

## **Natural Playscape on Neville - Maples Community / NW Winnipeg**

### **Project Target Risk Factors:**

Physical Activity  
Mental Wellbeing

### **Target Population:**

Preschool (6 yrs & under)

School age (6 -12 yrs)

The playground, located in the heart of the Maples, is open to all community members. We are a community rich with culture.

### **Project Leads:**

O.K. Before & After School Child Care Centres Inc. & O.V. Jewitt Community School

**Community:**Seven Oaks

**RHA:** Winnipeg - Evan Zarecki - Community Facilitator

### **Project Partners:**

O.K. Before & After School Child Care Centres Inc. & O.V. Jewitt Community School

### **Project Details:**

An ongoing project

### **Description:**

We are developing (1<sup>st</sup> phase is nearly complete) a natural Playscape area in the front playground area of O.V. Jewitt School. This joint project will offer children and families more exposure to nature and natural play opportunities.

### **Time:**

The project will be done in several phases. Construction began in July 2011. We anticipate completion of total project by fall of 2012.

### **Objectives:**

- The Natural Playscape will provide the children and their families a positive, new play experience - one that is open ended and stimulates discovery
- It will encourage and support the ideology of healthy living

### **Planning Supports:**

The following research statements support our planning:

- Children with nature nearby their homes are more resistant to stress; have lower incidence of behavioural disorders, anxiety, and depression; and have a higher measure of self worth. (Wells & Evans, 2002)
- Children with views of and contact with nature score higher on tests of concentration and self discipline (Wells, 2000; Grahn et al.,1997; Taylor et al., 2002).
- Spending time in nature has been shown to reduce stress and benefit treatment of numerous health conditions (Kahn, 1999).
- Play in a diverse natural environment can reduce or eliminate bullying (Nalone & Tranter, 2003).

- Exposure to natural environments improves children’s cognitive development by increasing their awareness, reasoning and observational skills (Pyle, 2002)

Following attendance at the Manitoba Child Care Association’s Annual Conference in 2009, where Rusty Keeler was the keynote speaker, this information was shared with the Board of Directors of O.K. Before & After School Child Care Centres Inc., school administration at O.V. Jewitt School and The Board of Trustees of the Seven Oaks School Division.

**Results:**

As a result, we were able to secure funding from several of these target audiences and others. The first phase of the playground development is almost complete. Families with young children are using the playground.

**What worked:**

The purpose of the project was to expose children and families to more natural play experiences and the outdoors. This goal has definitely been met as families and young children are already using the playground.

**What didn’t work and any changes made:**

Sometimes little details (size of structures, the ways our different organization work) were focused on too greatly. We had to remind ourselves of the “big picture” and the ‘WHY’ of the program.

**Unexpected Outcomes:** n/a

**Other notes:**

Although we are far from completion of the entire project, the experience has been an extremely worthwhile one thus far. The feedback received from the community, childcare program and the school has been overwhelmingly positive.

**Resources:**

Employed an artist to sketch out the landscape designs. Hired a construction company and concrete company to facilitate much of the labour.

**Volunteers:**

Employees from both the school and the childcare program volunteered some time (difficult to estimate the volunteer time)

**Total Costs:** To date, the total cost of the program has been approximately \$23,000. This represents the near completion of the first phase. The Healthy Together Now funding was \$3000. The other funders included: Home Depot, the Parent Council of O.V.Jewitt School, O.V.Jewitt School, O.K Before and After Child Care Centres Inc and the Seven Oaks School Division.

**Materials developed for your program:**

Pictures of the project’s progress:

[Photo 1](#)

[Photo 2](#)

[Photo 3](#)

[Photo 4](#)

[Photo 5](#)

**Contact Information:**

Community: Seven Oaks Community

Region: Winnipeg

Contact person: Jodie Kehl (O.K. Before & After School Child Care Centres Inc.) or Bob McIntosh (O.V. Jewitt School)

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An alternate contact or for information on other Healthy Together Now programs in the area please contact Evan Zarecki - [ezarecki@wrha.mb.ca](mailto:ezarecki@wrha.mb.ca)