



EVER ACTIVE SCHOOLS 2020/2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ever Active Schools acknowledges the First Nations, the Métis, and all of the people across Alberta who have marked these lands for centuries. We are very grateful to the friends, teachers, Elders, community members, and partners that have brought us through an amazing year.

As an organization, we experienced change. We took steps forward and also steps back as we navigated through the pandemic trying to respond to areas of need. We held the vision to “not lose the opportunity in the crisis.” We improved the systems of health equity, diversity and inclusion in our everyday work, reaching persons and communities of greatest need. The focus of health and well-being did not change, but we saw an increased value and understanding from the public. The pandemic taught us that investments in health and well-being are always essential. They need to be foundational to our schools and communities.

Wellness is not a program, campaign or a “nice to have”; wellness is essential for the path forward.

The last year quickly taught us that we need to think differently in terms of how we work. It reaffirmed our belief that ecosystems, as compared to organizations, are the best way to address social change. We believe that working alongside government, non-profits/charities and—most importantly—communities is the only way we will all be successful. This past year we led galvanizing efforts and are also grateful for the ones that invited us to join their causes.

Indigenous health and well-being continue to be a focus of our work and we are grateful to listen and learn alongside Indigenous communities. We believe that health and well-being are vehicles of reconciliation toward a better Canada. Through programs, professional development and resources we provided opportunities for a sense of belonging for each child at the centre of our work. This year we partnered directly with First Nations and Métis school communities in Alberta, in addition to facilitating virtual meetings, hosting virtual events and providing the platform to have communities teach and learn from one another, sharing successes and tools across Alberta.

We entered the year with a spirit of, “let’s try the best we can to help as many schools and families as we can,” through the pandemic. We stumbled, and at times failed, but our approach also put us in a place of curiosity and innovation that brought new initiatives that inspired us and allowed us to reach school communities and people that were in need.

Reflecting on the past year, we are grateful for the people we get to work with. The pandemic impacted people in so many ways and we did our best to lead with empathy, listen, and build relationships for the future. We tried to take care of ourselves in order to better help others. The conversation on health and well-being is changing and, more than ever, it is needed at a policy level to help communities through recovery. It will also need further financial investments, and it needs action.

Throughout the year we often said, “You Got This!” It was a term used as a motivating and pick-me-up statement to help people through the day-to-day. Even though we lived in a world of change and uncertainty, we have positive stories to share, highlighting the good that came from a challenging year.

To everyone seeing this report, thank you, You Got This!, and we can’t wait to see you.



Brian Torrance
Executive Director

OVERVIEW OF EVER ACTIVE SCHOOLS



Ever Active Schools (EAS) is a registered national charity based in Alberta with the vision that all students belong to healthy school communities that enable optimal health and learning. We provide leadership that promotes and supports healthy, active school communities through a comprehensive school health framework. We bridge partnerships among the health sector, community, schools and other key change-makers to address relevant and pressing issues facing the education system.

We embrace a capacity-building approach, founded on the existing strengths of the schools and communities we work with. Our primary activities involve:

1. Delivering professional learning and teaching resources designed to improve knowledge, skills and attitudes around wellness for teachers and program leaders;
2. Convening events where participants learn from sector partners and the experiences of others, while strengthening networks of support around them;
3. In-depth consultation and site-based mentorship to promote culture change on specific wellness issues of priority through projects, initiatives and in-residence programming; and
4. Maintenance of multiple communications channels to improve awareness, coordination and reach of school wellness-related initiatives.

VISION:

All students belong to healthy school communities that enable optimal health and learning.

MISSION:

To provide leadership that promotes and supports healthy, active school communities through a comprehensive school health framework.

VALUES

Relationships: Our work begins as collaborators, is built as partners, and continues in friendship. We show up for each other and our communities, act with empathy, and bring our authentic selves to work every day. We celebrate successes BIG and small - you can count on us for hugs and high fives.

Innovation: We're nimble and creative, always looking ahead with our feet firmly grounded in evidence. We balance risk with strategy.

Diversity: We recognize and value diverse abilities, identities, cultures and ways of knowing. We live it. We celebrate it. We don't know all of the answers but we're listening, learning and growing.

Contribution: We seek first to understand. Then act. We're here to help ideas and actions flourish. We provide opportunities and platforms to build capacity to promote health and learning.

Well-being: We're passionate about well-being and we care. We're committed to creating environments that support health, learning and growth because that's the type of place we want to live and work in.

YEAR AT A GLANCE

Throughout our work this year, Ever Active Schools has contributed to the coordination and reach of school-health related activities:

- Reached 802 schools and community programs through our direct work this year, while communications reached every school in Alberta
- Engaged with 253 unique partners, 17 of whom are new to us
- Participated on 64 regional, municipal, provincial and national committees; our involvement as leaders or contributing members increased by 6% from last year
- Programs helped participants to develop or reinforce an average of 9 partnerships to support their wellness efforts – a growth of 12% from last year

HOW WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE: SNAPSHOTS OF OUR IMPACT

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS TO A CHALLENGING YEAR

Virtual and outdoor programming options allowed EAS to facilitate programming and maintain relationships through the pandemic.

- We zoomed into over 150 virtual classrooms to provide wellness and learning activities for 4,800 students. Because of this, youth spent 144,000 more minutes being active at online school and were better able to belong to healthy school communities.
- We encouraged schools to use their communities as extensions of their classrooms to optimize health and learning outcomes. We facilitated a community exploration project in 13 classrooms and offering a DIY mapping resource for anyone else to participate (304 downloads).
- We went viral (but in a good way!) We hired 9 high school students and offered 2 post-secondary practicum placements to run the internationally acclaimed and award-winning Joy4All Project hotline. The hotline has received over 41,000 calls to brighten people's lives and reduce feelings of social isolation.

HELPING TEACHERS THRIVE

- We responded to the need to support teacher and staff well-being. From coffee deliveries, to meditation classes, to professional learning, and a professional peer mentorship program - we were there. These efforts reached 13,876 members of the school community.
- We helped strengthen teaching practices through professional learning, asynchronous online coursework, and in-depth mentorship in schools. Participants reported that their skills and abilities to support well-being increased (82%, n=171), and they were more familiar and comfortable with how to advance well-being in their program or school community (94%, n=182). Intention to apply what they learned in the following six months was high (94%, n=172).
- We developed 19 new resources, including 3 in French to add to our existing library (22,515 distributed across 85 unique resources).
- We launched a podcast with the Werklund School of Education, and reached 4000 unique listeners with 12,000 downloads from 41 countries. 93% of pre-service teacher respondents agreed that listening to the podcasts supported their own well-being as they learned (n=172).

SUPPORTING YOUTH WHO NEED IT MOST

EAS offered targeted support for priority populations.

- 44% of our programs support Indigenous youth and youth from families with low income
- 37% of our programs support youth experiencing disabilities
- 30% of our programs support newcomer youth and two spirits and non-binary, gender and sexually diverse youth
- 26% of our programs specifically support girls and young women.

Average ratings for our programs' efficacy to increase participants' capacity to serve priority populations ranged from 3.4 out of 5 stars at the lowest (events) to 4 out of 5 stars at the highest (mentorship). In fact, in a small sample of programs, survey participants reported that their skills and abilities to support well-being for priority populations increased (88% n=40), and they had high intentions to apply what they learned in the following six months (100%, n=40).

