



Activities & Impacts

Year One

Report on the first year of activities and impacts of
Walk With Me: Survivors Gaining Strength Together Outdoors

By Lynda Dechief, Co-Program Manager & Co-Trip Leader, November 30, 2022

Executive Summary

‘Walk With Me: Survivors Gaining Strength Together Outdoors’ is a new program of ANKORS. It is a creative, nature-based approach to foster healing, empowerment, and connection for women and gender diverse adults in the West Kootenays impacted by violence or abuse. Being physically active, having time to reflect, overcoming challenges, and being part of a shared experience with other participants are the design principles of each outdoor experience. The natural world and the group are the primary educators.

While Walk With Me is inspired by Outward Bound’s ‘Women of Courage’ program, we wanted to craft something unique to, and based in, our local region. We began in November 2021 by meeting with the Circle of Indigenous Nations Society and making a formal request for an Indigenous Elder to support the project. We then put together an Advisory Committee and held two meetings in January and February of 2022 to share our vision and burgeoning program ideas and get input into, then feedback on, our proposed application process and recruitment materials. The Advisory Committee includes members from across the region and from a range of agencies and services that work with women and gender diverse individuals impacted by abuse or violence. Walk With Me continues to work closely with Trans Connect to ensure the program is inclusive and that trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming individuals feel safe and supported.

We began inviting and vetting applications in March of 2022. In April, Walk With Me offered its first outing: a snowshoeing trip to Strawberry Pass in the Rossland Range. We have since led eight trips, including snowshoeing in Old Growth, day hikes through beautiful forests and by rushing creeks, canoeing on Kootenay Lake, biking on the Slocan Valley Rail Trail, a walk to a Sinixt pithouse, rockclimbing at Slocan Bluffs, and an overnight trip to the Lightning Strike cabin at Kootenay Pass.



Thirty-five women and gender diverse individuals have signed up for the program to date. Fourteen have participated in outings so far, with the majority of people coming back for more than one trip.

The program also includes a formal evaluation component to capture outcomes. Preliminary findings suggest that Walk With Me is having a number of positive effects on the lives of participants. These include impacts in the areas of resilience, connectedness, leadership, compassion, self-compassion, empowerment, belonging, and healing.

We are grateful to the Osprey Foundation, Columbia Basin Trust, Kootenai Art Therapy Institute, Hamber Foundation, and the BC Community Response Networks for funding Walk With Me. This program could also not have happened without the many donations of in-kind services from a long list of supporters.

This first year report on our activities and progress includes more details about the participants, the trips, the impacts, and all the people behind Walk With Me: Survivors Gaining Strength Together Outdoors.

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Walk With Me: Survivors Gaining Strength Together Outdoors

First Year Progress and Successes

Background

Walk With Me: Survivors Gaining Strength Together Outdoors is a program offering outdoor activities for female and gender diverse participants who have actively worked to heal from violence or abuse experienced at any time during their life. Through shared outdoor experiences in a supportive environment, our aim is to increase quality of life through connection, compassion, resilience, and leadership.

Walk With Me outings are for women, trans and non binary adults who are in the process of healing from any type of abuse or violence. Participants are given the opportunity to explore beyond their own perceived limitations alongside other survivors. Through fully funded day trips, wilderness workshops, and overnight trips, participants are brought together to share a powerful experience surrounded by the beauty and serenity of the natural world. Intended to reinforce the process of therapy or self-healing, Walk With Me can provide a catalyst for further growth and change.

The Participants

Participants from across the West Kootenays were invited through the Program's Advisory Committee and other relationships with our indigenous, anti-violence, substance use and mental health community partners. Self-identified women or gender diverse individuals aged 19 or older who have been impacted by violence or abuse experienced at any point in their lives were invited to apply to participate in Walk with Me through posters that were put up across the region, shared on social media, and through ANKORS' website. Once we ensured applicants met the eligibility criteria, they were sent a second part of the application, to gather information about their availability, interests, relevant medical history, and ways we could reduce barriers to participation such as by providing support for childcare or transportation.

We currently have 35 participants enrolled and who are invited to each of our outings. This is an amazing and diverse group in terms of physical ability, experience in the outdoors, gender, race and ethnicity, mental wellness, use of substances, age, and income. Many applicants face barriers to participating in outdoor activities on their own. A number of participants have children, so having childcare stipends available has been instrumental in reducing barriers for these parents. Transportation subsidies (gas cards and bus tickets), as well as providing rides to outings, has also increased participation for those who don't have vehicles or for whom the cost of gas is a barrier to participation. As one participant noted in the evaluation, the *"cost of gas and/or transportation is MOST ASSUREDLY a barrier to attending."* Another huge barrier is having other people to go outdoors with that they trust and who will attend to both their physical and emotional safety. There are not enough female and gender diverse mentors and leaders of low-cost or free outdoor adventures in the West Kootenays.

