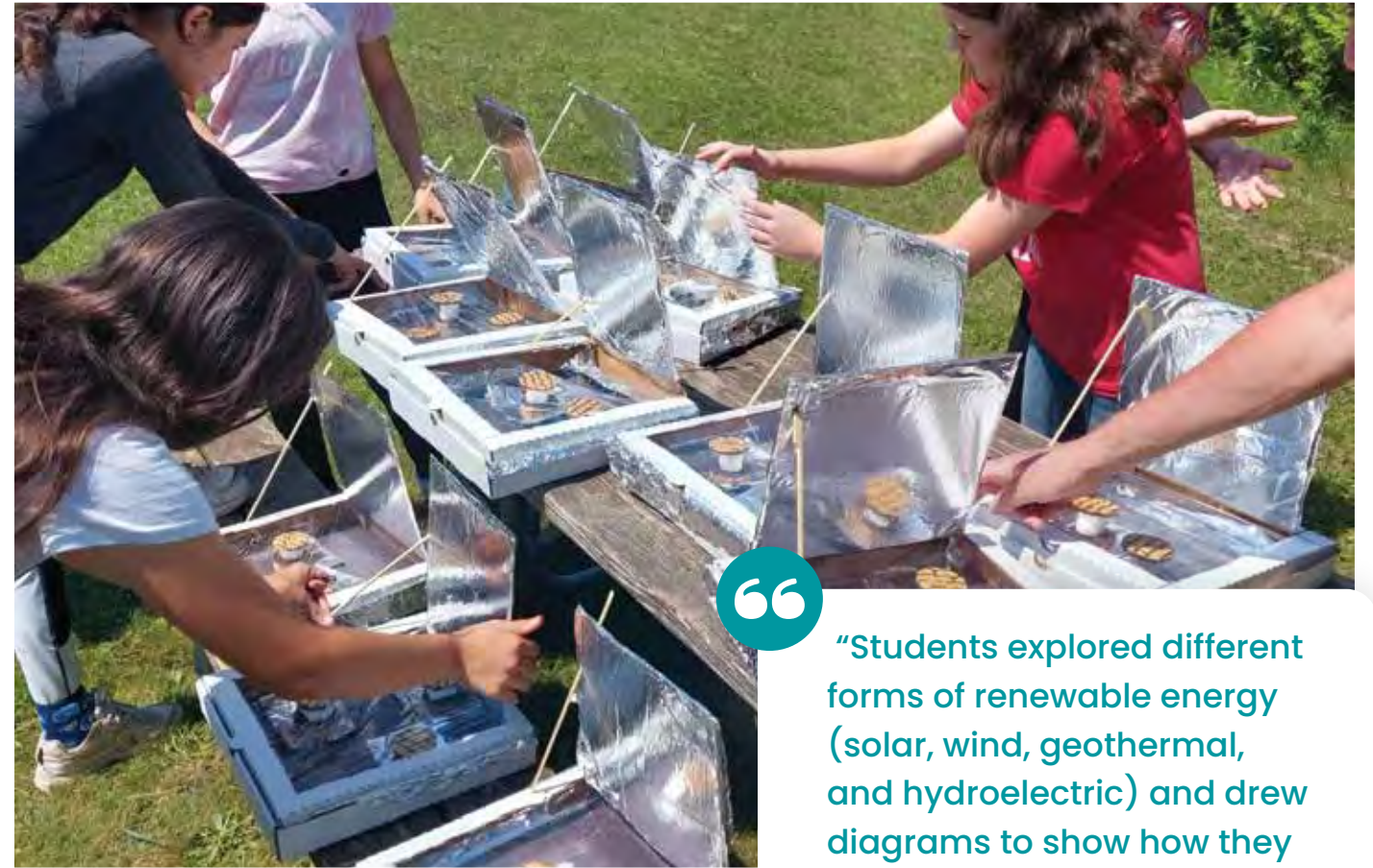
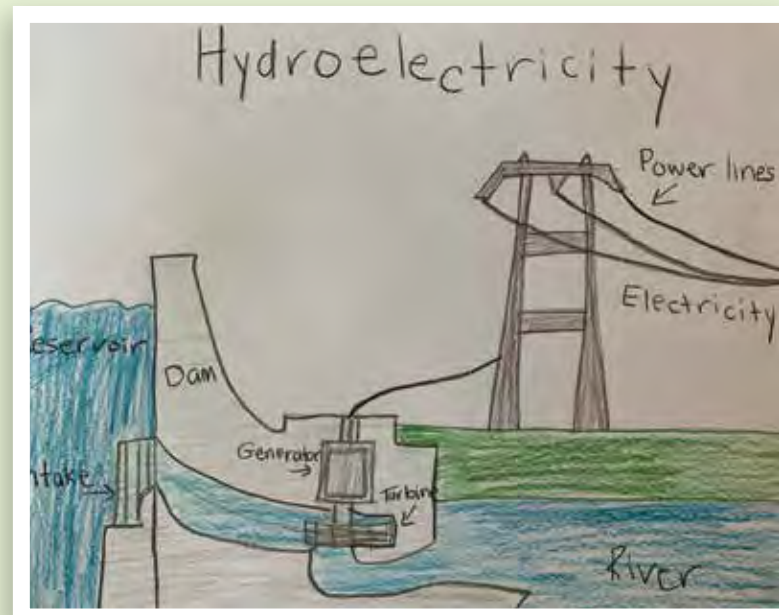


## How?

- Go for a walk in your community and see if you can find any buildings with solar panels or any evidence of nearby wind turbines.
- Contact your local utilities and find out if any of your community's electricity comes from hydroelectric stations.
- Do you have a hydroelectric station or solar farm in your community? See if you can arrange a tour.
- Try making simple solar cookers and have a 'cookout' on a sunny day.
- Take a poll in your class; do any students live in homes with geothermal systems? invite someone to speak to your class about how geothermal heating works.
- Explore other options for reducing our use of fossil fuels, such as renewable fibres for clothing, locally produced food and active transportation

## Why?

We live in a time where our energy choices are the major cause of climate change. Young people can begin to explore this environmental challenge and learn about energy options that don't rely on fossil fuels. This can contribute to their growing sense of agency and understanding the importance of making wise lifestyle choices.



“

“Students explored different forms of renewable energy (solar, wind, geothermal, and hydroelectric) and drew diagrams to show how they work. We planned a virtual visit to Camp Kawartha Environment Centre and learned that it uses solar hot water, geothermal heating, conservation, and photovoltaic panels!”

- Amanda Hipgrave (teacher)



“

“We participated in the local fibre production activity (video and zoom call, exploring samples of Sheep and Alpaca wool) as a source of renewable clothing fibres. Students were very curious about the sheering process. They learned a lot about farming sheep and alpacas.”

- Shannon Cannon (teacher)

## AGE 10-11 YRS

# Landmark 17

**Try at least three new outdoor activities that don't use fossil fuels.**

**Include a sport, a craft and a survival skill.**

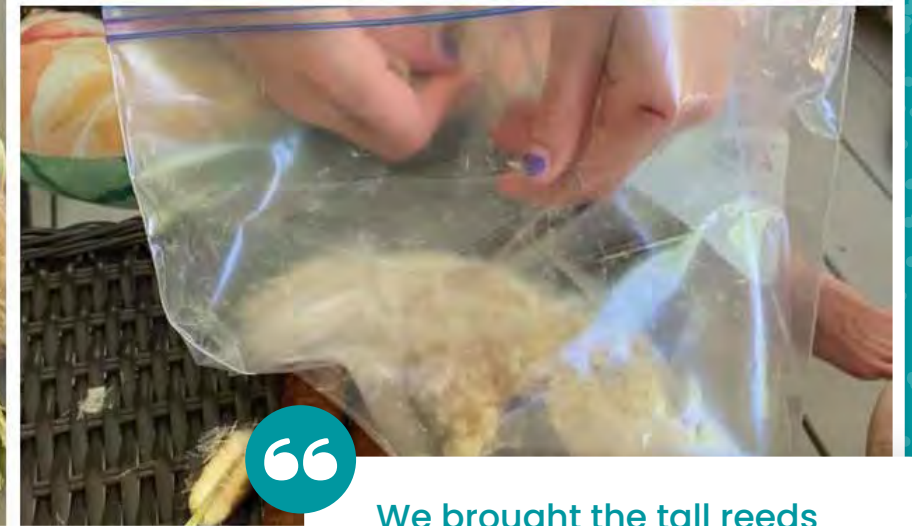
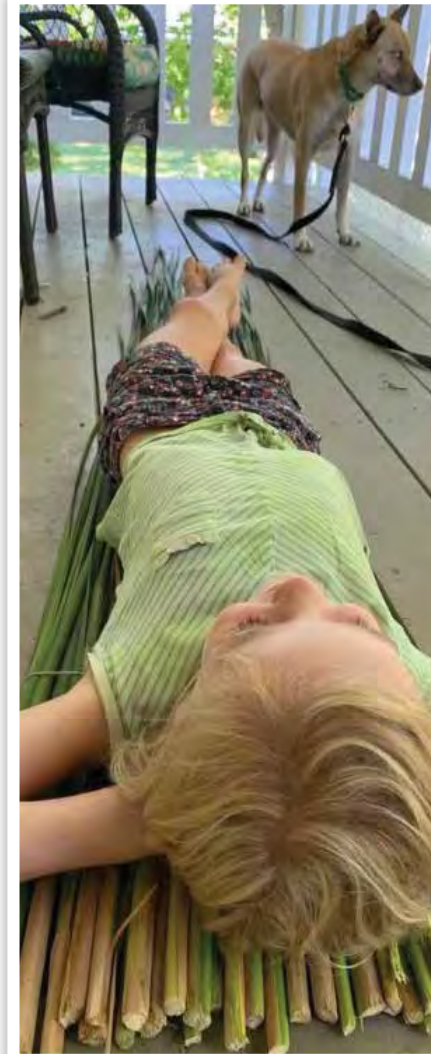
## How?

- Try a sport you've never done before: archery, snowshoeing, canoeing, lacrosse. Which of these were originally developed by First Peoples?
- Learn how to build a fire using only natural materials found nearby.
- Create an outdoor shelter that will protect you from the elements.
- Organize a mini-Olympics at your school with a variety of sports for students to try.
- Try a craft using only natural materials: try stringing a weaving frame between a square of sticks, and weave natural materials to make a beautiful wall-hanging.



## Why?

These activities help to develop more complex outdoor skills to overcome fears and develop confidence. This also strengthens a sense of personal identity and builds a greater understanding of the history of the land and its peoples.



“

We brought the tall reeds home and with string I showed my mom how to tie them into a cattail mat. First Nation Peoples used this technique to make beds, baskets and clothes. I also fluffed the brown cattails and put it in a bag. We brought it camping and used it as a fire starter.”

-Isla Passey (student)



# AGE 10-11 YRS

## Landmark 18

### Celebrate a local natural area.

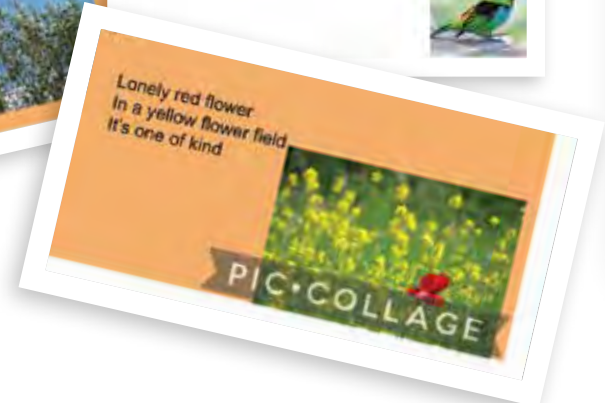
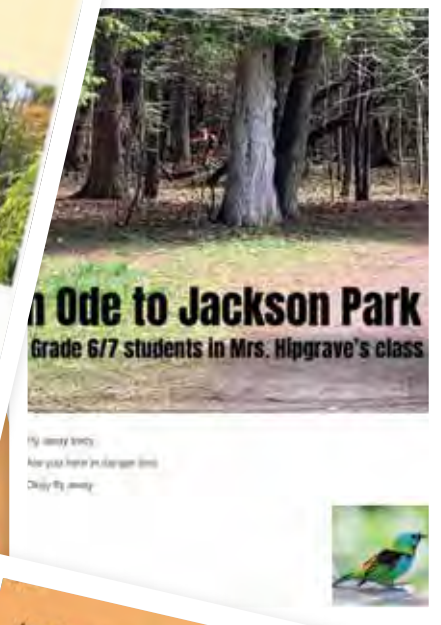
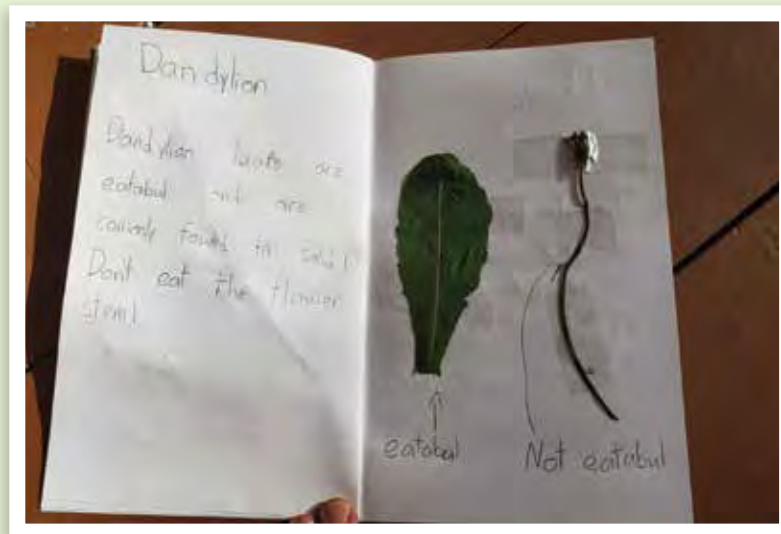
Create a book, blog or video about a nearby natural area to encourage people to visit and appreciate it.

### How?

- Make a travel guide for a nearby natural area that you like to visit; include photos and written descriptions of why it's a great destination.
- Visit your natural area during different seasons. Are there different things to see and do, depending on the season?
- Invite local experts to share their knowledge of the area to expand your understanding of its history and biology.
- Work with others to produce maps, artwork, stories or poems for your book or blog to reflect what you learned and how you feel about the area.
- 'Did you find that everyone sees the same things as beautiful or interesting? If not, what do you think contributes to these differing opinions?'
- Discuss how you could encourage others to visit, enjoy and protect the area.

### Why?

Thinking about what makes a natural area unique and beautiful sparks deeper discussions of our values and our relationship to the natural world. This is an excellent class project that invites diverse opinions and encourages students to express their perspectives in a variety of creative ways. If students continue to monitor the space they have celebrated, they may find evidence of both respectful as well as thoughtless interactions with the area. At this stage of development, young people can begin to explore what shapes our values and our relationships with other living things.



“For National Poetry Month in April, students wrote and compiled a book of poetry to celebrate Jackson Park. They were inspired by a nature walk and wanted to capture the moments that stood out to them the most.”

-Amanda Hipgrave (teacher)

## Explore biodiversity.

Find out what lives in a nearby wetland, forest or meadow.

