



*Connecting with
community on the
Sherose Island Nature Trail*

**Son Truong, Misty James, Karen Gallant, Joel
d'Entremont, Ashlyn Stevens**

School of Health and Human Performance

Municipality of Barrington Recreation
Department

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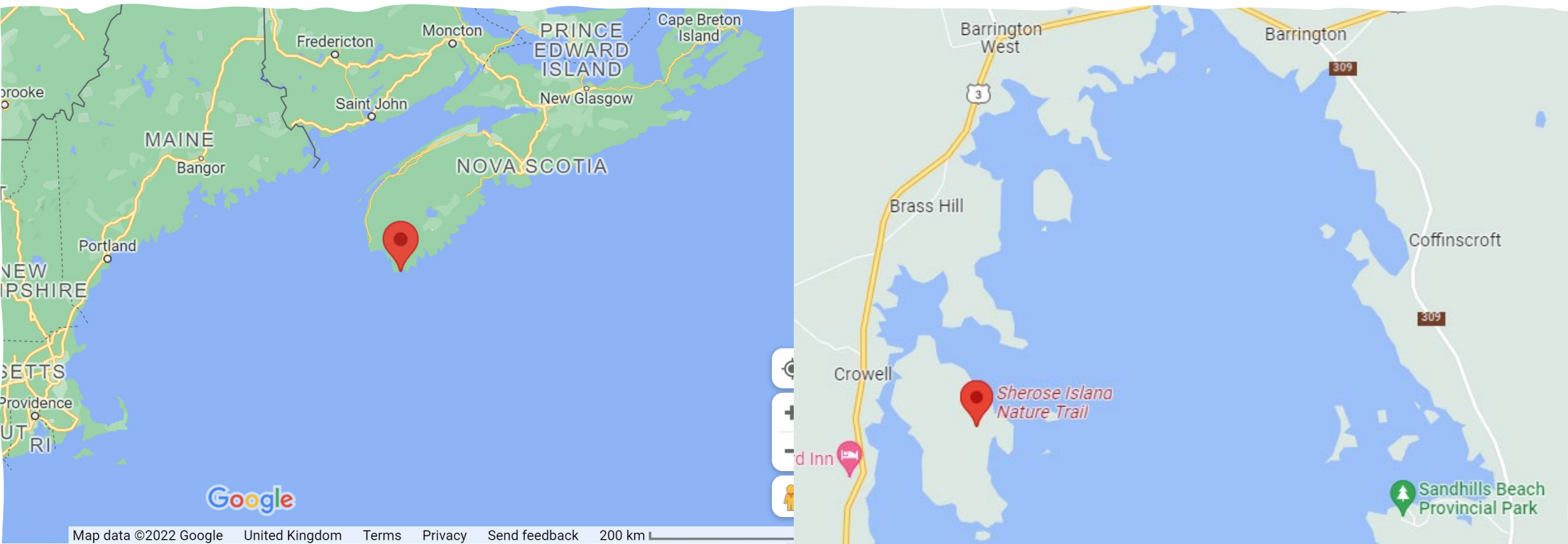


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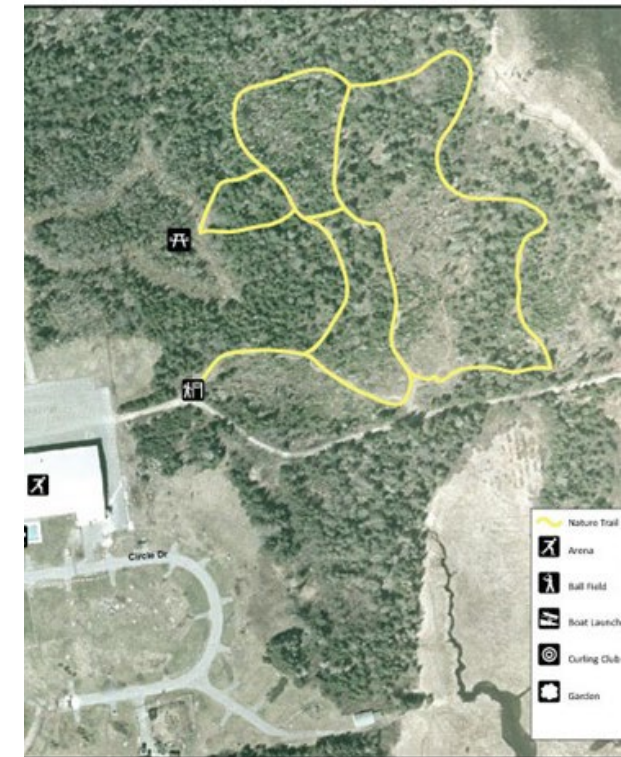
South Shore of Nova Scotia