The participants are also (in their own words): fun, kind, reserved, funny, loyal, stubborn, adventurous, human, nurturing, strong, caring, understanding, persistent, positive, open-minded, empathetic, bubbly, quiet, humorous, courageous, good at listening, compassionate, shy, artistic, talented, weird, creative, supportive, grounded, outgoing, sad, angry, cautious, intellectually analytical, good hearted, hopeful, ambitious, strong-minded, passionate, thoughtful, resilient, tenacious, inventive, active, reliable, frenetic, knowledgeable, sensitive, honest, organic, original, smart, inquisitive, and determined.

The Trips

Fourteen of the enrolled program participants have attended between one and six Walk With Me trips so far, with the average number of trips attended being three. We have had an average of five participants on each of our nine trips to date, since we began offering outings in April 2022. Trips have included:

- Snowshoeing at Strawberry Pass
- Snowshoeing at Busk on the Old Growth Forest Loop
- Hiking Kokanee Creek Canyon Trail
- Hiking The Old Growth Trail
- Canoeing on Kootenay Lake
- Biking Slocan Valley Rail Trail
- Walking to a Sinixt Pithouse in Vallican
- Rock Climbing at Slocan Bluffs
- Overnight Snowshoe trip to Kootenay Pass



While nature is the ultimate teacher and healer in Walk With Me, we include art, reflection, and group sharing activities in each of the outings, all grounded in the natural world. We open each activity with a land acknowledgement, an invitation for participants to share their name and pronouns, then a question that allows the group to get to know each other better. Examples include asking people to share “something in nature that represents you” or “how you are feeling today as if you were telling a weather report.”

Before setting out, we share maps of our route, encourage everyone to be present, to take care of themselves and each other, to connect with other participants and also spend time with their own thoughts and feelings, to voice their needs, and to notice the landscape as we move through it together.

Each trip has a different focus on healing and includes facilitated activities. For example, our hike up the Kokanee Canyon Trail culminated in each of the eight participants that day writing something on a rock that was no longer serving them in their healing journey, and hurling that rock from the viewing platform into Kokanee Creek. Participants threw away such things as 'shame', 'self-doubt' and 'addiction' into the fast-moving water below the waterfall, and the ensuing group discussion was very powerful for all. Participation in activities and discussions is always voluntary and no one is ever asked to share more than they feel comfortable doing so.



Another example is our art activity during the hike on the Old Growth Trail, based on the question, "What makes you feel really alive?" Using watercolours, pencil crayons, and/or oil pastels, participants created pieces of art that allowed them to share with the group and also have a reminder to take home with them.

On a secluded beach on our canoe on Kokanee Lake, participants had silent reflection time and engaged in goal setting in hand-crafted journals. In the debrief of this activity, many participants shared aspirations around doing more self care, as well as concrete plans for doing so in the very near future.

On our overnight trip to Lightning Strike cabin at Kootenay Pass, participants crafted and wrote some words of kindness to themselves on a postcard that will be mailed to them in the spring.

Skills built have included walking in snowshoes, entering/exiting and paddling a canoe without tipping, riding a bicycle on a rough path, and rock climbing on a top rope. In addition to the emotionally therapeutic aspects of the program, participants are challenged physically in ways that are designed to be rewarding



and empowering. We also engage in knowledge sharing around edible and medicinal plants, with participants being the most abundant source of this information.

The Slocan Valley Rail Trail outing in September was intended to be our first overnight trip but had to be reduced to a longer day trip due to health concerns about sleeping out in the smoky air that prevailed at the time. Luckily, we were still able to have the honour of visiting a Sinixt pithouse in Vallican, where Marilyn James, an Elder with the Autonomous Sinixt, shared story with us about Swarak'xn (how Frog Mountain got its name) and the Winter Dance as well as the whuplak'n (the law of the land), which clarifies that women hold the ultimate authority, and responsibility, in relation to the land, the peoples, and all other beings.



Rather than the originally proposed 5-day overnight trip, we decided to begin with a 2-day overnight trip based on feedback from participants that it would help make overnight outings more accessible physically and for those with parenting or work obligations that will not allow them to get away for a longer trip.

Thus, we embarked on an overnight backpacking trip by snowshoe in early November to the Lightning Strike backcountry hut at Kootenay Pass. The impacts of all these outings are shared in the next section, but can be summed up nicely by the words of one of the overnight participants:

"I feel like we're making the tiniest baby steps towards healing with every step we take. It's so subtle, you hardly notice, but I think that's what's happening... The trip was a wonderful way to connect with nature and friendly, kind, and respectful humans... I have more stamina than what I thought." – Walk With Me Participant



The Impacts

As we promised our funders, and so we would know if we were having the impacts we hoped, we have been monitoring and evaluating our project activities and desired outcomes through a variety of methods and tools. The aim of Walk With Me is to increase quality of life and support people in their healing journeys through increasing connection, resilience, leadership, and compassion.

