

CAMP STEPPING STONES 2023 NEWSLETTER



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Return to in-person Camp this year, the weather cooperated with intensity. Sunny, hot and dry weather saw no restrictions to the activities planned. No dampened spirits, as the Volunteers and Campers alike enjoyed the Camp Stepping Stones experience. June 2 – 4, 2023 a weekend to remember as we had a few returning volunteers to guide us through the weekend, as for many volunteers this was their first time at Camp.

Campers arrived to register on Friday evening, they and their families were greeted by the cabin leaders and enjoyed a Pizza supper donation from Selkirk's Royal Canadian Legion branch 42 and also had donated soda from Gimli Sobey's.

All of our campers were greeted on their bunks by Stuffed animals donated by Little Elska, they could write on a wooden heart the name of their loved one and insert it into the stuffy. They also picked out a special blanket to take home donated by Project Linus Stonewall chapter. Followed by gathering in the Lighthouse to decorate and display picture frames for their loved ones for all to see.

Friday evening included a camp fire with smore's and tractor drawn hay rides, then bedtime in preparation for a full day of activities on Saturday & Sunday.



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Saturday began with a few sleepy Volunteers as our Campers were really excited about the weekend with little sleep in anticipation of all to follow the first night in camp. With breakfast the first of many delicious meals served by Camp Arnes kitchen staff.

We had a number of activities for each of the 7 cabins of campers which included Memory Frames (Friday evening), Dream Catchers, Memory Boxes, Painting rocks, Archery, Rope climbing, Rain Sticks and some free time for games or just enjoying each other's time-sharing stories.

We were fortunate enough to have Antuarko on behalf of Inti Muju, a not for profit organization Anaturko founded in 2019, attend and participate with us this year. Inti Muju works to preserve indigenous spiritual knowledge and ancestral wisdom from around the world.

We had Antuarko, assist us with the Rain Stick activity and he later joined us at our Saturday evening camp fire playing different flutes and instructed our campers on the use of the rain stick as an accompaniment to his music.

The campfire on Saturday saw campers cooking hotdogs donated by Stonewall Co-op over the fire, and other yummy snacks provided by Camp Arnes. Prior to Camp fire, we had our Luminary evening, each of the campers received a "Hug" scarf donated by Palliative MB.

Sunday saw the continuation of many activities, we joined in the dining hall at lunch for our last meal together prior to everyone departing from our very fulfilling weekend. This weekend flew by with many new friendships and connections made. Prior to the Campers departure we joined together in the large field, for our farewell. Holding hands in a very large circle each Camper and volunteer had an opportunity to share what they liked most about camp. Here are some of the comments shared during this farewell;

- "I liked playing and making friends its kind of helped me grieve"
- "I liked this camp because there is so much to do"
- "Best thing about camp was the food"
- "I liked doing archery"
- "We had super fun cabin leaders"
- "I liked the high ropes"
- "I liked that I wasn't alone and every one else had the same thing happen to them"
- "Meeting all the new friends"
- "I like everything"

With all of the comments complete the last thing to do at camp is a Butterfly release. Each camper and a few volunteers had a butterfly to whisper their message for their loved one and released them into the beautiful sunny day and amazing location that is Camp Arnes.

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Memory Pillow;

When someone dies, we hurt. We miss many things about them and we may remember them wearing their favorite shirt and wish to be comforted by something that reminds us of them. By using a piece of their clothing children and teens will continue to cherish the memory of that person.

If no piece of clothing is available to bring we had fabric that the campers could choose from to make their memory pillow.

Campers would then have the pillow to hug when they were thinking of their loved one and needed a little comfort.



Dream Catchers – according to legend good dreams are able to pass through the center to the sleeping person. Fear and anxiety are the most basic feelings after the death of a loved one for a child/teen. Often, they may find it difficult to sleep at night or have bad dreams.

Whether dreams are good or bad they can inspire, confuse or upset us.

So, by hanging them over our bed the dream catcher will trap the bad dreams where they will stay until they perish in the light of dawn.

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Butterflies;

Painted lady butterflies are native to Manitoba and were supplied by Butterfly Wings and Wishes in Edmonton Alberta.

There is an old legend, which states that if you want to make a wish first you must capture a butterfly without harm. Butterflies are a symbol of life and freedom.

When a loved one dies we have many emotions including sadness, anger and loneliness, these are normal.

Prior to the butterfly release campers are encouraged to whisper their memories and wishes to the butterfly, and when they are released they carry these on their wings into the sky.



PHOTO GALLERY



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Volunteers

Without Volunteers – Camp Stepping Stones would not be possible. The Volunteers unwavering commitment and dedication to working with children and youth is beyond comparison. We were very fortunate to have had returning volunteers, that helped those of us that were new to Camp Stepping Stones. And also, many new volunteers that found this experience very rewarding and fulfilling.

Each year we look for at least 30 volunteers, to take on many different roles dependent on the time commitment that they may have available to them during the weekend. We look for those that can spend the whole weekend as our Cabin Leaders, Camp Nurse and Organizers. We count on those that cannot commit to the full weekend to support us with Memory activities, weekend support/extras and those organizers that can give us periods of time throughout the weekend.

We are always on the lookout for Volunteers and encourage those that may be interested to reach out to us at any time through the year. For more information please visit www.ierha.ca or contact 1.855.494.7369.



What did our Volunteers have to say about Camp Stepping Stones 2023:

- ‘Working with the children to make their own pillow in whatever way they wanted, and the incredible conversations as well’
- The best experience at camp
 - “Being able to be there for the girls”
 - “seeing all the relationships being formed”
 - “talking with campers about why they were there”
 - “Watching campers learn, grow, laugh and share their hearts”
- “Loved the activities”
- “Extremely fulfilling & rewarding”



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DONATION ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Many thanks to those that helped us provide an amazing experience with Camp Stepping Stones 2023;



NOTEABLE MENTIONS:

Camp Stepping Stone Committee	Camp Arnes – Kitchen and support Staff
Gimli Maintenance	Palliative and Spiritual Care Teams
Pinawa Maintenance	Tracy Sieb
IERHA Management	Tammie-Lee Rogowski
IERHA Human Resources	ALL the VOLUNTEERS once again, because without you this would not have been possible!
IERHA Communications	
Butterfly wings and wishes	
Chicken Chef – Gimli MB	
Pinawa High School for making the rain sticks	
IERHA EMS – Mike Todd	

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Connect with us:

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1 – 237 Manitoba Ave. Selkirk MB R1A0Y4*

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E-mail: campsteppingstones@ierha.ca

On-Line Grief Resources for kids and families:

<http://palliativemanitoba.ca> (Winnipeg based local programs and support groups)

<http://kidsgrief.ca> or <http://DeuilDesEnfants.ca> (free online resource to help parents support their children through the grieving process)

<http://www.mygrief.ca> (an interactive free online grief support tool)

<https://www.facebook.com/teensgrief> (contains video interviews with Canadian teens who have experienced the death of a loved, intended to offer insight for others going through similar experiences)

<http://www.virtualhospice.ca> (includes resources and links as well as a short informative video series by Andrea Warnick, nurse educator and grief counsellor)

<http://www.dougy.org> (activities for kids, resources for teens, recommended readings and videos)

<https://www.sesamestreet.org/toolkits/grief> (Tips, videos, children's story and a guide to help families communicate with one another)