DECOLONIZING OUR PRACTICE

Only by improving our own practice can we best serve communities. Elders Russ Auger and Flora Northwest advise our work and provide teachings as Elders in Residence at EAS. Many more knowledge keepers and community members share with us and help us work in a good way. This year, we embraced the opportunity to make more meaningful land acknowledgements. We continue to walk on this journey of truth and reconciliation, and are grateful to those who guide us.

GROWING A COMMUNITY

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THE FULLER PICTURE: A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF EAS

Numbers tell a great story; however, they don't articulate the breadth of our daily work, nor a year in the life of our team. As we came together in July 2021 to reflect on the previous 12 months, feelings of pride, joy, and celebration were heard as we reminisced about the relationships both built and nurtured, the resilience witnessed and the innovative ideas that came to life. We invite you to pour yourself your favourite hot drink and cozy up to enjoy a few in-depth stories about our year, including the creative solutions that have emerged, highlights that have supported teachers to thrive, and the work we've undertaken to decolonize our practice.

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS TO A CHALLENGING YEAR



2020/21 was a school year like no other. The COVID-19 pandemic brought into sharp focus the important role schools play in a functioning society. It highlighted how schools can be places to promote and protect health and revealed many challenges and inequities precipitated by online and alternative learning demands. Many partners and organizations rose to the challenge, finding creative ways to support well-being amid the pandemic. Here are just a few from Ever Active Schools!



In early May of 2021, the province announced COVID-19 health restrictions that included a temporary return to online learning for all provincial Alberta schools. In an effort to support teacher and student well-being during this two-week period, we innovated EAS on Demand (EASoD): a free, fun and interactive 30 minute virtual classroom session with an EAS Health and Wellness Consultant. Grounded in physical literacy to support physical, cognitive, and affective wellness, these sessions were designed to provide teachers with a bit of respite from online teaching, to share and role model new resources and activity ideas to teachers, and to promote physical activity as a key component of wellness, even (and especially) in the online space.

The initiative gained tremendous and unexpected momentum, with the initial announcement tweet generating 18,484 impressions and the promotional video receiving 2,436 views. We delivered sessions every day for a two-week period. Ever Active Schools delivered EASoD to 141 online classrooms, engaging more than 3,500 students and supporting 11 classrooms with specific inclusion and accessibility needs.

The community of Wood Buffalo extended their online learning one extra week, so we delivered 12 additional sessions to them, reaching more than 430 students. Through to June, we provided sessions to another four First Nations school authorities. **In total, EAS supported 161 teachers, facilitating 4,830 minutes of activity and learning in 151 total classrooms to more than 4,800 students.** We received positive feedback from many participating teachers. Below are some of our favourite quotes:

"Thank you so much for offering this opportunity. It makes online teaching a little less daunting when people help us out!"

"It's hard to keep them engaged right now and your lesson was exactly what we needed on this rainy day."

"My class is so excited! Thank you."

"This was incredible! How did we not capitalize on this sooner?"

"We enjoyed it immensely."

"Thank you for hosting an amazingly engaging Zoom session. Lots of ideas for our return to school and any future online learning."

EXPLORE YOUR 2.4 & TRAIL TALES

Explore your 2.4 encourages youth to explore the 2.4km radius – the average walk zone of Alberta school – of their home and/or school. Thirteen schools participated in this project this year with our mapping resource being downloaded a total of 304 times.

School administrators and teachers saw the potential for Explore Your 2.4 immediately: to counter the restrictiveness of COVID protocols, it encouraged cohort classes to use their communities as extensions of their classrooms. Explore Your 2.4 also:

- Increased youth comfort and competence to move independently;
- Improved familiarity, safety and walkability of community spaces;
- Increased physical activity opportunities;
- Built student leadership and physical literacy skills;
- Reduced school transportation budgets; and
- Increased understanding of how valuable and rich in resources our community spaces can be.

Trail Tales, an accompaniment to Explore Your 2.4, is a story walk where pages of the story are staggered across the school community. Interest in Trail Tales extended beyond the 13 aforementioned project schools. The resource was appealing because of its potential to integrate thematic, curricular learning in an outdoor environment where students could be physically distanced while remaining socially connected. Its use expanded into opportunities for subject-specific content review, orienteering, games to develop self-regulation competencies, and a tool to communicate learning.

One example of Trail Tales in action is with the Elk Island Catholic School division. We first met with teacher health champions in September 2020. They walked, ran, or skipped the grounds of the division's central office while reading a story, and their enthusiasm inspired the EICS Wellness Consultant to collaborate further with EAS. Together, we offered a free, half-day professional development session for all 16 schools in the division. **Each school received a complimentary set of Trail Tales to help fulfill their plan(s).**

Schools used Trail Tales across all grades. At the elementary and junior high level, it was commonly used as an outdoor, shared reading experience, often connecting to a broader, community-based day. At the high school level, students set out to evaluate the efficacy of Trail Tales and coordinate their own Trail Tales experience for younger students at neighbouring schools. High school teachers also used Trail Tales to take the experience of test preparation and review outside, garnering overwhelmingly positive responses—including some surprise and confusion from students! Most notably, one student's immediate reaction was, "wait, what? We're going OUTSIDE for Chem?"

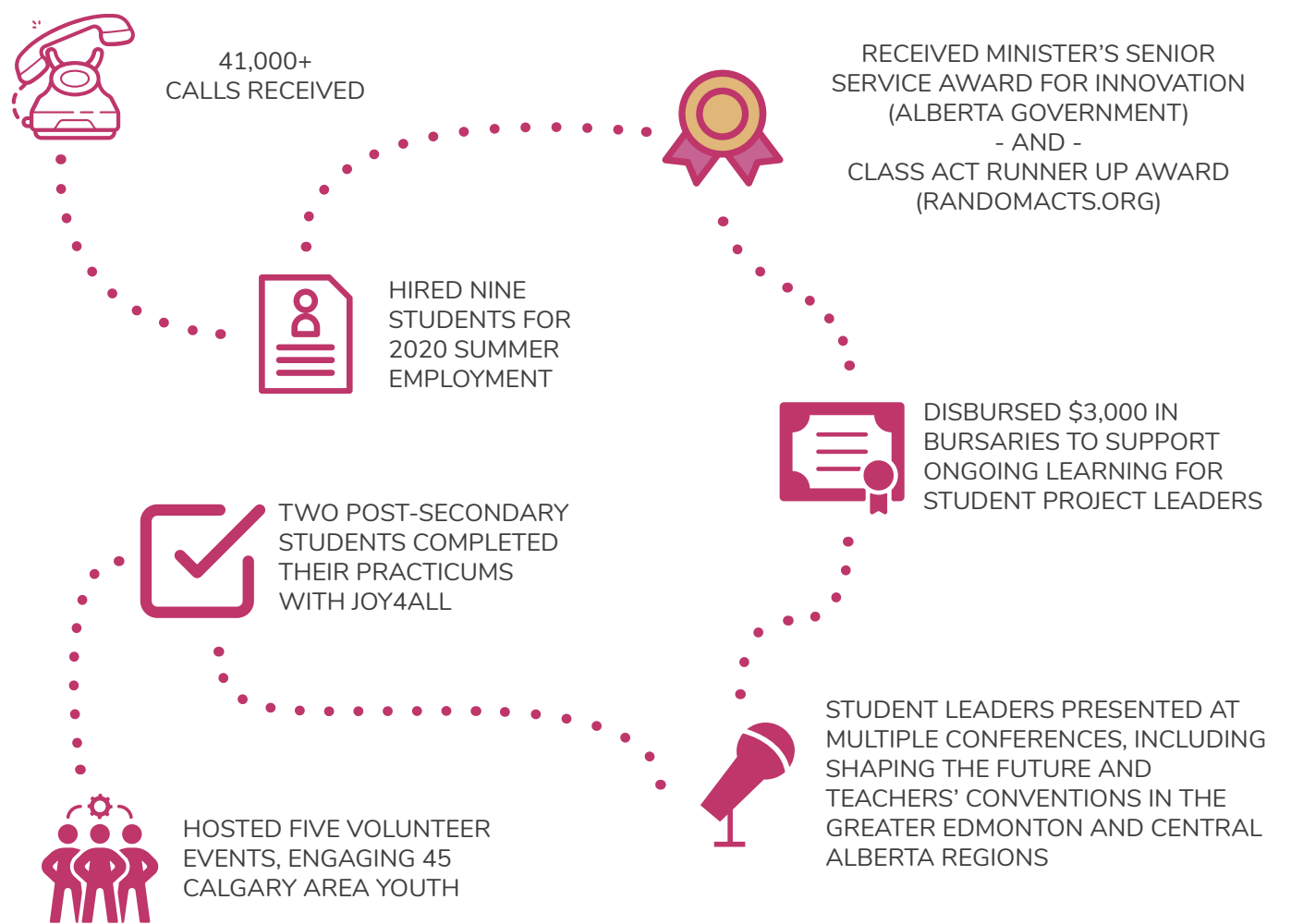
Overall, these experiences highlighted the ease to create and set-up Trail Tales, heightened student engagement, and affirmed the value in redefining and expanding the boundaries of the classroom.