Preliminary evaluation findings with a small group of participants suggest that we may be on our way to having positive impacts in these areas, as well as fostering empowerment, belonging, and healing.

Evaluation Tools

Before participants come on their first outing with Walk With Me, we ask them to fill in a “pre-survey” to assess where they are currently at in terms of our desired outcomes of resilience, connectedness, motivation to lead, and compassion for self and others. These scores are not used to evaluate individual participants but instead grouped together and compared with aggregate scores on a “post-survey”, including all the same questions, that is provided to participants after they have attended a number of trips. In this way, we are never evaluating individual participants, only the overall impact of the program. As part of the evaluation process, this post-survey also asks participants for feedback on how to improve the project.

We also send each participant a Trip Reflection survey after each outing to learn about their highlight of the trip, what they’re most proud of from the trip, what they learned about themselves, how they would describe the experience to others, and what was the most challenging part of the trip.

We do a formal staff debrief after each outing and document our perceptions of how things went and what we could improve for next time.

We also recently asked all the program participants who have signed up but are yet to attend a trip if they have any suggestions for us about improving the project, including reducing any barriers to their participation. This feedback will help shape Walk With Me in the coming year.

Desired Outcomes

Having led Women of Courage trips previously for Outward Bound, we know that the success of outdoor empowerment programming for participants is written all over their faces and in the way they carry themselves by the end of a trip. This type of programming can be truly transformative and we see and hear examples of that at the end of each outing, when we do a closing circle where participants share something they are proud of themselves for, that they learned about themselves, or that they accomplished that day. This information is often included in the written Trip Reflections surveys. We are also witnessing participants connecting with each other, getting outdoors more between planned outings, and gaining confidence due to their participation in Walk with Me.

In addition to all this wonderful qualitative information, the pre- and post- program surveys quantitatively assess changes regarding our four desired program outcomes: connectedness, resilience, leadership, and compassion. We are using the same four validated tools used by Outward Bound in their evaluations to measure these domains, as well as an additional validated scale designed to measure self-compassion for survivors of trauma, created by Kristin Neff, PhD.

The post-survey also collects qualitative data from participants on how the program impacted them in these and other areas.

Preliminary Evaluation Findings

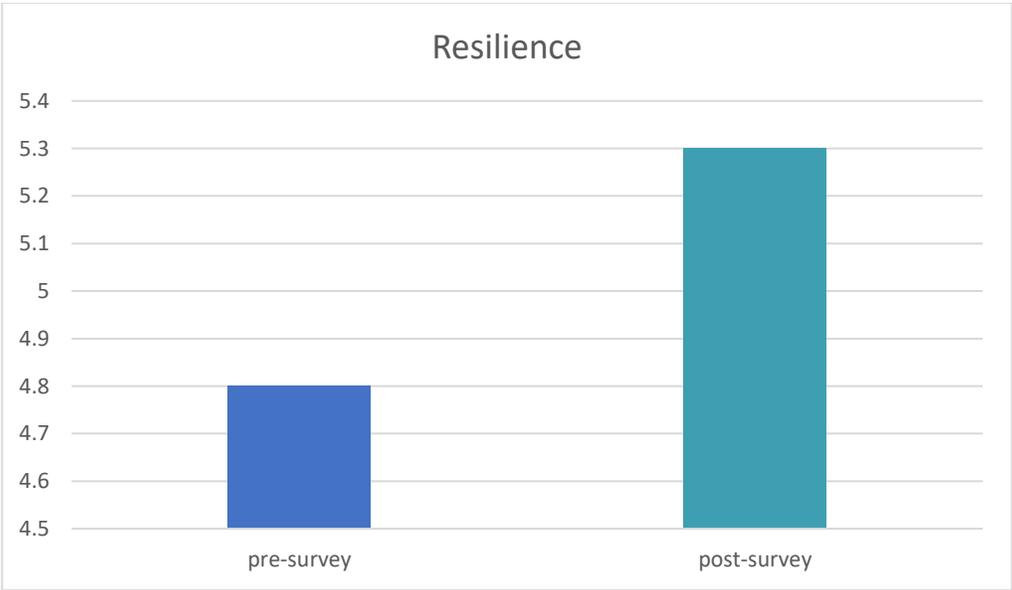
We have pre- and post-surveys from eight of the fourteen participants who have participated in an average of 2-3 outings with Walk With Me since the program began. These quantitative surveys are designed to assess changes in the areas we chose to focus on in our evaluation. While these findings are very preliminary, and represent only a very small group, we are seeing some measurable positive impacts in the areas of resilience, connectedness, and several aspects of self-compassion, including self-judgement, common humanity, isolation, and over-identification with the negative.

Resilience

Often described as “the ability to bounce back,” resilience has long been promoted as a common outcome of Outward Bound Canada and other outdoor adventure programs (Outward Bound Canada, 2017).

As described in Outward Bound’s 2017 Impact Report, “rather than letting life challenges drain their resolve, people who demonstrate resilience find a way for their challenges to build them up and make them stronger.”