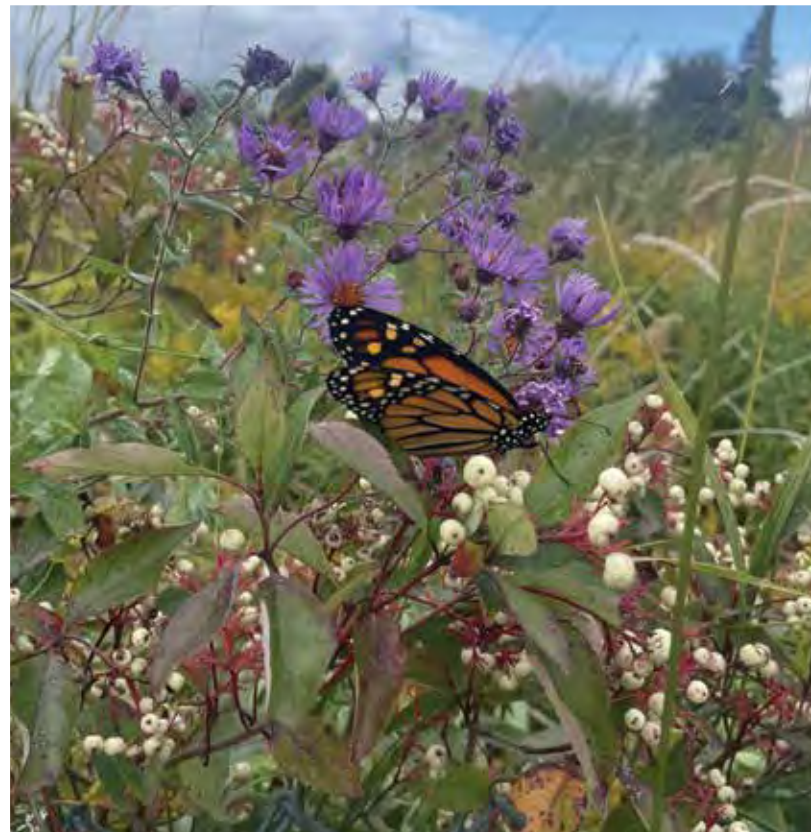


## How?

- Visit a wetland in early spring and listen for frogs calling; how many different kinds of calls can you hear? Go back a month later and see if you hear different frog calls.
- Explore a local forest or meadow by matching older students with their younger 'buddies.' Have each pair look for as many different living things as they can. Keep a record of what was found.
- Visit a local stream with dip nets, buckets and magnifying glasses. Look for living things in the sediments; collect them in your net and place gently in a bucket of clean water. How would you describe the animals you found? Can you find any clues about what they eat or where they live? Be sure to release the animals back to where you found them.
- How many different kinds of trees can you find in a nearby forest? Compare the bark, branches and leaves. Do different trees grow in wet places than dry places? Can you find evidence of insects living on these trees?

## Why?

Young people in their pre-teen years can be encouraged to go beyond observing and naming the living and non-living parts of a habitat, but to start exploring relationships and interactions in a real-life setting. Which plants are used for food and shelter by which insects, birds or mammals? Identifying a resident of a habitat can open the door to learning more about its life and needs, and a deeper understanding of the complex links between living things and their environment (including humans).



“

"On summer solstice, we slowly explored our yard on hands and knees, peeking at the various plants and the animals on the plants. We found lots of interesting things on our milkweed plants in particular (beetles, aphids, weevils, thrips, native bees, flies, and a spider)!"

-Lisa Fitzsimmons  
(parent)

# Plan, conduct and evaluate at least two environmental projects.



“

"Students completed the: Schoolyard Report Card. They drew a map, filled in a Report Card ('Habitat for People' and 'A Healthy Environment'), and are making recommendations to our school principal."

-Karen Brown (teacher)

“

"Our intermediate students planned and ran outdoor activities for the whole school for a whole week! This project lifted the spirits of every student and staff and got everyone outside enjoying the brisk spring air."

-Lindsay Bowen (teacher)

## How?

- Students can measure and map their schoolyard and develop a plan to improve it as a habitat for people and/or wildlife.
- Plan and map a local daytrip for the class or family; use sustainable forms of transportation to get there (walk, bike, canoe, bus etc.). Bring a picnic on your trip and reflect on what you experienced when you return to home or school.
- Research the life cycle and environmental impacts of an item or fashion product you use regularly; write a letter to the company to applaud the good things about the product and suggest changes that could make the product more sustainable.
- Plan activities that senior students can do with younger buddies, and have a combined fun day at school.
- Participate in a local conservation project. This can include monitoring wildlife populations, planting trees and building a garden for wildlife.

## Why?

To further develop motivation and empowerment, young people need opportunities to be leaders and decision-makers in their communities. It's wise to limit the scope of initial projects to keep them manageable. Planning, leading and reflecting on projects are wonderful opportunities to learn, grow and build a sense of hope.



“

"Our class is taking part in the Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program-Classroom Hatchery Program. This program is delivered to us virtually through the OFAH this year. We are learning about the life cycle of the salmon and watching the whole process through video conference. We will hopefully have our own aquarium with eggs next year, to have a chance to take care of the fry, watch them grow, and help release them into Lake Ontario."

- Heather Morton (teacher)



**Learn about at least two other cultures** by meeting and talking with someone whose culture is different from yours.

## How?

- Invite local Indigenous Elders and Knowledge-holders to play a role in the education of all children and youth.
- Encourage people in your community to share the foods and traditions of their homeland.
- Invite immigrants to share their experiences of leaving their homeland and making a home in a new place.
- Visit a seniors' home and write the story of one senior's life.
- Participate in special events held in local Indigenous communities such as making maple syrup, harvesting wild rice, or Pow Wow celebrations.
- Plan special events to honour annual recognition days such as National Indigenous Peoples' Day in June or Black Peoples' Awareness Month in February.

## Why?

It is ideal to provide opportunities throughout childhood to develop meaningful and respectful relationships with people from many backgrounds and cultures. This becomes especially important in the early teen years when the peer group is the focal point of social interaction. In our world of global communication, peace and harmony depend on knowing that there is no 'Us' and 'Them.' We are all inextricably linked, and learning to value human diversity is equally important to valuing broader biodiversity.



“

Junior and Intermediate students attended an assembly to learn about Black History Month, the African diaspora, Jamaican culture, and Viola Desmond. A big thank you to Charmaine Magumbe for her time, knowledge, and kindness!”

-Amanda Hipgrave  
(teacher)



“

"Our school enjoys the presence of many New Canadian friends. Several of them are currently observing Ramadan. Two students from our class, are doing daily announcements. We are learning new things every day. Thank you Tahani and Gulbinda! "

-Karen Brown (teacher)



# Landmark 22

## Become a 'Citizen Scientist'.

Participate in a program to collect and submit data about the local environment.

### How?

- Try user-friendly programs such as 'iNaturalist' to help identify things in nature, and submit information about local ecosystems.
- Classes can assist with monitoring Monarch butterfly populations by raising Monarchs and reporting sightings to 'Monarch Watch'.
- Local conservation organizations can teach students basic techniques for monitoring water quality.
- Students can track the migration of birds, butterflies and even whales by visiting 'Journey North'.
- In spring and summer, students can help to monitor local amphibian populations through 'Frog Watch'.
- Students can work with local experts to learn tree identification skills, and then help to submit tree inventories that help with urban forest planning.

### Why?

This provides an ideal opportunity to combine outdoor observation with the math skills of collecting and evaluating data. This contributes to students' developing sense of agency - knowing that they can play a role in influencing the world around them. It also helps them understand that there are real-world applications for the math skills they are learning. There are many programs that encourage input from citizens in all seasons. These help to guide a wide variety of conservation initiatives.



66

"We raised, tagged and released 8 monarch butterflies. We also submitted a spreadsheet of our data to Monarch Watch."

-Sheila Potter (teacher)

66

"We learned about the Otonabee Region Watershed, indicators of watershed health and measured chemical and physical properties of water."

-Janet Gray (teacher)



## Design your own Healthy House.



### How?

- Discuss what makes a house healthy or unhealthy. How can an existing house be adapted to be healthier for people and the environment?
- Visit a local sustainable home. What unique features does it have?
- Research a variety of approaches to sustainable buildings; consider energy source and use, water source and use, building materials, landscaping options etc.
- Draw a floor plan of your sustainable 'dream' home, and a sketch of what it looks like from the outside.
- Draw a 3D model of your healthy house. Combine other students' work to create a 3D healthy community. Compare and discuss the variety of ideas presented by students.

### Why?

Creativity thrives at all ages, if students are encouraged to think in innovative ways. As young people continue to look at human relationships with the natural world, it makes sense to include our own habitats in the discussion. How can we live in ways that are kind to the environment, including how we build and maintain our own homes? This is an ideal research project - to explore sustainable building options to create living spaces where both people and nature can thrive.



“

Students researched and built models of an energy efficient home that would require less electricity/energy from traditional methods. They included lots of solar panels, wind turbines, gardens, rain barrels, and energy efficient appliances. A couple really thought outside the box, including things like a library so people would spend less time on tech!”

-Shannon Cannon (teacher)

“

GreenUP's Girls Climate Leadership Camp participated in a workshop lead by the Endeavour Centre's Jen Feigin. This workshop focused on healthy and sustainable building techniques and materials. This workshop also highlighted the important role that girls and women can have in industries such as construction, where gender-based discrimination is an ongoing barrier.”

-Brianna Salmon  
(community educator)

# Calculate your Ecological or Carbon Footprint and make a plan to reduce it.

## How?

- Try an online calculator such as footprintcalculator.org; another option that has separate versions for middle school and secondary school is the International Student Carbon Footprint Challenge at [www.depts.washington.edu/i2sea/iscfc/calculate.php](http://www.depts.washington.edu/i2sea/iscfc/calculate.php)
- Discuss how you compare with the average footprint for your country and for the earth.
- Discuss what aspects of your lifestyle you can personally control (e.g. a student may not have any control over where their family lives, but could make choices in food consumption or modes of transportation).
- Are there reasonable changes you could make to reduce your footprint? How do your options compare with other students or other people in your family?
- If you wanted to have an impact on the lifestyle choices of other people in your community, what approaches might you consider?

## Why?

Global issues are more manageable when translated to a local and personal level. While it's easiest to keep living in ways that are familiar, exploring the impacts of personal decisions can promote discussion and reflection. Students with their peers can explore the challenges and potential of making different lifestyle choices.



An ecological footprint is a measure of how people take from nature compared to the natural resources available for people.

Directions: Answer each section based on a typical person in your country and community. Record your scores on the next page.

<p><b>Water Use</b></p> <p>My shower/bath on a typical day is:          No shower/bath [0]          3-6 minutes/half-full tub [40]  <u>10+ minutes/full tub [70]</u></p> <p>I flush the toilet:          Every time I use it [40]  <u>Sometimes [20]</u></p> <p>I leave the water running when I brush my teeth. [40]  <u>We use a dishwasher at home. [50]</u>  <u>We water our lawn at home. [50]</u></p>	<p><b>At Home</b></p> <p>1. I live in a house that is often empty. [200]          3. We donate items when we no longer need them. [-10]</p>
<p><b>Food</b></p> <p>I eat animal-based products:          Never (vegan) [0]          Infrequently (vegetarian) [10]          Occasionally [30]  <u>Often (balanced) [50]</u>          Very often (meat daily) [70]</p> <p>I compost my fruit and veggie scraps.  <u>Yes [-10]</u>          No [20]</p> <p>___ of my food is locally grown.          All [0]          Some [20]          None [40]</p> <p>___ of my food is packaged.          All [40]          Some [20]          None [0]</p> <p>___ of my food is processed.          All [40]          Some [20]          None [0]</p>	<p><b>Energy Use</b></p> <p>1. ___ of our appliances are energy efficient.</p> <p>2. I do not use energy-efficient light bulbs.</p> <p>3. My car is not energy efficient.</p> <p>4. My car is not energy efficient.</p> <p><b>Transportation</b></p> <p>1. I drive a car.</p> <p>2. I drive a car.</p> <p>3. I fly.</p> <p>4. I fly.</p>

“

"Students calculated their ecological footprint, examined how Canadian lifestyles compare with other countries, and made personal plans to reduce our footprints."

-Amanda Hipgrave (teacher)

“

"Students found their 'Earth Overshoot Day' and calculated how many Earths would be needed to sustain their lifestyles. They then made recommendations on how they could personally reduce their Carbon Footprint."

-Karen Brown (teacher)

AGE 14-15 YRS

## Landmark 25

Explore and develop at least three outdoor skills that are new to you.

### How?

- Explore opportunities to try new adventurous sports such as rock-climbing, white-water canoeing, cross country skiing or kayaking.
- Try an overnight canoe or wilderness backpacking trip.
- Work with a naturalist to identify edible wild plants in your area and explore the meaning of a 'sustainable harvest.'
- Learn how to find your way in a natural area using maps, compass and/or GPS.
- Try learning how to make a fire without matches or paper. Learn about fire safety and how to be responsible with fire when outdoors.
- Learn how to recognize at least two constellations in the night sky in each of the four seasons. Learn how to tell the four directions using clues in the sky. Learn some of the stories about constellations told by different cultures.

### Why?

Teens enjoy testing their limits as they continue to explore their identity and place in the world. At this age, many teens love the thrill of adventure sports. They are also exploring independence and alternatives to the status quo. This can be a stressful time of life with considerable peer, academic and family pressures. Young people can benefit from exploring a variety of outdoor endeavours to relieve stress, build physical stamina and take breaks from screen time.



AGE 14-15 YRS

## Landmark 26

### Volunteer to help in your community in at least three different ways.

Reflect on what you learned through music, poetry, a blog, journal, or social media.

### How?

- Discuss issues of local concern and possible ways to participate in finding solutions.
- Work with a local conservation organization to help restore terrestrial or aquatic habitats.
- Help a local food bank or food co-operative in distributing healthy food to people experiencing poverty.
- Help in a local animal shelter to care for animals without homes.
- Conduct a food drive to collect donations for a local food bank.
- Conduct a fundraising project to support a local environmental or social agency whose work you admire.
- Help with transportation surveys to collect data to track active transportation trends in your area.

### Why?

Exploring and responding to local social and environmental issues can expand abilities for social analysis, understanding and empathy. This helps to strengthen personal connection to the local community and develops a sense of purpose and empowerment to help others.



“

Over the years we've learned a lot from, and about, our classmate Israa. Israa is blind and has to learn in ways that are different from the rest of us. In addition, she does it in her second language as Arabic is her first. With several Outdoor Ed trips ahead, we thought it might be time to learn a bit more how she navigates. We needed a better understanding since we will be hiking in terrain that is unfamiliar to her. We hope we will be better guides and helpers in the future.”

-Karen Brown (teacher)

“

Our students are AMAZING volunteers. They help our primary classes every day by acting as lunch monitors in various classes and playing with primary students at recess. It is wonderful to watch them make such positive contributions to our school community.”

-Amanda Hipgrave (teacher)



AGE 14-15 YRS

## Landmark 27

### Plan and go on an extended trip in a wilderness area for at least 3-5 days.

Travel by canoe, bicycle, skis, on foot, snowshoe or any other self-propelled mode of travel.

### How?

- This Landmark can be part of a family vacation, a tripping experience at summer camp, or part of an outdoor adventure program in secondary schools.
- Teens can participate in planning menus, selecting gear and choosing materials for recreation on the trip; travelling light will be an important consideration.
- Try travelling without any electronic devices. Follow standard safety protocols such as notifying friends, family or officials of your departure and planned completion dates, as well as your intended route.
- Write about your trip along the way or when you return. How did your attitude change over time? Did you learn or experience new things? Would you make any changes for a future trip? Did you learn anything about yourself or those you travelled with?

### Why?

Advanced outdoor experiences (including planning, leading and evaluating) are important in enhancing leadership, conflict resolution, teamwork and decision-making skills. Surviving and thriving in unfamiliar and sometimes uncomfortable circumstances can help to build self-esteem and strengthen a sense of identity and accomplishment. Encountering the challenges of living outdoors for an extended time can be a life-changing experience, deepening a personal relationship with the natural world.



“

"Our family spent a glorious 8 days canoeing through Quetico Provincial Park. The park was virtually empty and we went almost 4 days without seeing a soul. Breath taking scenery, gorgeous campsites, spectacular sunsets and the loons completely outdid themselves with their evening symphony. Such a great way to recharge the batteries. Just us, together, with our two canoes, tents, food, and great sense of adventure. The days are hard work, with the paddling, the wind, and especially the portaging. But all that builds one's sense of confidence - internally, and in a sense of wilderness skills."

-Cameron Douglas (parent)

AGE 16-17 YRS

## Landmark 28

**Help to rehabilitate something that has been damaged** (such as an animal, waterway or natural area) over an extended period of time.

### How?

- Explore opportunities available in your community to help with rehabilitation. Contact local conservation organizations to ask about volunteer opportunities for ecological rehabilitation such as shoreline stabilization and habitat enhancement.
- Talk to school administrators about rewilding a section of your schoolyard. Create a small pollinator garden; plant wildlife-friendly trees and shrubs. Learn how to care for them.
- Local wildlife rehabilitation centres may have volunteer opportunities to care for injured wildlife while they recover and prepare for release back to their homes.
- Local animal shelters may have opportunities to care for and socialize with pets who are waiting for adoption.
- Explore nearby opportunities to visit with people recovering from injuries such as accidents or convalescing from surgery. Teens may provide important support by playing games, reading stories or chatting with people through their recovery.