THE JOY4ALL PROJECT

The Joy4All Project was born in March 2020 from the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Students from our Recreational Leadership course created a telephone hotline for socially isolated seniors. The hotline has pre-recorded stories, jokes and kind messages for people to call in and listen to, with the goal of tending to the social-emotional and mental dimensions of wellness of the people phoning in. They received international media attention for the project's impact. The Recreational Leadership class ended in June 2020, and the project transitioned to our *Miyomahchihowin: In Good Health* portfolio under the leadership of youth volunteers.



LOOSE PARTS PLAY



Loose Parts Play was slated to launch in over 15 schools in Northern Alberta in 2020/2021. The start of the school year, understandably, saw caution and care as the priority to ensure the physical, mental and emotional health and safety of students and staff. The need for play was apparent, so EAS responded with a COVID troubleshooting guide to support those schools still interested in offering loose parts play. The Elk Island Catholic School (EICS) division went one step further, collaborating with EAS to create a document to help schools be responsive to health guidelines while following division policies.

In addition to the leadership seen by EICS, many other school jurisdictions were keen to get creative to implement Loose Parts Play. Edmonton Public School Board's (EPSB) wellness consultant facilitated informal, voluntary and regular check-ins. This time allowed EAS and schools to meet in a shared space to listen and discuss ideas and questions about moving forward, resulting in **a community of practice intended to continue into the next school year**. Before the end of the school year, four out of 10 schools hosted small-sided, classroom-cohorted loose parts play experiences. **EPSB and EAS also collaboratively hosted two professional development sessions to a total audience of approximately 300 EPSB staff.** These presentations inspired further interest in loose parts play among EPSB schools.

This brings us to St. Monica's school in Edmonton: a unique site dedicated to pre-kindergarten students (ages 3–5 years), primarily serving children with a diagnosis of a physical, cognitive or emotional disability. Thanks to leadership from the school's on-site learning coaches, St. Monica's was eager and ready to add loose parts play to their programming. In January 2021, EAS facilitated a virtual staff session, followed by an in-person, full day-long loose parts play observation where staff watched students from all classes play outdoors with loose parts materials. Staff embodied the comprehensive school health framework as they rolled out loose parts play: partnerships and services secured additional storage and materials; staff made curricular connections through literacy (supported by Trail Tales); and staff regularly discussed the program to ensure the physical environment for play was safe and engaging, and the social environment was positive and responsive to logistical observations and concerns.

While work with Fort McMurray school divisions was more limited due to travel restrictions, it was just as successful. **Two public schools moved forward with loose parts play programming**, and of particular note was a grade 3 lead teacher at Timberlea school, who opted for a down-sized approach. They chose 'pool noodle play,' because it supported several play categories (rough and tumble, large motor, symbols, construction) and materials were easy to acquire.

Each of these examples embody the characteristics and benefits of play: an opportunity to be flexible and adaptable in order to find solutions to a problem.



HELPING TEACHERS THRIVE



Ever Active Schools was born of the need to support teachers to implement the health and physical education curriculum. This area of impact keeps us close to our roots, but takes on a new shape as we support teachers in more ways within the context of their own wellness as well as their teaching practice.

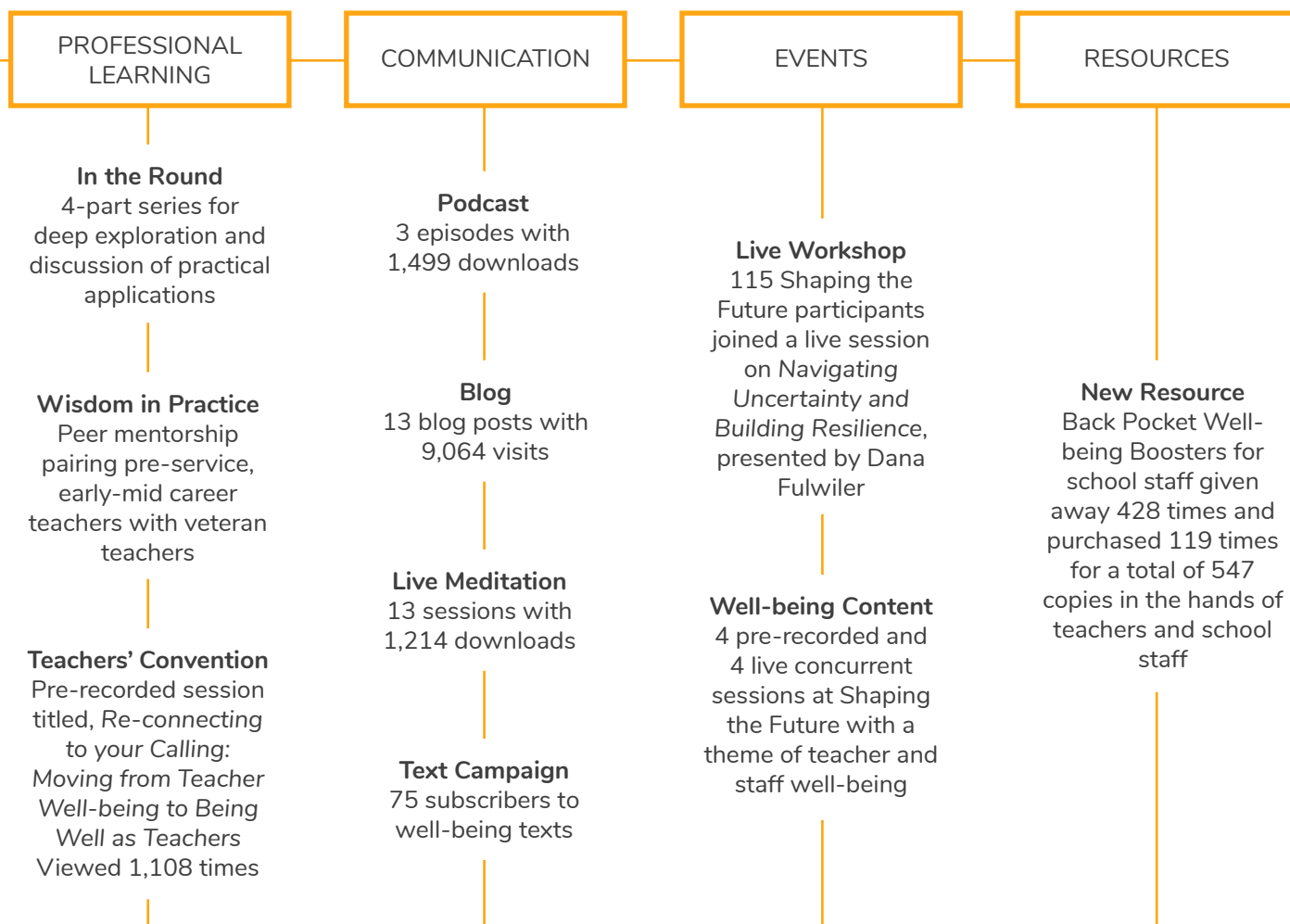
FOCUSING ON TEACHER AND STAFF WELL-BEING

