

GO FOR WINTER GREEN!



from the national Go for Green program

Winter Green is a national strategy designed to address lower physical activity levels during the winter season, while protecting, enhancing or restoring the environment. Winter Green aims to 'take the roof off winter' and bring Canadians out of hibernation to experience Canada's diverse winters and participate in traditional outdoor winter activities.

QUICK THAWS!

Here are more cool ideas that help warm up your winter. Use them to generate your own ideas for winter activities for your youth.

- Costume parade on skis or skates
- Winter picnic on skis
- Outdoor fashion show of winter wear and demonstration of winter activities
- Skating parties
- Orienteering in the snow
- Outdoor dinner party with winter food theme
- Evening Flashlight Walk on local walking trails
- Sno-Pitch: baseball in the snow
- Winter bird watching treks
- Adopt a sidewalk – shovel a senior's walk or driveway
- Build bird houses for spring.

An invitation

We invite all Canadians to be *winter green* and experience the benefits of being active in the outdoors during winter, while protecting the environment. This winter, Canadians in every community are being *called to action* – and we want to hear about it! You or your community can create your own Winter Green event: build an outdoor rink; organize an outdoor game of ringette, broomball, curling or hockey; host an ice fishing competition; toboggan with friends and family; create a winter carnival; snowshoe through the woods. Whatever you do, get active, get *winter green*! Here are some great ideas from communities across Canada – you might want to adapt similar themes for your own Scouting groups.

Winter Active Challenge – building community spirit

The active living coordinators in some communities on Prince Edward Island often collaborate on community projects, especially those that promote active living in the winter, in part because time and resources are limited. An example is the Winter Active Challenge week. Community members are invited to participate in existing events and activities during a one-week period in winter. They're encouraged to report each physical activity of 20 minute's duration, or more. Housework, a walk to the post office, shovelling snow, school physical education classes, as well as sports and fitness activities count equally.

Community Council Games – friendly competition warms up the winter

Friendly competition is the key to getting citizens of Hamilton, Ontario out and active in the winter. As a lead up to Winterfest, community councils hold winter games designed to provide fun, community spirit and physical activity. Events include lumberjack games, snowshoe races, skating and obstacle courses for kids. There are age categories to provide fair competition. While the city staff provides a coordinating role and some modest seed money, the events are planned and organized by volunteers in each of the councils. Neighbourhood merchants provide prizes and refreshments and the events are promoted on the local radio stations.

The Family Fun Zone – bringing families together

Organizers of Calgary's Winter Festival wanted to create a venue that would provide young families with physical activity in a fun atmosphere, but also include an educational component. To do this, they set up a large tent in downtown Calgary along the Bow River to accommodate activities inside and out. Inside activities, such as crafts and jigsaw puzzles, have an educational theme. Outside, winter mini golf, tug-of-war and an obstacle course keep families warm while being physically active, even on the coldest days of winter!

Photo: Sharon McDonald

The Shubie Toboggan Hill – creating a sustainable, inviting, outdoor environment!

Scouts, Guides and Pathfinders are recruited to help supervise this winter activity to make sure it is safe, well-attended and fun, while promoting a sense of community. Located in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, music, games and plenty of hot chocolate round out this annual toboggan party which has grown from a one day event to almost every Sunday of the winter!

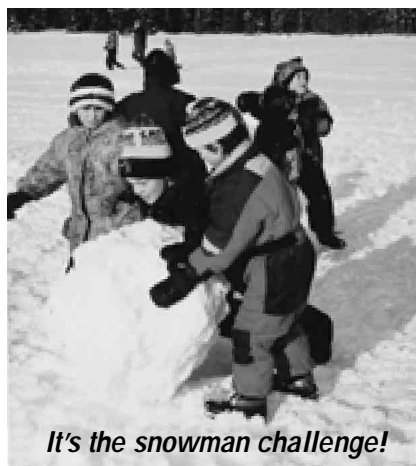
Mid-February Blahs Buster – Winterfest

In Portage La Prairie, Manitoba, community leaders interested in active living are really listening. They have come up with the Blahs Buster, a great way to promote winter activity while encouraging community participation. Organizers include Scouts, Girl Guides, the Lion's Club, the public health department, and local businesses. Each is given responsibility to implement and manage an activity related to its work in the community. As a result, a wide range of physical activities are organized by these different groups: snow golf, hay rides, cross country skiing, snowshoe races and information booths. A true belief in sharing power and decision-making allows these diverse groups to work together.

