

EVER ACTIVE SCHOOLS

2022/2023 ANNUAL REPORT



A photograph of four young women in a classroom setting, smiling and reaching up to place colorful wooden blocks on top of each other, building a tower. The woman on the left is wearing a black hoodie. The woman in the center is wearing a brown hoodie. The woman on the right is wearing a white hoodie. The woman on the far right is wearing a white t-shirt with a logo that says "I have a Micky".

WE LL-BEING

At Ever Active Schools, **WE** believe that true well-being extends beyond the individual. It flourishes within the web of community and connection.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from Director and Board Chair	1
Highlights	2
Recreation Leadership	3-5
Learn to Skate	6-8
Everybody Plays	9-11
Resettlement Through Recreation	12-14
Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP)	15-17
Closing	18



LETTER FROM DIRECTOR & BOARD CHAIR

*Dear Friends and Supporters of
Ever Active Schools,*

It is with heartfelt enthusiasm that we present to you the Annual Report for 2023, where we showcase our unwavering commitment to nurturing well-being within our educational communities. This year, our report theme revolves around a simple yet powerful concept: the “we” in well-being.

At Ever Active Schools, we believe that true well-being extends beyond the individual. It flourishes within the web of community and connection. Our organization recognizes that well-being encompasses more than physical health alone. It encompasses mental, emotional, social, cultural and spiritual aspects, all intertwined and inseparable. By focusing on the collective well-being of our educational communities, we can create an environment that fosters resilience, growth and the opportunity to thrive for everyone involved. Knowing that positive social interactions are the foundation of wellness, we strive to provide endless opportunities for the school communities and children and youth that we work alongside.

Our team loves this work and we hope that shows through this report. A big part of the “we” is the team, teachers, community leaders, Elders and students that we are honoured to work alongside.

In this year’s report, you will find inspiring

stories of collaboration, inclusivity and shared achievements. We have witnessed countless transformative moments where students, teachers, administrators and parents have come together, united by a shared vision of well-being. Whether it’s the jubilant laughter of students engaged in play, the empowering conversations on equity and access, or the heartfelt support offered during challenging times, our community has demonstrated time and again that connection and togetherness are the bedrocks of lasting well-being.

Through strategic partnerships, innovative programs and the dedication of our incredible team, we have been able to cultivate environments where everyone feels valued, supported, and encouraged to thrive. This report not only celebrates the remarkable accomplishments of the past year but also serves as a testament to the profound impact that can be achieved when we focus on the “we” in well-being.

Thank you for your unwavering support as we embark on this collective endeavor of creating access to wellness in healthy school communities.

In Wellness,



Brian Torrance
Executive Director



Bob Young
Board Chair

HIGHLIGHTS

IMPACT

779

people reached every day through our programming

460

school and community programs reached

8,353

teachers and staff reached

equivalent to almost a quarter of the certificated staff employed in Alberta's education system

83,993

children and youth impacted

equivalent to the 5th largest city in Alberta



HOW WE MADE A DIFFERENCE

37%

of schools are meeting recommendations for health promoting school standards

146

unique partners

Participant Feedback on EAS Programs

4.3/5 stars

average rating

730 total respondents

Empowering Wellness Efforts through Ever Active Schools

5

n=173

partnerships/relationships are developed or reinforced on average by engaging with Ever Active Schools

98%

n=793

of surveyed participants became more familiar and comfortable with how to advance well-being in their program or school community

86%

n=2,306

of children and youth who participate in the work we support feel a greater sense of belonging

74%

n=1,974

of children and youth who participate in the work we support report feeling more socially connected

40%

of our service delivery supported priority populations

568/1,430 interactions



A photograph of three students participating in a triathlon. In the foreground, a student with red hair and purple glasses is pushing a black TrailRider triathlon bike. The bike has a large front wheel and two smaller rear wheels. A yellow rope is attached to the front of the bike. In the background, two other students are also on TrailRider bikes. One student is wearing a green t-shirt with a circular logo that says "TRAIL RIDER" and "EVER ACTIVE SCHOOLS". The other student is wearing a grey t-shirt with a colorful graphic that says "HAVE A" and "CE". The students are all smiling and appear to be enjoying the activity. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a path.