### Why?

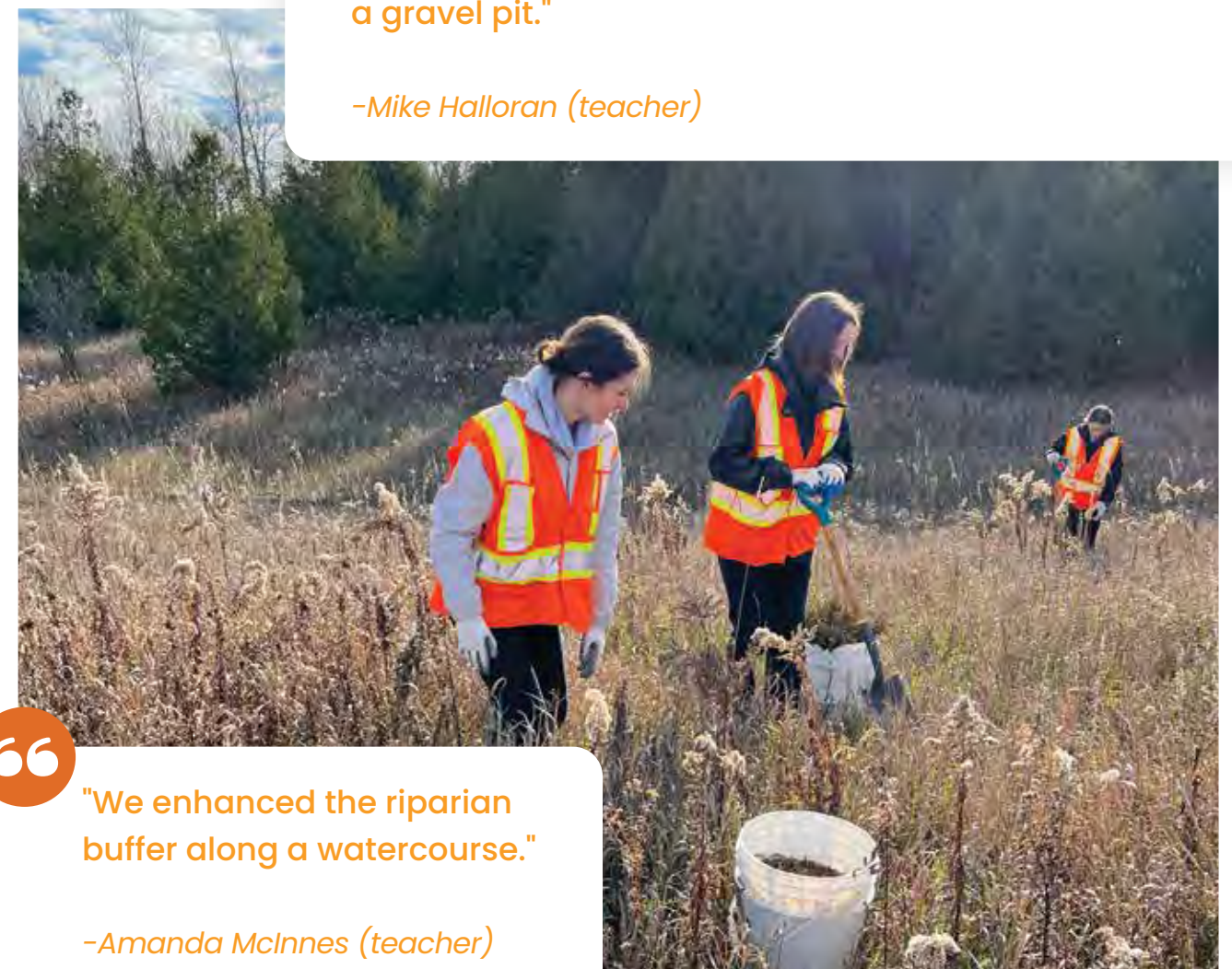
Young people can become disheartened by the extent of environmental damage caused by human activities as their awareness of local and global issues expands. It is important to balance awareness of issues with opportunities to build skills for rehabilitation and regeneration. A sense of hope and empowerment can grow from knowing that people are a vital healing and restoring force in the world.



“

"The students from a grade 11 Environmental Science class from Holy Cross planted trees in Ennismore with Otonabee Conservation as part of the rehabilitation of a gravel pit."

-Mike Halloran (teacher)



“

"We enhanced the riparian buffer along a watercourse."

-Amanda McInnes (teacher)

# AGE 16-17 YRS

## Landmark 29

### Explore a local issue of social justice.

Develop a plan to raise public awareness or motivate public involvement.

## How?

- Identify issues of injustice that concern the students. Have they experienced or witnessed examples of social discrimination? What may be the root causes of these issues? What role can they play in promoting justice and equity?
- Is homelessness an issue of concern in your community? Have students met or talked with someone experiencing homelessness? What factors may contribute to this situation? How could students raise public awareness of local homelessness and encourage public participation in addressing the issue?
- Make a 'mind map' of the issue that concerns you. Explore the various root causes of the issue, including ideas from other people. Add to your map any actions you can think of to help address the issue.
- Express your concerns and ideas for action to people in positions of influence such as politicians, school board officials, directors of social or environmental organizations.
- Identify, celebrate and promote examples of positive action being taken to find solutions to issues that concern you.

## Why?

To continue focusing on social issues at the stage of life when social interactions are so important, this Landmark encourages youth to identify and discuss a local issue of social justice that is meaningful to them. Young people benefit from opportunities to explore issues such as racial or religious intolerance, gender identity and discrimination, poverty, environmental racism and others. Discussion of issues should be linked to exploring potential solutions, and opportunities to take meaningful local action. This is an important opportunity to develop and practice leadership skills and expand an understanding of the power of collective action.



66

"We hosted an interactive workshop on Youth as Agents of Change in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to engage students in social justice issues, including poverty, climate change, racial discrimination and leaving no one behind. During the workshop, we encouraged students to participate in discussions by asking a series of thought-provoking questions. We explored examples and useful case studies highlighting the underlying factors causing poverty in Peterborough and local actions taken to address these issues. We spoke about how the local community can work towards resolving these issues and how youth can take action and make positive change to build a more sustainable future."

- Margaret Zou (community educator)

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



### Canada's Challenge of Leaving No One Behind

Those considered **left behind** in Canada often include women, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, people with disabilities, seniors, members of the 2SLGBT+ community, and youth

Do you see anyone missing from this list?  
Who do you see being left behind in your community?

"We discussed with students how the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) principles would ensure that Canada meets the universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the Indigenous Peoples, and a stronger degree of protection for Indigenous rights than those currently in place under Canadian law. We engaged students throughout the workshop using interactive activities on Slido and Kahoot. Students were encouraged to participate in reflections and discussions on how UNDRIP resonated with them and how their knowledge and understanding of UNDRIP can help to generate a positive impact in the local community."

-Margaret Zou (community educator)

## Use a creative medium to describe your 'ecological self'.

How are you are connected to the world? Express your perspective in poetry, music, visual or dramatic art.

### How?

- What is the meaning of 'Your Ecological Self?' This involves thinking about all the ways that you are connected to the world around you. Your human community is certainly an important part of that, but you also depend on air to breathe, water to drink, and many other living things that provide your food and shelter. In turn, you also affect your world in many ways. Your personal ecological self is like a fingerprint - it is unique to you, and unlike anyone else's.
- We encourage you to represent your ecological self in any way you wish - through prose, poetry, a drawing, a sculpture, a journal entry, a video or anything else you choose. In many ways, this is the pinnacle of the journey towards stewardship and kinship - an awareness of the incredible tapestry of life where each of us is an important thread and plays a special role in holding the fabric together.

### Why?

A fundamental concept in Indigenous teachings is that we are all interconnected. This knowledge of the inextricable links between all beings, also brings a great deal of responsibility. Other beings support us, and we must in turn support the well-being of life on earth. As young people shape their lives and grow into adulthood, they can find comfort and purpose in the knowledge that they are part of a large and awesome family of life on this home we call Earth. This awareness grounds and centres us, and can be a lifeline amidst the stress and complexity of modern life.



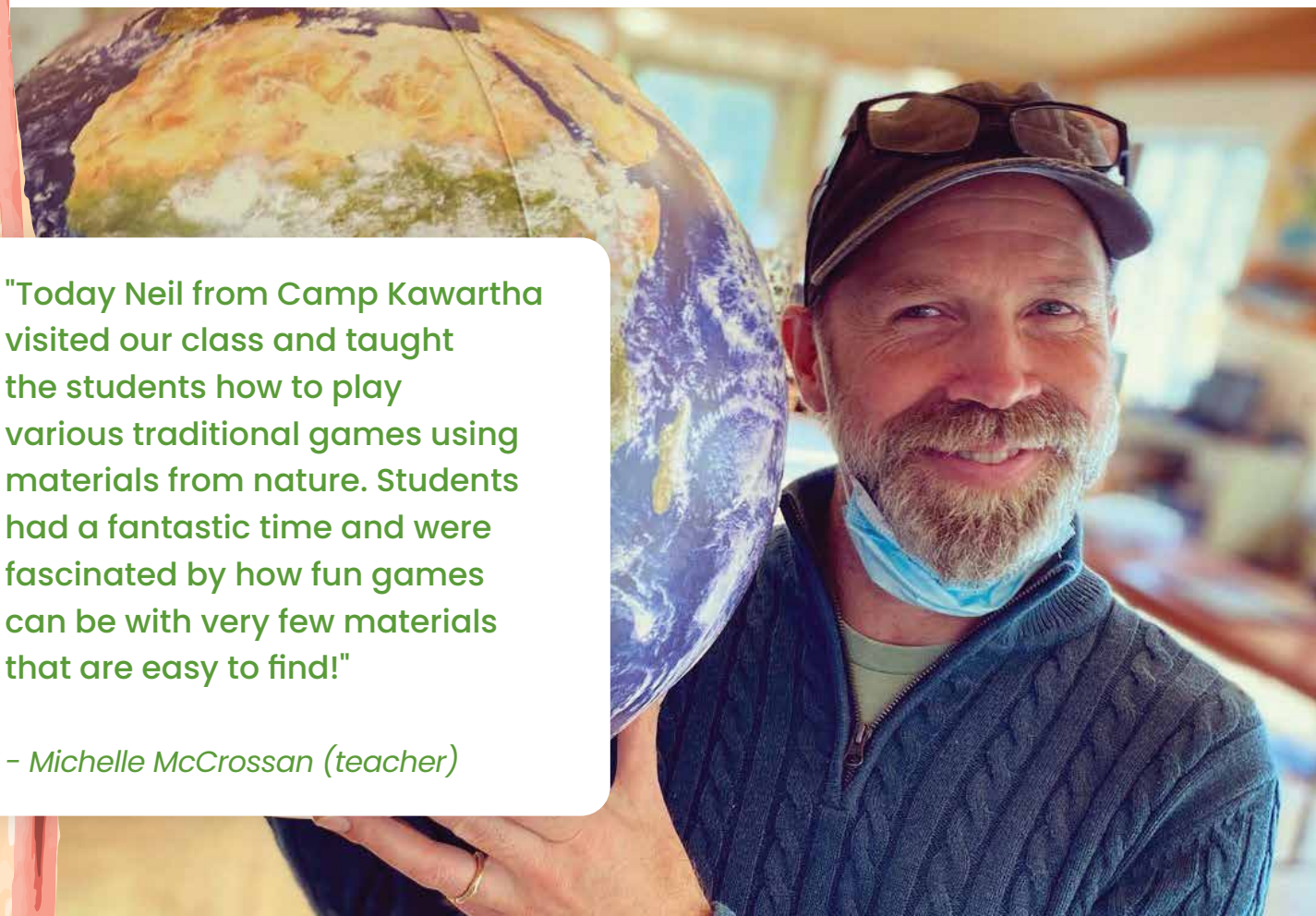


# Program Partners

# Program Partners

While many individuals and organizations have played a role in the Pathway Project, here we showcase those who specifically offered outreach programs for Pathway schools and early learning centres. Since this timeframe overlapped the COVID-19 pandemic between 2020 and 2023, many of our partners combined virtual with in-person outreach in response to shifting health regulations. However, we all recognize that in-person, outdoor mentorship is preferred wherever possible.

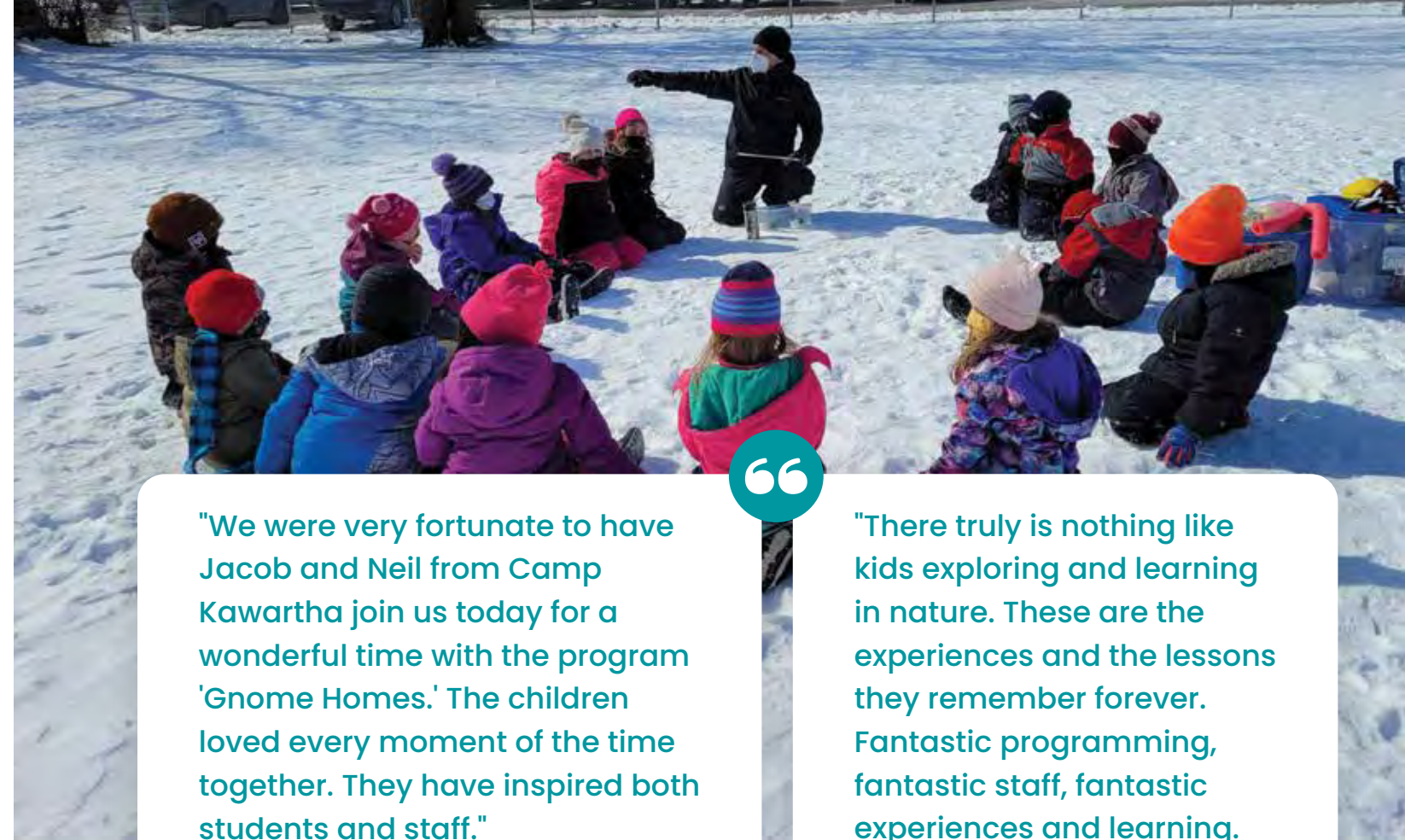
The Peterborough region is blessed with many talented people who regularly do excellent nature-based programming with young people. The umbrella of the Pathway Project provided a sense of unity and common purpose for many wonderful existing programs, and also encouraged the creation of new ones. With funding support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, we were able to contract many of these partners to offer their programs to schools and early learning centres participating in the Pathway Project.



“

"Today Neil from Camp Kawartha visited our class and taught the students how to play various traditional games using materials from nature. Students had a fantastic time and were fascinated by how fun games can be with very few materials that are easy to find!"

- Michelle McCrossan (teacher)



“

"We were very fortunate to have Jacob and Neil from Camp Kawartha join us today for a wonderful time with the program 'Gnome Homes.' The children loved every moment of the time together. They have inspired both students and staff."

- Wendy Burton-Booth  
(early childhood educator)

"There truly is nothing like kids exploring and learning in nature. These are the experiences and the lessons they remember forever. Fantastic programming, fantastic staff, fantastic experiences and learning. Thank you!!!!"