This past year, Ever Active Schools prioritized teacher and staff well-being across our programs and services to elevate this important and essential piece of the healthy schools puzzle.



"I think it is essential... if you want a healthy school, you HAVE to [prioritize teacher well-being]... How can we be this calm, anchored voice for our students if our own minds are very anxious and unsettled?"

– Lisa Bush on The Podclass episode, *Intentionally Creating Work-Life Balance*



"Mentoring is often an unsung and unrecognized tool in preparing and nurturing individuals new to a profession. Such relationships provide invaluable insight and support." – Lindy Fors, mentor (Wisdom in Practice)



Teacher appreciation was another goal this year. During an especially difficult year, it was important for Ever Active Schools to show some appreciation for teachers and school staff. We know that meaning and accomplishment are key components to well-being, so it was important to us that staff knew that they mattered and were superstars.

To show our appreciation, our team hit the road and **personally visited 123 schools, hand delivering a bag of coffee along with a set of the Back Pocket Well-being Booster cards.** The day was a highlight for us because we saw the smiling faces of so many hard working staff, and for the schools we visited, we were told regularly that this was just what was needed to get through the final few week of the school year.

SUPPORTING THE PRACTICE OF TEACHING

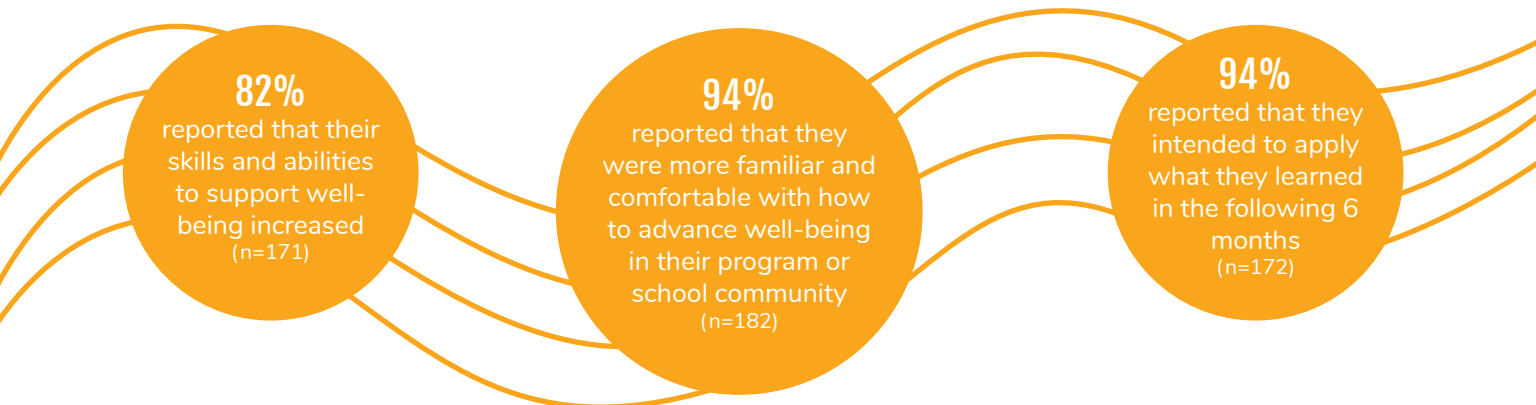
This year, EAS provided tangible support for teachers to embed well-being into their practice and personal lives. We offered professional learning online and through workshops at school-based and jurisdictional learning days; we provided “expert in residence” mentorship in schools on priority health topics; and, we developed and distributed learning materials and resources, providing literal back-pocket support.

Our two free, self-paced online courses (*Physical Activity 101: Understanding Physical Activity for After School Programs in Alberta* and *Building Healthy School Communities*) educated 121 participants.

- “This course was **PHENOMENAL!** An incredibly comprehensive, detailed, and diverse resource that has bolstered my confidence to lead the charge of CSH reform at my school.” – Building Healthy School Communities course participant

We delivered workshops to 100 schools and community programs, with participants reporting that the knowledge gained reached 26,193 students.

We provided **in-depth school mentorship opportunities to 57 schools, reaching 11,506 students** through a blend of online and in-person delivery. Through this, **we supported 430 teachers to engage their students to embrace and develop physical literacy** while learning from home.



We developed 19 new resources this year, including 3 in French. Of the **91 unique resources available** to support the practice of teachers and staff, the majority (82%) were physical resources or toolkits and the rest were educational materials. Offering a selection of resources for free keeps our work accessible. Our most accessed free resources included the Joy4All hotline, which received 10,847 calls; Games & Activities to Optimize Self-Regulation, downloaded 694 times; and Cold Weather Recess Planning, downloaded 577 times. In addition to our free downloadable resources, **we provided \$27,233 worth of resources at no cost to help teachers address public health measures and thrive.**

EAS piloted 2 editions of a resource subscription box–Embrace Winter and Move Your Body Grow Your Brain. We distributed 100 total boxes, each containing more than 25 seasonal resources and activities for classrooms.



“We **LOVE** our Embrace Winter box! It has provided us with a great excuse to take learning outdoors. These games and resources have my grade 7 and 8 students laughing, collaborating, problem solving, and learning new skills.” – Customer review



THE PODCLASS



THE PODCLASS

In January 2021, we launched The Podclass, a podcast for in-service and pre-service teachers focusing on health and well-being in school communities. Each episode features interviews with topic experts, aiming to provide listeners with ideas, information and practices to take into their classrooms the next day.

We developed the initial series, Conversations on School Health, in partnership with Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary, to replace course lecture content for EDUC 551: Comprehensive School Health and Wellness. In 20 episodes, this series explores such topics as the foundations of comprehensive school health, trauma-informed teaching practices, and vaping and tobacco education. A survey of students in the course showed **they most recommended the episodes Weight-Neutral Health Promotion with Dr. Shelley Russell-Mayhew, Positive Teacher Well-being with Dana Fulwiler, and Intentionally Creating Work-Life Balance with Lisa Bush**. Anecdotally from the course instructors, the course assignments reflected deeper learning, and overall the learning seemed elevated compared to the delivery of previous years.

The remote nature of The Podclass allowed for us to not only interview guests from several regions, but also to reach listeners internationally. Currently, **The Podclass reaches 6 continents, 41 different countries, and almost every province and territory in Canada**. More than 4,000 unique listeners have downloaded episodes more than 12,000 times.


