Hello! My name is Kaitlyn, and today my partner Megan and I are going to be presenting two ideas to liven-up Waterloo park in the Winter. The two ideas we are presenting consist of outdoor skating rinks to include all community members in this fun, Canadian activity and a “mindfulness” corner to promote mental health, and being in the present moment for park-users.

IMAGE LINKS:
My roommate drew the flowers! :)

NOTES:
Ice Rinks

Proposal #1
NOTES:
The cold winter weather can prevent families from enjoying the outdoors, however, there are many exciting experiences that winter can offer in our beautiful Waterloo Park!

Spending time in nature can boost mood (Tillman, Tobin, Avison, & Gilliland, 2018) and concentration abilities (Taylor, & Kuo, 2009).

So, how do we get our community out of their houses and into the park during the winter?

Skating is a favourite past-time of many Canadians, which is why we are proposing to bring this winter activity to Waterloo park!

Uptown Waterloo already has a skating rink, which is well used and enjoyed by our community. Our rinks are designed to be more inclusive of a variety of skaters, and incorporate lots of features that the uptown rink does not offer.

IMAGE LINKS:

Skating Picture:
Main Goals for the Rinks

1. A space/rink for every skater
2. Promotes social connections
3. Inclusive for those who are not skating (caregivers, spectators, etc)

NOTES: We have three overarching goals for the rinks in Waterloo park; for there to be a space for every skater, to promote social connection, and to create an inclusive environment for those who are not skating.

IMAGE LINKS: https://stock.adobe.com/ca/images/id/321118795?as_campaign=Freepik&as_content=api&as_audience=idp&tduid=d6ef91d43eafced7ea481b03ba8274de&as_channel=affiliate&as_campclass=redirect&as_source=arvato
NOTES:
Our first rink is the learners rink, which is designed with young skaters, approximately 3-8 years old, in mind. The four circular petals accommodate engaging features, each targeting the practice of a different skating skill. Having partially isolated areas in the petals allows for children and their families to not worry about other skaters potentially colliding with them, as it is so common that people can skate, but not stop! Petals will also be helpful for parents who wish to supervise their children but are not skating themselves, as the parents can easily stand or sit beside the petal their child is using.
NOTES:
This rink incorporates three main features: a drum area, a fish pond area, and a skating skills practice area. The fourth petal has bird footprints drawn under the ice for skaters to follow, although it is mostly empty to allow for families to choose how they use the space. The middle of the rink will also serve as a “free area” for skaters to use as they please. Here, and at the sides connecting the petals, drawings that prompt various skills such as two-foot sit glides, or “cars” will also be drawn under the ice.

The first petal is the drums area. When hit, the drums will make a soothing “drum sound” and light up! This will promote children to skate around all of the drums, practicing edges and adjusting their speed. The drums can be padded to avoid any injuries, will be in multiple heights to accommodate a wide age range, as well as double-acting as sturdy objects children can hold onto while taking a rest.

In the second petal, we have the fish pond area. Drawn under the ice, we have included a fish pond and little swimming fish! We imagine that children will naturally practise skills such as falling down and getting up by touching all of the fish drawn under the ice, or pretending to “swim” on the pond! This is also a great area where caregivers can bring toys, such as plastic fish, and ask children to “swim” all the fish to the pond!

The third petal is the skating skills corner. It includes images drawn under the ice such as spirals, stop signs, and animals to encourage children to practice different
skating skills. The images all match the skating skill, and will have a label written below it, such as “hop!” underneath the bunny. You will see in this video an example of a little girl practicing making snow, indicated by a snowman drawing!

Including fun animal-themed features such as the bird footprints and fish pond encourages children to engage in pretend play, and promotes language development. Experiencing this new and exciting environment will create opportunities for young children, such as eager 3 year-old skaters, to learn new words they haven’t been exposed to before, such as “blade” or “glide”. This helps to set a strong foundation for their vocabulary understanding abilities before they enter school (Rowe, 2012).

