

# **WELCOME TO CROSS CONSERVATION SCHOOL!**

## **WHAT TO EXPECT**

The Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area is a 4800 acre nature preserve located 1.6 kms SW of Calgary off of Highway 223x. The Area is a mix of aspen forest and grassland habitats and home to over 400 species of plants, 140 species of birds, and 25 species of mammals. There are over 22 kms of hiking trails accessible to the public through appointment.

The week spent with your class at the Cross Conservation Area is part of a long-term learning experience that is intended to promote an environmental conservation ethic. This outdoor experience is unique to every school and class, depending on the theme each teacher wishes to develop.

### **Big idea development**

The ideal plan is based on an "all encompassing" idea that will connect many of the Program of Studies expectations. This idea will include Cross Conservation School as only one week within the larger plan, and should also include many other experiences such as in-class projects and other activities. The plan can be developed for a 6-month time frame or can even become the focus for your school year. A large part of this "Big Idea" planning process is completed through your proposal and application to Cross Conservation School.

### **Meetings and Inservices**

Once your application has been accepted, we will meet with you or your team several times to assist with program preparations.

#### *Welcome Session*

In May there is a welcoming and orientation session at the Cross Conservation Area, hosted by the Open Minds Education Director and the Cross Conservation School (Opens Coordinator). This meeting will introduce you to Cross Conservation School and the Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area, discuss what to expect in the coming year and get you excited about your week.

#### *Teacher Inservice*

A two-day inservice typically takes place at the end of August from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. These two days are designed to familiarize you with the resources, natural history, and trails at the Cross Conservation Area, and introduce you to observation, writing and drawing techniques that will help you develop successful journalling skills with your class. We also offer a variety of exercises that will help you develop your students' naturalist intelligence and creative expression.

#### *Six weeks prior*

A school visit will be arranged, with the CampusCalgary/Open Minds program Director and the Cross Conservation School Coordinator. This visit is designed to review your long-term plan, Big Idea development and other ideas related to planning your week. During this time we want to hear about the activities or projects you have been working on with the students, and progress

with your class's journals. We will also finalize any administrative concerns (e.g., forms, health concerns, payment, special needs). We will leave a *Binder of Possibilities* for you to review in preparation for the next meeting and a kit of activities and biofacts to use with your class. We'll also discuss any requests for guest speakers and the Coordinator will schedule these into your week before the next meeting.

### *Three Weeks Prior (final)*

At this meeting, the Cross Conservation School coordinator and you will develop a schedule for your week that encompasses your Big Idea. We will schedule activities, journaling time and confirm the trails you will travel on. You should have reviewed the *Binder of Possibilities* and selected the activities you wish to engage your class in.

While the week schedule is planned in full, but be prepared for variations due to weather and time. It is suggested that Friday be left open as a free day to finish activities or have the children choose what they wish to revisit.

## **Developing a knowledge and skill base before you come**

### *Open Minds Skills*

In order for you to make the best use of your time at the Cross Conservation Area (CCA), students should have developed certain skills and a knowledge base before they arrive. Here are some examples:

- Journal writing is an important skill that is developed with experience. In their journals, students can record their observations, draw, and write reflectively about their experiences. This is an extremely useful part of the students' learning. Students can begin using their journals well before their week at the Cross Conservation Area.
- Conservation - cover conservation vocabulary; discuss conservation issues locally or globally; look at the interaction between culture and conservation; research biodiversity and species preservation in Alberta and the natural regions of Alberta

### *Cross Conservation Area Messages*

At the Cross Conservation Area - "Nature is the teacher; the classroom is the outdoors; the textbooks are the very things you see. In this school, there are no marks and no examination papers," (Tilden 1957).

We believe that offering quality conservation education programming to youth will inspire an awareness, understanding and appreciation of the natural world that will lead youth to become environmentally conscious and active environmental citizens.