Podcasts offer listeners the opportunity to invest in their own wellness as they learn. The audio-only format allows listeners to perform other tasks or activities, like walking, cooking, crafting or cycling, while they tune in. We highlight this idea in each episode, with each guest sharing their favourite activities to take care of their own well-being. **93% of pre-service teacher respondents agreed that listening to podcasts supported their own well-being as they learned. (n=172)**

To date, The Podclass has received a 4.5/5 star rating on iTunes.

Find The Podclass on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcasts. Also available at: www.everactive.org/services/the-podclass/



SUPPORTING YOUTH WHO NEED IT MOST



Knowing that education is a key social determinant of health, we recognize that it is important to apply an equitable approach to supporting youth across other determinants too: gender, race, culture, disability status and socio-economic status. In order to support priority populations, we offer specific programming for youth who need it most, and integrate this support across all programming.



On January 22, 2021, Ever Active Schools hosted Still I Rise, a one-day virtual event for students in grades 7-12. **The event gathered 1,223 students and 27 teachers from 11 school jurisdictions and 7 First Nations school authorities, including 10 participants from outside of Alberta**—blowing our expectations out of the water! Still I Rise focused on positive mental health and well-being, aiming to provide students with skills and understanding to develop resiliency, and was born of a need identified by Indigenous school communities amid the challenges and isolation of COVID-19. Students ‘zoomed-in’ from their homes and classrooms, creating connection and community despite the distance. An unexpected highlight of the day was watching and listening to students cheer when their school name was introduced during the event opening, creating positive energy. **With the support of their schools, many students earned a credit towards graduation for attending.**

Elder Flora Northwest opened the event with prayer and words of welcome and encouragement, beginning the day in a good way. Students then moved into smaller breakout sessions with an amazing complement of strong Indigenous role models. Evans Yellow Old Woman helped students feel motivated to tend to and nurture their personal wellness; Alicia Cardinal shared her messages of practicing gratitude, personal planning and positive affirmations; Devin Buffalo shared his story of resilience in sport amidst racism and struggle; and Rilee Manybears and Lannie Houle inspired students to follow their passions and prioritize their wellness. Students rejoined the larger group to listen to Joe Dion Buffalo close the day with his story of revival, from the shadows of Residential Schools to sobriety and a thriving career doing what he loves. The Alberta Medical Association Youth Run Club challenged students to think about ways they can increase their personal wellness and track their wellness activities for the following nine days.

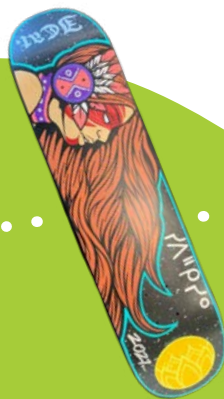
Our friends at Alberta Blue Cross, with their dedication to the youth in Alberta, help make these kinds of youth-focused days a reality. Much like Ever Active Schools, Alberta Blue Cross envisions an equitable world where all youth belong to healthy school communities and have access to wellness education.

WELLNESS IDEAS

- Go for a run
- Go for a walk
- Try a new healthy recipe
- Try yoga or stretching
- Play an active game
- Spend time outside in nature
- Call a friend or relative
- Put on your favorite playlist and dance
- Go to bed early
- Help out a sibling or family member
- Try a fun activity you have never done before
- Reflect, meditate or journal



One lucky student won this skateboard, hand-painted by Edmonton-based Cree artist JCat Cardinal



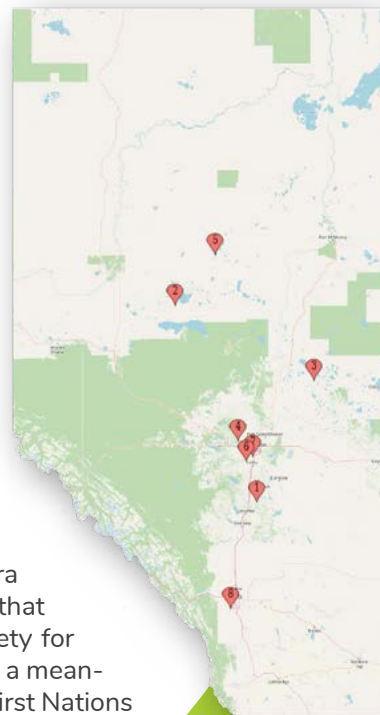
INDIGENOUS YOUTH WELLNESS COLLABORATIVE + RESILIENT SCHOOLS NETWORK CALLS

The **Indigenous Youth Wellness Collaborative (IYWC)** is an opportunity for organizations, programs and researchers serving Indigenous youth to gather and share. EAS hosts IYWC calls twice each year in the Fall and Spring. This year, the calls moved online and brought together more than 20 participants representing 19 different sector partners, including two new partnerships. The calls opened with a virtual smudge, welcome and introductions followed by a round-table discussion with the opportunity for each partner to share their work. These calls create opportunities for collaboration and partnership, highlight resources and opportunities for EAS to share the information discussed with schools communities, helping to build trust and cooperation across the sector.

The **Resilient Schools Network Call (RS Network Call)** was revived in October 2020 in an effort to foster connectivity and nurture relationships, as many First Nation and Métis school communities intermittently moved between in-person and at-home learning over the course of the school year. The calls were held on the first Wednesday of each month and moved from a phone conferencing line to Zoom, creating a greater feeling of community. EAS hosted 20 participants representing 14 different schools on the first call in October; in the following months, participation steadily increased. By June, 34 unique school communities participated in the RS Network Call, and each call welcomed at least one new school community.

The monthly calls served as a place to connect and share tools, strategies, resources and funding opportunities. It was also a place to pray together and offer peer-to-peer support. These network calls were a highlight for many on the EAS team. EAS facilitated discussions on strategies for managing cohorts and physical distancing; current challenges and opportunities for sport, physical activity or wellness in communities; ideating on session content for EAS events (Still I Rise and Resiliency Summit); and check-ins with one another and the well-being of teachers and staff in school communities.

EAS was blessed to have Elder Flora Northwest as an integral part of the RS Network calls. Elder Flora opened each call by praying in Cree and offering words of welcome and support. She shared insights and teachings as well as her feedback. She often told stories that evoked peals of laughter! When news broke of 215 children buried at a former residential school in Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, Elder Flora held space for the many Indigenous school community members who joined the call that Wednesday to share their thoughts and personal stories. Her presence created safety for our team and for participants. Over the past year, the RS Network Calls have become a meaningful space of community and connection and a fundamental part of our work with First Nations and Métis school communities.





JUMPSTART MASKS AND BAUER HOCKEY SETS

As students trickled back to class after at-home learning, there came a need to support school communities with in-person learning. Thanks to a generous donation of personal protective equipment by Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, Ever Active Schools distributed 31,467 masks to Indigenous schools across Alberta. Appreciation came through social media platforms celebrating the help to better protect students and school staff.

As part of the Hockey Equipment Relief Program, Bauer Hockey provided 50 sets of hockey equipment (skates, gloves, helmets and sticks) for children and youth with financial barriers. The equipment was distributed across 7 schools during the pandemic while students were learning from home; the school authorities then coordinated equipment deliveries to the homes of the students. The equipment was especially timely for Maskeksihk Kiskinomâtowkamik school in Enoch, which for the first time has an outdoor rink for students.



DECOLONIZING OUR PRACTICE



Our organization is grateful to receive ongoing teachings from generous and patient Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Community Members, and Indigenous youth and school staff members. We strive to continuously examine and improve our practice so we can better contribute to society and serve our stakeholders.