In our survey, three items relating to the resilience scale were measured. Participants self-identified as feeling more resilient after participating in outings, as illustrated in the diagram below.



Participants also shared some specific thoughts with us about developing resilience through attending Walk With Me outings:

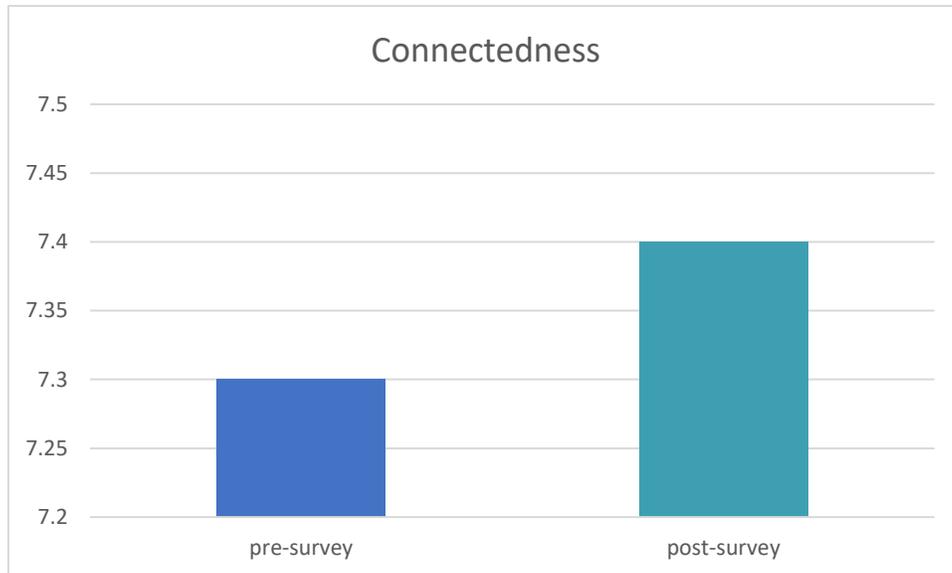
“I was able to push myself and gain the reward of completing what I set out to achieve and this made me [more] likely to push myself in the future.”

"[I am learning] anything is possible if you just keep putting one foot in front of the other."

Connectedness

Connectedness is defined as "sensations of comfort and well-being that come from being actively involved with others or environments. It is a feeling of belonging, trust and partnership with self, others, and the natural world." (Outward Bound Canada, 2017)

In our survey, items relating to the connectedness scale were measured, and participants self-identified as feeling closer to and more trusting of individual in their lives as illustrated in the chart below.



Participants shared thoughts with us about their increased connectedness with others as a result attending Walk With Me outings, including:

"It's been so great for me to connect with others and feel safe, accepted and included."

"I learned to appreciate the power of connection."

"It built a little bit of trust in people in me."

They also described this connection as extending to the natural world:

"I felt included and accepted, so I could make connections to those around me and to the natural world around me."

"Connecting with the old growth trees near the Apex Nordic Ski trails was an amazing experience! I've been back to visit multiple times :)"

Leadership and Compassion for Others

While the quantitative survey did not find measurable increases in two of the other areas we measured—Leadership and Compassion—we did find evidence of both in participants' answers to our open-ended questions in the post-survey:

“This program has allowed me to share my knowledge and enthusiasm around the great outdoors in a group settings. It has inspired me to take more of my friends out into the wild and experience joy while walking in the forest.”

“It's helped me to feel confident setting firmer boundaries as a leader which makes me more effective.”

“[The Trip Leaders] give me confidence to not be shy.”

We wondered if the lack of change in the compassion measure may have been because people who have been impacted by abuse or violence often already have high levels of compassion for others.

“I have always been able to extend empathy to others but participating in this group helped me to show myself more grace.”

The next part of our evaluation focused on compassion for self, a key aspect of healing from trauma.

Self-Compassion

In addition to the desired outcomes described above based on Outward Bound Canada’s evaluation, we added another outcome based on our understanding of the impacts of trauma: self-compassion.

According to researchers, “self-compassion entails being kind and understanding towards oneself... Self-compassion has been associated with positive mental health outcomes and may have implications for post-traumatic processing” (Valdez & Lilly, 2015).

In order to measure this, the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) was created and validated by Dr. Kristin Neff (2003) who is one of the foremost researchers and authors on the relationship between self-compassion and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). She defines self-compassion as being “more supportive towards oneself and less harshly judgemental. It involves greater recognition of the shared human experience, understanding that all humans are imperfect and lead imperfect lives, and fewer feelings of being isolated by one’s imperfection. It entails mindful awareness of personal suffering and ruminating less about negative aspects of oneself or one’s life experience” (Braehler & Neff, 2020).

We used the Short SCS (12 items) in our surveys, which has near perfect correlation with the longer scale (Raes, Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011).