RECREATION LEADERSHIP

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“Because of this class I have made a best friend for life as well as found a passion for working with children.” - Recreation Leadership Student, 2023

A student, initially quiet and reserved, joined the Recreation Leadership program in January 2023. Despite sitting in the back of the class and keeping their head down, this student never missed a day. It was during a group trip to Canmore and an outdoor activity facilitated with Rocky Mountain Adaptive that something remarkable happened: this student completely broke out of their shell, gaining newfound confidence that would shape their future. The confidence this student gained led to their successful employment, and it didn't stop there.

This experience also ignited a passion for working with children, which they expressed in a heartfelt letter to Ever Active Schools staff member Kaitlyn, the teacher who worked so hard to build the relationship. "Because of this class, I have made a best friend for life as well as found a passion for working with children."

This single student's journey exemplifies the impact that the Recreation Leadership program can have on personal growth and career development.

Project Overview

The Recreation Leadership program has proven to be a catalyst for transformation in the lives of many students. The program provides pathways to employment in the recreation and human services sector for youth who experience barriers to employment and academic success.

We know that most youth in Canada find jobs through employed family and friends, which means that youth from communities where unemployment is higher face disproportionate barriers. Work experience programs tend to be offered and funded by labour unions and are primarily accessed by young men entering the trades, which widens the job opportunity gap for girls and gender diverse students.

Recreation Leadership connects youth to an employment network and higher paying jobs in health and human services, while also supporting high school completion through credit-earning. Students gain valuable skills and certifications, but they also develop a strong sense of belonging and connection to their community.

Funders:



Collaborators:



Calgary Board
of Education



Project Results

Surveys conducted among participating students have revealed the significant positive impact of the Recreation Leadership program on their academic success and overall career preparedness. A majority of students reported that the program helped them gain confidence, improve their communication skills,

succeed in school, expand their knowledge about different career options and feel better prepared for their future careers. 14/15 students reported having a broader understanding of the different career options available to them. All 15 students reported feeling more seen and heard by their peers through this program and said they would recommend it to their friends.

DID YOU KNOW?

Across Ever Active Schools programs, participants experienced:

Improved
academic
success

624

credits earned
across four unique
projects

Improved
employment
readiness

1,383

certifications were
awarded across four
unique projects

We heard the following feedback from surveyed youth:

88%

"This interaction helped me succeed at school."

Students surveyed: 498

74%

"I know about different career options because of this interaction."

Students surveyed: 463

76%

"I feel better prepared for a career because of this interaction."

Students surveyed: 352



LEARN TO SKATE

LEARN TO SKATE

“Students from 7 different countries were skating on ice for the first time within months of their arrival to Canada!”

-Program Volunteer

Students piled off the bus at the Olympic Oval. It was March, and students from 7 different countries laced up and hit the Fastest Ice in the World. It was their first time in ice skates, an experience that would not only introduce them to a beloved Canadian pastime but also symbolize their journey of adaptation and resilience in a new country. Some were met with fear the first time their skates touched the ice; others found a runway of opportunity. It became clear that it formed an unforgettable memory for every student involved.

They were not only learning to skate but also discovering the strength within themselves to conquer new challenges and embrace their newfound home. With each passing minute, their confidence grew, and they began to let go of their fears. For many students, the impact of the Learn to Skate program is immeasurable. Students embraced a new physical activity and in doing so, they discovered their own strength, resilience, and the endless possibilities that awaited them in their new home.

Project Overview

The Learn to Skate program fosters access to physical activity for all children. Financial barriers often hinder students' access to recreational activities; by removing transportation and equipment costs, this program creates an accessible opportunity for students to develop essential physical literacy skills in an alternative environment. It creates a level playing field, ensuring that every child has a chance to participate and thrive. The program not only teaches them a new skill but also fosters a sense of belonging and connection within their diverse school communities.

Project Results

In the 2022/23 school year, Learn to Skate supported over 1,400 students from 14 schools across Edmonton [12] and Calgary [2]. When surveyed (t=11), 100% of teachers reported that the Learn to Skate program fully increased opportunities for students to participate in physical activity, sport and/or performance arts.

T=11, 4=2, 5=9

“We are an inner city K-9 school consisting of many refugee and immigrant students. So many of our students are new to the country, or alternatively, have never skated before!”