Outdoor Rinks – creating sustainable facilities through community ownership

Typically, indoor ice rinks in most communities are booked to capacity. Lack of ice time leaves recreational users such as families and youth with little time to enjoy this healthy, fitness-promoting winter activity. In Saskatoon, a partnership between local community associations has helped to make ice rinks accessible to all residents. The community association operates the outdoor rinks, maintaining them with the help of neighbourhood volunteers and community groups. Everyone involved agrees on the operating criteria, which sets out duties such as erecting the boards, flooding, snow removal, supervision, maintenance, lighting and scheduling for various community groups. Community ice rinks in Saskatoon are now more accessible to everyone!

Environmental awareness through active living



In Marystown, Newfoundland, school kids have little opportunity to get out and enjoy the countryside. So teachers, parents and other volunteers decided to combine active learning with active living. Everyone works together to organize a winter outing, that includes learning about local geography, history, culture and environment. Cross country skiing, fishing, and skating on the ponds are a few of the activities. As well, kids are treated to a traditional Newfoundland Jigg's dinner of salt beef, potatoes, turnips, carrots and cabbage, with figgy duff (see sidebar) for dessert.

Cold winter: cool ideas!

Snowball pile: Pile rolled snowballs as high as possible. The participant or team that piles snowballs the highest wins.

Over and under snowball relay: Each team makes snowballs and puts them in a pail. Pass the snowballs one by one through the first person's legs, then over the second person's head, etc., until the snowball reaches the second pail at the end of the line. If the snowball is broken, use the next snowball from the pail. The team with the most snowballs in the second pail is the winner.

Snowball roll: Team play. Start at the top of a hill with small snowballs at about the same size. Roll snowballs down the hill and back up. The snowballs are judged in a variety of categories: largest, roundest, oddest shape or fastest up and down.

Frosty Is Alive and Well: A snowman building contest! Pick a large open area with lots of packed snow. Every Frosty is made up of three balls. Participants may bring clothes to dress their snowman.

Dog Sled Pull: Each team must pull a team member on a toboggan around an obstacle course. Construct the course using snow, toboggans, weighted boxes, etc. Make sure the rider wears a helmet.

Seal Slide: Participants lay on scooters or Krazy Karpet sliders and move their arms and legs as if they are swimming, to move the carpets around in the snow.

Winter Nature Scavenger Hunt: Do a scavenger hunt with a winter environmental/nature theme. Best done in a snowy wooded area.

Winter Word Search: Do a word search puzzle with winter sports and associated winter words.

Make your own winter warm and cheery using some of these active ideas.m

– *Winter Green is a national Go for Green program that encourages outdoor physical activity during winter, while protecting, enhancing or restoring the environment. http://www.goforgreen.ca/winter_green/*

FIGGY DUFF

Serve with this interesting dish with heated molasses after boiling.

- 3 cups bread crumbs
- 1 cup raisins
- ½ cup brown sugar
- dash salt
- 1 tsp ginger
- 1 tsp allspice
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- ¼ cup melted butter
- 3 tbsp molasses
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 tbsp hot water
- ½ cup flour

Soak bread and crusts in water for a few minutes. Squeeze out the water and rub between the hands to make crumbs. Measure without pressing down in the cup. Combine the bread crumbs, raisins, sugar, salt and spices and mix with a fork. Add melted butter, molasses, and soda which has been dissolved in the hot water. Add flour and combine well. Pour mixture into a dampened pudding bag; tie tightly leaving a little slackness to allow for expansion. Boil for 1 ½ hours. Serve with heated molasses.

WALKING IN WINTER:

The activity of a lifetime

with files from Hike Ontario and Active 2010

People walk and hike for a multitude of reasons. For some, it is a low-cost heart-healthy recreational activity. For others it is a social occasion, a chance to meet people with similar interests.

But all walkers and hikers are drawn to the infinite variety and beauty of the land and to that release of tension such an experience induces. Walking and hiking can be an antidote to so much of what plagues us in our modern urban life-style.

There is more to walking and hiking than just exercising or looking at a view. We gain appreciation for nature's values: simplicity, silence and solitude. We learn that we must depend on ourselves more than upon external aids. We learn that by "roughing" it we can better appreciate what we have. In the end, we learn more about ourselves.