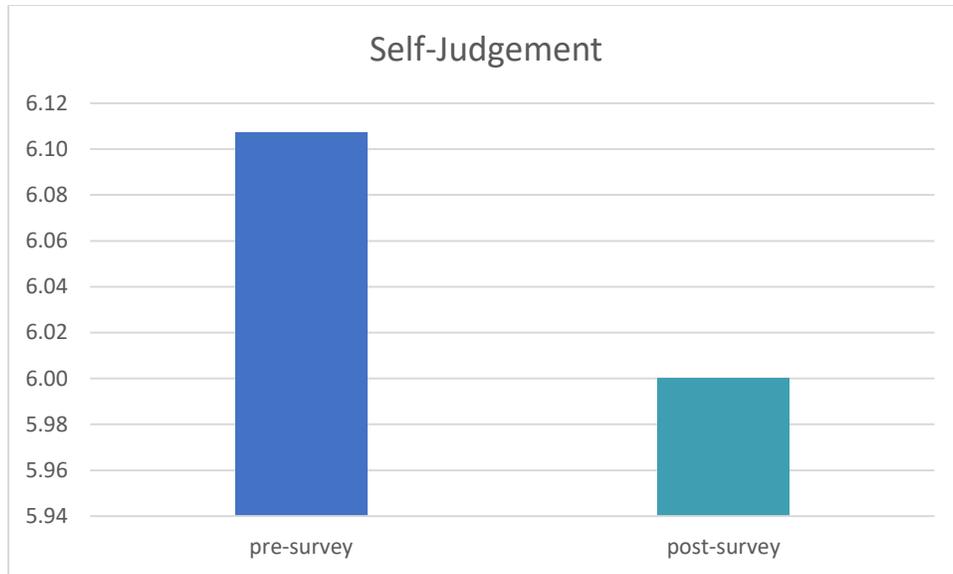
We found that after participating in a number of outings, participants reported being measurably less judgemental of themselves, having a greater sense of being part of a shared human experience, less isolated, and having a decreased focus on the negative and their inadequacies.

Each of these is described in more detail below.

a. Self Judgement

Braehler and Neff (2020) describe self-judgement as “[saying] harsh and cruel things to ourselves that we would never say to a friend.” When self-judgment is decreased, this “disparaging internal commentary... become[s] benevolent and encouraging rather than punishing or belittling, reflecting a friendlier and more supportive attitude towards ourselves.”

Participants in Walk With Me outings had a self-reported decrease in self judgement between the start of the program and the writing of this report, as illustrated in the chart on the following page.



Participants also shared thoughts with us about their reduced levels of self-judgement as a result of attending Walk With Me outings, including:

“[I am] learning to accept limitations of myself and others without judgment.”

“Seeing others persevere through hard experiences and recognizing the other things we have in common, made me feel like I must also possess some qualities I admire in others.”

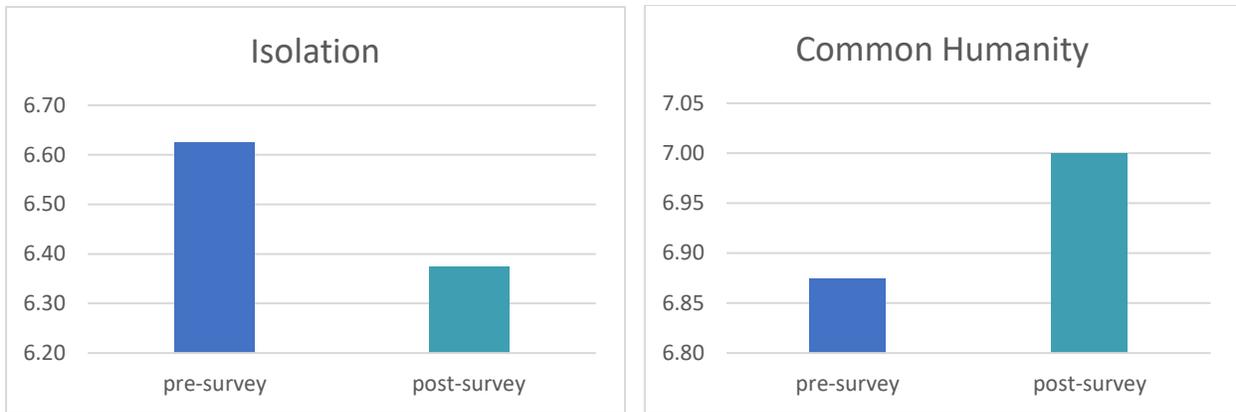
“Hearing everyone’s stories and struggles, I learn to not be so hard on myself.”

b. Common Humanity and Isolation

Braehler and Neff (2020) also write that “self-compassion is embedded within a sense of interconnection rather than separation. One of the biggest problems with harsh self-judgment is that it tends to make us feel isolated and cut off from others. When we fail or feel inadequate in some way, we irrationally feel like everyone else is just fine and it’s only me who is such a hopeless loser. This creates a frightening sense of disconnection and loneliness that greatly exacerbates our suffering.”