-(teacher)

## Camp Kawartha

In addition to playing a lead role in developing and administering the Pathway Project, Camp Kawartha delivered many different outreach programs to schools as a Pathway Program Partner. While they normally host visiting classes at their two facilities on Clear Lake and in Peterborough, during the pandemic Camp Kawartha staff were able to visit schools and offer nature-based programs in schoolyards. Program themes included Nests and Nest Making, Adaptations, Inuit and Traditional Games, Alternative Energy, Biodiversity and many more. In addition, a staff training opportunity was available, where Executive Director Jacob Rodenburg worked directly with three teachers from the same school to build their skills and confidence in outdoor learning, while Camp Kawartha staff worked with their classes to deliver individualized outdoor programs. This unique and valuable opportunity avoided the expense of paying for teacher release time, while still providing professional development during school hours. As an added bonus, several classes had memorable outdoor learning experiences with skilled outdoor educators. Jacob also provided a complementary resource '[Teachers' Guide to Outdoor Learning](#)' to participating teachers to help continue and expand their skills and confidence.

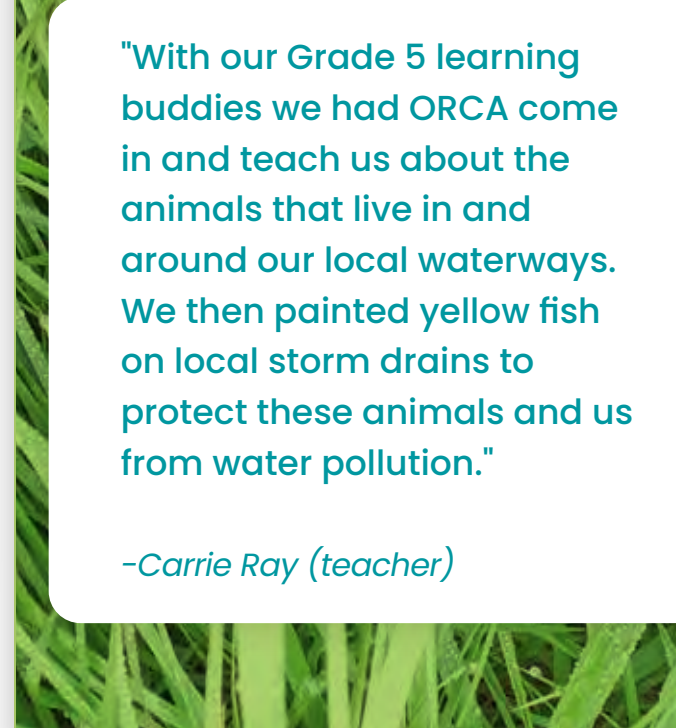


"Wow! Thank you, Nature Nancy, for the amazing time playing, exploring, laughing, and learning. We enjoyed taking pictures of leaves, the sky, and each other with the nature cameras. The magic paint really was magical as we saw colours appear while we painted. As some of the kids said, 'we want to stay outside forever!'"

-Indrani Talapatra (teacher)

"Today we had so much fun with Nature Nancy! We learned all about the components of soil, had an opportunity to explore the critters that live in our forest floor, and got to make our very own terrariums. We had an absolute blast this morning and can't thank Nature Nancy enough for leading us through a tremendous morning."

-Frankie Perrin (teacher)



"With our Grade 5 learning buddies we had ORCA come in and teach us about the animals that live in and around our local waterways. We then painted yellow fish on local storm drains to protect these animals and us from water pollution."

-Carrie Ray (teacher)

## Otonabee Conservation

Otonabee Conservation (ORCA) has been a local leader for many years in teaching students about the Otonabee River Watershed, and providing hands-on opportunities to protect and restore habitats for wildlife. While ORCA staff deliver a variety of stewardship programs to elementary and secondary students, they focused primarily on grades 5 to 12 for their Pathway Program Partnership, engaging older students in a variety of hands-on monitoring and rehabilitation programs. An introductory in-class or virtual session was followed by an outdoor opportunity to assess water quality, become familiar with local species and evaluate indicators of health such as benthic invertebrates. Many classes also participated in restoring shoreline and upland habitat, or building pollinator and rain gardens.



"The class worked with Otonabee Conservation to plant approximately 400 trees as part of the Selwyn Aggregate Pit Rehabilitation Project. Red pine, white pine, white spruce and cedar were planted and then mulched for moisture retention. The trees will generate biodiversity, sequester carbon and rehabilitate the soil. Meredith did a wonderful job getting everything organized and Paul led the 'Tree Planting 101' session. There's nothing quite so nourishing for the soul than planting a tree ... or 400!"

-Cameron Douglas (teacher)

## Think Outside with 'Nature Nancy'

Nancy Thomson (aka 'Nature Nancy') runs a business called 'Think Outside' that specializes in visiting schools and delivering fascinating outdoor programming in the schoolyard or nearby natural areas. As a qualified classroom teacher, Nancy has developed a suite of curriculum-linked programs on topics such as Animal Babies, Feathered Friends, Snowshoeing, Park Art, and many more. The Pathway Project covered the cost of Nancy's visits for teachers who hadn't worked with her previously, to help spread skills and enthusiasm for outdoor learning to as many teachers as possible.





## Riverview Park and Zoo

Riverview Park and Zoo (RPZ) focused their excellent programs on early learners and primary grades, linking with Landmarks 2 and 5. These Landmarks encourage children to have positive interactions with animals from a young age. RPZ offered a variety of options including a limited number of in-class 'foster pets' which were loaned out to classrooms, complete with enclosure and supplies, for several weeks at a time. This allowed children to learn from zookeepers how to care for the animals, and to develop personal friendships both with the animals and the zoo staff. During COVID-19, the RPZ also offered a 'virtual pet' option, where classes could visit 'their' pet online over several weeks. A virtual zoo tour was another option offered to local schools and pre-schools, allowing children to visit a variety of animals during pandemic restrictions, and understand their unique needs.

“

"The tortoise that we have been taking care of is going back to the Riverview Park and Zoo next week. We have learned so much and the students are now experts on what living things need to survive! We remember that tortoise needs clean water, a safe place to live, and the right kind of food (Tortoise especially likes kale!). Over the past many weeks, our class has enjoyed doing a variety of literacy activities related to our tortoise friend and this week we are writing messages to say goodbye to tortoise."

-Indrani Talapatra (teacher)

## TRACKS

Trent University and the Kawartha World Issues Centre host a unique program called 'TRACKS' (Trent Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge and Science). TRACKS weaves Indigenous science with Western science to create a unique opportunity for cross-cultural learning. While in-person visits were limited during the pandemic, educators from the TRACKS program developed a series of seasonal learning kits delivered directly to families as incentives for outdoor exploration rooted in Indigenous guidance. As health restrictions eased, TRACKS was able to visit local classes with a 'River Race' program to explore the lifecycle and challenges experienced by local freshwater salmon.

"We ordered the TRACKS spring activity book and Jack really enjoyed learning about and planting kosmaan (squash) seeds and watching them sprout! We extended the activity by sprouting some alfalfa for him to see, and we also have some arugula, kale and watercress sprouting in our garden outside! Jack's excited to eat a salad with all of our veggies."

-Sarah Crouthers (parent)

"Using the winter family activity guide created by TRACKS, we have tried many new winter lessons and activities. One we tried recently was called "Catch! That! Flake!". We learned a few different words for snow in Anishinaabemowin and about how snowflakes form. Using black felt, a magnifying glass, and a reference page with photos, we identified as many different snowflake forms as we could (triangular, hexagonal, stellar dendrites, branched stars, stellar plates, and simple prisms)."

-Emma Langley (teacher)





"Kate came to sing songs with our preschool and toddler room. The children were very engaged by clapping, singing and dancing along. What fun to have a member of the community share her talents with us!"

-Kristen Nelson  
(early childhood educator)



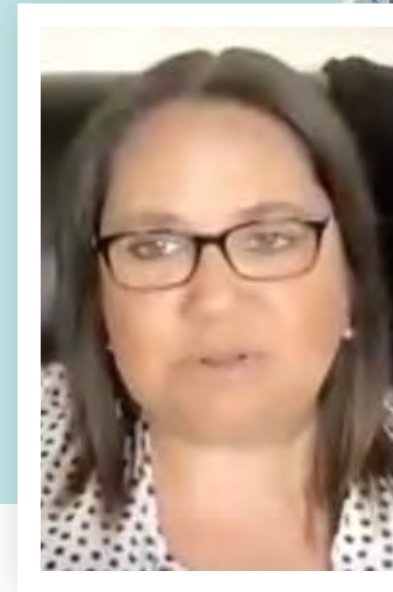
"Your visit to Baby & Me was a multi-layered gift to the families. It was lovely to see the parents (and a grandparent) engaging with their little ones. I know those families have been enriched by the experience and will be even more intentional in building their children's perception of and relationship with the natural world around them. Thank you for what you do, Kate – you inspire us!"

-Karen Clysdale (librarian)



## Kate Jarrett

A wonderful local musician and storyteller, Kate Jarrett has focused her programs with very young children in pre-school settings and Kindergarten. Sharing her love of nature through songs, stories, rhymes and finger games, Kate has enchanted children, parents and educators alike. Young children have a natural affinity for rhythm and rhyme, and these fun, interactive experiences can play an important role in building lifelong connections between children, their world, and the people who love them. As a retired children's librarian, Kate also brought a wealth of suggestions to parents and educators for excellent picture books to encourage care, empathy and stewardship of our extended family of living things.



**Learning from the Land and Indigenous People**

Nicole Bell continues her popular Saturday gatherings online. Learn Anishinaabe teachings and explore your local environment. Free of charge.

**January 29  
1-4 PM**

Workshops include smudging, seasonal teachings and stories as well as hands-on nature-based activities. All ages welcome

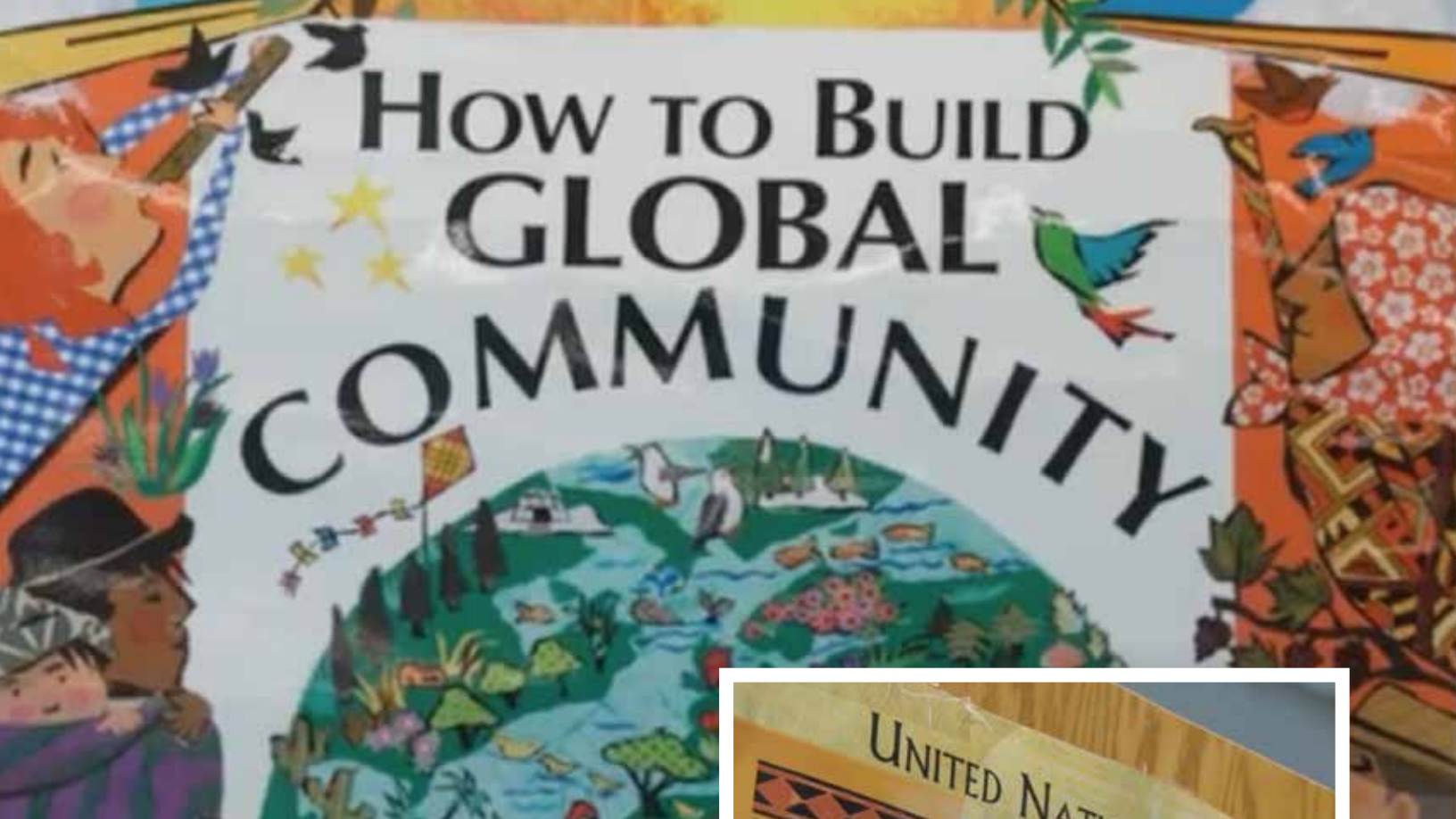
Register by e-mail  
contactlearningfromtheland@gmail.com

Follow @learnonland for announcements

## Learning from the Land

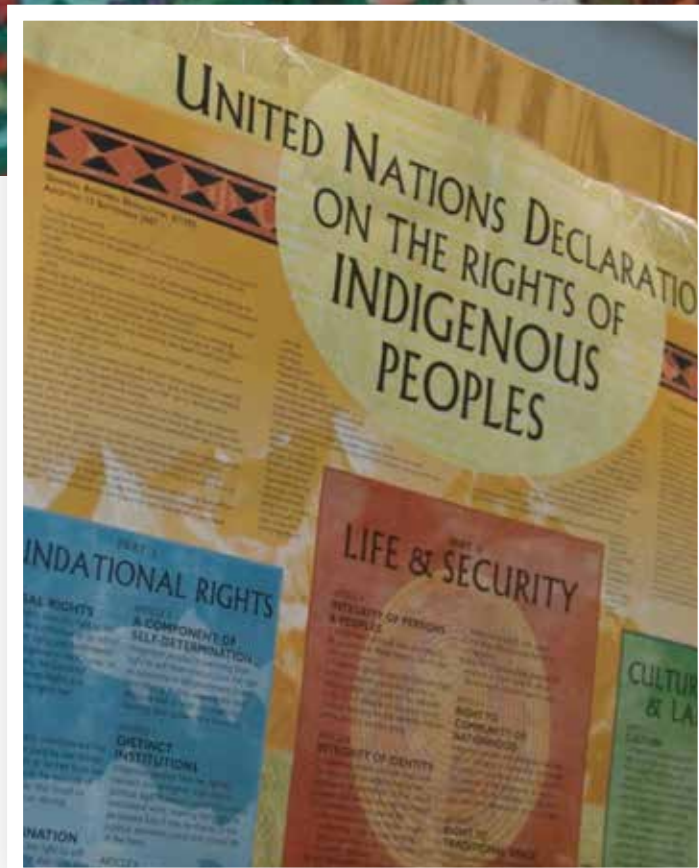
We've been fortunate to work throughout the development of the Pathway Project with Nicole Bell, Senior Indigenous Advisor in the School of Education and Professional Learning at Trent University. Nicole has brought her knowledge of Indigenous ways of teaching and knowing into our collective learning journey, for which we are all grateful. In addition, she offered a program called 'Learning from the Land' to families in the Peterborough region. Although the best setting for learning about the land is invariably being there in person with mentors, Nicole managed to adjust her teachings during COVID so that she could speak to participants through

Zoom, encourage them to do follow-up exploration on their own outdoors, and then regroup for a collective wrap-up to share experiences and learning. Nicole offered three-hour seasonal programs on Saturday afternoons twice each month, as well as more intensive week-long in-person camps from her home on the Kawartha Lakes during the summer months. Nicole's weekly themes included topics such as: migration, bears, turtles, circle teachings, our winged relations, creation stories, Nanaboozhoo stories and eagle teachings. Families and educators from across the Peterborough region participated in, and were enriched by, Nicole's wonderful programs.