CREATING MEANINGFUL LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Beginning in September 2020, Ever Active Schools began to question our practice of territory land acknowledgements. We paused our practice and started to ask the questions: Should this be done differently? How could we do it differently? What interest do we, collectively, have in doing this differently?

Our initial response was to draft new land acknowledgements that felt more meaningful and authentic to our organization than our current practice. It was when one of our team members was sharing this work with people in her community that the question was posed, “have you offered protocol?” This gift of guidance caused us to slow down and invite our Elder in Residence, Elder Russ Auger, into our process. On a few occasions over the year we gathered with Russ (Heatwave Buffalo Child) and listened as he shared about the importance of askîy ᑭᓄᓂ (land) and the meaning and importance of offering land acknowledgements.

Our whole team engaged in discussions of land, the importance of land acknowledgements as an act of reconciliation, and, more broadly, prioritizing, decolonizing and Indigenizing the systems we work within. We related this to the ways in which we take up comprehensive school health in our communities. **These are living conversations within our organization, and we continue to create internal supports and resources to facilitate meaningful action as we walk this journey together.**

Beyond our internal experiences as individuals and as an organization we took steps this year to share our understanding and learning with the communities we serve. At Shaping the Future 2021, EAS prepared a pre-recorded presentation, viewed 68 times, describing our experience and process of working towards meaningful land acknowledgements. In April, we met virtually with staff at New Brighton School in Calgary who were in the midst of their own exploration and transformation with land acknowledgement and were seeking additional perspectives. Our practices have also extended to our Board of Directors and has led to board members offering to share their own land acknowledgements. **With an ongoing emphasis on learning in the outdoors, members of the EAS team have identified this as a critical moment to ensure we are not taking the land for granted as it continues to sustain us.**

These efforts are affecting change. It is communicated to us in the way people hear, read and feel our words and sentiments differently. We have received expressions of gratitude for the time, care, sincerity and individuality we bring to each acknowledgement. We are and will continue to take the time needed to do right by this work, to do right by the land, and to do right by the people and relationships that we speak of and are connected to.

Andrea reflects, “I am excited for the meaningful work that we as a team have accomplished in bringing a respectful path to learn together; I envision our team continuing to respect traditions yet strive to improve understanding of equity for all the students and people we interact with. I highly encourage school communities to take meaningful steps to engage local Indigenous knowledge keepers to assist them in implementing land acknowledgement in the culture of their communities. This work is so crucial to connecting people to the lands as we are all rooted in places tied to experiences and history.”

Read more of our team’s experiences on the blog:

everactive.org/land-acknowledgements/

Dear Land,

Thank you for being beautiful. Thank you for creating the places I love most, like Elk River, the Rocky Mountains, and the Edmonton River valley. Thank you for providing my family with food and water so that we are able to live and grow and explore. Thank you for growing trees that give us oxygen to breathe. Please continue to be resilient and strong. I want very much for future generations to see all of the wonderful things that I have been able to see. I promise to do my part too. I will take care of you by doing my best not to pollute your air, water, and soil. Together, we can find a balance to keep both of us healthy.

Your friend,
Cassidy, grade 7 student, Edmonton

ELDERS IN RESIDENCE

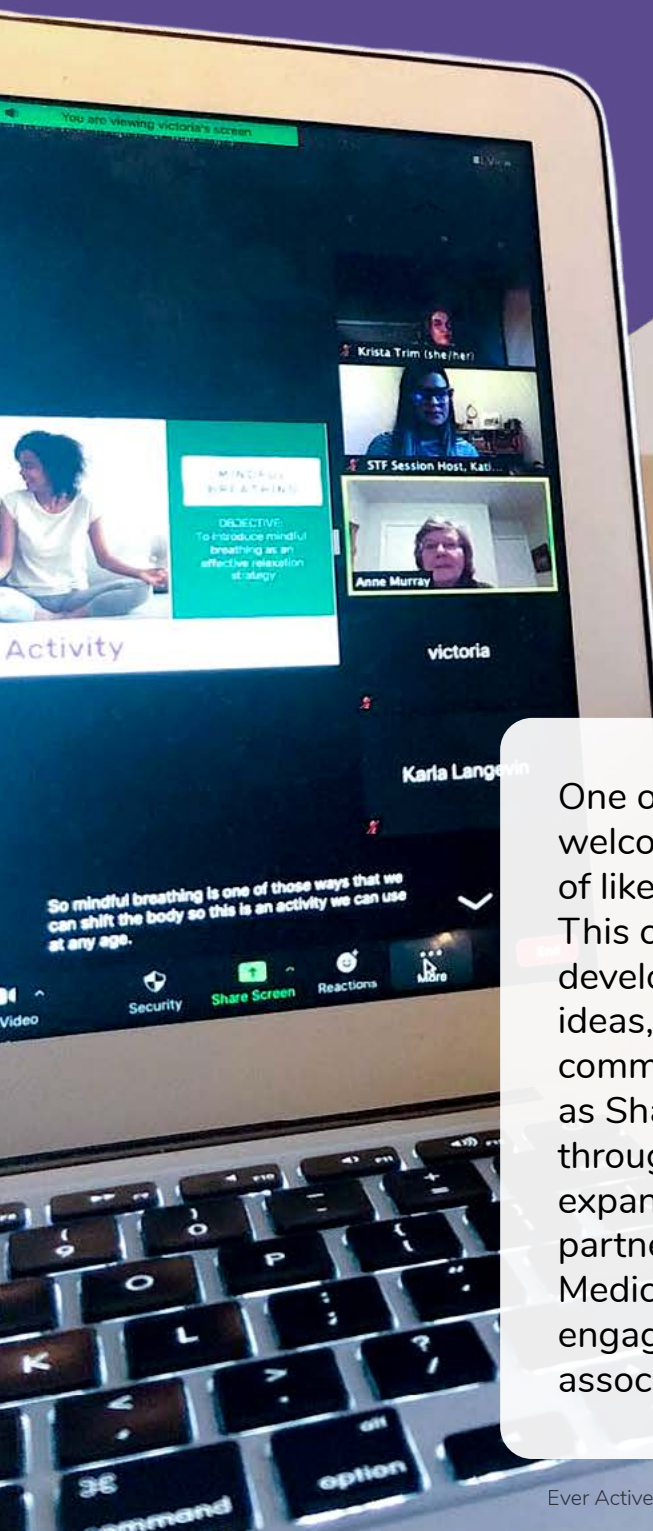
Over the last number of years, Ever Active Schools has worked with Indigenous Elders from each of the Treaty regions across Alberta to support various aspects of our work. We continue to invite Elders to open conferences, meetings and events in a good way, such as Elder Helmer Twoyoungmen, who has become an important part of Shaping the Future. We've engaged Elders as part of our hiring process through our interview panel, with one of our team members reflecting that having Elder Russ Auger at his EAS interview five years ago is an experience he will never forget. We've engaged Elders such as Elder Vera Starlight in teaching circles with youth at Resiliency Summit, and more recently Elders like Elder Kathleen Laboucan in a virtual circle with teachers and school community members from across the province.

In December 2019, Elder Russ Auger joined our team as an Elder in Residence, supporting our work serving Indigenous school communities through our Resilient Schools (RS) portfolio. The impact of Elder Russ was immediately and deeply felt by our team. Elder Russ joined RS team meetings, offering teachings and council as we were ready to receive these messages, and connecting with our team individually. In September 2020, Elder Russ and Elder Flora Northwest began to support our full team. We have spent time with Elder Russ around the fire learning how to evolve our land acknowledgements and to engage in meaningful and purposeful acts of reconciliation; with Elder Flora, our team sits for tea, and she attends our monthly Resilient Schools Network Calls, where she is known for her stories and wisdom. Their presence supports the safety and well-being of the indigenous community members we work with, as it does our Indigenous team members and our wider team.

