

THE MOOD WALKER

ISSUE 8, OCTOBER 2018

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



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Ontario



CENTRE FOR INNOVATION IN
CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH



Conservation
ONTARIO
Natural Champions



OCASI
Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants



Ontario

Mood Walks Retreat

More than 20 campuses attended a special Retreat hosted by CMHA Ontario in partnership with Ryerson University on August 1, 2018. The event served as an opportunity for Campuses to learn more about the program, as well as hear from those already experiencing the benefits of campus walks. We heard from all four partners: Hike Ontario, Conservation Ontario, OCASI and Center for Innovation in Campus Mental Health. Participants also had an opportunity to take a Mood Walk during the lunch time. An afternoon was filled with some inspiring presentations from Dr. Nathan J. Cooper, Dr. Deena Kara Shaffer, Taniya S. Nagpal and Bill Kilburn on Why Nature Matters: Mood Walks as a Holistic Program. At the end of the day we had an opportunity to meet some of the students at Ryerson University who are participating in Mood Routes and who shared their experience and all the benefits they are experiencing from the Walks.

For a full agenda of the day please click [here](#).



Our Mood Walks Journey

Interview with Jodie Lockey-Duesling, Wellness Education Coordinator

Can you give us a brief update on what has been happening with your Mood Walks group so far?

When we started this journey, I was already familiar with Mood Walks from my previous workplace. It was the first time I seen it open up to students and campuses.

Thus far, we have had a number of students, staff and community members join our weekly mood walks on Mondays. We provide bright Mood Walks shirts, protein bars, fruit, snacks and Mood Walks water bottles. We stick out in orange shirts walking across town to get to our trails! We engage in the pre/post survey and results show that many of us are starting with lower moods and feeling “stressed, tired, and exhausted” and ending an hour later with heightened moods and overall more energized and less stressed. This is remarkable. Students have busy lives while on campus, they are bombarded with school work, exams, work etc.. they could not even imagine adding an extra hour into their days. Yet they come out and walk with us and who would have thought walking can change our outlooks this much?

What are the biggest challenges you experienced while preparing and running the Mood Walks groups?

The fall rain has been our only challenge. Looking forward I would do two days a week next time we engage in Mood Walks to account for missed days with the weather. Our outreach campaign included posters, during Orientation Week, with Recreation/Athletics and on our website.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Along with this, we had a remarkable response for wanting to become Certified Hikers. Tom Friesen did an amazing job training us all on being safe and smart while hiking. We are looking forward to him joining us in a few weeks! I am excited to give out a Coleman Hiking Backpack prize to one of our leaders!

Not only did I notice a difference in how it feels physically to walk and take a break, it added to our self-care which we all so desperately need. Lastly, I noticed the social connectedness it created. Giving ourselves space to interact, social and emotionally and perhaps even to our surroundings.



We love Mood Walks and cannot wait to do it again next year!

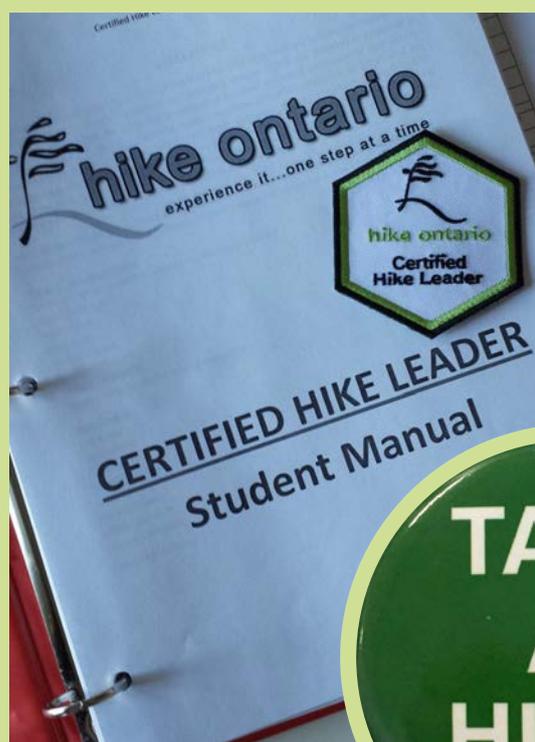
hike ontario

experience it...one step at a time



A few recommendations from our partner Hike Ontario for a safe and successful Mood Walk:

- Choose a route that has Level 1 (Easy) conditions to start.
- Discuss the group members' ability to hike at a rate. CMHA staff have a rating system for physical condition called a PAR – Q. This is a useful tool if you have it.
- Bring a first aid kit and identify your Medical Staff and then First Aiders.
- Ensure that all of the hikers are carrying water and possibly a snack. Wise Mood Walks agencies are supplying this water and snacks.
- Carry sunscreen and insect repellent to share (being aware that some people have allergies to certain products).
- Introduce the hike to talk about speed, distance, hazards, return time, etc.
- Ask your group members to PRIVATELY share any health concerns THAT WILL AFFECT THEIR HIKING.
- Appoint a Lead Hiker and Sweep who bracket your group of hikers and determine whether to use whistle signals or other communication techniques. Make sure that participants know to stay between them. You may engage able clients to also take on this responsibility as we want to develop hike leaders within each group from staff and clients.
- Expect to be hiking somewhat slower than you are used to.
- Range up and down the line of hikers to check on their condition and comfort during the hike.
- Take a clothing adjustment break early into the hike to remind hikers to hydrate.
- Repeat warnings about footing, trip hazards, staying on the trail to avoid poison ivy, ticks, etc.
- Take frequent breaks and allow hikers to have input to determine route and return points.
- Expect to find some expertise from your participants. (I learned a couple of new wild herb types on my first hike).
- Remember that trips and fall hazards will increase towards the end of the hike as people are more fatigued. Encourage “call backs” about hazards = Warn following hikers about slippery rocks, wood on bridge, roots, icy or muddy ground.
- Debrief the Hikers and take their feedback to heart.
- Enjoy the experience - I know I did.
- Let me know if you need any assistance and when you are active and I will help if possible. (tomfriesen@hotmail.com 519-439-8900)





CENTRE FOR INNOVATION IN **CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH**

Did you know that over 70% of post-secondary students report a feeling of overwhelming anxiety? Campuses are the sites of a wide range of mental health challenges, from relatively minor symptoms up to anorexia and bipolar disorder.

The Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health (CICMH) aims to reverse these trends by helping Ontario's colleges and universities enhance their capacity to support student mental health and well-being.

Created in 2014, CICMH is a partnership involving Colleges Ontario, the Council of Ontario Universities, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, the College Student Alliance and the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario Division.

CICMH acts as a hub to educate, share and co-create innovative approaches and partnerships across campuses and community organizations. It works with its partners and stakeholders to:

1. Build the knowledge and skills of front-line staff and students in post-secondary institutions to increase their capacity to address the mental health needs of students.
2. Foster innovation in collaboration that promotes systemic responses in the post-secondary system to address the mental health needs to students.
3. Develop strategic partnerships to leverage external knowledge, resources and relationships that address the needs mental health needs of students.

CICMH's main website (campusmentalhealth.ca) includes a variety of knowledge exchange resources such as webinars, toolkits, and information sheets to support the work of front-line staff and others on campus. [Morefeetontheground.ca](https://morefeetontheground.ca) further provides education on mental health, responding to students and referrals to programs on campus. For more information on upcoming webinars please visit: <https://campusmentalhealth.ca/knowledge-sharing/webinars/>

The Centre also holds free one day forums across Ontario with the goal of bringing regional post-secondary institutions and community organizations together to highlight the great work being done, seek and build collaborations and to facilitate networking.

Their largest event is their annual conference which serves as a meeting place for stakeholders in post-secondary mental health across Ontario and Canada. This annual event attracts over 200 participants, 20 exhibitors, and leaders in mental health from across the country. It offers over a dozen workshops featuring the best, promising and emerging practices in the sector. This year's conference theme is, Bold Ideas which will focus on innovative designs and solutions to the challenges in addressing mental health needs on campus.