## Kawartha World Issues Centre

The Kawartha World Issues Centre (KWIC) has years of experience working with youth to engage them in issues of social justice and the environment. Their Pathway Program Partnership involved working with secondary students to explore local priority issues related to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). KWIC organized a series of live virtual workshops with young people to explore issues of justice and sustainability using interactive tools such as Slido and Kahoot. Then, they discussed methods of taking action such as writing to politicians, inviting Indigenous leaders to speak to their class and creating spoken word or art pieces expressing their feelings on these



important but difficult topics. They were also encouraged to spend time on the land and develop personal relationships with local flora and fauna, to deepen their understanding of issues that resonated with them.



## Glen Caradus

In addition to being a skilled outdoor educator, Glen is a talented musician, puppeteer and storyteller. Glen does a variety of nature-based puppet shows as 'The Paddling Puppeteers.' One of his popular shows is 'Plugged into Nature,' that focuses on the fascinating outdoor relationships that can be found when we leave our digital devices behind and spend time exploring outdoors. Glen weaves participatory songs into his performances with young children, as well as a variety of traditional 'string stories' that create parts of the story out of string weaving. Glen worked primarily with young children for the Pathway Project, delighting tiny tots at Early Learning Centres, and families at public events such as Family Literacy and March Break programs at the Public Library.

"Glen shared his gift of music, as well as his knowledge of some Indigenous words, making our experience all-encompassing."

-Julie Stoter (teacher)



"We had the Paddling Puppeteers visit to discuss the importance of unplugging from our devices and learning all about our natural surroundings. Stories of canoe adventures and travels through Curve Lake showed our kids the need to disconnect from the things that consume us on our phones and iPads."

-Robin Finch (teacher)



## New Canadians' Centre

The New Canadians Centre is very active in Peterborough, welcoming recent immigrants to the area and providing programs that assist with the process of making a home in a new country and community. As a Pathway Program Partner, they offered their 'Living Library' of speakers to visit junior and intermediate classes and share their experiences in their homeland, and the challenges of learning a new language and building new friendships in an unfamiliar place. In addition, they shared their new picture book with primary classes – written and illustrated by Cassandra Lee, a local author and illustrator. 'Building a Home' is inspired by the stories of children from Syria, Kazakhstan, Mexico and Pakistan who are now living and going to school in Nogojiwanong–Peterborough. This provided an excellent introduction to Landmark 21, which encourages students to meet and get to know people from other cultures.



"Today we met Bhisham Ramoutar from the New Canadians Centre. He spoke to our class about the Centre, and what it is like to be an immigrant or refugee in a new country. He also told us about his personal journey to Canada."

– Todd Richard (teacher)



"Our class participated in the Blue Heron drawing contest organized by Bird Friendly Peterborough. The students had a great time reading/learning about the Blue Heron and creating their mascot."

–Giselle Peters (teacher)



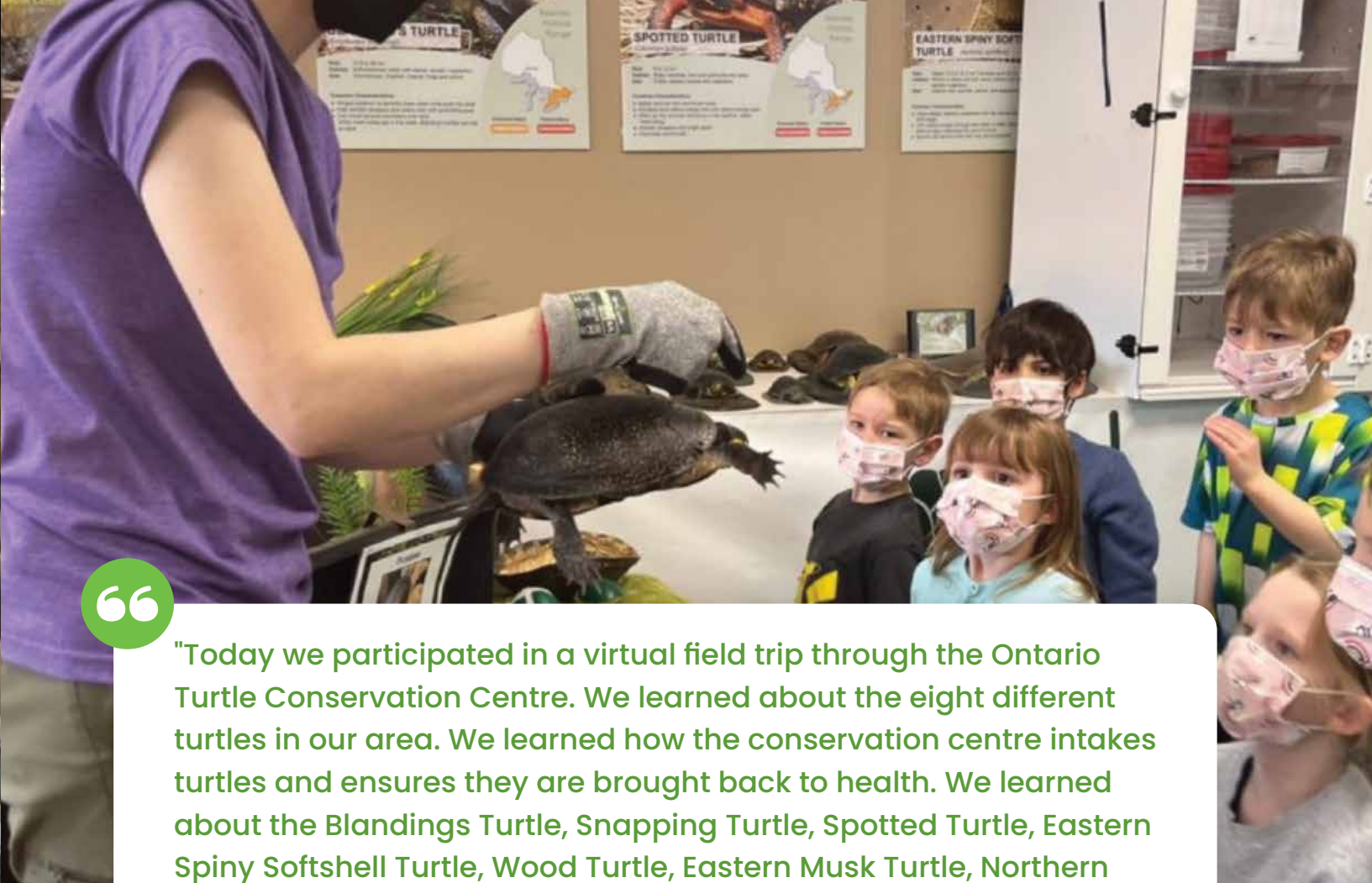
## GreenUP

GreenUp has a great deal of experience promoting climate-friendly transportation with people of all ages. As a Pathway Program Partner, they organized neighbourhood cycling events and adapted their popular Grade 5 'Pedal Power' program to a virtual format designed to engage families in cycling during the pandemic.



## Farms at Work

Farms at Work engaged local farmers to create a unique learning opportunity for intermediate and senior students. They offered an opportunity to meet local farmers online while exploring the concept of sustainable fibres for clothing and the fashion industry. Through a locally produced video, students met several local farm families who raise fibre-producing animals such as sheep and alpacas. The video follows the process of caring for and shearing the animals through the entire production process that results in yarns that can be knit or woven into sustainable clothing items. Farms at work then offered personal film screening opportunities for classes, accompanied by a live Q & A with one of the farmers in the film.



“

Today we participated in a virtual field trip through the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre. We learned about the eight different turtles in our area. We learned how the conservation centre intakes turtles and ensures they are brought back to health. We learned about the Blandings Turtle, Snapping Turtle, Spotted Turtle, Eastern Spiny Softshell Turtle, Wood Turtle, Eastern Musk Turtle, Northern Map Turtle, and Painted Turtle. We learned how Turtles keep our freshwater balanced and disperse seeds so that more native plants will grow! This field trip sparked a lot of an interest our class. We will be continuing our inquiry on Turtles and their importance in Indigenous culture.”

- Kara Leahy (teacher)

## Monarch Ultra

Carlotta James wore several hats as a Pathway Program Partner - all dedicated to supporting pollinators and building healthy habitats. Carlotta is a founder of the Monarch Ultra - a long distance run that simulates the migration of Monarch butterflies each fall, and raises funds to support pollinator protection. Carlotta also represents 'Peterborough Pollinators', a group of local volunteers who encourage the creation of pollinator gardens. Carlotta has given presentations to local classes about the importance of pollinators and how to protect them. She has also worked with young people to create a variety of pollinator gardens in the region.



## Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre

The Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre (OTCC) is centred in Peterborough. They do a great deal of unique and important conservation work to rehabilitate injured turtles and educate the public about the importance of turtles in wetland ecology and the decline of turtle populations in Ontario. As a Pathway Program Partner, they conducted live online tours of the centre for

primary grades to meet some of their 'Turtle Ambassadors' and learn why it's so important to watch for turtles crossing the road during breeding season to avoid injuring these beautiful animals. Lisa Browning, Education Coordinator for the Centre, guided students through the process of rehabilitating turtles and preparing them for reintroduction to their native wetlands.



## Kawartha Wildlife Centre

The Kawartha Wildlife Centre (KWC) is a relatively new arrival in the Peterborough region – offering rescue and rehabilitation services to injured wildlife. With a host of committed volunteers who care about the wellbeing of regional wildlife, they also visit classrooms to educate students about the importance and needs of various wild friends such as birds, mammals, fish, invertebrates, reptiles and amphibians.



"Today we celebrated the arrival of Spring by heading out and looking for birds who have migrated back to our area. Thank you to naturalists Chris Risley and Ben Taylor for sharing your bird expertise and providing us with binoculars to borrow. We spotted robins, red winged blackbirds, finch, seagulls, grackles and heard the presence of a woodpecker."

-Frankie Perrin (teacher)



"On Friday, we had our very own Naturalist, Lynn Smith, volunteer to visit and walk in the woods with us behind the school! Lynn helped us identify the Scotch Pine, Trout Lily plants, and the Sugar Maple leaf. We turned over logs to find worms, centipedes, slugs and bugs, and examined bits of bark and interesting shaped sticks. We were excited by green moss and marveled at how it doesn't have roots. We found yellow fungi and bumpy trees and felt different types of bark. Lynn was a great sport--she answered questions and encouraged us to 'listen,' and 'look,' carefully at our surroundings. It was a super day, full of warmth and sunshine that we have all been craving."

-Julie Stoter (teacher)

## Local Naturalists

The Peterborough area has many talented and generous naturalists. Many of these are members of the Peterborough Field Naturalists, and some are also retired teachers. We have found that many teachers lack confidence in guiding outdoor exploration with their classes. They really appreciate having a local naturalist accompany their class on an outdoor walk to help point out interesting sights and sounds in nature and start the important process of developing positive relationships with wild friends.

Through support funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Pathway Project has been able to purchase a class set of child-friendly binoculars that naturalists can bring along when they visit classes of older students. We've also produced some simple illustrated guides to common local birds in winter and spring. Big thanks to the wonderful naturalists who have helped local teachers and students find awe and inspiration in nearby natural areas!



**We're also grateful to two local partner organizations who help facilitate participation in the Pathway Project by storing important equipment to loan to local families and classes.**

**Five Counties Children's Centre** does wonderful work with children facing many challenges who need specialized support. They have agreed to store and loan our all-terrain wheelchair to enable children with physical challenges to participate in many outdoor activities in all seasons. Our thanks to Five Counties for opening doors for so many children!

**Peterborough Child and Family Centres** who run many excellent programs, also store and loan the two Pathway 'Wonder Wagons,' complete with bins of seasonal exploration tools. Our thanks for taking on this important role!

## Peterborough and Region Master Gardeners

Many local educators are interested in giving their students an opportunity to grow plants for food or habitat, but need some experienced guides to plan and care for a schoolyard garden. The Peterborough and Region Master Gardeners regularly provide volunteer advice for gardeners on a wide range of garden topics. As Pathway Partners, the Master Gardeners provided a garden advisor to many local classes to help plan growing projects, source materials and guide the process of caring for green friends. Our thanks to these generous people for sharing their time and talents!



# Behind the Scenes

# Behind the Scenes

The Pathway to Stewardship and Kinship is the result of a great deal of behind-the-scenes work and cooperation. To help other communities contemplating a similar project, this section summarizes the organization, staffing and communication tools used to inform, motivate and engage participants in the Pathway Project.

## Leadership and Coordination

### Community Leadership Roundtable

From our earliest discussions, the Pathway Project has included a diversity of community voices from many sectors in all discussions and decision-making. This evolved into a 'Leadership Roundtable' of between 10 and 20 volunteer participants, many of whom had played a role in developing the project through the initial community interviews, so they brought a sense of excitement and commitment to the project. The Roundtable members represent primarily the fields of

education, health and environment. They also include a combination of decision-makers in influential organizations as well as people currently working 'on the ground' with children and youth as parents or educators. The Leadership Roundtable meets every two months to guide policy decision-making, provide advice on program development, stay informed on project activities and to report back to their home organizations.



"I am grateful to have had the opportunity to participate as a member of the Pathway to Stewardship & Kinship Leadership Roundtable. It has provided a unique platform to network and connect with others representing a broad spectrum of organizations who are all driven by their passion for stewardship out of respect and love for nature. As a collective, we create a synergy - sharing a wealth of knowledge, experiences, insights, thoughts to formulate ideas and strategies that go beyond meeting the set goals or objectives. I am awestruck by the impact this initiative has had in establishing opportunities for children, families and educators to learn and most importantly strengthen their connection to nature."

- Kathy Warner (Program Manager for Peterborough Child and Family Centres)

### Coordinating Committee

A smaller Coordinating Committee is comprised of 3-5 members of the Leadership Roundtable. This committee meets at least monthly, and works more closely with staff to guide day-to-day operations. The Executive Director of Camp Kawartha is always a member of this committee, since Camp Kawartha is the lead organization in the collective, and has assumed legal and financial responsibility for the project.

### Staff

Funding support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation has enabled the hiring of a small group of core staff. This includes a part-time **Project Coordinator** to oversee program planning and outreach with partners, supervise communication and resource development from the project, manage expenses and report to the Coordinating Committee and Leadership Roundtable. We've also been fortunate to work with a **Communications Coordinator** who is a journalist and videographer. She is responsible for social media, production of seasonal newsletters, management of the program website, promotion of special events and the production of informative videos to support skills development for educators and parents. The third essential staff element is a group of part-time **Outdoor Activity Consultants**. These experienced educators act as personal supports for educators participating in the project. They help educators with program development, offer professional development opportunities, and distribute seasonal ideas for outdoor learning for classes.

# Building Momentum

When we pilot-tested the Pathway Project between 2017 and 2019, we found it challenging to stay informed about the wonderful work being done by local educators. We felt it was important to develop some type of simple reporting process, so ideas could be shared among educators. We also wanted to know what kinds of activities were working well, and what supports and encouragement might be useful.

## Reporting: Website and App

Since many people are familiar with posting highlights of their activities on social media such as Facebook and Instagram, we wanted to set up a similar simple process for families and educators to submit a few lines about their Landmark-linked activities, along with a photo. We linked this with the Pathway website, along with a banner on the homepage with simple instructions on how to post a report. We wanted to create an incentive for reporting by automatically recording and accumulating points as participants completed each Landmark. Our website guru set up a system using 'Formidable' where participants create a Pathway account which gives access to a reporting form linked to a Leaderboard for schools/centres and another Leaderboard for families.



To further simplify the process, we set up a web-based app which allows participants to send in reports directly from their cellphone. Since Landmark activities tend to become more complex and time-consuming as children get older, each Landmark has its own unique point value, linked to the time and effort it requires to complete. Participants can see their points accumulate on the Leaderboards in the 'Activity Centre' tab on the Pathway website. As an added incentive to keep up participation, Leaderboards are reset to zero at the start of each season (October, January, April and July). This also levels the playing field for newcomers, since everyone starts each season afresh.

School and Group Activities

Spring Season Leaderboard (April, May, June)  
(This board resets to zero at the start of each season.)

Who's in the lead this season? Build up your Pathway Points by reporting your Landmark activities.

PLACEMENT	GROUP NAME	SCORE
1	Highland Heights Or 7/8	322
2	Highland Heights Or 6/7	283
3	Isac 2021	180
4	R F Opreany K/3	87
5	Queen Elizabeth Or 2/3	82
6	Highland Heights LLSA	41
7	The One Two Crew	37
8	Keith Wigham Or 1/2 B	28
9	Explorers	26
10	From Chilcare Rosemont (8)	27

Reports are posted under the website's 'Activity Centre' tab, so participants can see their photos and descriptions of what they did. These are grouped by four major age groups, so anyone can check during any season and see what others in their age group are doing.