“With self-compassion, however, we recognize that life challenges and personal failures are part of being human, an experience we all share... The element of common humanity also helps to...feel closer and more connected to others. It reminds us that we are not alone.”

Analyzing changes between the pre- and post-surveys indicates that participants in Walk With Me had a decrease in self-reported isolation, as well as a similar increase in feeling part of a common human experience, as illustrated in the charts on the following page.



Participants described this decreased sense of isolation and feeling part of something larger as a result of attending Walk With Me outings. For example:

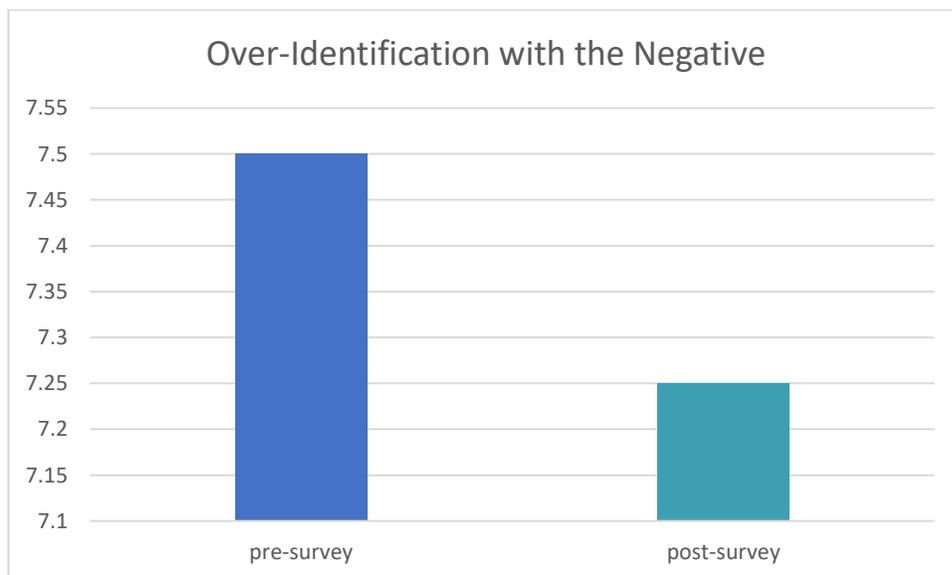
“I learn about myself when I listen to the stories of the other group members.”

“I feel less alone in my trauma.”

c. Overidentification with the Negative

“When our attention becomes completely absorbed by our perceived inadequacies, we can’t step outside ourselves. We become overly identified with our negative thoughts or feelings” (Braehler and Neff, 2020). Decreasing this overidentification with the negative is a key component of self-compassion.

Participants in Walk With Me had a measurable decrease in their overidentification with the negative, as demonstrated in the chart below.



Participants described this decreased overidentification with the negative as a result of attending Walk With Me outings, including:

“Toward myself I have little tolerance for flaws or failures... being with those who share my flaws or experiences has helped me be more accepting toward myself.”

“Meeting people with similar experience has helped me normalize my imperfections.”

The flip side of this overidentification with the negative, according to Braehler and Neff (2020), includes a sense of mindfulness as well as being able to see the full picture of one’s experiences. This is evidenced in the following quotes from a Walk With Me participant:

“The Old Growth walk was a great reminder to slow down and savour the healing power of nature. It allowed me to get out of my thinking brain and ground myself in the present moment.”

“[Another impact of Walk With Me is] self awareness, honoring where I am in my healing.”

Higher levels of self-compassion have repeatedly been associated with psychological well-being while lower levels of self-compassion have been associated with increased mental health impacts. Self-compassion increases emotional and physical resilience (Braehler and Neff, 2020).

Thus, we can hope that these positive impacts on self-compassion are also having positive impacts on participants’ mental health and emotional and physical resilience.

Limitations of Quantitative Survey Findings

We should be clear that the quantitative findings are based on a very small group of participants (n=8) that only represent 57% of all the participants who have attended an outing to date, so we are limited in our ability to extrapolate findings or find statistical significance. We also do not know if any changes we are seeing might influenced by other resources participants are also accessing, or simply shaped by time passing. For this reason, we have started to develop a control group to have as a basis for comparison in the final evaluation we will report on at the end of next year. We asked everyone who has yet to participate in an outing to do a pre-survey and we will have them complete another survey before they participate in their first outing in order to measure the impact of not participating in Walk With Me in order to compare it to the impact of participating.

While there are always limitations to quantitative findings, the qualitative findings (ie. the voices of participants) do speak clearly to the positive impacts of participating in Walk With Me.

Additional Impacts

We conclude the preliminary findings by sharing a few more quotes from participants from the evaluation post-surveys:

“Every time I go on a Walk With Me trip I gain a new experience, a new part of myself, a new feeling. It’s a positive and safe place.”