We recognize the value that Indigenous Elders bring to our team and organization, and want to continue to work with Elders in more intentional ways. EAS is blessed to have Elders Russ Auger and Flora Northwest as part of our team in the role of Elders in Residence to offer ongoing support to our team in unique ways.



GROWING A COMMUNITY



One of the most valuable roles we play is welcoming stakeholders into a community of like-minded individuals and organizations. This community can continue to support their development in innumerable ways, and share ideas, best practices and failures. Our wider community is nurtured through events, such as Shaping the Future and Resiliency Summit; through networks we facilitate; and by the expansion of our organizational capacity through partnerships with regional centres, such as Medicine Hat's Be Fit For Life Centre, and engaging teachers and community members as associated and active school travel facilitators.

EVENTS: SHAPING THE FUTURE

Shaping the Future is a platform to bring together leaders from the health, education and active living sectors to engage in learning opportunities that support the implementation of comprehensive school health strategies. The conference is usually hosted in the serene mountains of Lake Louise; however, due to public health restrictions, the 2021 conference took place for the first time ever in a virtual format. We used the event app Whova, the Zoom platform and Youtube to share content in a way that allowed for networking and learning between delegates.

The conference this year featured **53 on-demand sessions**, which delegates could access for 3 months; **23 live virtual workshops**; **7 wellness opportunities**; and **one keynote presentation** by Shelley Moore on supporting inclusion and access within the classroom. Some topic themes included:



There was concern that going virtual would lose some of the community feel that comes alive in the mountains; however, our delegates showed us that, much like their students, learning from behind screens wasn't going to hold them back. Delegates : were active in Q+A exchanges, posting articles and participating in polls. It was a constant battle to be on the top of the app's gamified leaderboard – who would be the most engaged of them all?

Even in this virtual reality, our delegates had wonderful things to say about their experience.

- “This has been fantastic, thank you!”
- “Best conference ever.”
- “Well done given the circumstances of the year and the restrictions in place, hope to be back in person next year.”
- “Shaping the Future is the best conference, and next year will be the biggest party!!”

The virtual format had the benefit of ensuring access for delegates that would have been otherwise restricted by proximity, travel and logistics. A total of **573 people attended Shaping the Future**, of which 305 were individual registrations and 268 were teachers registered directly through their schools. As we look forward to planning future events, we are excited to learn from and incorporate some successes of this year's virtual conference, such as pre-recorded online content.

Attendee breakdown by sector:

- 522 Education
- 8 Recreation/Active Living
- 22 Health
- 10 Research
- 9 Other



RESILIENCY SUMMIT

Rise Up!

Empowerment | Resiliency | Mentorship



EVENTS: RESILIENCY SUMMIT

Resiliency Summit is a two-day gathering of Indigenous youth, educators and community members to share activities and celebrate stories and practices around health, wellness and resilience. Students and educators learn and share with Indigenous artists, athletes, Elders, community members and role models, experiencing a variety of active and creative activities. Unlike previous years, the 2021 summit was held virtually.

Elders in Residence Russell Auger and Flora Northwest opened the conference, followed by insightful student presentations where schools shared videos of their communities. Students joined six sessions focused on arts, physical activity, land-based learning and the importance of Indigenous influencers.

Notable Quotes for Resiliency Summit 2021

- “Our grade six students and teachers really enjoyed the conference.”
- “Wow, we really enjoyed the presentation from Tammy Lamouche and RedCloud around language integration. We would love to bring them into our school.”
- “You are a great organization and we really appreciate our relationship with you and the support that we get. Thank you!”
- “Love everything you do and all the support you give us and our students.”

We saw great success with the virtual conference, welcoming 356 participants—10 schools, 7 classrooms and 3 individuals!



ASSOCIATED AND ACTIVE SCHOOL TRAVEL FACILITATORS

External facilitators, who deliver content on behalf of Ever Active Schools, have become an integral part of our operations. Our Associated Facilitator (AF) roster consists of 10 mighty teachers, spanning as far north as High Level and as far south as Calgary with representation in-between. While opportunities to deliver front-facing professional learning on behalf of EAS were limited this year, that did not slow down the passion and creativity of this group. We scheduled regular, virtual drop-ins to simply connect with peers and find out what was going on in everybody's world. It was humbling to experience their willingness to attend despite long days of teaching online, in-person, or both.

We are grateful for the time our AFs were able to offer to provide teaching and learning, drawing upon their diverse, lived experiences and knowledge. **Two facilitators each led a few EAS on Demand sessions in May 2021; three signed-up as mentors for our Peer-to-Peer Mentorship initiative; two led sessions at Shaping the Future 2021; and, when it came to participating in the Spring coffee delivery, we had overwhelming participation, with AFs visiting a total of 36 schools!** This growing community has been, and will continue to be, a mutually beneficial experience. We experienced immense joy when recognizing each of our facilitators on social media as 'AFs of the Month' this year. The monthly posts introduced the AF to our broader EAS following and brought attention to the work they are doing and ways to connect directly with each of them.

Similar to the Associated Facilitator role, EAS also works with a team of facilitators specifically around active transportation. We currently have three facilitators implementing a project with 8 schools in the Calgary area. All three facilitators have exceptional community development skills, believe in active transportation and want more students and families in these areas to be able to make active transportation their first choice. One facilitator is broadcasting a City of Calgary project on social media with #getkidsout. We are also fortunate to have a facilitator in the city of Leduc, whose experience and education as a substitute teacher and employee with the city's transportation department, situates them perfectly within their role to advance active school travel.

When it comes to recruiting and training Active School Travel Facilitators, we found that engaging parents in their own local or school communities was the most effective approach: their community knowledge is invaluable. We lead facilitators through training to learn the school travel planning tool kit, used widely across Canada, and follow up with ongoing mentorship to provide guidance as-needed. With hours of training, mentorship, and relationship building at the forefront of their positions, our facilitators are undoubtedly an extension of the EAS community.



ASSOCIATED FACILITATOR OF THE MONTH
COLLIN DILLON



ASSOCIATED FACILITATOR OF THE MONTH
LISA CASSIDY



ASSOCIATED FACILITATOR OF THE MONTH
ADAM PRATT



ASSOCIATED FACILITATOR OF THE MONTH
KEVIN HIGGINS



ASSOCIATED FACILITATOR OF THE MONTH
LISA GRANT



ASSOCIATED FACILITATOR OF THE MONTH
DAYNA LANDRY



ASSOCIATED FACILITATOR OF THE MONTH
SABRINA GRECU



ASSOCIATED FACILITATOR OF THE MONTH
TAMMY PIERSON

EVER ACTIVE COMMUNITIES: BE FIT FOR LIFE MEDICINE HAT

Be Fit for Life (BFFL) was a network series of centers with a 40-year history in Alberta communities. It was a collection of nine centres, housed in colleges or universities across the province, supporting physical literacy and meaningful movement across the lifespan. Over the course of this past year, sustaining their programming or operations in the same way wasn't possible due to funding cuts or restrictions within the sectors of provincial sport and recreation and advanced education. The government did provide transition grants, and through one of those grants the Medicine Hat centre reached out to EAS. Our relationship with the centre is long-standing as we have continued to participate on committees in Medicine Hat and reciprocally, the BFFL team has delivered some work on our behalf around physical literacy mentorship for the last several years. On the foundation of this relationship, we partnered with BFFL to help sustain their operations in the form of a four month project; a safe haven of sorts. Creatively, this seemed to be the best of a few available solutions - for the unit to become a regional center of Ever Active Schools.