-Learn to Skate Teacher

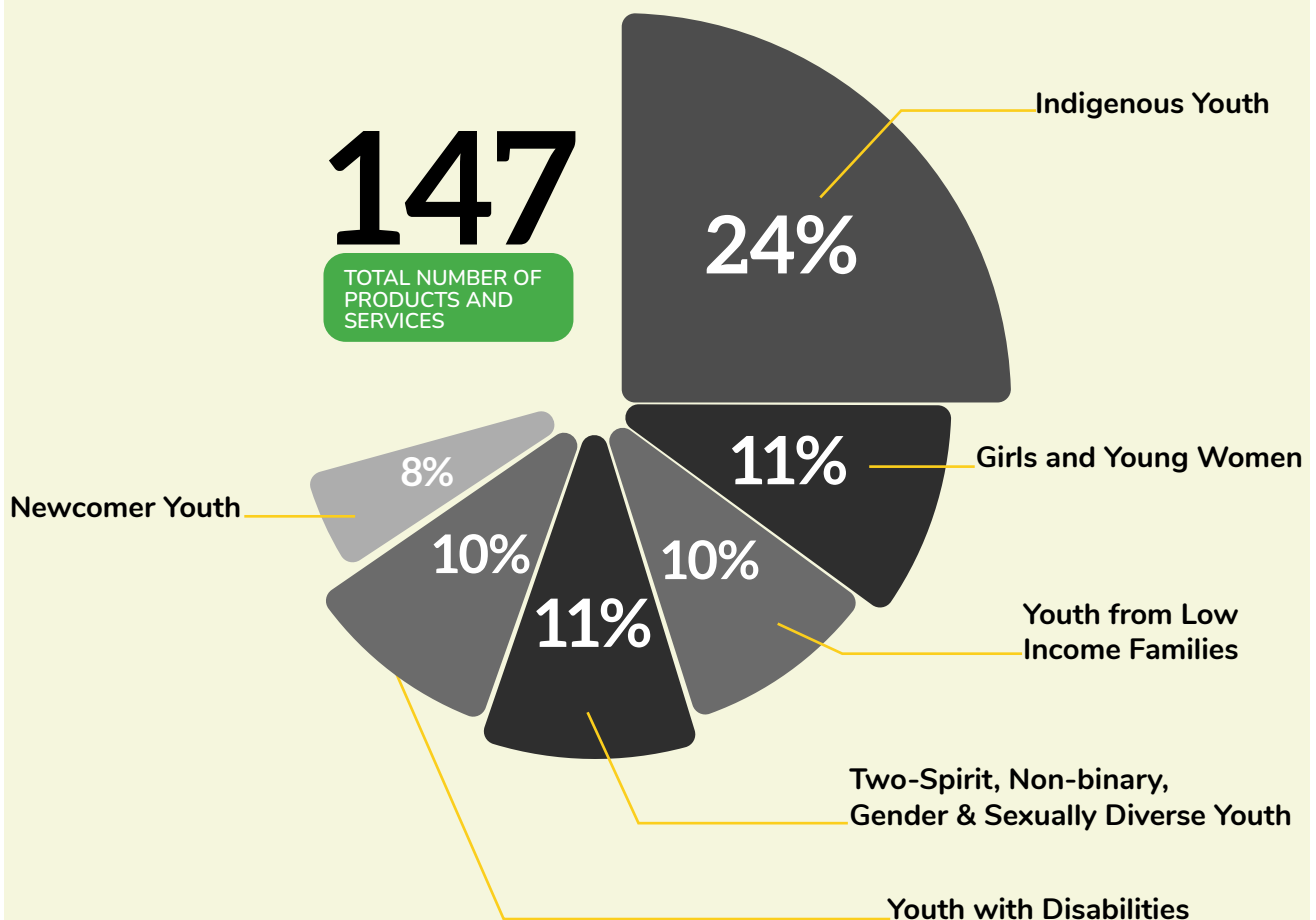
Funders and supporters:



**DID YOU
KNOW**

Ever Active Schools provides programming for priority populations/underserved communities.

**PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF PRODUCTS AND SERVICES
SUPPORTING PRIORITY POPULATIONS**



EVERYBODY PLAYS



EVERYBODY PLAYS

“I sat in the middle of the gym like I always do. One of the very first students who sat next to me looked right at me and said, “Are you going to stay here for longer than just today?” - Adam, Ever Active Schools Staff

Everybody Plays brings to life the right to participate in play. However, not every school or community has the same access or capacity to support play opportunities. Adam, an EAS team member, experienced this firsthand when working with a rural and remote school. He learned that frequent absences from the physical education teacher meant students were missing out on consistent positive movement experiences. Teachers were impacted too - they didn't have access to their only prep periods of the week and they felt ill-equipped to teach physical activity. With students participating and staff watching, this was a moment that highlighted what connecting and joy through positive movement experiences was all about.

