

THE MOOD WALKER

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News and Events for Mood Walks Participants, Program Leaders, and Partners



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Ontario
Mental health for all



Conservation
ONTARIO
Natural Champions



Ontario

TO MOOD WALKS

From Sophie Grégoire Trudeau



24 SUSSEX

Mood Walks

I am very pleased to recognize the Mood Walks for their unique explorative initiative for those enrolled in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Program at Rouge Valley Health System.

Exercise is an amazing way to see an improvement in our health – both mental and physical. We are so fortunate to live in a beautiful country like Canada, and I know firsthand the benefits of exploring and hiking in the fresh air. This type of active lifestyle not only allows us to connect with the outdoors, but also to build a deeper connection with one's self.

Because mental health is the pulse of our society, our mental wellbeing affects us all. Mood Walks takes our young Canadians out in the open and shows that we can all benefit from a holistic and balanced approach to mental health. We are truly at our best when our personalities shine through.

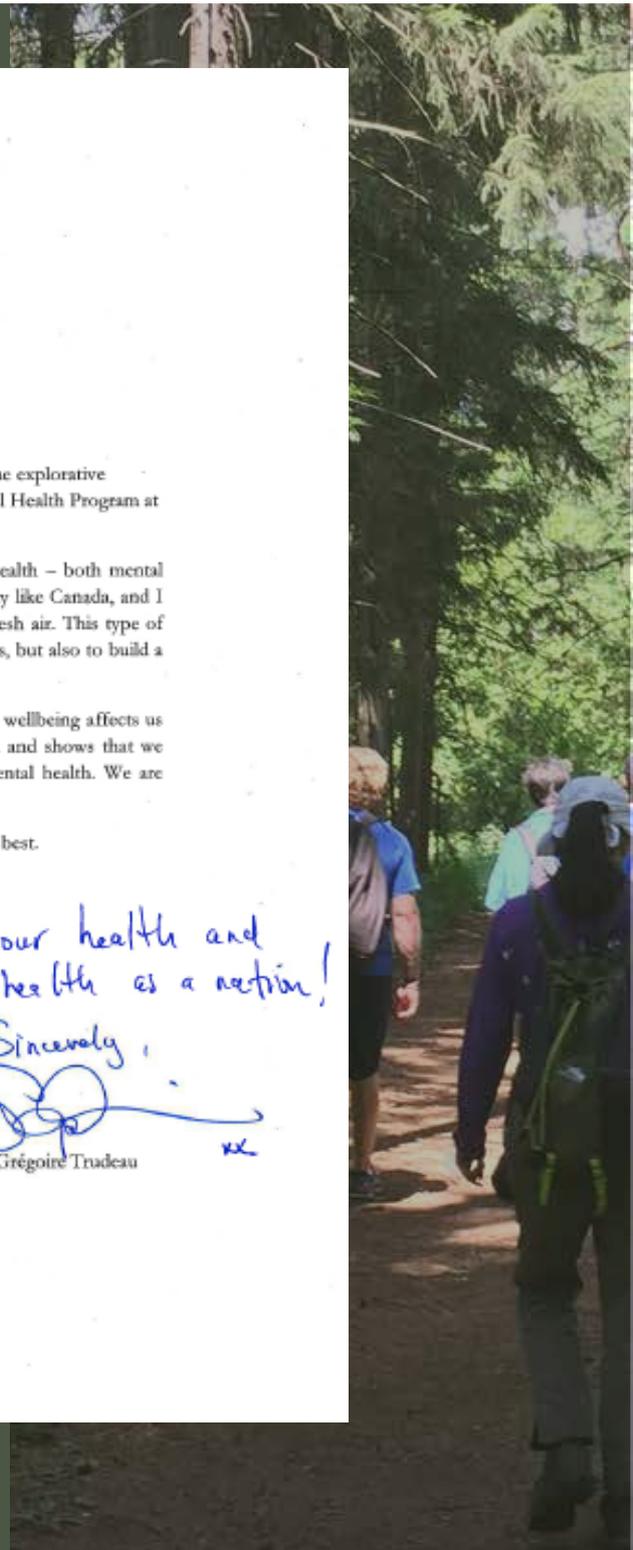
I wish all of the staff and participants of Mood Walks the very best.

To your health and
to our health as a nation!

Sincerely,

Sophie Grégoire Trudeau

Ottawa
2016





THANK YOU!

The **Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario Division**, our partners **Hike Ontario** and **Conservation Ontario**, as well as the 41 participating community agencies across the province would like to thank **Sophie Grégoire Trudeau** for her kind words and recognition of the **Mood Walks Project** and **Rouge Valley Health System**.

