Nature-based Interventions for Nova Scotia

1. Social Prescribing

- Bridging the gap between clinical and social care
- Person-centred interventions for concerns not solely addressed by medication, and offers patients diverse and accessible ways to improve their holistic health and wellbeing
- Helps address social structures and barriers of inequality and access to services, especially in rural, aging populations
- Opportunities can decrease loneliness and social isolation, boost empowerment and health prevention, enhance connectedness and belonging and improve mental health
- Prescriptions can include many things
    - *Access to nature, art and recreation programs, food production, conservation, volunteering opportunities and ways to connect with others*

2. Nature-based Interventions

- Ultra cost-effective form of social prescribing
- Protection of green urban areas and regional ecology to promote human health, climate adaptation and community resilience
- Can align with Indigenous land-based well-being perspectives and *Etuaptmumk* to act on both western science and Indigenous ways of knowing and being
- Peer reviewed activities that offer prevention of chronic health conditions, promotion of well-being and treatment of certain health issues include:
    - *Increased provision of public urban parks, gardens and paths;*
    - *Provision of accessible natural environments;*
    - *Green/nature/park/garden prescriptions;*
    - *Wilderness therapy/ecotherapy/forest bathing;*
    - *Outdoor volunteering; and*
    - *Promotion and facilitation campaigns.*

3. Local Examples

- *Eastern Shore and Musquodoboit Valley Well-being HUB*
  https://wellbeinghubv1.wordpress.com/
    - Non-profit providing mental, physical, spiritual and emotional wellness programs
    - Seniors and Mental Wellness (16+) Navigators and working groups
    - Mental wellness ambassador training, grief support, sharing community resources

- *How We Thrive*
  https://www.howwethrive.org/
    - Non-profit supporting community well-being, resilience and climate uncertainty
    - Offering empowering webinars and gatherings, Climate Connections and Leadership workshops and funding to begin climate conversations

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- *PaRx Parks Prescription Program*
  https://www.parkprescriptions.ca/
  - A form of social prescribing across Canada and began in Nova Scotia in 2022
  - Support for health care professionals to give prescriptions of accessible time in nature to their patients
  - *Dose of nature* – 20 minutes at a time for 2 hours per week
  - Partnership with Nature and Forest Therapy Canada as 'PaRx Connectors'
  - Recent Dalhousie study to test cortisol levels before and after guided nature walk at Sandy Lake, Bedford – findings not yet published

- *'Grounded in Nature – Rooted in Community' Pilot Workshop – May 3, 2026*
  Check https://saveouroldforests.ca/ for updates
  - Aiming to support volunteers, activists and caregivers in Annapolis County to build capacity and resilience during social and climate challenges
  - Connecting to special places – 'in the service of old forests and waters'
  - *Offering climate emotion support and sharing, mindfulness and yoga practices, forest therapy experiences and others*
  - Sharing supportive resources and collecting anecdotal information
  - Partnership between Save Our Old Forests, Soft Pine Wellness, Heron Payne Therapeutic Counsellor and Annapolis County Wellbeing Network

4. Resources

- https://www.socialprescribing.ca/about-social-prescribing
- https://hospitalnews.com/caring-for-our-caregivers-the-power-of-social-prescriptions/
- https://yourdoctors.ca/blog/health-care/social-prescription/
- https://www.nstra.info/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/AddendumtoRelievingBurdenintheHealthcareSystemReportFINAL.pdf
- https://www.communityhealthboards.ns.ca/parx
- https://natureforesttherapycanada.org/
- http://www.integrativescience.ca/Principles/TwoEyedSeeing/
- https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/health/the-healing-powers-of-trees/
- https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212041614001648
- https://www.mdpi.com/2075-4663/7/6/141

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