- Municipality of Barrington
 - Barrington Recreation Centre
- Community of approximately 6,500
- Approximately 40 km west of Shelburne and 66km southeast of Yarmouth



The Sherose Island Nature Trail

- Opened in 2007
- Minimal use in recent years
- Renewed use during COVID-19 public health restrictions
- Current plans for redevelopment of Recreation Centre and outdoor space





Guiding Framework to Gather Diverse Community Perspectives

- **Community-informed approach to play space design and evaluation**
 - (Dobia, Truong, Ward, & Regalado, 2019; Malone, Dimoulis, Truong & Ward, 2014)
- **Child-friendly methods and approaches to play space design**
 - (Lloyd, Gray, & Truong, 2018; Truong & Mahon, 2012)

Purpose of the Study and Community Consultations

1. To identify how the Nature Trail is **currently being used** and key users/stakeholders;
2. To gain a deeper understanding of community members' **experiences** of the Nature Trail as a public space;
3. To examine community members' views and **recommendations** for the future development of the Nature Trail.



Methods & Participants

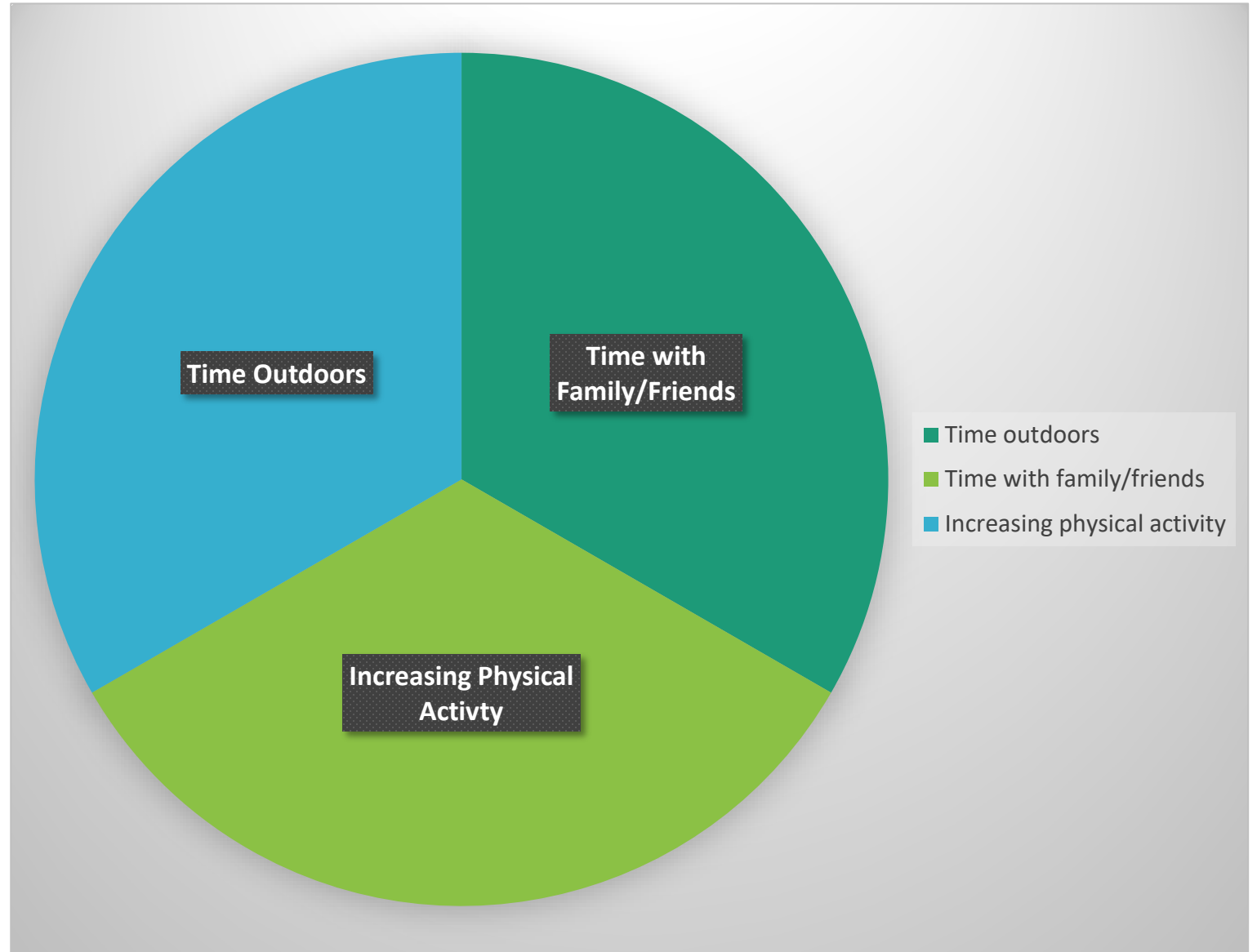
Method	Participants
Online Surveys	163
Virtual Photo Challenge	11
Community Interviews	8
Walking Tours & Photostories	21 (17 children & 4 youth)
Total	203
Field Visit Observations	2 days with 4 observers