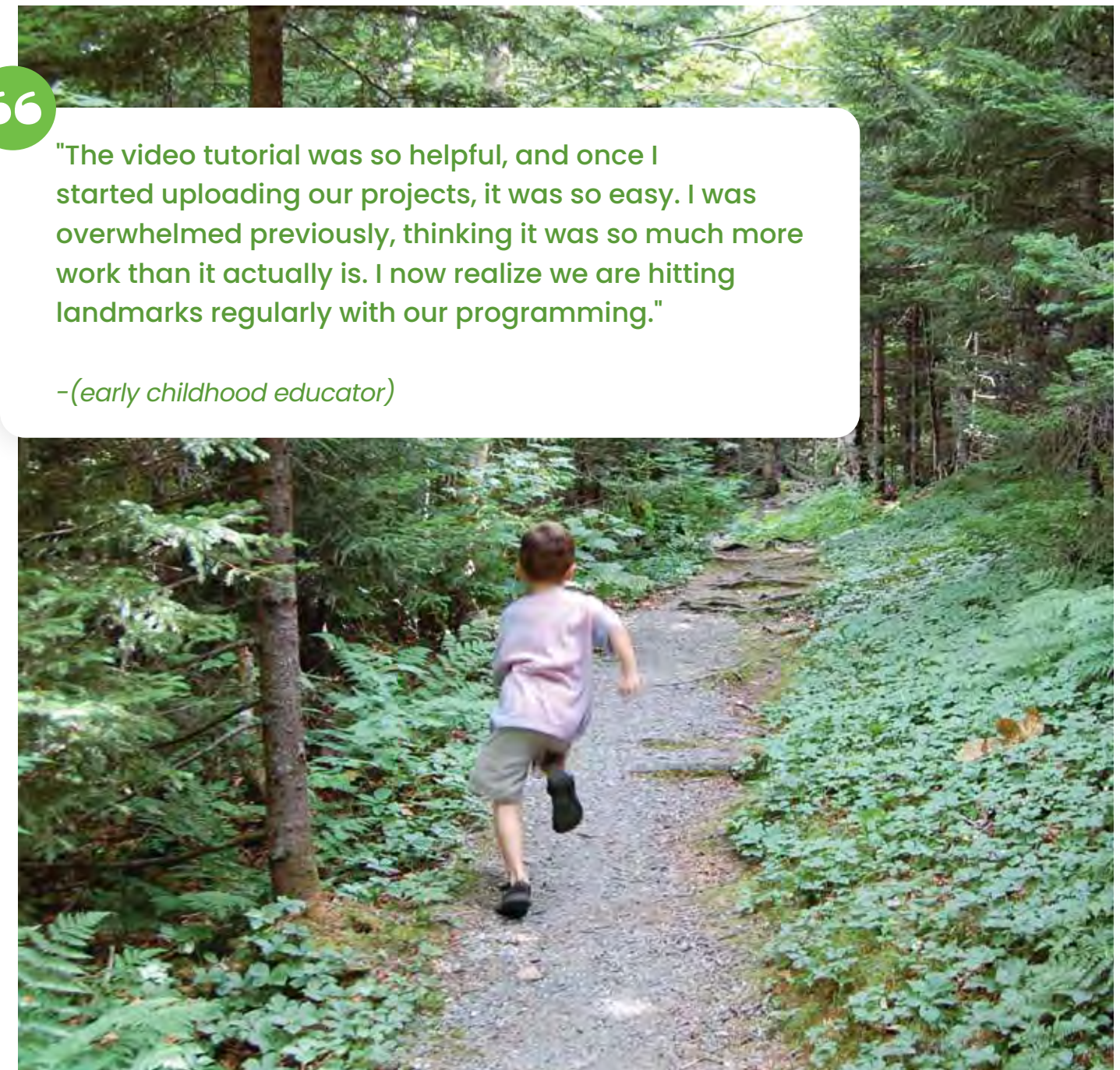


As an added incentive to send in reports regularly, we offered a \$50 gift certificate from a local small business as a draw prize every month. Every report submitted each month gives a chance to win! Since businesses were already experiencing reduced income during the COVID pandemic, we didn't ask for donations of gift certificates, but supported our neighbours by paying the full cost of these draw prizes. Prize options included local bookstores, toy or craft supply stores, outdoor activity suppliers, and green product suppliers.



"The video tutorial was so helpful, and once I started uploading our projects, it was so easy. I was overwhelmed previously, thinking it was so much more work than it actually is. I now realize we are hitting landmarks regularly with our programming."

-(early childhood educator)



## Goal Tracker

When we started our latest cycle of funding support in 2020, we wondered if we could reach a goal of 10,000 reported Landmark activities by the end of the grant in 2023. This target would represent the number of activities reported plus the number of children who participated in each report. We set up a 'Goal Tracker' page on the website to chart our progress towards that goal. We were amazed to find that we passed the original goal of 10,000 in less than one year! We needed to reset our goal frequently as participation exceeded all expectations! Mid-way through our third year, we raced past 50,000 Landmark experiences, and put out the challenge to see how high we could go before the end of June 2023!



“

"I was able to go outside in winter, in conditions that I otherwise would have avoided without the prompts from the Pathways project. Students so enjoyed the experiences."  
-(teacher)

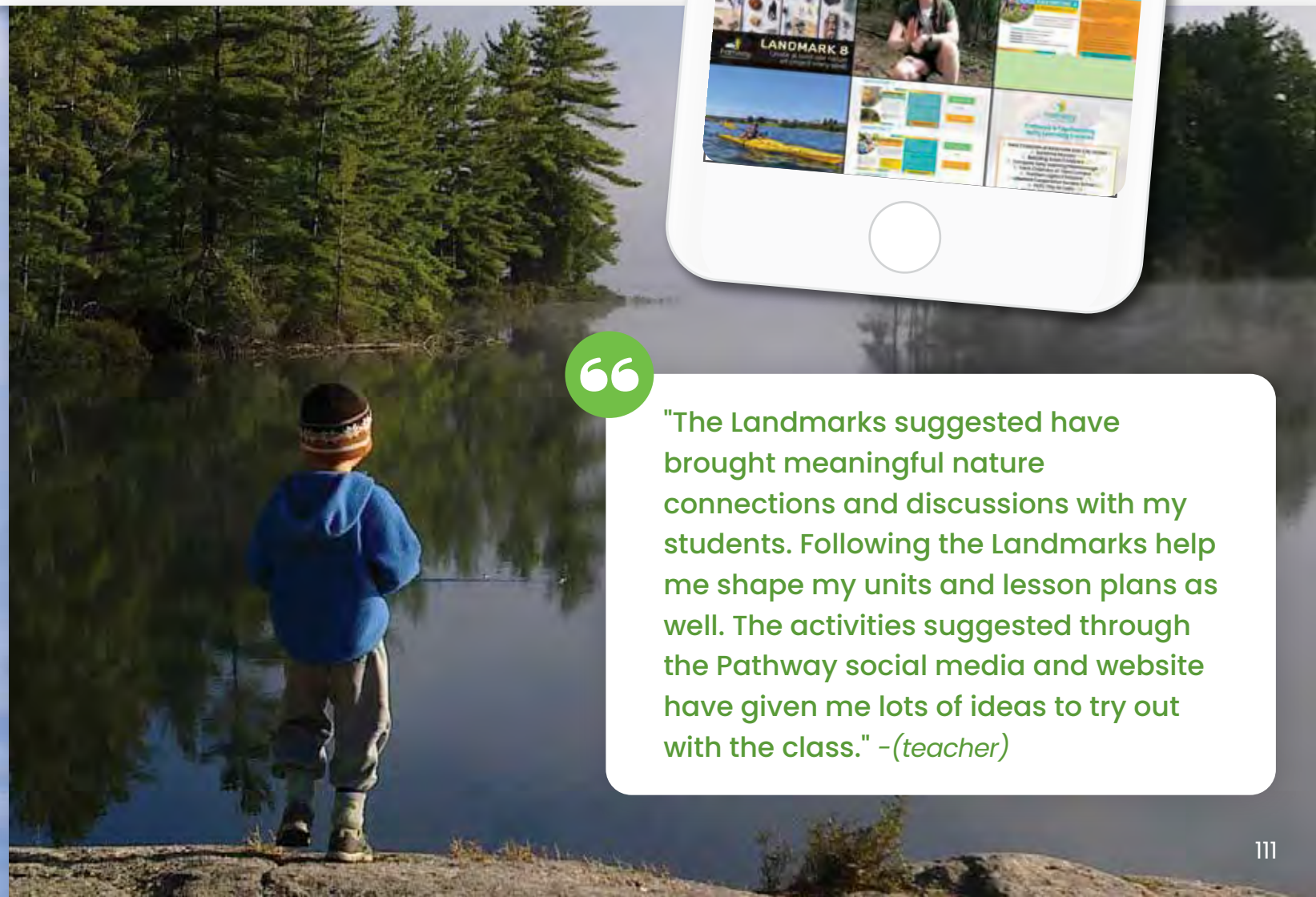
## Social Media

To further distribute ideas for activities received in our Landmark reports, and build community momentum, we participated in several social media platforms - Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Regular posts and interactions with followers created many fascinating discussions and engaged over 1,200 followers who shared personal perspectives from both parents and educators. Social media was also an excellent tool for promoting special events hosted by the Pathway Project.



“

"The Landmarks suggested have brought meaningful nature connections and discussions with my students. Following the Landmarks help me shape my units and lesson plans as well. The activities suggested through the Pathway social media and website have given me lots of ideas to try out with the class."  
-(teacher)



## Trailblazer Program

As participation in the Pathway Project continued to expand, with more elementary schools each year, we experienced a challenge resulting from increased demand for supports. Since our Program Partners had limited capacity to offer in-class programs to schools and early learning centres, we decided to set up a step-wise series of progressions that we called our 'Trailblazer Program'. For new schools, we offered a variety of in-class supports to educators in exchange for an agreement to submit at least one Landmark report each season. We asked for at least four participating teachers in each school to qualify for Trailblazer status. We hoped this would encourage a 'teamwork' approach to developing outdoor programming in local schools.

The first step in the program is 'Trailblazer Acorn.' Acorns are offered a variety of supports for the year. If at least four teachers submit a Landmark report each season, the school moves on to become a 'Trailblazer Sapling.' Sapling schools or centres are given a budget to support a school environmental project or outdoor activity centre. Other benefits for Sapling schools included a limited number of bus subsidies for visiting local outdoor education centres. If a Sapling school fulfills their agreement to have at least four teachers submit a Landmark report during the school year, they can graduate to 'Trailblazer Oak' status. As an Oak centre, you qualify for a \$500 gift certificate from a local garden centre to purchase an oak tree, or a variety of perennial shrubs or flowers to enhance the habitat in the play yard.

Each participating class or centre was set up with a 'Trailblazer Portal' in their Pathway account. These portals introduced their personal Outdoor Consultant, provided a list of supports available, and an agreement form that could be completed and submitted online.

Throughout the three years of the Trailblazer program, we worked with a total of 22 elementary schools (150 classes) and 15 early learning centres.



"Being part of the program has made me more mindful of our outdoor time. It is now part of our weekly schedule."  
-(teacher)



## Building Skills

We know that many teachers are already comfortable and competent with outdoor learning, and have strong relationships with community mentors to interact with their classes. While these wonderful educators benefit from support and encouragement too, our hope was to reach out to those who are hesitant or nervous about moving beyond the classroom, to help build their skills and confidence. We approached this in a variety of ways to appeal to various learning preferences.

“

"Because of the Pathway Program, I have felt that it is "ok" to do lots of outdoor learning/and free play. Pathway has shared the research that supports the value of nature connection to staff, administration, and the community. As a teacher, this helps me feel comfortable planning for learning outdoors."



### Print Resources

In 2017, as a result of several years of research and community consultation, a project [guidebook](#) was released, called 'Pathway to Stewardship and Kinship: Raising Healthy Children for a Healthy Planet.' This comprehensive guide summarizes all the research underpinning the Pathway Project, describes the principles behind each Landmark and gives many suggestions for how each Landmark could be implemented. It also suggests community resources to support each Landmark, as well as a comprehensive reference to Ontario Curriculum links for each Landmark. While this resource is more extensive than a simple summary, it does provide a solid foundation to back up the Project, and an interesting and relevant resource for anyone who interacts with children and youth. We provided this resource to every participating educator who requested a copy.



At various points throughout the project, we also provided excellent, locally-produced print resources to teachers, including **'The Big Book of Nature Activities'** by local educators Drew Monkman and Jacob Rodenburg; other excellent resources distributed to teachers included **'The Book of Nature Connection'** and **'Teachers' Guide to Outdoor Learning'** by Jacob Rodenburg. We also obtained permission to print an excellent introduction to birdwatching for children, produced by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, called **'Bird Sleuth Explorer's Guidebook.'** We printed class sets of the birding guides, as they were designed to be used in the field by junior level classes.

During the school year, we also provided seasonal ideas for outdoor family activities to distribute with **school e-newsletters**. These simple, attractive PDFs were provided monthly to schools to encourage families to have fun outdoors together.

We also produced **illustrated references** to 'Common Winter Birds of Peterborough' and 'Common Spring Birds of Peterborough' to help classes and families get started in recognizing some of our most common feathered friends. Other print resources included **seasonal bingo cards** distributed at special events.

**Seasonal e-newsletters** were distributed to an extensive mailing list that included all participating educators, Roundtable members, partners, and a variety of local contacts as well as interested people from farther afield. These newsletters showcased recent Pathway participation, new videos and other resources, upcoming events of interest and suggested seasonal ideas for outdoor activities.

66

"I approach learning outdoors with a better sense of how to best support my students in the outdoor learning environment. I have less fear of encountering the unknown and being unable to answer questions on the spot- it's all about fostering the joy for nature." - (teacher)

## Videos

Through a very lucky twist of fate, we were able to enlist the services of a skilled videographer at the beginning of our latest 3-year funding cycle from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Our expansion of the Pathway Project coincided with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March of 2020, and opportunities for face-to-face interactions became very limited. Filming in many professional video productions also ground to a halt, which made it possible to hire our Communications Coordinator who could bring the project to local educators through excellent videography. Several 'Getting Started' videos were produced and distributed to help boost educators' comfort in teaching outdoors.

### These introductory videos included:

- 'How and Why to Take Your Class Outside' with Nancy Thomson
- 'Indigenous Insights for Outdoor Learning' with Kristin Muskratt and Kelly King
- 'Climbing over Barriers: Building Confidence in the Outdoor Classroom' with Nancy Thomson and Kim Dobson

As part of the 'Getting Started' series, we also worked on a series of videos focused on each of our 30 Landmarks. Each Landmark video introduced a skilled community mentor who explained the importance of each Landmark for its target age group, as well as providing ideas and challenges for making each Landmark a part of every child's growth and development. These videos are an incomparable permanent resource for our community and anyone working with children and youth.

When gathering in person wasn't an option, a number of our professional development workshops were presented on-line and recorded for future reference. In addition, several live workshops were also recorded to make the learning available more broadly. Collectively the Pathway YouTube Channel that houses all our videos has accumulated 7.1 thousand views.



## Workshops

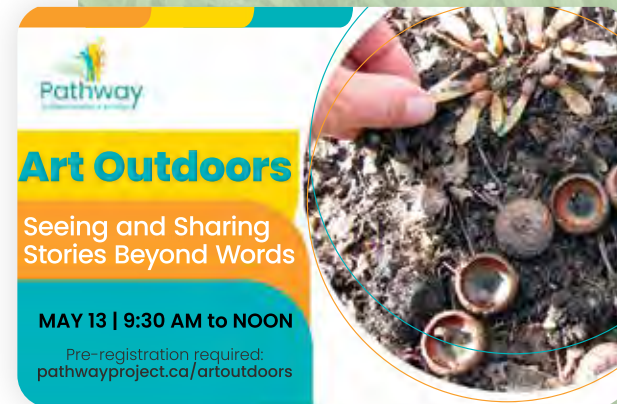
There are many challenges to offering appropriate and accessible professional development opportunities for educators. Teachers have many demands on their time, both in the classroom and after school. Finding time to attend after-school workshops can be difficult. Paying for teacher release time is very expensive for in-school workshops, and Professional Development opportunities for board-wide PD Days are usually booked a long time in advance.

During the height of the pandemic lockdown, we offered a series of evening workshops that could help with both virtual and in-person teaching. Most workshops included a live Q & A session.

In addition, a number of workshops for educators were delivered in-person, and filmed for broader distribution.