Benefits of walking

Walking refreshes the mind, reduces fatigue and increases energy. More than half the body's muscles are designed for walking; it is a natural movement that is virtually injury-free. It provides an enjoyable time for sharing and socializing with friends or family. Regular, brisk walking can reduce elevated blood fats or blood pressure and improve digestion and elimination.

Walking relieves stress and tension

Regular walking increases the number of calories you expend and helps you feel good about your body. When combined with healthy eating, walking will help you maintain a healthy weight and a positive body image. Brisk walking is an aerobic activity. It increases the body's demand for oxygen and trains your heart, lungs and muscles to work more efficiently.

(The above is an excerpt from *Walking: The Activity of a Lifetime*, a new pamphlet from Active 2010. Copies are available from the Leisure

Information Network at: www.lin.ca/lin/resource/html/bn28.htm or from Publications Ontario 1-800-668-9938 or 416-326-5300.)

Where to walk

Begin close to home. Many urban centres are developing footpaths linking parklands and other pockets of green. Then look for conservation areas or provincial parks a little farther afield. Most will have a series of trails arranged in loops, thereby leading you back to your car without having to retrace your steps.

As you become interested in going further, find out about trail clubs in your immediate area. These are volunteer groups who build and manage hiking trails. Each offers a series of organized walks and hikes as well as newsletters and social activities.

Finally you can head to the most distant corners of the land where Parks Canada has established national parks to preserve our most striking areas of natural beauty. In Banff National Park, for example, there are enough footpaths to last one a lifetime!

Equipment

One of the joys of walking or hiking is that these activities do not require a lot of money. If you are just beginning, do not spend your hard-earned cash until you decide that you wish to continue. However, if you decide to purchase hiking gear, remember that costly items can be a good investment. Quality gear will work well, prove durable, and be a pleasure to use. A cheaper item will often fail under stress.

The key is always to look after your feet. For easy trails, a good pair of walking shoes will suffice. In more remote areas on strenuous trails, a pair of hiking boots is needed. A good outdoor equipment store can show you the wide range of styles (and prices). Find a knowledgeable sales person to discover what best suits your plans and pocketbook. Your local Scout Shop is a great place to start!

On a full day hike you will want a lightweight day pack with padded

straps. In hot weather a belt pack or fanny pack can be more comfortable because it allows your back to breathe and also avoids the problem of a stiff neck and sore shoulders. A couple could get all their necessary gear into one day pack and one fanny pack.

Each item of equipment that you carry in your pack should be as light and as small as possible. When hiking or backpacking, "pleasure is inversely proportional to the weight carried". In other words, less weight will mean more fun. Carry a small first aid kit in a plastic pouch; essentials are moleskin or molefoam for padding blisters as soon as you feel a hot spot on your foot, a small pair of scissors, and an elastic bandage for sprains or sore joints. From May to August, use insect repellent - the most reliable includes DEET. Pack a small flashlight with long-life batteries: it is so light that you will forget it is there until you need it. A Swiss Army knife is the most versatile tool you can carry. Spare boot laces have many uses, including repairing a broken pack. A good whistle will help get attention in an emergency.

In hot weather, you will need a lot of water. Wide-mouthed screw-top litre-sized plastic bottles are ideal: if you freeze them the night before you hike (leaving room at the top for expansion) and carry them wrapped in a towel or sock (to absorb condensation) you can have cold water on the hottest day.

Rain gear should always be carried, no matter what the weather forecast. It only pours when you forget your rain suit! Under a strong sun, a wide-brimmed hat is better than a cap because it protects your neck and ears. Sunscreen is especially useful to help avoid sunburn or possible sunstroke. In cold weather a hat and gloves are essential.

What to include in your daypack: rainsuit, or waterproof and windproof shell; sweater (in case of temperature drops); a change of socks (always take care of your feet); hat (for sun protection or warmth) and gloves; water bottle (one to two litres per per-

son); lunch and some high energy snacks; compass and whistle; insect repellent; sunscreen; first aid kit with moleskin and a small pair of scissors; map and guidebook; small flashlight; Swiss Army knife; spare boot laces; sunglasses.

How to follow a trail

In most provincial parks and conservation areas, maps are available or are posted at the beginning of a trail. Each intersection will be signed. It is simply a question of knowing the name of the trail and your destination.