To access CICMH's resources and learn more about its events, please visit <https://campusmentalhealth.ca/>

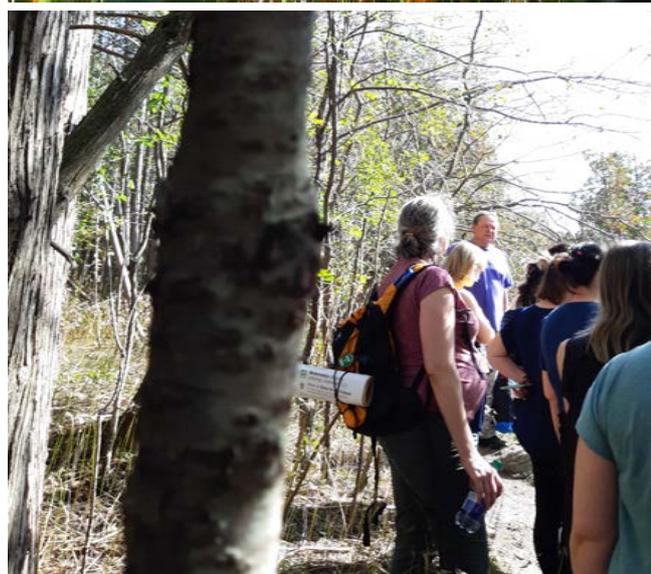
Mood Walks Launch at University of Ontario Institute of Technology

Reesa Grushka, Counsellor
with Student Mental Health
Services at UOIT

About a year and a half ago I dreamt one night that I had become a walking teacher. I woke up in the morning laughing at the idea, but also interested by the feelings of deep satisfaction and joy that lingered from the dream. I had been doing a lot of thinking about walking and the impact on the mind and body of moving through nature, reading, listening to podcasts, taking stock of my own life that was so much bound up with my desk chair and my car. So when, about 6 months later, my manager asked me whether I would like to spearhead a Mood Walks launch on our campus, it was an obvious yes.

When I began speaking with staff and students about a walking program at UOIT I quickly realized that I was not alone in my excitement. The idea of a time and space for members of the community to walk together was one that everyone I spoke to immediately endorsed. So it was that we had a team of 12 staff and student volunteers attend the wonderful Hike Ontario training offered by UOIT's own Mike Whitmarsh.

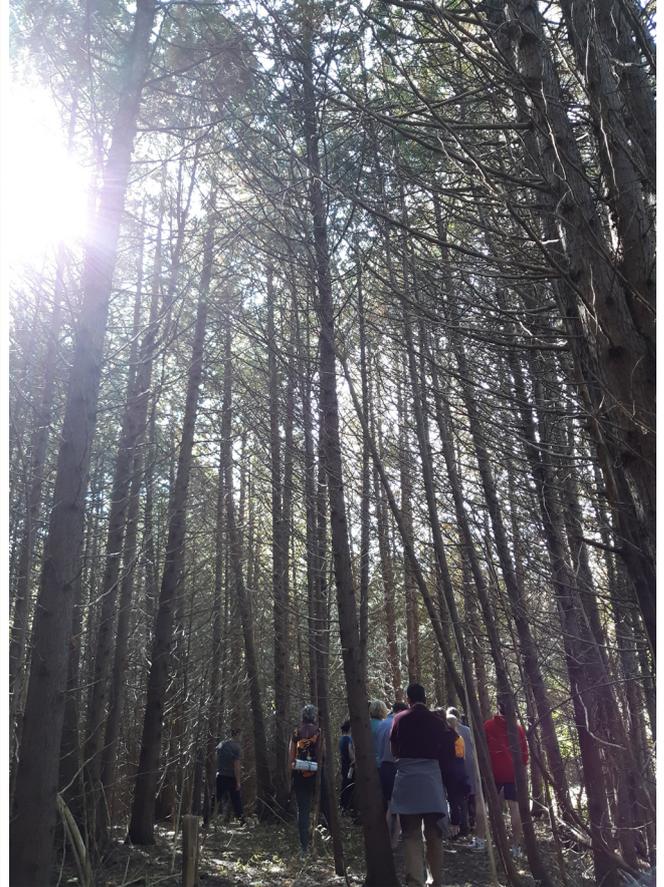
Photos courtesy of Megan Weales



We launched our first walk on September 12th, and are now running two walks every week, one on our North and one on our Downtown campus. The walks are small—generally just a few participants at each one—but I have held close the wonderful wisdom that came from the folks at Ryerson’s Mood Routes program. They said that they came to discover that their walking program isn’t designed to fill a gap, or to reach everyone all at once, but rather a program designed to invite delight and to offer opportunities for deepening wellness and new experiences for those who do participate.