**IMAGE LINKS:**
Drums: https://parkwarehouse.com/product/tuned-drums-freenotes-harmony-park/
Boy doing a two foot sit glide: https://skatecanada.ca/coaches-officials/coaches/
Little girl making snow: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nUawn7z2w4&t=39s

**VIDEO LINKS:**
Bottom right hand side: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nUawn7z2w4&t=44s
Video of Drums: https://www.freenotesharmonypark.com/products/instruments/tuned-drums/ (go to the end of the pictures, and there is a video demonstration of the drums)
NOTES:
The features in the skating rink will naturally prompt conversation. Types of speech that inform and question children, such as positive acknowledgement ("Yeah! Good job!") imitation ("Let’s hop like a bunny does!"), questions ("What does the bunny do?") and comments ("The flamingo is pink.") have been shown to promote cognitive and language development in children, such as language comprehension, production, and verbal reasoning (Lacroix et al., 2002). All this just from enjoying the rinks in Waterloo Park!

IMAGE LINKS:
Rink 2 - Figure Eight

- Safe space for all ages
- Large cross-over area
- Wide to allow for passing and wheelchairs/strollers

NOTES:
Our next rink is the figure eight rink. The main goal of this ice rink is to provide a safe place for people to skate at a calm and comfortable pace. This helps to welcome multi-generational families and older adults. Implementing a true figure-eight design with a cross-over section will promote users to be aware of their surroundings and keep speeds to a minimum. Lastly, we aim for this rink to be at least two parking spaces wide at all points, for adequate passing room. This design will help to create an inclusive environment where everyone is welcome and embraced!

IMAGE LINKS:
Figure eight rink: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/timmins-sk8te-hollinger-record-1.4539759
NOTES:
Here is the bird's eye view of the figure-eight rink. This rink is a great space for parents with children in strollers to get out and skate! While pushing the stroller on the ice, the parents receive both exercise and quality conversational time with their children. Back-and-forth conversation between children and parents is very important in the development of socioemotional skills, such as emotional regulation (Gómez and Strasser, 2021). Being outside on the ice provides new visuals to engage both parents and children, promoting new conversation topics!

IMAGE LINKS:
Woman pushing a stroller: https://www.strollerboards.com/ice-skating-with-baby-stroller
Rink 3 - Fast Tracks

- A place for more experienced skaters who have a need for speed!
- Multiple paths to accommodate multiple skaters/groups
- Large “starting area” so players can skate while they wait

NOTES:
The last rink is designed to follow a “fast track” model, including three main tracks, and two tracks on the sides for skaters to use to circle back to the start.

This ice space is targeted towards experienced skaters who have a need for speed! Having multiple fast tracks will allow for large groups of skaters to use them with little waiting time, or different families to each use one. The large waiting area at the bottom of the rink gives lots of room for skaters to move around while waiting their turn, decreasing boredom and the potential for aggressive behaviour (Consortium for Health, Intervention, Learning and Development, pg.11). Games such as I Spy, or exercises such as knee touches can be suggested on signs beside the rink to keep skaters entertained. This area will also prompt peer-to-peer conversations between children, and provides playful learning opportunities to make new friends. Since this is a free activity that can be used multiple times per week, this will be especially beneficial for children who are not accessing enriching activities of a similar nature elsewhere (Wing et al, 2007).
NOTES:
Here is a potential area where the rinks could be built. This location includes washrooms and parking nearby, helping to avoid long walks with large skate bags! There is also lots of open space for children to play in the snow beside the rinks. All these rinks have very flexible features, making it easy to pick and choose what you would like to incorporate.

NOTES:
Here is the layout of the ice rinks. Walking paths connecting the rinks are suggested to accommodate users who wish to move to and from, or supervise children on multiple rinks. Adding these unique and inclusive rinks to the park will be beneficial towards language, social, and motor development for all in the community!
NOTES:
Now, we will move onto introducing our second idea for the park, the mindfulness area.
Mindfulness, which is “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994), has been demonstrated to improve psychological health, such as symptoms of depression, anxiety (Zoogman et al., 2014), and stress in children and adolescents (Kallapiran et al, 2015). Furthermore, the Ontario curriculum has started to place emphasis on teaching mental health to elementary school children (Ministry of Education, 2022). Therefore, we think adding mindfulness in Waterloo park is a gentle way of introducing mental-health into the community. Members can implement these techniques in their day-to-day lives to help control emotions and calm the nervous system.