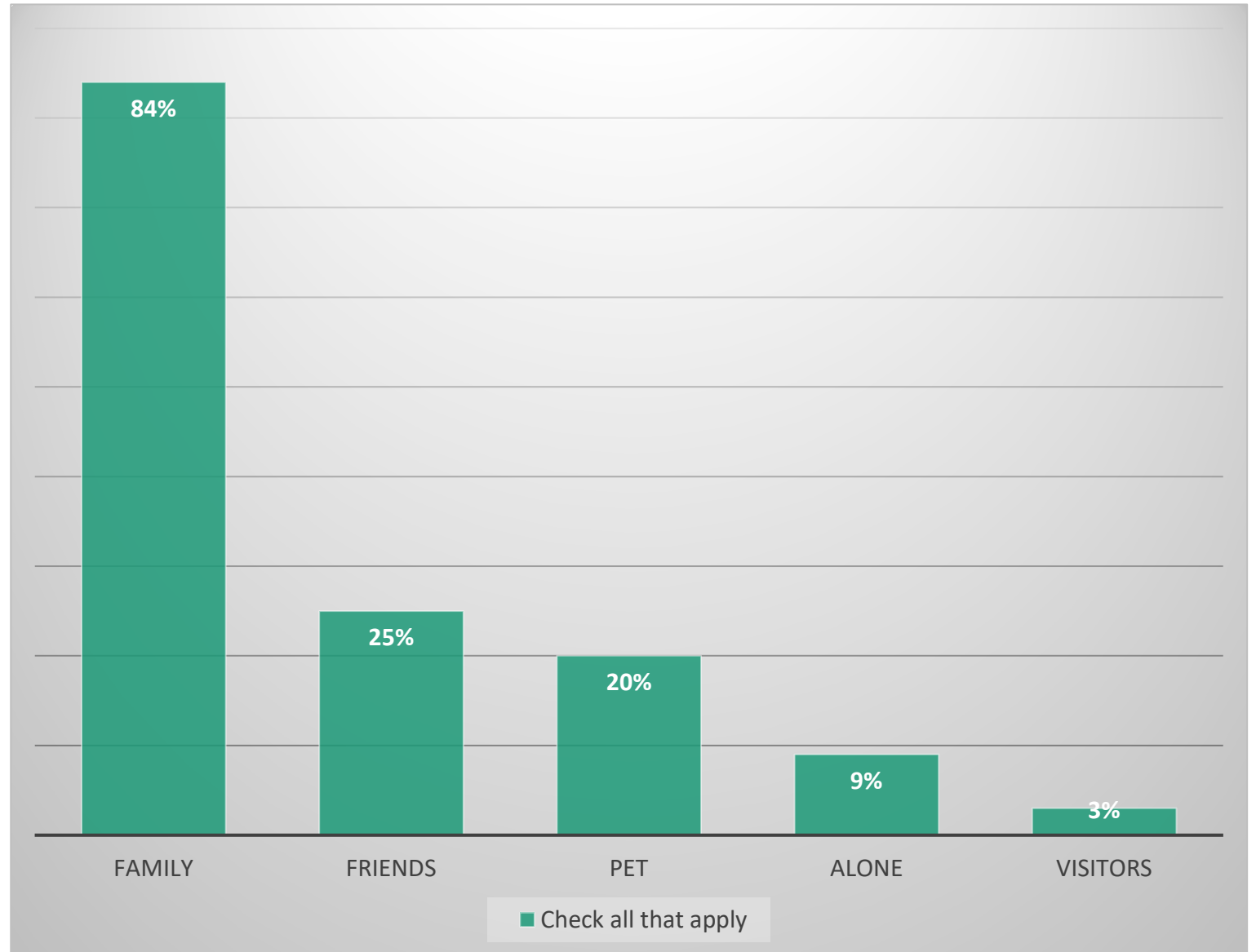
Overview of the Findings



Top 3 Motivations for Using the Trail

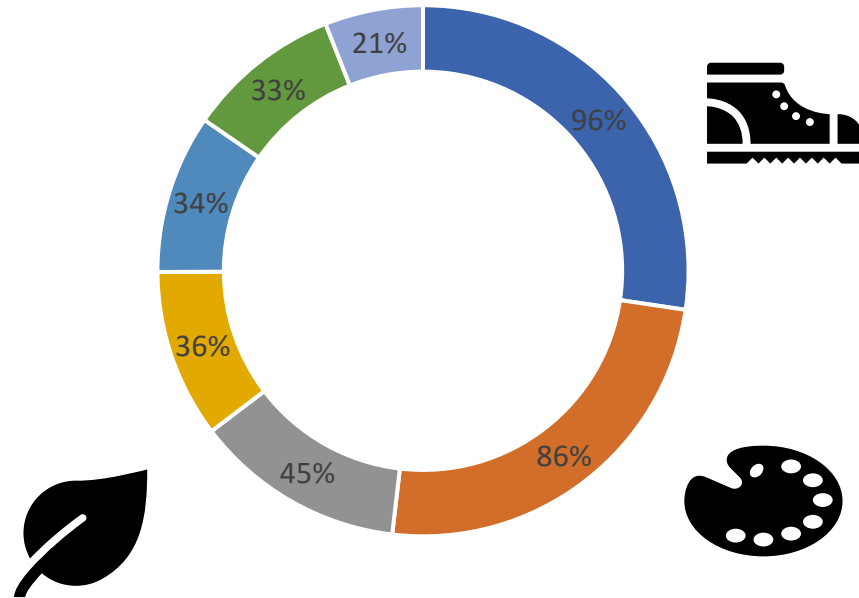


Who do you use the trail with?



What activities do you do on the trail?