It is in the spirit of delight that our Mood Walks have been most successful. Those who participate, whether they attend every week, or come just once or twice, all walk away with feelings of peace, calm, and excitement about the beautiful natural world that surrounds our campus.

The photos you see of an early October walk were taken on a day when Mood Walks joined up with Rick Burke, who led us into the woods to discover the plants and animals that sustained aboriginal communities on this land for thousands of years. The walk ended with a smudging ceremony that reminded us precisely of the connection our bodies, our spirits and our communities have with the natural world we inhabit.



Ryerson



Two years ago, I moved to Toronto from Vancouver to attend Ryerson University as a mature student, and was immediately struck by the contrast between where I came from and where I had landed. Living on the West Coast, I had regularly sought time in nature as an antidote to the busyness of life. Without that anchor, I felt adrift living and studying in Toronto's hyper-urban core.

Downtown Toronto can be unrelenting: endless concrete, a regular symphony of sirens, the constant hum of traffic noise, and the always-busy roads and sidewalks. Being a mature student in a crowd of recent high school graduates was already isolating, but I felt particularly alone in my longing for grass, soil, and trees to balance the stress of full-time student life.

A few months into my time at Ryerson, I received an email about a program called Mood Routes. The flyer advertised a 90-minute weekly nature walk for the simple purpose of decreasing stress, increasing mood, fueling creativity, and connecting with others. What a radical concept.

I knew in an instant that I had found my people at Ryerson.



Mood Routes was born out of the 2015 CMHA Mood Walks summit, a day-long conference promoting nature walks as a mental health strategy for youth. Two Ryerson Student Affairs staff members, John Hannah and Dr Deena Kara Shaffer, attended the conference, and knew instantly that they wanted to pilot the program at Ryerson.

Six routes were created initially with the help of a group of key stakeholders, including staff from the counselling centre, Student Affairs, and student staff. The routes were created with accessibility in mind, ensuring that the program is inclusive of those who use mobility devices. For this reason, Mood Walks became Mood Routes, and the language of walking was changed to st/rolling.

Obstacles to creating the program included the interesting challenge of finding the greenest routes possible in super-urban downtown Toronto, as well as managing expectations about turnout each week. On some weeks, the group was very small, while on others, there were nearly 15 attendees. Either way, the program ran, and participants learned that they could rely on Mood Routes any Tuesday of the year.

Mood Routes now offers 13 indoor and outdoor routes, and is open to faculty, staff, and students. This allows the program to operate every week that the university is open, no matter the season or the time of semester.



Like many Mood Routes participants, I experience decreased stress and fatigue, restored focus, and a lifted mood after each route. There is also a real sense of community developing as participants return each week and get to know each other. In addition, Mood Routes has introduced me to many previously unknown green spaces that are only a short walk away from campus. This (re)connection to self, to others, and to the place where I work and study has given me a real sense of belonging on a campus that felt so alien to me only 2 years ago.

Kate Lasiuk is a recently-minted Torontonion, a mature student in the School of Food and Nutrition, and a student staff member with Mood Routes at Ryerson University.

Follow Ryerson Mood Routes on Facebook or Instagram @rumoodroutes
Photos courtesy of volunteer social media managers Leslie Sinclair & Miranda Diez, with contributions from Benson Zhu



We are excited to share that we have 24 participating Campuses in the Mood Walks! Please see a full list below:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Algoma University | Sheridan College |
| Algonquin College | St. Lawrence College – Kingston Campus |
| Brock University | University of Guelph |
| Fanshawe College | University of Guelph Humber |
| George Brown College | University of Ontario Institute of Technology |
| Georgian College | University of Toronto Mississauga |
| Lakehead - Orillia University | Western University |
| McMaster University | Wilfrid Laurier University |
| Mohawk College | Wilfrid-Laurier University -Brantford |
| Niagara College | |
| Northern College | |
| OCASI | |
| Queen's University | |
| Ryerson University | |
| Sault College | |

THANK YOU! THANK YOU!
THANK YOU!



Coleman Canada has been very generous, donating a 14L backpack and a survival whistle to each of the participating Mood Walks locations! Thank you, Coleman!