The brief interaction with the student at the start of class stuck with Adam. He writes, “A few things that come to mind that make this moment special are the importance of our work, the importance of connection, and the importance of equity. All children deserve to have consistent, loving and caring adults in their lives. The work we do helps ensure that is more of a reality for so many kids across the province, especially those in harder to reach areas where supports are less accessible.”

Project Overview

Everybody Plays is a program designed to build a culture of health and wellness in school communities. It spans an entire school year and includes an in-school residency, thorough preparation and follow-up work tailored to meet the specific needs and opportunities for growth within each school. By engaging in consultations with administrators, wellness champions and student leaders, we gain valuable insights into individual school contexts. We then craft customized program implementation and professional development strategies.

Project Results

Survey shows 91% of adults (n=735) feel more supported through resources or partner organizations to meet the equity, diversity and inclusion needs of priority populations. 98% of adults (n=793) felt their interaction with Ever Active Schools helped them become more familiar and comfortable with how to advance well-being in their program or school community. 83% (n=677) of children and youth respondents reported that because of their interaction with EAS they were moving more. 78% of children and youth respondents reported that they are participating in more physical activities, sports, or performance arts as a result of their interaction with EAS.

This project is generously funded through Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities



DID YOU
KNOW

Ever Active Schools worked deeply with 81 schools to help them meet the Canadian Healthy School Standards.

32%
n=26

of these schools are beginning their journey of the Canadian Healthy Schools Standard.

31%
n=25

of these schools are developing their practice around Canadian Healthy Schools Standard.

32%
n=26

of these schools are at a stage of accomplishing the Canadian Healthy School Standard.

5%
n=4

of these schools are are mastering the Canadian Healthy School Standard.

Overall, this amounts to 37% (30/81) of the schools meeting the recommendations for health-promoting school standards.



A photograph of two young women in a wooded area. The woman on the left is seen from the back, wearing a dark blue parka with a blue-lined hood and a green knit headband. The woman on the right is wearing a dark blue parka with a white fur-lined hood and a brown hijab, smiling and gesturing with her hands. The background consists of bare trees and a hint of a body of water.

RESETTLEMENT THROUGH RECREATION

RESETTLEMENT THROUGH RECREATION

“Hey! You know me.” - Grade 6 Student

The community had gathered at Police Point Park in Medicine Hat for the Winter Outdoor Day, a special event as part of the Resettlement through Recreation project. In the crowd, a student recognized Erynn, an EAS staff member, and exclaimed, "Hey! You know me!" Tapping his chest with his right hand and with excitement on his face, again, he calls out, "You know who I am!" Erynn recalls, "There he was, a child in grade 6. A newcomer to Canada. A classmate of my daughter. A boy who has been participating in our Leagues of Play, after-school programming and our AMA Youth Run Club. He now realizes that I am one and the same. That lady who shows up for the 'sports stuff' after-school is the same lady who has been working with him and his siblings with Saamis Immigration. All of these pieces have come together for this moment of 'You know me!' A familiar face in the crowd."

This moment of recognition between Erynn and the student showed how the programming and support offered to newcomers in Canada have a profound impact in helping them to feel seen and known. Without these opportunities, the child may have missed the chance to connect with the community and form meaningful relationships.

Project Overview

The Resettlement through Recreation initiative aimed to help newcomers to Canada feel welcome in their new communities by providing sport and recreation opportunities. Ever Active Schools partnered with community organizations, resettlement agencies and funders to make this possible.

Through this project, we gifted agencies and families with the sports equipment needed to participate. We also trained resettlement agency workers to incorporate fun physical activities into their existing programming for youth. Cultural liaison workers ensured culturally appropriate access to physical activities, to "and we organized Family Fun Days to engage parents and showcase the value of sport and recreation.

Project Results

Feedback from participants highlighted the positive outcomes of the project. 94% of respondents (n=79) expressed their intention to attend the program again. A leader appreciated the program's significance for immigrant girls, particularly Muslim girls, in participating in sports activities.