Check all that apply

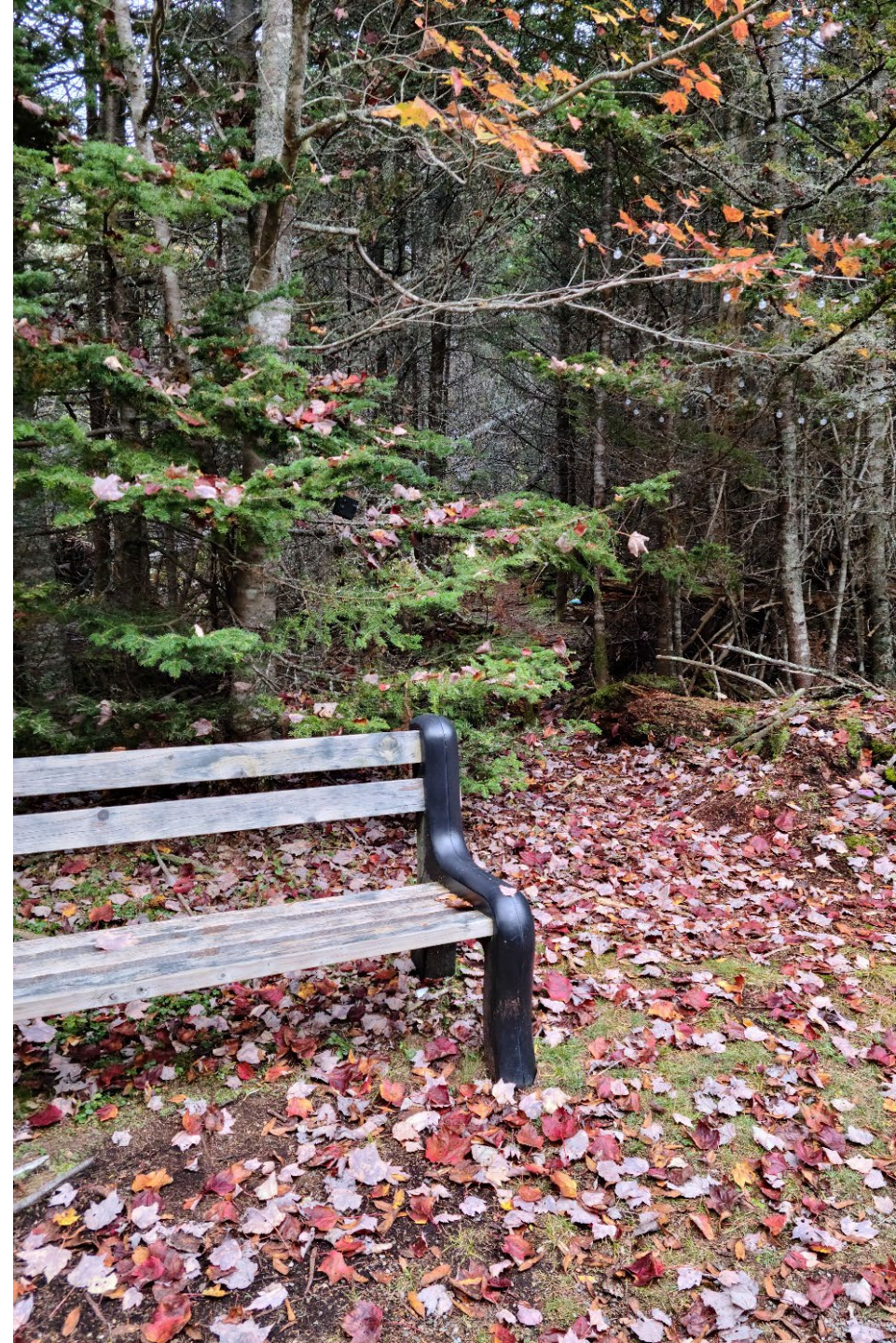


- Walk/hike
- Painted rocks
- Look for nature items
- Photography
- Programs
- Outdoor play
- Learn about nature

Top 5 Perceived Benefits from Using the Trail

Select up to three benefits:

- Physical Activity (90%)
- Time with Family/Friends (80%)
- Improved Mental Wellbeing (69%)
- Connection to Nature (60%)
- Connection to Community (26%)



Freedom
 Everything
 Activities
 Easy Walk
 Ocean view
 Quiet & Peaceful
 Community
 Always something new
 Painted Rocks
 Rock Gnomes
 Wildlife
 Kid friendly
 Place for kids to explore
 Family Time
 Clean Nature
 Woods
 Easily accessible
 Away from the road



What do you like most about the trail?



I enjoy watching my children run through the woods (looking for treasure, rocks, animal tracks, etc) freely exploring.

I appreciate how each time I visit the trail there are new things to see.

Young People's Perspectives

- Painted Rocks
- Branches & Side Paths
- Mud
- Climbing Rocks



Community Survey Recommendations

Do you experience barriers to accessing the trail/ participating in programs?

- 88.34% stated they did not experience barriers
- **Barriers that were reported include:**
 - Accessibility
 - Mud
 - Advertisement of events

Ideas for trail improvements included:

- 63.8% stated there were no changes they would like to see
- **Ideas for changes:**
 - Improving the muddy sections
 - Improving the trail surface
 - Extending the length of the trail
 - Creating picnic areas
 - Interpretation signs and trail markers

Discussion Themes

1. Challenge of **designing for all**
2. Challenge of **creating multi-user trails/spaces**
3. Challenge of supporting and managing **community-led initiatives** (e.g., painted rocks)





One: Designing for all