Hiking trails managed by trail clubs are usually "blazed". Although individual variations do exist, the usual symbol is a white rectangle, 15 cm high and 5 cm wide, painted on trees or fence posts beside the trail. Usually as you hike the trail, the blazes face you, and if the path ahead is not obvious, another blaze is visible from the first.

A double blaze (one above the other) indicates a turn. Usually the upper blaze is offset in the new direction of travel; otherwise, look for the next single blaze to either the left or the right.

If by chance you lose the footpath, simply return the way you came to find the previous blaze or sign. From here you should be able to relocate the trail and your route.

The trail user's code

Many of the trails in Canada exist only with the generous consent of landowners. If this trail privilege is abused, permission to hike can be revoked. We also have to be careful to minimize our impact on the environment. Unless we care for the land, we will quickly degrade its riches.

Every hiker is, therefore, requested to know and practice the Trail User's Code:

- o Hike only along marked routes, especially on farmland. Do not take shortcuts.
- o Do not climb fences; use the stiles.
- o Respect the privacy of people living along the trail.
- o Leave the trail cleaner than you found it; carry out all litter.
- o Fires are not permitted along the trail, except in approved campsites.
- o Leave flowers and plants for others to enjoy.
- o Do not damage live trees by breaking branches or stripping bark.
- o Keep dogs on a leash, especially on or near farmland.
- o Leave only your thanks and take nothing but photographs.

Winter walking and hiking

There's no need to stop walking and hiking when winter comes. All the trail clubs continue their activities year round and some of the most pleasant outings are through the snow, when the scenery sparkles or the sun glimmers in the pearly mist. However a little thought is required to keep safe and comfortable in the colder weather. Safety should always be a consideration, summer or winter, but mistakes made in winter may be less forgiving.

Comfort

Most of your hiking clothes will be suitable for winter hiking. Your regular boots and "sock and a half" (polypropylene liner and wool outer sock) remain the same. Wool or nylon hiking pants are helped along by the addition of gaiters that keep the snow out of your boots. Tops come in three layers, polypropylene underwear (keeps you dry), fleece pullover (keeps you warm) and a wind/waterproof jacket. A fleece hat and mitts are light and cosy. Cotton has its place, but not in winter activities. Cotton's problem is that it retains moisture - either yours or the elements'. This moisture quickly cools, leaving you with a cold or frozen layer, which is a primary cause of hypothermia. To be dry is to be both comfortable and safe.

Shorter days

Know your route. Know when sunset is scheduled and plan to be off the trail well before. Carry a map and a flashlight. Ice can be present; consider a trekking pole (looks like a ski pole) with a carbide tip that chunks into the ice. You will probably like your pole so much that you will use it year round - a great knee saver on the downhills.

Dehydration

Our normal sense of thirst lets us down in winter but we must keep drinking water. The consequences of dehydration, such as confusion, fatigue, bladder infections and kidney stones, are all best avoided.

Sun protection

Still required. The cool weather will try to fool you, but use that sunscreen - at least SPF 15 (and most authorities recommend even higher).

Other tips

Hike with a group or at least a friend. Your mother told you there is safety in numbers and hiking is a

good application of the rule. Problems do arise and the presence of other people helps.

Pack your pack with a few additional items to add more comfort and safety to the hike: a first aid kit (and a St. John's Ambulance first aid course wouldn't hurt), an extra layer such as a small down jacket for when you stop, a piece of closed cell foam to sit on, more water than you think you'll use, a good lunch and some high energy snacks, a spare set of socks and mitts, rain pants and some lip protection.

Walking in winter is something of a fine line: you want to walk fast enough to keep warm, but not so fast that you perspire too much. Leaders should be especially aware of this, watching the pace of the hike and providing stops for "clothing adjustments" and rests.

Canada's winters are long but they shouldn't keep you from enjoying nature and getting exercise. Wellness experts advise that outdoor exercise is one of the best ways of avoiding SAD (seasonal affective disorder), a distinctive type of winter depression. The bottom line is to continue hiking and reap the benefits year round.m

- Hike Ontario's Mission is to provide support, education and representation while promoting hiking and walking in Ontario. You can reach them at www.hikeontario.com, or:

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Active 2010 believes in:

- n Creating opportunities for Ontarians to become involved in quality sport activities.
- n Enhancing opportunities for Ontarians to participate in daily physical activity.
- n Increasing the number of Ontarians who value and believe participation in sport and physical activity is an integral and essential part of life in Ontario.

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