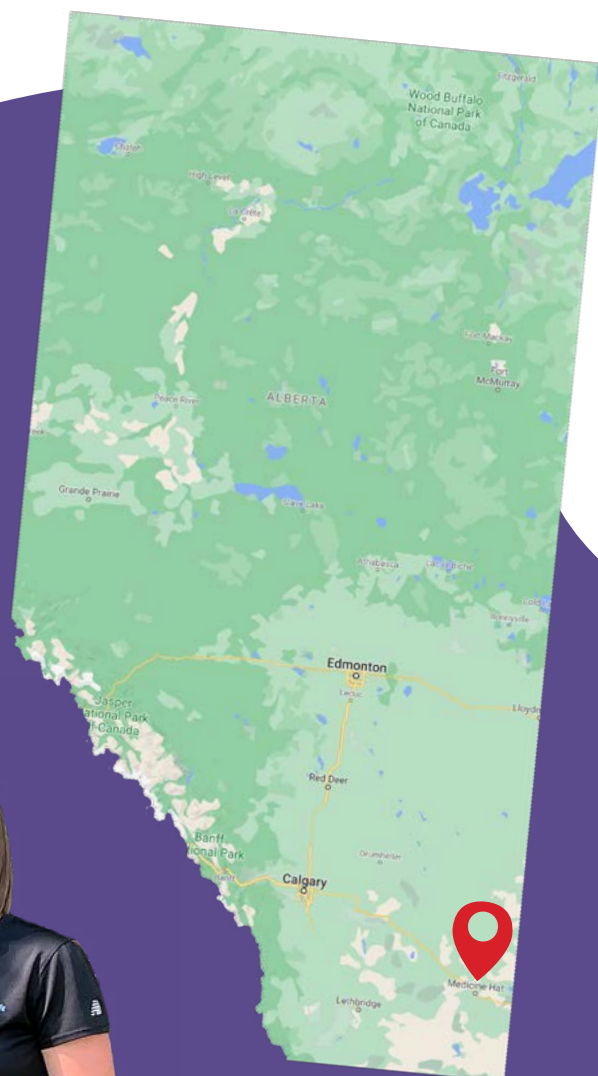
This continues to take shape as 'Ever Active Communities'. We now have six part-time staff members who report to a team leader with their original BFFL team. Similar to Active School Travel, they live and work in the community. They know the community and have a strong sense for what is needed or how to respond. Between March and June 2021, the new team members have supported various provincial projects, including direct delivery of programming with Little Red River Cree Nation, High Five training as part of Miyomahchihowin: In Good Health, and delivery of professional learning at the Out of School Time (OST) conference. These six individuals have many skills to offer for delivering professional learning and we are confident about the Medicine Hat centre's efficacy as the first regional hub for Ever Active Communities.



**Ever
Active
Schools**
www.everactive.org



be fit for life
moving alberta



OUR E-COMMUNITY

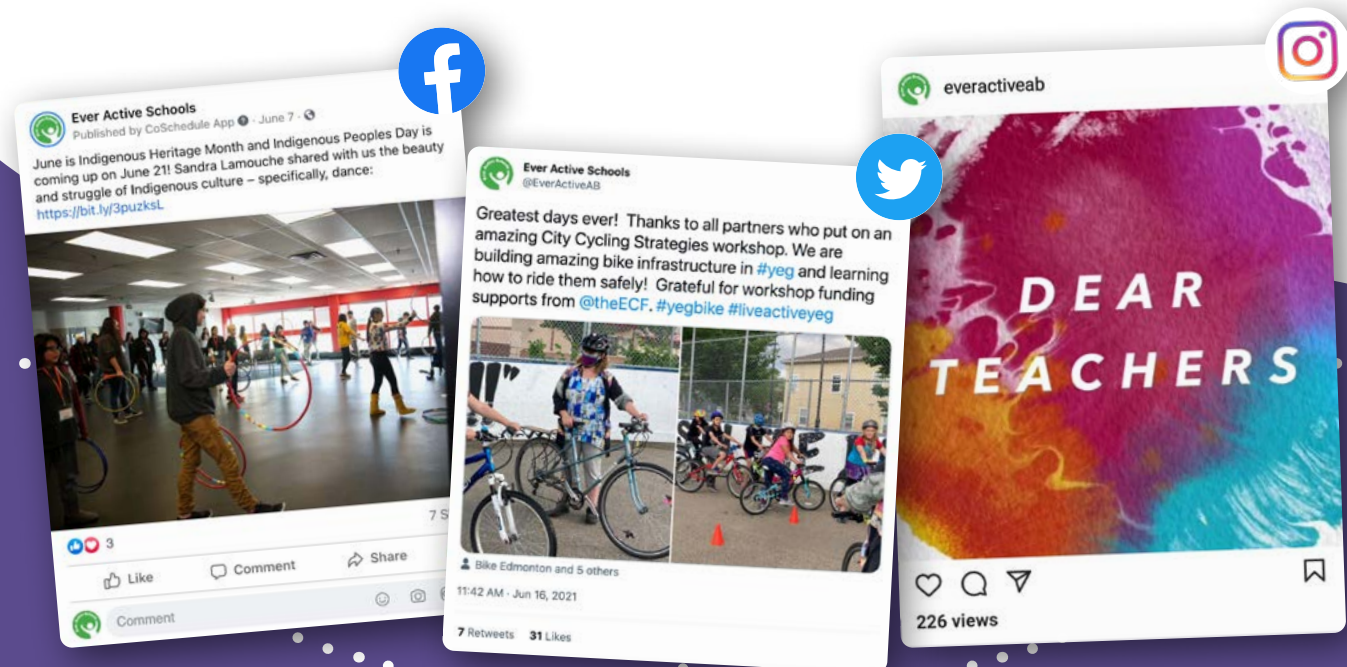
Our community exists beyond our face-to-face work. Through electronic newsletters, websites and social media channels, we're able to connect and share resources with people across Canada and beyond.

We currently send out six different newsletters to varying audiences and have **11,522 subscribers**. Our monthly newsletter, the Ever Active Schools e-news, accounts for approximately 6,000 of those subscribers – they regularly receive information about our resources, events, partners, funding opportunities, and more. In the 2020-2021 school year, we distributed 24 editions of various newsletters.

The Ever Active Schools website serves as an online home for all things related to the organization. We have web pages that showcase who we are as a team, including values, team biographies, project and organizational reports, and project work stories. The website also serves to house all the information related to our events, services, and ways to get involved with EAS. Our online store hosts our available resources, including free downloadable and low-cost physical resources. **Over the 2020/2021 school year, our website was accessed 94,865 times by 71,947 users, resulting in more than 216,000 pageviews.**

EAS has an active presence on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram with regular posts that share information on programs, resources, and supports for comprehensive school health. **Across these platforms, we have over 1.5 million impressions on our content and a total of 9,658 followers.**

Communication tools like our website, social media, and newsletters allow us to connect with an international audience that may not be able to participate with in-person offerings. Through these tools, we are able to support people from around the world – teachers, administrators, parents, coaches, program leaders and more – in their comprehensive school health journey.





THANK YOU

to the funders, partners and supporters who make the work of Ever Active Schools possible and impactful.

Any gift, large or small, helps to support healthy school communities in Alberta. Donate at everactive.org/donate