A space to explore outdoor, nature, & risky Play

Risky play is defined as “a form of play that is **thrilling** and **exciting**, which involves **uncertainty**, **unpredictability**, and varying degrees of **risk-taking**” (Lee et al., 2022, p. 12).

Research shows that risk taking is an **important skill** that may be learned through nature play (Harris, 2015) and that it may help develop skills, such as **problem solving** and **risk assessment** (Little, 2017).

The Challenge of Designing for All

- “I like playing with the **branches**.”
- “I like getting my boots **dirty**. It’s **sticky** and **fun**.”
- “We like going **off trail**, doing shortcuts.”



Why Risky Play?

(Gill, 2011)

1. Children learn to manage risk and understand safety.
2. Provides an opportunity to explore and fulfill an innate need for risk, rather than seek unmanaged risks.
3. Health and developmental benefits.
4. Builds resilience, confidence, independent thinking, and self-reliance.



What do these statements reveal about the intention of the play spaces?

The Ian Potter Children's WILD PLAY Garden is designed to cater for all ages and abilities in a dramatic landscape in which children are encouraged to run, jump, play, learn and discover the wild side of life. WILD PLAY allows children to get lost in the wonder of nature with dry creek beds, an artesian water play area, a bamboo forest, banksia tunnels, turtle mounds and Centennial Park's first treehouse.

Nature Play Programs at Centennial Park: Climb trees, build cubbies, explore the great outdoors, make mud pies, and discover strange bugs. (Re)connect children to nature and experience all of its benefits. Led by our expert team of education rangers, Bush School inspires love for the natural world through games, bushcraft activities, stories and more.