IMAGE LINKS:
NOTES:
While activities such as yoga and mindfulness training are available elsewhere, offering opportunities for practicing mindfulness in the park has distinct advantages. Having our activities in the park makes them easily accessible and available 24/7. In Waterloo, mental health services have increased to a year-long wait time (Duhatschek, 2020), with additional pressures on these services due to the rise of individuals requesting care in COVID (Duhatschek, 2021). Most importantly, the community will have the benefit of practicing these activities outside which can increase awareness of your surroundings, facilitate a stronger connection with nature, and decrease negative affect (Nisbet et al, 2019)!

We are proposing 4 different activities that the park could implement in the same area, creating a “mindfulness corner”, which I will talk about later.

IMAGE LINKS:
NOTES:
Our first activity is called square breathing. During this simple exercise, participants breathe in for four seconds and out for four seconds, twice. As participants do their slow, controlled breaths, they can imagine a square and follow along the lines.

Deep breathing, which is practiced by square breathing, as well as in yoga, and meditation, helps to bring more air into the body. This can positively impact stress levels, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and overall mood (Brown & Gerbarg, 2005; Ma et al., 2017).

We propose that the park include two signs of different heights (one for children and one for adults), explaining this technique, with a box that individuals can trace with their fingers. The arrows could be raised, to allow for an easy follow along with their eyes closed.

IMAGE LINKS:
Square Breathing - For Kids!

Feeling Stressed or Worried?
Follow along with Bethany and Ben!

Breathe In!

HOLD FOR
5
4
3
2
1
SECONDS

Breathe out!

Do this at least two times!
Bethany and Ben feel better now!
Do you?

NOTES:
Here is an example of a shorter, child-friendly sign. As you can see, this sign is designed to be simple and engaging with lots of images, promoting children to follow along themselves. Adding in the mascots will help tie this activity together with the overall theme of the park! Look out for these guys later!

IMAGE LINKS:
Girl: https://www.freepik.com/premium-vector/little-girl-takes-deep-breath-then-exhales_17584863.htm#query=children%20deep%20breathing&position=33&from_view=search
Along with this activity, we suggest putting an emotion rating scale on the board. This allows for people to point to the face of the emotion they are feeling, and start a conversation about it. This can foster “heart-to-hearts” between parents and children, helping them become more aware of the current emotional experience of others and themselves.

**IMAGE LINKS:**
Activity 2 - Yoga

- Images of yoga poses
- Promote the space to the community so that groups can organize usage

NOTES:
The second activity that we are proposing is a yoga activity or what we like to call Snowga. Our signs will use the word “yoga” since they are designed to be used all year round. This area would also be a nice place for community groups to come and meet up on their own accord.

Practicing yoga has been shown to improve the management of and reduction in stress and anxiety (Nanthakumar, 2018). As the poses on the board each connect to an animal, questions such as “How do you think your sister is feeling in cat pose? Her legs are shaking!”, can easily come about while trying these fun poses! Conversations about feelings, with connections to children’s own personal experience (such as during yoga!) can benefit children’s understanding of mental states in social situations, as they are practiced in a relevant context and help to highlight the “inner world” of others (Aram et al., 2013).

IMAGE LINKS:
Snow Poses: https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/407294360046240946/
Activity 3 - Labyrinth Walking

- Walk along a path that leads to the centre, and uses the same path to go to the exit
- Used as a meditative, relaxing and spiritual experience
- Used in many diverse health care settings

NOTES:
Our next activity is modified from the concept of labyrinths. They are similar to meditative walking, as they combine meditation with physical activity to create a full mind-body connection (Biagard, 2009) and calming experience (Davis, 2021). They date back more than four-thousand years (Saward, n.d.), and have been found on every continent except Antarctica (Bigard, 2009)! As you can see from the picture, a labyrinth contains one non-branching path, using the same path to enter and exit. Walking a labyrinth has been demonstrated to promote positive mood and peacefulness, decreasing anxiety, stress and agitation (Davis, 2021).