“Walk With Me allows me to connect with nature which is my happy place... Walk With Me allows me to have experiences I would never have otherwise.”

"It really unlocked a spark of joy in my heart."

The Trip Reflections we asked participants to fill out after each trip also yielded additional insight into the impacts of the outings, especially around the themes of empowerment, belonging, and healing:

Empowerment

"The most challenging part was getting my backside out the door."

"I learned from myself that I could've pushed myself a little bit further sometimes."

"I'm stronger than I thought."

Belonging

"I'm not weird. I can talk about my internal process of trauma recovery and feel supported and understood."

"I am so grateful to the whole group and for how everyone held space for each other. It was so beautiful."

"I feel like a lot of us have become so independent because we learned to be independent through a trauma but letting another person help you is self-love."

"This trip was a great and memorable experience and gives me some confidence and a feeling of connection and belonging."

Healing

"I am learning about myself how good it feels to connect with others and have fun without drinking. I am learning acceptance of myself and others. I am learning to go with the flow."

"Excellent 'me' time"

"That was one of the most beautiful and healing experiences of my life! I have a permanent smile now. 😊"

In summary, participants in Walk With Me outings to date shared with us—through quantitative surveys as well as their answers to open-ended questions—a number of impacts of the program. These include resilience, connectedness, leadership, compassion, self-compassion (including decreased self-judgment, isolation and negativity, and increased connection to the larger human experience), empowerment, belonging, and healing.

The People

A program like this does not happen without a number of people behind it making it happen. This section describes the staff and many supporters who have worked to create Walk With Me.

Co-Trip Leaders / Program Managers

ANKORS hired two part-time staff to develop and implement Walk With Me: **Judith Robertson** and **Lynda Dechief**. Both are competent in the backcountry, experienced Wilderness First Responders, and have lived expertise of many of the issues this project aims to support participants around.

Judith has worked for over two decades with Outward Bound as an instructor and Program Manager. She has led trips and trained staff for Women of Courage wilderness expeditions and is a professional art therapist with a practice founded on the intrinsic healing values of the natural world blended with creative self-expression and exploration.

Lynda has co-led Women of Courage Programs, has a Masters degree that focused on violence against women, and has done support work and trained many health and social service providers in the intersections of violence/abuse, mental health, substance use and other health and social inequities.

Judith and Lynda's roles have overlapped a lot as they have many shared skills related to delivering this project. For example, risk management, leading the trips, and facilitating group activities during outings have been shared tasks. However, because Judith has more experience in designing and delivering outdoor programming, as well as facilitating wilderness- and art-based therapy, she has taken the lead in these aspects of planning and delivering 'Walk With Me', including curriculum development and logistical planning. Lynda has taken the lead in engaging with our community partners for their input and to recruit participants, ensuring barriers to participation are addressed, designing and implementing the evaluation, overseeing the grants and budget, and communicating with funders.

Despite their qualifications to lead this program, Judith and Lynda also recognized their limitations and brought in many other key people to help develop, support, and enhance Walk With Me.

Additional Key Supports

One of our first steps upon receiving funding for Walk With Me was to reach out to the Circle of Indigenous Nations Society (COINS) to ensure we are respectfully acknowledging all the ancestors and keepers of the land on whose traditional territories we are honoured to live and do this work. We made a formal request for the support of an Indigenous Elder, and COINS connected us with **Debbie Bird**. Deb has supported our trips when she is able, leading an opening circle to acknowledge everyone's ancestors, the land we are on, our connection to it, and the important things it can teach us.

We have also benefited enormously from having **Nicola Hare** from *Trans Connect* (another program of ANKORS) on our Advisory Committee, supporting our trips with her presence and participation, as well as consulting with us on gender diversity and inclusivity in Walk With Me. Through resources and feedback she shared with us early on in the project's development, we were able to use more inclusive language in our recruitment materials. Thanks to her, we came to understand the importance of not only self-identified (cisgender and transgender) women feeling welcome in the program, but also non-binary, gender non-conforming, agender, trans men, gender fluid, bigender, mixed gender, two-spirit, and other gender diverse individuals also knowing the program is for them. This is crucial, as gender diverse individuals face extremely high rates of gender-based violence yet are often excluded from programming and safe spaces for women. Our learning about gender diversity and inclusion has had

positive results, as almost a third of applicants so far identify as gender diverse, we have had gender diverse individuals on almost every outing we've done, and many have expressed a feeling of safety and trust in the group. A number of cisgender women have also expressed appreciation for being in a group that includes gender diverse participants.

Jasmin Caton played a key role in allowing us to provide an outdoor rockclimbing day for participants. As a highly trained and qualified Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG) Rock Guide with more than two decades of experience climbing at the highest levels of the sport, she was able to provide the instruction and necessary safety required by our insurance provider to offer this activity. **Sarah Murray**, also a very experienced climber with over a decade leading groups for Backroads Adventures, assisted with the rockclimbing outing.