A variety of other professional development workshops were offered in-person only, once pandemic restrictions were eased.

We wanted to also reach out to families to provide in-person opportunities to explore and create in the outdoors, while meeting wonderful local mentors.



## Family Adventure Challenges

Especially during the Covid pandemic, many families were overwhelmed with at-home online learning with their children, lack of access to family resources such as distant family members, and financial and employment challenges. This sometimes had an unexpected positive result, where many families found solace and comfort in spending more time outdoors together. However, it was an ongoing challenge to entice families to report their Landmark activities through the Pathway website or app.



“

"This is a great way to spend the summer! We had so much fun looking for faces in nature."

-Ashley Page (parent)

In an effort to encourage more family participation and provide ideas for a variety of outdoor summer discoveries, we launched a **Family Adventure Quest** during the summer of 2022. Each week, families received a new challenge to complete, ranging from finding faces in nature to exploring the night sky together. Any family who completed and reported any five of the eight challenges was entered into a grand prize draw of up to \$500 value in materials or services from local businesses. This generated some wonderful family activities, reported to us with heartwarming photos. This would be worth trying again and expanding participation in the future.

## Website

The Pathway website ([pathwayproject.ca](http://pathwayproject.ca)) has become an important hub for all Pathway activities, and we hope it will be a permanent resource for the community. The website houses the Pathway guidebook, the Pilot Community Survey Report, all of the Pathway videos, Landmark introductions and community resources, all of the seasonal newsletters, blogs and links to a wide variety of resources. The website has had 97,836 page views with more than 17,000 unique visitors.

In addition, the website is the hub for reporting Landmark activities, Leaderboards, showcasing participant's activities and upcoming events.

"I have learned so much this year through the workshops you provided us and the experts you connected us with. I especially enjoyed the ones we just did virtually with Nature Nancy and Jacob Rodenburg. I feel inspired to do even more next year! I am definitely in for next year." -(teacher)

## Personal Advice and Support

Throughout the development and expansion of the Pathway Project, we worked to develop personal supportive relationships with participants wherever possible. Personal consultants assigned to each school or early learning centre reached out regularly to invite discussion, questions and to offer useful resources. It was difficult at times to get responses from teachers, but it's well known that teachers are very stretched for time, and are often overwhelmed with emails from a variety of organizations in addition to their school board communication.

However, many positive friendships were forged through the Trailblazer consultant opportunity, especially in schools/centres where the principals/supervisors were supportive and enthusiastic about the Pathway Project and outdoor learning in general. We extend our gratitude both to our skilled and committed outdoor consultants, as well as to the many educators who took the time to respond and use the ideas and support offered to them.

The very heart of the Pathway Project involves weaving together a love and appreciation for the natural world, along with developing a strong network of community care and support. These provide the foundation for personal, community and environmental health.



"Nancy's emails with links to recommended resources were extremely helpful! I used many of these and they were all very successful with students."  
-(teacher)

"Being a consultant has enabled me to use the knowledge and experience from those 30 years of outdoor education to help others get their kids outside and caring about the natural world. It's been a wonderful extension of my working career, being able to pass along the knowledge and the joy!"

- Kim Dobson  
(Outdoor Activity Consultant)



## Celebrating Achievements

An important part of providing support involves recognizing and celebrating the efforts of families and educators. We approached this in a variety of ways.

**Social media** provided an excellent platform for praising recent Landmark reports, especially those with new and innovative ideas, or providing exceptional experiences for children and youth. This assumes that the educators are also participating in the social media platforms, but we have found that word-of-mouth communication usually reaches teachers about social media shout-outs.

Wherever possible, outdoor consultants or other Pathway staff contact families or educators directly to cheer them on regarding memorable or particularly heartwarming Landmark reports. This becomes more challenging as participation increases, and Pathway staff time is also stretched thin, reducing time available for additional personal communication. However, **personal encouragement** is an excellent way to build positive relationships wherever possible.

Pathway organizers continue to be impressed by the number of very committed educators and parents in our community. From the initial roll-out of the Landmark reporting process, some educators went far beyond the required reporting process, including extra advice for others, such as curriculum links for their activities, or very heartfelt and poetic explanations of why these experiences are so important for children. We decided to celebrate extraordinary efforts in an annual **Awards Celebration**.



This up-beat event, held in the fall, recognizes families, early learning centres and elementary schools who achieved the highest number of Landmark points for effort as well as numbers of experiences. We also presented awards to individual outstanding educators whose efforts inspired and motivated so many others. These Awards Celebrations combine recognition with local entertainment, refreshments and outdoor fun. They are another way to provide personal contact, opportunities to chat and deepen relationships around a shared sense of purpose and accomplishment.



# What We've Learned

“

"I am more comfortable with my abilities teaching and providing learning opportunities outdoors. My teaching has changed and I know almost anything that can be done inside can be adapted to the outdoor setting. It is 100% something that moving forward will be a daily part of my teaching practice." *-(teacher)*

## What We've Learned

---

The past years of working together to promote stewardship and kinship have been an exhilarating and inspiring journey. There is so much to learn from each other as we imagine and work to build a different kind of world where healthy kids and a healthy environment are the primary goals. In the hopes that our experiences will benefit other communities, we'd like to summarize what we've learned while travelling on the Pathway.



## 1. Building Relationships is Key

We can't overstate the importance of positive relationships in all aspects of our work - relationships between people as well as with the world we share. While we stress the importance of outdoor play time, simply being outdoors isn't enough to build the lifelong connections and sense of responsibility that underpin the skills needed for true stewardship. Having time to explore outdoors, and spending time with mentors who model curiosity and respect for the wonders of the world as well as providing children with age-appropriate stewardship experiences, are all equally important.

The Pathway Project differs from many traditional outdoor education programs in that it combines outdoor learning and adventures with building strong, supportive relationships with people in the community. At the same time, working together as organizers, a sense of mutual respect and empathy have helped us face and manage barriers to moving forward. In a political world where continually 'criticizing the other side' seems the norm, knowing that we share a common purpose (i.e. the wellbeing of our kids) has provided a wonderfully positive, cooperative atmosphere that is refreshing and rejuvenating. We know that everyone's voice is equally important. If these positive relationships aren't already existing in a community, it's important to take the time to develop and maintain them.

## 2. Broad Scope is Both an Asset and a Challenge

It is complex to manage a project that spans the life of a child from birth through teen-hood, since each age group has dramatically different needs and abilities. Developing resources suitable for various ages has been time-consuming, and we leaned heavily on existing programs and resources – expanding on them as much as possible. There are many benefits in focusing on specific age groups – early years, primary, junior etc. and many educators have well-developed program repertoires for their specific age of child. We appreciated the opportunity to learn from these educators through the ideas they shared in Landmark reports.

However, while demanding in terms of program delivery (trying to find something to offer each age group), the broad age span of the Pathway Project helped to provide a more holistic view of child and youth development. Rather than having early learning experts segregated from junior level educators, for example, we all talked to each other and shared ideas and skills. This also helped to foster a greater sense of collective community momentum, helping us take important steps towards shifting our culture in a more earth-and-child-friendly direction, which is exciting!



## 3. Adult Learning Opportunities

While in early program surveys, parents and educators expressed an interest in workshops to build their skills, actually getting people out to in-person workshops is a challenge for a number of reasons. Of course, pandemic restrictions limited in-person activities during a large part of our project time period. At these times, virtual workshops were much appreciated and well-attended. However, when restrictions eased and more in-person programming was possible, we found it was often the 'keepers' who came to after-hours events. While it was always wonderful to spend time with these committed and skilled educators and/or parents, it seemed that the people who most needed the training were least likely to attend.

As an added complication, when workshops were advertised widely on special event platforms, spaces filled up quickly, and participants in our programs often couldn't get in. When we advertised only to Pathway participants, attendance was sometimes spotty. It seems the best combination was to advertise to Pathway participants first, and then offer spaces more widely closer to the event.

Another approach that worked well was offering training opportunities to staff at various centres as part of their professional development days.

This worked best with individual childcare centres, where Pathway consultants worked with all the staff to share ideas, build skills and discuss the many benefits of outdoor learning. These kinds of opportunities are much more challenging to organize for large school boards, where P.D. sessions often focus on literacy and numeracy as priorities.

An approach with great promise is sending a team of Outdoor Educators to work together with several elementary classes at the same time during school hours. In this scenario, several teachers can receive individualized training with one educator, while their classes are engaged in various types of outdoor learning with other skilled educators. That bypasses the need to access expensive 'release time' for individual teachers but still incurs the expense of paying for several outdoor educators at the same time. In our case, additional funding support was available, but this may be more challenging to afford on a broader scale across large school boards. Convincing school boards of the importance of outdoor learning in child health and development is still a challenge at the institutional level, though well understood by many individual educators.



## 4. Engaging Volunteers

There is great potential in involving community volunteers to share their knowledge with school classes. Many teachers will find there are parents of their students willing to come along for outdoor walks, or who have varied experiences and talents related to their culture and interests.

These opportunities are not always simple to arrange, however, and as an outside organization arranging volunteer visits to classes, these points were important to remember:

- Volunteers are required to hold an approved police records check, including a vulnerable sector check; in our area, these must be renewed annually, and can take several months to obtain.
- Teachers need to be aware that many volunteers don't have classroom management skills, and the teachers should be prepared to be in charge of the program, seeing the volunteer as a skilled helper, but not intended to run a program themselves.
- The best volunteer interactions are where volunteers understand the many demands on a teacher's time; teachers need plenty of advance notice of a volunteer visit, and it's important for volunteers to be punctual and dependable. Volunteers are most appreciated when they make minimal additional demands on a teacher's time.

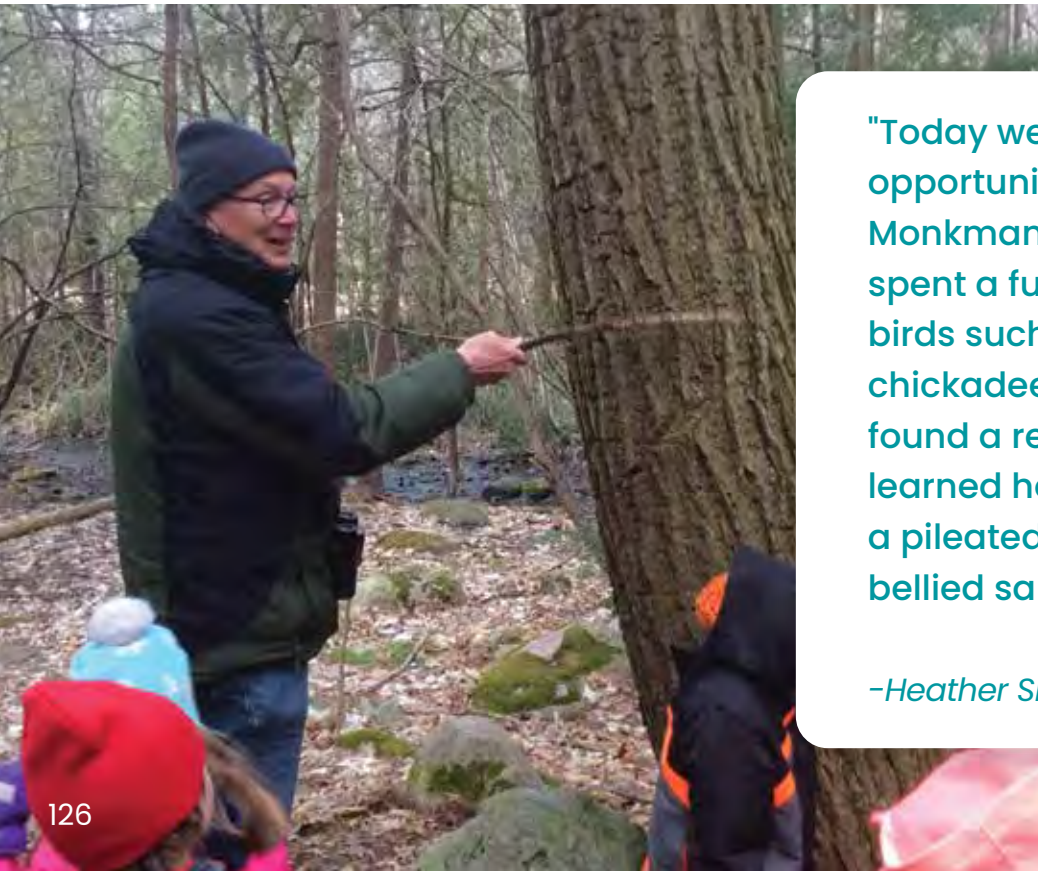
For community groups who regularly offer specialized visits to run programs in classes, schools should be prepared to pay a fee for the expertise, equipment, travel and staff time involved. Grants can sometimes allow these programs to be offered free of charge to schools, but there is always a financial cost for professional program delivery from the community.

## 5. Engaging Indigenous Communities

Reconciliation is an important social and environmental issue in Canada, and welcoming local Indigenous communities to participate in program planning and delivery is important to building strong and lasting relationships. However, it's equally important to realize that Indigenous communities are deeply engaged in retrieving, reclaiming and relearning much of their own lost cultural identity, and in healing the wounds of intergenerational trauma. It is simply impossible for Indigenous communities to respond to every request they receive for 'an Indigenous voice.'

Opening the door to sharing knowledge and opinions depends on building respectful relationships. This is especially true when educators in land-based learning want to honour the teachings of their local Indigenous communities. These relationships take a great deal of time to build and maintain if they are to be more than a token of goodwill.

We are grateful for the generosity of our key Indigenous advisor throughout the development and delivery of the Pathway Project, and would be delighted to work more closely with regional Indigenous communities in the future. At the same time, we realize that developing a more earth-friendly western culture is our own responsibility, for those of us whose ancestors are not Indigenous to this place. We truly benefit from strong relationships with local Indigenous communities, but the responsibility for making positive changes in our own and our children's lives is in our own hands.



"Today we had the exciting opportunity to join naturalist Drew Monkman in Jackson Park. We spent a fun filled morning observing birds such as the song sparrow, chickadee and cardinal. We also found a red squirrel midden and learned how to drum on a tree like a pileated woodpecker and yellow-bellied sapsucker."

-Heather Snowball (teacher)

"We had a special visit from our friend Melody Crowe this morning. She read us a story called 'When Squirrels Try', by Lisa Galjanic. It's about a squirrel who has a very difficult time trying to get a big acorn up a tree. Finally, he asks a friend to help, and they work together to bring the acorn up. They are so happy that they were able to do it! After the story, Melody invited the children to share a time that they have been a good friend to someone. The students were so proud to share their ideas with the group."

- Indrani Talapatra (teacher)

## 6. Trailblazer Steps

As we grappled with the challenge of offering the Pathway Project to an increasing number of schools with the same budget and limited capacity for in school programs from our partners, we questioned the value of continuing to offer the same in-class programming to the same teachers, year after year. While teachers who are already comfortable with outdoor learning always love to have excellent program facilitators visit their class, we looked for a system of graduated program supports where different supports could be offered to more experienced educators.

As many schools are familiar with step-wise environmental programs such as Eco-schools, it was suggested that we adopt a similar model. Where Eco-schools has a Silver-Gold-Green hierarchy of achievement, we opted for nature-based names for our three steps. We designed our Trailblazer program based on these categories: **Acorn** for beginning schools, **Sapling** for schools reaching the criteria for Acorn graduation, and **Oak** for schools reaching the criteria for Sapling graduation. The intent was that different program supports or incentives would be offered to each of these levels. While this made sense to us initially, we'd recommend some tweaking for future initiatives.

Although this trend may have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, we found that many teachers move to different schools each year. This makes it less appropriate to have a school 'graduate' to a next step if there is a different complement of teachers the following year.

It also required a great deal of record-keeping to determine which teachers fulfilled their program commitments and which schools were eligible to graduate.

We'd recommend a simpler model in the future. Perhaps entry-level supports should only be offered to new teachers, or those uncomfortable with outdoor learning. As individual teachers demonstrate their ability to use and share their skills in outdoor learning, perhaps they can be offered recognition in the form of release time to attend more advanced professional development and networking opportunities with other teachers. This would require commitment and financial investment at the Board level.

Our regional Catholic School board has recently adopted a model that draws on many of the principles of the Pathway Project. Each school receives a poster of commitments that they display in the school in September. They agree to work on these commitments during that school year, and they apply a colourful sticker to each square as that action is completed. Every year, they continue to work on these environmental and citizenship commitments, reinforcing the fact that building just, healthy and caring communities is a challenge that we work on, step by step together, and this process is ongoing. We believe this type of model has great promise for keeping up the momentum while simplifying the paperwork.