This important province-wide initiative promotes physical activity in nature with others, as a way for young people to improve both physical and mental health. Mood Walks is thrilled to be providing key training, capacity building and support for community mental health agencies to launch educational hiking program for youth who are at risk of, or experiencing, mental health issues.

Walking groups are valuable tools for mental health service providers, benefitting clients, families, staff, organizations, and communities. Our provincial project hopes to contribute to the growing body of evidence demonstrating the extensive physical, mental, and social benefits of young people engaging in outdoor physical activity. We hope to one day bring this program and opportunity to all Canadians, helping young people across this country access nature for their emotional and physical benefit.

Thank you again Madame Grégoire Trudeau for recognizing this initiative, and the importance of mental health and well-being in the lives of all Canadians.



Photo Credit: CMHA Ontario

St. Joseph's Care Group Sister Margaret Smith Centre

Mood Walks Group Profile

St. Joseph's Care Group, Sister Margaret Smith Centre in Thunder Bay started their Mood Walks program in June and ended in August. The group successfully completed 10 hikes, plus a celebration event. Program highlights included a team alphabet photo challenge using digital cameras and a unique experience on a hike at **Mission Island Marsh Conservation Area** when they discovered several domesticated rabbits that had been abandoned. The group contacted animal services who were able to rescue many of them. The story made the local news and the participants were proud to have been a part of the rabbit rescue.

The program leaders look forward to continuing to run their Mood Walks youth program, which they have re-named "Walking Wednesdays." They have also started a Mood Walks program for adults. Next spring they plan to engage some of the current youth participants as volunteer hike leaders.

North Eastern Ontario Family and Children's Services

Mood Walks Group Profile

The enthusiastic Program Leaders and staff at **North Eastern Ontario Family and Children's Services (NEOFACS)** held monthly Mood Walks in **Kapuskasing** and **Cochrane** from May until September. They started out as a small group of youth, but quickly grew over the summer months due to an exciting program and encouraging youth participants to invite friends.

In addition to exploring local trails, participants had the opportunity to visit NEOFACS **Camp Cadanac**. They also had the support of an energetic summer student who led several themed hikes, including a fun and messy "Mud Walk" that concluded with a much needed swim.

The group captured their hikes by creating collages out of photos (pictured right). Going forward, they plan to continue their hiking program and explore additional outdoor physical activities, including snowshoeing.