Promoting Outdoor Play



www.southshoreconnect.ca

<http://southshoreconnect.ca/project/outdoor-play-resources-for-parents/adult-role-in-outdoor-play-infographic-8-5x11>

Canadian Public Health Association (2019)
Developing a Play Policy

<https://www.cpha.ca/developing-play-policy>

Designing for
balance
while
Designing for
all

PROVIDING A BALANCED APPROACH



“A degree of risk – properly managed – is not only inevitable, but positively desirable”

TIM GILL, 2010

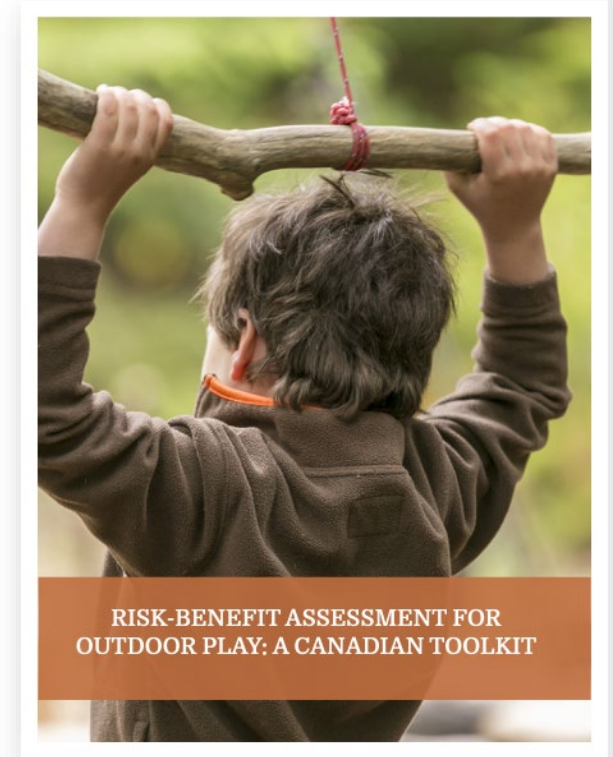
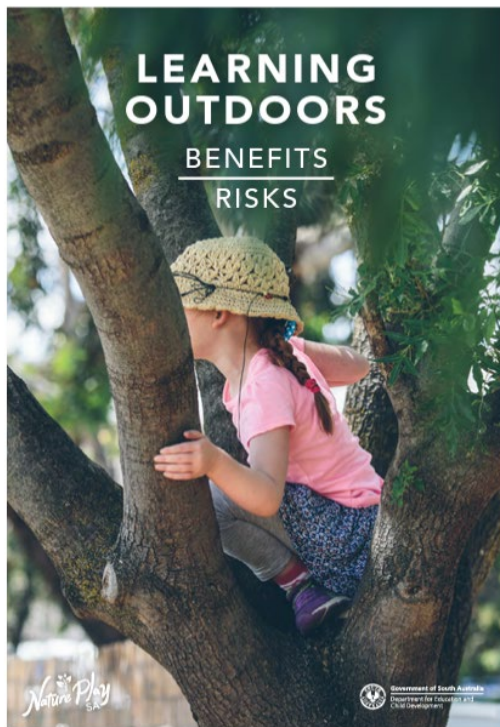
Discussion

- What have your experiences been like **balancing diverse needs and interests** on a nature trail or play space?
- How do we enhance accessibility considerations, while ***keeping the magic*** and the features for children to explore and transform the space?



Implementing Outdoor Play & Risk- Benefit Assessment

- [Nature Play South Australia \(2017\)](#)
- [Play England \(2008\)](#)
- [Child & Nature Alliance of Canada \(2019\)](#)



Canadian Risk-Benefit Assessment Toolkit

(Gill, Power, & Brussoni, 2019, p. 41)

TOOL	TITLE	WHEN TO USE IT
1	Informed Consent Form	Use this when you need parental permission
2	Standard of Care Checklist	Use this when you start significant new programs.
3	Program/Experience Risk-Benefit Assessment (RBA) Form	Use this before beginning new programs and/or play experiences that involve significant risks
4	Site Risk Assessment Form	Use this before a program begins operating on a new site that involves significant risks. Use it whenever you visit a new site. Use it annually if you visit the same site on a regular and repeated basis, and immediately after significant changes to that site.
5	Incident Report Template	Use this whenever a child or adult is injured.



