

## New 'Outdoors Club' makes a difference at IMS



A new club at Innisfail Middle School is having a positive impact with students.

When Ted Hutchings became Principal of Innisfail Middle School (IMS) in the fall of 2022, he wanted to do something that would positively impact school culture, and connect students with the community.

"Personally, I love being outdoors and experiencing all Alberta has to offer," says Ted Hutchings. "In starting the 'Outdoors Club', which is an expansion of the highly successful 'climbing club'... we hoped students would enjoy being out in our beautiful province. We recognized some students might not have had a chance to participate in these activities previously and we wanted to give them the chance to do that." Hutchings says the school also hoped the club would positively impact school culture.

So far the Outdoors Club has provided students with the opportunity to experience downhill skiing both at Canyon Ski Hill and at Nakiska Resort. Students have also gone hiking, snowboarding, snowshoeing, wall climbing, and swimming. 75% of the student population has participated in at least one activity, there have been about 20 staff involved, and 25 parent volunteers.

"The students tell us they love it," says Hutchings. "We believe it is impacting school culture, and it's also helping students feel more motivated about school."

"I think it's extra fun," says Ollie Nelson, a grade 6 IMS student. "We've done some cool adventures, which is awesome! It's something to look forward to. It gives me a sense of adventure and excitement."

"It's a good learning opportunity to do things we don't usually get to do," says Jaden Lambert, a grade 7 IMS student. "It drives me forward to do better in school so my parents allow me to go."



"It's nice to be outdoors," says Mya Burton, a grade 8 IMS student. "I like that it's given me the chance to make new groups of friends. I look forward to all of the trips, and to connecting with people I haven't seen since last year. Also, it proves to us that the administration and staff care about us, and I think it does help us feel more belonging at school."