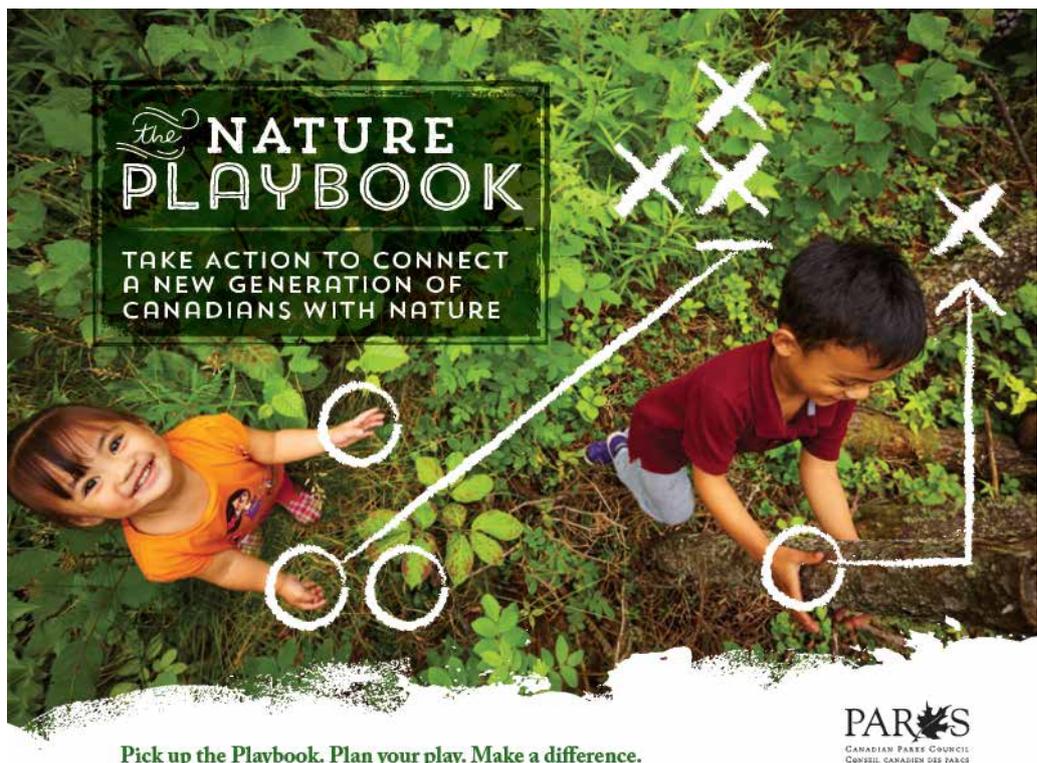
THE NATURE PLAYBOOK

Time spent outdoors provides irreplaceable benefits in our lives. The more people who experience, connect with, and share their love for nature, the more support there will be for its conservation.

There are endless ways to connect with nature, as many ways as there are people in the world. **The Nature Playbook created by the Canadian Parks Council** offers suggestions and possibilities, but also emphasizes the importance of knowing yourself or your organization, and connecting on your own terms. The goal is to reach outside traditional spheres of parks and conservation, to share this message with a wider audience.

Just as the plays in a coach's playbook spark movement and bring the team together, The Nature Playbook is designed to inspire action – bringing Canadians into the nature game. The Nature Playbook is grounded in research and provides seven strategies with supporting "plays" for individuals and families to connect with each other and the land. **Mood Walks** is excited to be included in this document as a Signature Play – an example of an impactful program in Canada, that has the potential and the ability to be adapted.

To download a free copy of The Nature Playbook, visit: www.parks-parcs.ca



A Walk in the Rouge

In 2016, **Parks Canada** was proud to partner with the **Rouge Valley Health System (RVHS)** for the launch of their Mood Walks program.

Starting in May and running until fall, the program consisted of 10 guided walks with RVHS patients who were led by Parks Canada staff and volunteers. Mood Walks in the Rouge explored walking trails around the RVHS grounds as well as in Rouge National Urban Park, Canada's first national urban park. The walks were targeted to youth ages 13 to 24 who were looking to improve both their physical and mental health.

The Mood Walks program in the Rouge is very unique to Parks Canada, as there are no other national parks in such close proximity to a health system or hospital. Being able to provide nature walks and the "Parks Canada experience" was a wonderful opportunity. Many of the participants who participated had never experienced the outdoors or been hiking before. We were able to share special moments with them such as seeing their eyes light up when spotting a turtle or a frog sitting at the wetland or learning a new bird call. Throughout the summer



months, we had the time to build relationships with the participants and we looked forward to seeing their familiar faces every week.

As Parks Canada employees, some of us are lucky enough to enjoy the outdoors on a daily basis. It is easy to forget how much we really benefit from being outdoors and this program has helped us to appreciate that. In doing very simple evaluations with the participants before and after the Mood Walks, we found that the patients had significant improvements in their overall happiness and mood, as well as had decreased their levels of anxiety and stress. The benefit of being outdoors and in nature is no longer just a theory, but proven fact.

We are very much looking forward to working with the RVHS again for the 2017 Mood Walks program and helping many others who suffer from mental health issues discover Rouge National Urban Park and its healing powers.

Rouge National Park Staff

Photo Credit: Parks Canada





Photo Credit: MEC

Get Outside Summit

#MECOutdoorNation

In September, we shared the **Mood Walks for Youth in Transition** project at the **Get Outside Summit** hosted by **MEC Outdoor Nation**. This incredible event was free and included: two days of project shaping and refinement with input from a panel of experts, workshops, and a pitch session to apply for funding.

We are pleased to announce that **Mood Walks** was 1 of 3 projects awarded a \$5,000 grant to support our passion for getting young people outside. We are thrilled to have additional funding from MEC and project support from such an incredible group of individuals.

For more information on the Get Outside Summit or MEC Outdoor Nation, visit:
<http://outdoornation.mec.ca/>



Mood Walks Summit

Register Today!

Attend the Mood Walks summit at Harbourfront Centre in Toronto on **Sunday February 26, 2017!**

The event will include key outcomes from the project, storytelling, and learning opportunities for mental health professionals, program leaders, volunteers, project partners, youth participants and members of the public.

The summit will also be an opportunity to exchange knowledge and explore other areas of mental health, nature, physical activity and youth engagement.

Space is limited, so register today:

www.moodwalks.ca/news-and-events/summit2017/

The Mood Walker

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To contribute to the newsletter, submit photos, provide feedback, or suggest topics of interest, please contact jasmine@moodwalks.ca.