Partners:



Medicine Hat

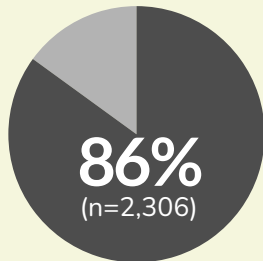


MH INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM
Managed by the Society of Grasslands Naturalists

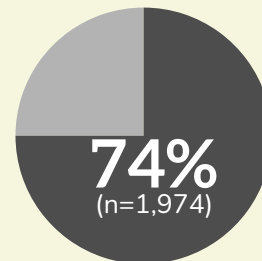


DID YOU
KNOW?

Participating youth experienced a positive impact on their well-being across all of our programs.




of surveyed students felt a sense of belonging and acceptance.



of surveyed students felt more seen, heard, and understood by their peers.





INDIGENOUS YOUTH MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

INDIGENOUS YOUTH MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

“It was so good to see Indigenous kids play, laugh and be themselves with no barriers, demands or restrictions. They played and played.” -Teena Starlight, National Director for IYMP

Amidst the Canadian Rockies in Kananaskis, AB, a gathering occurred for the Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP); an after-school initiative dedicated to fostering healthy living and well-being in Indigenous school communities. Indigenous youth and community champions from Kehewin, Tsuut'ina, Morley, Kainai and Maskwacis, as well as participants from Québec and Manitoba, converged to learn, connect and play. At first, students kept to their respective groups. When the sessions began with an opening circle, some could barely speak into the microphone and others skipped introductions altogether. Then the games began and the tensions started to ease. Hoodies came down and friendships and connections began to form through play. From that point there was no stopping them: they played in the sessions, played in the hallways and played in the cabins; the kids formed lifelong connections and friendships, all through play.

By the end of the two days there were no longer separate groups coming together, but instead one singular community laughing and supporting each other. The power of play broke down the barriers

these kids had put in front of themselves and formed bonds of friendship. The sight of Indigenous children wholeheartedly playing, and witnessing their laughter and authentic expressions without barriers, demands or restrictions was profoundly impactful to National IYMP Director Teena Starlight. It served as a reminder of the urgent need to create safe spaces where the youth could be themselves, cultivating their well-being.

One teacher who attended reported, “I think this is going to change the lives of the younger kids, but also the older kids we trained here today who will be the leaders of the program. It has also hugely improved my relationship with these students, since they got to see that I am a fun person who cares about them, not just their teacher talking in the classroom!”

A student shared: “I’m taking back with me all the games we learned that I can run with the little kids, but also the love and support of all of you. I’m keeping that in my heart.”

Project Overview

The Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP) is a community-driven after-school program designed to promote holistic well-being, positive mental health and healthy living among Indigenous youth. Indigenous high school students assume leadership roles, supported by a Program Leader chosen by the community. IYMP spans 20 weeks throughout the school year and involves weekly 90-minute sessions with healthy snacks, vigorous physical activity and mentorship. The primary goal of IYMP is to equip Indigenous youth with the tools necessary to become leaders within their communities while fostering a strong connection to and celebration of their cultural heritage. By harnessing the strengths of Indigenous

children and youth, the program seeks to build healthy relationships and thriving communities.

Project Results

63 people participated in IYMP training this year, which included students and staff from 9 schools and communities across three different provinces. Students received up to 2 high school credits towards their graduation for attending, with a total of 78 credits earned at the training. Additionally, a National Director was hired for the program to steward the creation of a logo and website, and to collaborate with elders and regional coordinators across the country.

DID YOU KNOW?



79%
(n= 1,101)

of students feel like EAS programming provided the skills to be a strong leader.

74%
(n= 610)

of students feel like EAS programming supported them to connect to their culture.

72%
(n= 653)

of students felt they had the opportunity to celebrate their culture.

Across Ever Active Schools programs:



CLOSING



Our team is incredibly proud of and passionate about the work we do. We wish to acknowledge the many marvelous teachers, coaches, youth, elders and parents who are involved in this work, and whose efforts make it possible. You continue to inspire us.

We are grateful to work alongside many talented partner organizations who share similar values and are committed to improving the lives of children and youth. We appreciate your contributions.

Special thanks to our partners, sponsors and donors to these programs and for their dedication to making meaningful investments.



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