## 7. Reaching Families

Although we had hoped to generate significant family involvement in the Pathway Project, that hasn't materialized at this point in our journey. Educators agree that learning is much more powerful when activities and relationships are reinforced both at home and at school. While we know that many local families provide rich opportunities for their children to experience the natural world, we weren't successful in generating much interest in submitting reports from families about their activities.



We also know that the COVID-19 pandemic stretched many families to their absolute limit in many ways, and survival was a bigger priority than submitting Landmark reports! Some of the families already familiar to us helped to test out our reporting system during its first summer, but they soon disappeared from reporting once our system was functioning well. Even our offer of a monthly draw prize for reports submitted, didn't generate much interest from families.

We had modest success with a summer Family Adventure Quest, where a new challenge was released each week, and significant prizes were offered for completing a minimum number of challenges. While many families registered to participate, relatively few ever submitted a report.

We also sent ideas every month to participating schools for seasonal family activities, but never received any feedback that they were used by families. We believe an ideal scenario would be having teachers encourage their students' families to submit Landmark reports to help boost the points achieved by their class and school. Since we were aware that teachers were also stretched to the breaking point during the pandemic, it seemed unfair to ask them to take on this additional workload. This would be worthwhile to try in the future, as a means of stimulating more outdoor activities for young people. As schools begin to recognize and promote the health benefits of outdoor time, this can become a more prominent part of communication with parents, and parents' endorsement of outdoor learning.





## 8. Financial Support for Participants

In the earlier days of the Pathway Project, we offered a small budget to classes for purchasing materials to support outdoor learning. We were surprised that many educators had trouble deciding how to spend their budget. In many cases, teachers didn't have time to decide what they needed, or to source and access materials.

We decided to discontinue the financial offerings in most cases, except for providing school-wide funds to support a special project, or to subsidize the cost of bussing students to special outdoor education experiences.

It seems more useful and appreciated to offer specific materials delivered directly to them, such as book resources or class sets of outdoor exploration booklets. In some schools, especially dedicated teachers took on the task of creating bins of outdoor learning materials that any class could borrow and use. Minimizing any additional demands on their time is an important consideration in any interactions with teachers, even if potentially useful resources are being offered.

## 9. Reaching Secondary Students

Secondary schools were another demographic that we had less success with engaging. Yet again, this may have resulted in part from additional teacher workloads due to the pandemic, but we had very little response to offers of program supports. We would have benefitted from more time to develop specific programs to support secondary classes, since this was the last age group that Pathway Program organizers targeted.

In some cases, our partner organizations (such as Otonabee Conservation and the Kawartha World Issues Centre) had strong links with secondary schools, and these were important in conducting successful outreach programs. The structure of secondary programming makes it difficult to focus on a particular group of students, since each student has their own individual daily schedule, and groups of students don't spend all their time together unless they are in a specialized program such as Outdoor Leadership. We'd appreciate an opportunity to develop stronger links at the secondary level, but this could require another few years of dedicated focus on this age group.

## 10. Hands-on Project Opportunities for Older Students

It's important for older students to have meaningful opportunities to develop leadership skills and to gain hands-on experience in projects to improve environmental health. We've seen many heartwarming examples within schools where older students mentor younger ones – taking their younger 'buddies' on walks or playing games with them. We've also heard about many wonderful initiatives where older students plan an event that benefits the whole school, such as outdoor activity days led by senior students, or pancake days where senior students cook and deliver a pancake lunch to the whole school. These good news stories make us all smile, and put a spring in our step!



There are still relatively few community groups in our area that offer ongoing opportunities for senior students to participate in some type of environmental remediation project. Some, such as Otonabee Conservation, offer this important opportunity to youth every year, but there is a need for more opportunities for young people to develop practical, social and leadership skills in environmental monitoring and remediation. In many cases, these opportunities are linked to short-term funding from charitable foundations, and can be ephemeral opportunities. They often involve planting projects which are certainly important, but often have little opportunity for long-term monitoring and evaluation.

Citizen science programs are expanding and becoming more user-friendly, and these have great promise for involving young people in data collection as a component of conservation programs, but to date we've seen minimal evidence of widespread participation in these programs in elementary and secondary schools.

We strongly encourage decision-makers in politics, education, resource management and philanthropy to support the development of more opportunities for every student to engage in positive environmental initiatives that build skills and empower youth. Some of these initiatives have been sidelined by pandemic restrictions, but now that personal interactions are again permissible, we endorse the expansion of programs that directly engage young people in finding and practising solutions. Many educators are working hard to give young students opportunities to love and respect the natural world. Now we need increased opportunities and support for engaging youth in protecting and rejuvenating the communities that support them. We will have accomplished something truly important if we can nurture young adults who no longer see themselves as an inevitable part of an impossible cluster of problems, but rather as skilled and compassionate leaders for social and environmental transformation.

## A Few Closing Thoughts for Other Communities

We have shared the story of our journey towards stewardship and kinship, and how we hope that this process and learning can be applied in other communities as well. Children's stages of growth and development are similar everywhere, and the basic principles and Landmarks of the Pathway Project can be used anywhere. Each Landmark can be interpreted and applied in endless ways, and we encourage others to use their own skills and creativity to expand upon this basic framework. What excellent programs already exist near you that can support some of the Landmark activities? How can you work together to bring them to more young people?

It's important to build and maintain a sense of collective ownership in a similar partnership. Our initial process of interviewing and surveying a wide cross-section of community members helped create a feeling of collective voice and momentum. We have found that including people with 'on the ground' experience is equally important to including influential decision-makers. It is powerful to focus on what you have in common. In our case, that is the love of our children and concern for their present and future well-being.

Existing strong and mutually respectful community connections are another great asset in a shared initiative such as the Pathway Project. It takes time to develop trust – time to listen to each other, to work together and be honest with each other. We started our process with a strong core of dedicated, passionate people who collectively brought a wide range of skills and experience to the table. This collective continued to expand as the project grew and gained momentum.

One of the beautiful things about the Pathway Project is that it can be used by a group of any size. It can give a family ideas for sharing time together; it can be useful for an after-school program working with children of various ages; teachers will find that it links beautifully with curricular studies. The framework provided by the Pathway Project can be adopted by larger collectives such as school boards, or indeed by an entire community. In our case, our goal was to work together towards developing a community culture of stewardship. An ethic of stewardship doesn't just emerge on its own – as the saying goes, "It takes a village..." There are so many ways you can work together with community leaders, educators, parents and stakeholders to create your own Pathway to Stewardship and Kinship.

We are grateful to all the wonderful people who have joined us on this journey, which continues to grow and evolve. The Ontario Trillium Foundation has been a much-appreciated partner and supporter, and we are grateful for their ongoing faith in us, and the many doors they have opened. To our fellow organizers, advisors, parents, educators, and everyone else who cares about kids:

**Thank you, friends – gchi miigwech niijkiwenyig!**

# Acknowledgements

The Pathway to Stewardship and Kinship is a community project that represents the efforts and goodwill of many people – too many to name individually. The Pathway Guide (available on the website [pathwayproject.ca](http://pathwayproject.ca)) includes the many contributors who developed the project up to 2017.

We gratefully acknowledge our key organizers and participants who helped to guide and shape the Pathway Project from 2017 to 2023:

**Project Coordinator and Lead Writer:** Cathy Dueck

**Communications Coordinator and Videographer:** Anne-Marie Jackson

**Director and Lead Advisor:** Jacob Rodenburg (Camp Kawartha)

**Outdoor Activity Facilitators:** Kim Dobson, Nancy Doherty, Nancy Thomson, Sheri Owen, Kelly King, Brittany Finigan, Rachel Gilham

## Pathway Leadership Roundtable Members (2017–2023)

Leisa Baker (Peterborough Public Health)

Drew Beaton (Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board)

Nicole Bell (Trent University, Education and Professional Learning)

Jennifer Bingham (Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board)

Meredith Carter (Otonabee Conservation)

Annie Corkery (PVNC\* Catholic District School Board)

Katie Crowe (City of Peterborough, Recreation)

Maggie Cummings (TRACKS)

Kim Dobson (retired Outdoor Educator, Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board)

Kelly Elliott (City of Peterborough, Recreation)

Paul Elliott (Trent University, Education and Professional Learning)

Madeleine Endicott (public health nurse)

Beckie Evans (Investing in Quality, Peterborough)

Barbara Lillico (Peterborough Child and Family Centres)



Marylou Lummiss (Fleming College, Early Childhood Education)

Maureen McDonald (retired Family Physician, Millbrook Valley Trails)

Danielle Moher (Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board)

Lisa Nisbet (Trent University, Psychology)

Karen O’Krafka (GreenUP)

Kerri Riel (PVNC\* Catholic District School Board)

Jacob Rodenburg (Camp Kawartha)

Brianna Salmon (GreenUP)

Heather Snowball (Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board)

Ellen Stewart (City of Peterborough, Recreation)

Lindsay Stroud (GreenUP)

Sarah Taylor (PVNC\* Catholic District School Board)

Karen Thayer (City of Peterborough)

Geneva Walker (TRACKS)

Kathy Warner (Peterborough Child and Family Centres)

*\*Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington*

## Participating Early Learning Centres (2017–2023)

Compass Early Learning and Care Home  
Childcare Centres

Compass Early Learning and Care -  
Peterborough

Compass Early Learning and Care -  
Millbrook

Lakefield Cooperative Nursery School

Mark Street Kinderschool

Northern Lights Children’s Daycare Centre

Old Millbrook School Early ON Centre

Pearson Child Care

Peterborough Child and Family Centres

Peterborough Daycare

Rowan Tree Children’s School

Strath-MacLean Childcare Centre

Sunshine Daycare

Trent Childcare (campus)

Trent Childcare (Kaawaate)

## Participating Elementary Schools (2017-2023)

Edmison Heights Public School

Highland Heights Public School

Immaculate Conception Catholic  
Elementary School

Kawartha Heights Public School

Keith Wightman Public School

Lakefield Public School

Millbrook South Cavan Public School

Otonabee Valley Public School

Prince of Wales Public School

Queen Elizabeth Public School

Queen Mary Public School

R.F. Downey Public School

Roger Neilson Public School

Roseneath Public School

St. Alphonsus Catholic Elementary School

St. Anne Catholic Elementary School

St. Catherine Catholic Elementary School

St. John Catholic Elementary School

St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School  
(Douro)

St. Patrick Catholic Elementary School

Westmount Public School

Cam Douglas (pp 20, 74, 75, 78, 79, 81, 91)

Mandy Dufresne (p 50)

Madeleine Endicott (p 5)

Lisa Fitzsimmons (p 62)

Sonya Friesen (pp 124, 129)

Dana Geen (pp 36, 54)

Kris Greenfield (p 39)

Lisa Gutoskie (pp 6, 17, 21, 41, 92)

Mike Halloran (pp 80, 81)

Amanda Hipgrave (pp 56, 61, 63, 64, 65,  
66, 72, 76, 77, 90)

Mary Hollingworth (p 58)

Nancy Hurley (p 17)

Anne-Marie Jackson (pp 51, 55, 88, 93,  
94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 107, 109, 115, 118, 119,  
120, 123, back cover)

Leanne Kelly (p 68)

Sarah Langer (p 28)

Blake Leeder (p 70)

Amanda McInnes (p 80)

Lisa Miles (p 40)

Kaitlin Moncrieff (p 90)

Sarah Parna (p 113)

Candace Passey (p 59)

Frankie Perrin (pp 8-9)

Giselle Peters (p 99)

Sheila Potter (pp 45, 69)

Carrie Ray (p 91)

Brianna Salmon (p 70)

Rose Sanderson (pp 47, 52, 120)

Heather Snowball (pp 4, 43, 45, 49, 53, 55,  
126)

Stephanie Springett (pp 26, 31, 32, 33)

Julie Stoter (pp 7, 19, 103)

Indrani Talapatra (pp 16, 35, 36, 48)

Sarah Taylor (p 52)

Shelley Tremblett (p 34)

Cat Trites (p 101)

Aarohi Upadhyay (p 94)

Beatrix Volgyi (p 125)

Matthew Walmsley (pp 2-3, 47, 55, 62)

Emily Warren (front cover, pp 12, 24, 27,  
28, 29, 31, 32, 35, 37, 43, 44, 46, 85, 86,  
back cover)

Krista Young (p 100)

## Photo Credits

Many thanks to Pathway participants who sent photos with their Landmark reports and gave us permission to print them. What a beautiful opportunity to glimpse the life-affirming work that takes place in our community every day!

Grace Beaumont (pp 14, 30)

Tara Bischof (p 55)

Danielle Blondin (pp 13, 38)

Karen Brown (pp 57, 61, 67, 73, 77, 132)

Shayla Bush (p 22, 63)

Tara Cahorn (p 104)

Geri-Lyn Cajindos (pp 7, 10, 42, 46, 59, 60)

Shannon Cannon (p 57)

Jessica Carey (p 48)

Keevin Carter (p 58)

Deb Chapman (p 19)

Shauna Chappell (p 49)

Kathy Connelly (pp 15, 18)

Sarah Cook (p 89)

Annie Corkery (p 69)

Sarah Crouthers (p 93)

Kim Dobson (p 104)

Nancy Doherty (p 26)

Leanne Kelly (p 68)

Sarah Langer (p 28)

Blake Leeder (p 70)

Amanda McInnes (p 80)

Lisa Miles (p 40)

Kaitlin Moncrieff (p 90)

Sarah Parna (p 113)

Candace Passey (p 59)

Frankie Perrin (pp 8-9)

Aarohi Upadhyay (p 94)

Beatrix Volgyi (p 125)

Matthew Walmsley (pp 2-3, 47, 55, 62)

Emily Warren (front cover, pp 12, 24, 27,  
28, 29, 31, 32, 35, 37, 43, 44, 46, 85, 86,  
back cover)

Krista Young (p 100)

# Recommended Resources



Be sure to check out the Pathway Project website:

[pathwayproject.ca](https://pathwayproject.ca)

This website contains a collection of excellent resource materials, including 'how-to' videos for each Landmark, filmed workshops and a collection of seasonal newsletters and activity ideas.

## Other Useful Resources:

- Dueck, Cathy and Jacob Rodenburg: **Pathway Project Guidebook: Raising Healthy Children for a Healthy Planet (2017)** - <https://pathwayproject.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Pathway-to-Stewardship-Guide.pdf>. This is the original project guidebook, including Landmark activity ideas, summaries of community interviews, Ontario curriculum links and a complete list of references for the background research that shaped the Pathway Project..
- Dueck, Cathy and Lisa Nisbet (2019). **Pilot Community Survey Report** - <https://pathwayproject.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Pilot-Community-Survey-Report.pdf>. This summarizes community feedback from surveys conducted in pilot schools and centres. It helped guide organizers in preparing for a community-wide rollout of the Pathway Project.
- Judson, Gillian (2018). **A Walking Curriculum: Evoking Wonder and Developing a Sense of Place (k-12)**. Vancouver, BC: KDP. This resource is an excellent starting point for educators to develop confidence in taking classes outdoors for themed walks in the community.
- Monkman, Drew (2002). **Nature's Year in the Kawarthas: A Guide to the Unfolding Seasons**. Toronto, ON: Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc. This resource is a wonderful summary of things to look for in the natural world throughout each season in the Kawartha Lakes region of Ontario. Other communities could collaborate to compile a similar collection of natural wonders to look for in their region as their seasons unfold.
- Monkman, Drew and Jacob Rodenburg (2016). **The Big Book of Nature Activities**. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers. This is a comprehensive collection of tried-and-true nature-based activities for children with accompanying background information for educators and parents.
- Rodenburg, Jacob (2022). **The Book of Nature Connection: 70 Sensory Activities for all Ages**. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers. Looking for some simple but powerful activities to activate the senses and help build relationships with the natural world? Jacob has assembled a collection of his favourite sensory-based activities for all ages in this attractive and user-friendly resource.
- Rodenburg, Jacob (2022). **Discover Your School's Better Nature: A Teachers' Guide to Outdoor Learning** - <https://pathwayproject.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/TeachersGuide-FINAL-FEB-17-2022-1.pdf>. This guide helps teachers build their confidence in facilitating outdoor learning with their classes. It describes the many benefits of building positive relationships with the natural world and includes excellent ideas for games and other outdoor activities with children.

"We are thoroughly enjoying being involved in the Pathway Project! Our educators are really engaged in finding more and more creative ways to include nature and the outdoors into their programming. And the children are completely enthralled!"



"We have loved being a part of this project! It has inspired our educators to really think about nature within all aspects of our programming."

"A FANTASTIC program which my students adored and learned so much."

- *Praise From Educators*