IMAGE LINKS:
Spiral: Davis, 2021 (from the paper above)
Labyrinth Walking

- Similar to the discovery walk (what do you notice around you?)
- Opportunity for language that promotes social skills
- Break from other high-energy park activities

NOTES:
The Waterloo Park labyrinth could be permanently installed for year-round usage using low-cost materials such as wood or rocks. While typically a place for quiet reflection, the labyrinth in Waterloo park could allow for quiet discussion to be more inclusive of families and groups.

For example, providing a “pause” from the other high-energy activities can promote longer conversations, and provide an opportunity for language that goes beyond the “here and now”, such as discussing what happened earlier that day (Leech & Rowe, 2021). This area also creates a calm space for children and parents to pay attention to the environment around them. What do you think the other people walking the maze are feeling right now? Recognizing the emotions of others is integral in the development of social skills, and is strongly associated with the development of language skills (Nelson et al., 2010).

IMAGE LINKS:
Snow maze: https://www.cbc.ca/parents/play/view/change-up-winter-play-with-a-snow-maze
The last activity that we are proposing is a “spidey-senses” activity. Children are prompted to stand or sit wherever they are, and identify five things they can see, four things they can touch, three things they can hear, two things they can smell, and one thing they can taste, or their favourite thing to taste! This activity is similar to a grounding technique, which is any activity that helps us feel calmer, connected to our bodies, and in the present moment (Hershler et al., 2021)! Using your sense of sight and concentrating on the things around you has shown to help relieve stress and lower blood pressure (A Harvard Health Article*, n.d.).

We thought that this might be a nice activity to do along the “poetry walk” that the previous group proposed. Each time a child sees this little spidey-mask icon along the walk, they can stop and do this activity.

*This was the name of the “author” in the article as they did not wish to specify!

**IMAGE LINKS:**
Bugs: https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/insect-icon-flat_3949163.htm#query=bugs&position=1&from_view=search
Caterpillar: https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/cute-caterpillar-cartoon-vector-illustration_7038524.htm#query=caterpillars&position=1&from_view=search
Other bugs: https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/different-insects-collection-isolated-white-background_22275067.htm#query=caterpillars&position=4&from_view=search
NOTES:
This is an example of a conversation that could take place while performing this activity. The language that is used here is basic, however, pointing to what is being talked about can help objects become more obvious and aid in understanding for both the child and parent (Rowe & Snow, 2020). Pointing or other gestures can also help children develop larger vocabularies, as the child can visually link the idea of a dog to the word “dog” (Rowe & Snow, 2020).

IMAGE LINKS:
Human pictures:
Speech bubbles:
NOTES:
We propose that the park include wooden boards for visitors to reference while practicing the activities, all year-round. These boards would have all the information to complete each activity fully. Here you can see an example of a board for the yoga activity.

IMAGE LINKS:
NOTES:
As you can see on the slide, this is the “corner” that I have been talking about. Placing the boards beside each other, with a different board for each activity, displayed with each graphics and follow-along instructions, creates a secluded feel for those who want a moment alone.

NOTES:
Lastly, the mindfulness corner can be near the Victorian gardens. We think this would be a good area as it’s a little more removed from the hustle and bustle of the park. The gardens also provide a calming backdrop for visitors to enjoy.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to our presentation! We have a few minutes to answer questions now.

**IMAGE LINKS:**
My roommate drew the flowers! :)

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**IMAGE LINKS:**
My roommate drew the flowers! :)
Questions
References


References


References


Sauvad. J. (n.d.). A brief history of the labyrinth. The labyrinth builders. [http://www.labyrinthbuilders.co.uk/about_labyrinth/history.html](http://www.labyrinthbuilders.co.uk/about_labyrinth/history.html)