Two: Creating multi-user trails and spaces

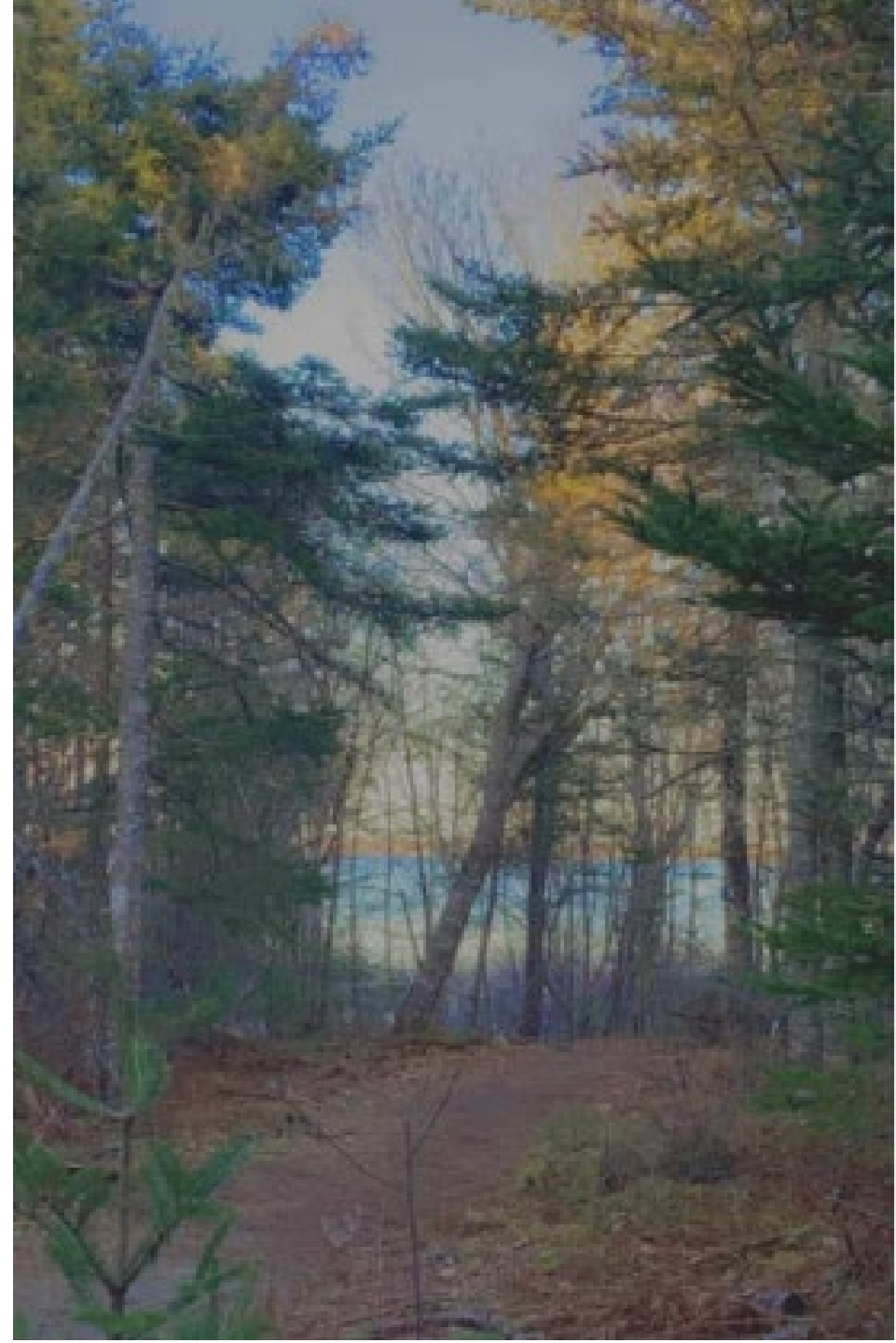
A space that promotes health and wellbeing

- **Physical activity**
- **Social wellbeing and intergenerational engagement**
- **Connection to nature and mental wellbeing**
- Research shows that outdoor learning, play, and contact with nature has numerous **health promoting benefits** (Mann et al., 2022; Ward et al., 2022).
- Studies support that time spent in nature, including nearby nature, may result in a **sense of connectedness** with the natural world, which also **enhances psychological wellbeing** (Nisbet et al., 2020).

Discussion

How do we design and manage **multi-user** nature trails and spaces that may also lead to **peaceful**, **calm**, and **introspective** experiences?

“It was a very peaceful walk, and I loved seeing the ocean through the trees.”





Three: Supporting community-led initiatives

A space to foster community-building and place-making

“I like that it is feels more like nature than other walking trails that have been made. And I love finding rocks and watching the kids go into the little off trails made and letting them explore.”

