



Creating Partnerships ~ An Education Example

Things to Consider ~ Prior to and during an Education partnership with Schools, School Boards or School Districts

- Do your homework: Take time to research and learn key priorities for the specific organization (ie School Board).
- Look into Mission - Values statements of the organization (School Board/District, School)
- Specific examples for School Boards are: review the Provincial Program of Studies related to PE/ Wellness/Outdoor Education/Health-Mental Health; 3 Year Education Plan; Indigenous-Land Based Learning connections.
- Identify who to connect with for the specific organization and determine the best way to initially connect (email, phone, in person)

Look for's: ~Do they have an Education Plan (3 Year Ed Plan)? What Goals or Frameworks have been identified?

~Do they have a Wellness Curriculum or Well-Being Framework?

~Is there a focus or connection to Land Based Learning and or Indigenous ways of being/learning?

~Are there visible strategies to support staff and student wellness/mental health?

- Based on what you learn - create possible connections to how Forest Therapy/Bathing Walks can support the identified goals, strategies and curriculum for that school board and/or individual school. You could create a type of document highlighting these, along with information about "What is a Forest Therapy walk?" that could be sent or provided when meeting with people (highlight the connections to their focuses).

Things to Consider ~ When meeting with School leaders, teachers, staff;

- Emphasize how Forest Therapy/Bathing walks support the wellness and well-being of individuals. There has been a much greater focus on staff wellness (and student wellness) since Covid given the impacts we've seen on mental health within a profession that already carries a huge stress load.
- When meeting with individual schools you could ask about specific programs they run. For example: school clubs; Outdoor Ed programs; current wellness type programs, before and after school programs; if they have a naturalization area within the school grounds - basically things currently in place where Forest Therapy/Bathing walks naturally could fit into.
- Some schools bring in various Residency Programs (may have an art, drama, PE or outdoor focus). This may be a possible connection to explore.



Other Things to Consider ~ Places you could also connect to within Education

- **Professional Development** - All schools have PD days where they focus on curriculum, assessment and current learning practices (ie Land Based Learning). These would include opportunities for Well-being activities to support staff wellness - a perfect fit for offering a Forest Therapy/Bathing walk.
- **Conferences** - Find out about Conferences being held within your area where you may be able to connect into offering a Walk session. These could be Education Conferences - Outdoor Learning or Environmental Conferences - Leadership Conferences etc
- **Teacher's Convention** - Look into your regional Teacher's Convention, again a great place to offer Walks as sessions for educators.
- **Provincial Teaching Associations** - In Alberta it is called the Alberta Teachers Association (ATA). One of their many functions is offering Professional Development for teachers and administrators. There is also a Support Staff Association that functions in similar ways.
- **Regional or Provincial Consortiums** - These exist in Alberta, and most likely do in other Provinces/Territories, Another place that offers Professional Development for schools and educators that focuses on current topics and curriculum focuses.
- **Forest Schools and Kindergarten Programs and Charter Schools** - These types of programs operate separately from local school boards but are mandated to follow Provincial Program of Studies and would have similar focuses for supporting staff wellness.
- **University/College Practicum Teaching Programs** - Another great opportunity to support upcoming teachers (given their stress load) and look at possible connections to support Wellness/PE-Health curriculum.

Some Final Thoughts to Consider ~

- **Free Walks** - When making initial connections I've found offering free walks for senior leadership teams or staff teams to be helpful in building relationships and connections.
- **Your costs** - Consider time frame, numbers, your flexibility
- **Resources** - Providing links to articles that provide connections with research around health and wellness benefits from Forest Therapy/Bathing walks and spending time in nature; The importance of taking kids outside; How Forest Bathing and learning in nature support ADHD, Learning disabilities, Autism, Behaviour, Benefits of spending time in nature etc.
- **Perseverance and Passion :)** It may take several attempts to finally make a connection and then more time and being open to volunteering some of your time (i.e. free walks) to help get in the door and create those partnerships and opportunities. Keep Going!