Leah Axelson is ANKORS' bookkeeper and has done all the incredibly important work of tracking revenues and expenses, ensuring staff and contractors are paid, and providing financial reports to track the budget and report to funders. **Cheryl Dowden**, ANKORS' Executive Director oversees everyone's work, provides support and encouragement, and is our Emergency Contact/Coordinator for each trip in case we need an outside person to communicate with rescue personnel. **Milo Offerein** has done an amazing job creating and updating the Walk With Me webpage: <https://ankors.bc.ca/walkwithme/>

Justin Dextor, Recreation Officer with Sites and Trails BC was very helpful and supportive of us obtaining the permissions we needed to use various trails. **Matt McLelland**, who led the Recreational Therapy Program for Freedom Quest, and **Tina Tew**, its Executive Director, provided valuable information about leading potentially vulnerable groups into the wilderness and getting the insurance required to do so.

We put together a **Regional Advisory Committee** and held a number of meetings early in the project to get input into, then feedback on, our proposed application process and recruitment materials. The Advisory Committee includes members from across the region and across a range of programs. This amazing group helped ensure that we developed materials that would allow potential participants to feel welcome to apply, the paperwork would not be too much of a barrier or trigger, but that we could also capture all the information needed to properly and safely lead trips. They are:

Cheryl-Anne Pine	Crown Counsel	Attorney General
Barb Vincent	Victim Services	Nelson Police Department
Nina Hamilton	Victim Services	Nelson RCMP
Jen Worman	Assessment and Counselling Clinician	Summit Psychology Group
Savana Roy	Nakusp Victim Services/SKY Coordinator	Arrow & Slocan Lakes Community Services
Nicola Hare	Trans Connect Coordinator	ANKORS
Rainey Boksa	Stopping the Violence and Safe Home Counsellor	Salmo Community Services
Katie Laramie	Victim Services	Trail FAIR Society
Debbie Pitaoulis	Women's Counsellor, Forest Therapist	Arrow & Slocan Lakes Community Services
Anna Maskarine	VAWIR Coordinator, Transition House Manager	Nelson Community Services
Juanita Kiff	Healing Our Spirits Group Facilitator	COINS
Cheryl Dowden	Executive Director	ANKORS
Shori Smith	Nakusp STV and Women's Outreach Worker	Arrow & Slocan Lakes Community Services

Walk With Me is truly a community effort and aims to be as collaborative, inclusive and respectful as possible. We are extremely grateful to all of the people listed in this section, as well as the following section of funders and in-kind supporters, for their assistance and encouragement of Walk With Me, and for helping to make it a better program.

Funders & In-Kind Supporters

We are so grateful for to all of our funders to date, including:

- The Columbia Basin Trust
- Osprey Community Foundation
- BC Community Response Networks
- Art for the People – the Kootenai Art Therapy Institute
- The Hamber Foundation



We have also been the recipients of a number of generous in-kind donations so far, including:

- Nelson Nordic Ski Club – donated snowshoe rentals and use of nordic trails
- CUBE Climbing Centre – climbing shoes, harnesses, helmet rental donated
- Big Cranium Design – discounts on stickers, hats
- Nelson Rocha – logo design, bike maintenance, canoe rental donated
- Anne Marchildon & Amy O’Neill – bike rentals donated
- RDCK Paddle Centre – discount on canoe rental
- Elk Root Conservation Farm – space rental donated for dinner/camping venue
- Justin Dexter at Recreation Sites and Trails BC – Backroads Mapbook & Map
- COINS – donated overnight gear rental
- Outward Bound USA – donated backpacking and overnight gear rental

We are so appreciative of everyone’s support of Walk With Me. It is truly a community effort.

We look forward to the next year of programming and to welcoming even more participants onto outings into nature that include art activities and time for reflection as part of the healing journey.

We hope that we can continue to foster positive impacts in the lives of women and gender diverse adults through shared outdoor experiences in a supportive environment.



Appendix A

Evaluation References

Braehler, C., & Neff, K. (2020). Self-compassion in PTSD. In M. T. Tull & N. A. Kimbrel (Eds.), *Emotion in posttraumatic stress disorder: Etiology, assessment, neurobiology, and treatment* (pp. 567–596). Elsevier Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-816022-0.00020-X>

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Raes, F., Palmier, E., Neff, K. D., & Van Gucht, D. (2011). Construction and factorial validation of a short form of the Self-Compassion Scale. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*. 18, 250-255.

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Outward Bound Canada (2017). Impact Report 2017.

This document references the four validated scales they use in their evaluation, which we also used:

- The Brief Resilience Scale (Smith et al., 2008)
- The Motivation to Lead Scale (Chan & Drasgow, 2001)
- The Hemingway Measure of Adolescent Connectedness Scale (Karcher, 1999)
- The Compassionate Love of Close Others Scale (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005)