“It has brought the community together.”

Impact of the Painted Rocks

- The painted rocks initiated **new events** on the trail.
- The painted rocks **animate the space** and experience for both children and adults in varying ways.
- While some rocks were viewed as fun and playful, there were also many that carried **individual meaning**.
- Furthermore, the act of painting and leaving a rock seems to provide a sense of individual **connection** to the trail.

“Being in a little bit of nature, all of the lovely painted rocks gives you the opportunity to slow down & enjoy their beauty.”



Discussion

The painted rocks are a **community-led initiative** that have made the trail a big draw. There is a lot of support for the painted rocks.

How do we make decisions about the painted rocks that will **encourage involvement**, while also ensuring the trail is **manageable** and consider longer-term impact?



Summary of Project Recommendations



Develop and share collective values and a vision for the trail:

Emphasize benefits of outdoor, nature, risky, and intergenerational play
Connection to nature
Public awareness raising on the child's right to play; benefits of outdoor play
Play champions and play workers; develop a play policy



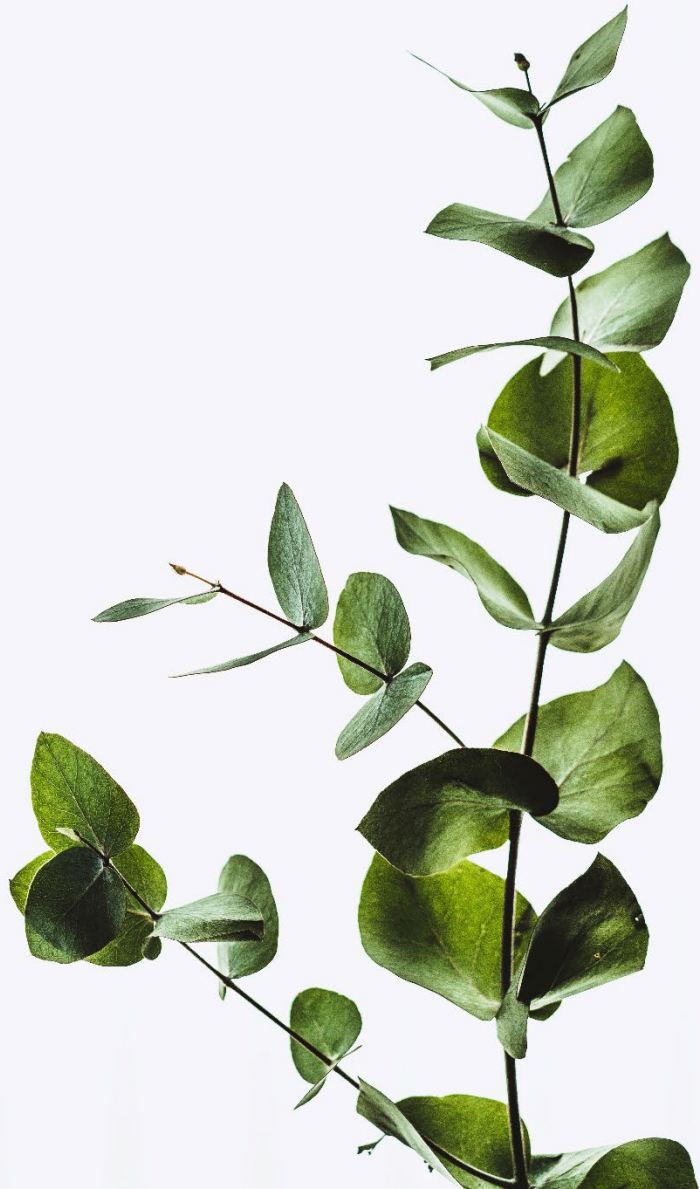
Create programs and partnerships to help reduce barriers and connect community with nature



Create an accessible and inclusive nature trail



Provide ongoing support and seek new resources for trail development



Discussion Questions

1. How do we enhance accessibility considerations, while ***keeping the magic*** and the features for children to explore and transform the space?
2. How do we design and manage multi-user nature trails and spaces that may also lead to **peaceful, calm, and introspective** experiences?
3. How do we make decisions about the painted rocks that will **encourage involvement**, while also ensuring the trail is **manageable** and consider longer-term impact?

Thank You

Son Truong son.truong@dal.ca

Misty James mjames@barringtonmunicipality.com

Karen Gallant karen.gallant@dal.ca

Joel d'Entremont identremont@barringtonmunicipality.com

Ashlyn Stevens ashlyn.stevens@dal.ca



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