While you attend our outdoor school we hope that you will complement these efforts in your own lesson plans. Please take the time to read about the wildlife and the habitat in the Area, and to become familiar with the landscape as much as you can before your visit. This will increase your familiarity with our outdoor classroom and will surely enhance your group's experience here. Our website and our book, *Paradise Preserved*, are great resources to learn more about the Area.

## **Walk softly on the earth- Area rules**

If students understand that the outdoors is full of homes of animals and plants perhaps they will behave as though they are visitors. Relate nature to their homes and ask how they expect visitors to behave. Take nothing and leave the area as you find it or better!

The Ann and Sandy Cross Conservation Area is considered a Wildlife Habitat Development Area under the Alberta Wildlife Act. Pursuant to this act, the following rules are in place:

1. Visitors are asked to register before using this area by calling 931-1042.
2. Horses and Dogs are not allowed on site. This reduces the impact on the land and wildlife.
3. Bikes and vehicles are not allowed-except in the parking lot.
4. Camping, fires, smoking, hunting and discharging of firearms are all prohibited.
5. Please pack litter out with you as there are no garbage cans on the trails.
6. Stay on the trails and keep your distance from the wildlife.
7. Leave everything in place- please do not pick the flowers or plants. Do not take anything away from the area.

It is important for students to know that these rules make us different than a park, especially parks they may be familiar with. We also adhere to the following guiding principles that guide all of our operations.

1. Protect habitat and providing space for native wildlife.
2. Offer conservation education programs.
3. Manage human use of the area through entry by appointment only.
4. Collaborate positively with our stakeholders.
5. Pursue landscape-level approaches to protect the Conservation Area.
6. Strive for sustainability in all aspects of our operations.

## **Bussing**

The Cross Conservation Area School covers the cost of bussing; all buses are pre-arranged with Southland Transportation. We will call the bus charter at least one week prior to confirm your bus for the week. If there are any problems the Cross Conservation School Coordinator will contact you. The bus drops off and picks up the class in the lower parking lot. There is not enough room up at Belvedere House for a bus to turn around.

## **Payment**

For the school year, the school's portion of the cost of Cross Conservation School after subsidy is \$750.00 for CBE & CSSD schools, \$850 for independent schools. An initial deposit of \$100.00 is required to confirm your place. The \$100.00 will be collected at the initial welcoming and orientation session. If the deposit is not received at the welcoming session, please send a cheque to the Cross Conservation Area before September 15th. Cheques are payable to the Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area and can be mailed to:

Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area  
Box 20, Site 23, R.R. 8  
Calgary, AB T2J 2T9

A cheque for remaining fees should be given to the Cross Conservation School Coordinator upon arrival on the first day of Cross Conservation School. Independent schools will need to send a \$100 cheque to the Calgary Foundation care of Trish Savill.

### **Cancellation Policy**

Cancellations must be received a least one-month prior to your scheduled program. The Campus Calgary/Chevron Open Minds director and the Cross Conservation School Coordinator will determine any program refund. Cancellation notice received later than one month will result in the loss of your deposit. Any cancellations, where the Cross Conservation Area cannot recover bussing costs, could result in the loss of your \$750.00 program fee.

### **Safety and Emergency Information**

Prevention is key to avoiding any accidents. With the help of parent volunteers, teachers should be able to handle any situation before it becomes dangerous. Information regarding our safety and risk management plans will be provided to you to review. Teachers should also reference the appropriate Policies and Procedures found in the CBE Off-site Activities Procedures Manual.

#### *Health Concerns*

Teachers are responsible to notify us of any health concerns. During Cross Conservation School, you should have emergency numbers and Alberta Health Care numbers for each child. These do not need to be given to the Cross Conservation School Coordinator, however, they should be brought with you in case of an emergency. The CBE has requested teachers to bring hand sanitizer to the area to use after washroom breaks and before lunch.

#### *Emergencies*

All Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area staff have First Aid training, and First Aid kits and radios to contact Belvedere House are carried with the CCA volunteers or staff. Other first aid kits are located on site. We recommend that you bring a cell phone and first aid kit for your own use in case of an emergency or to contact the school.

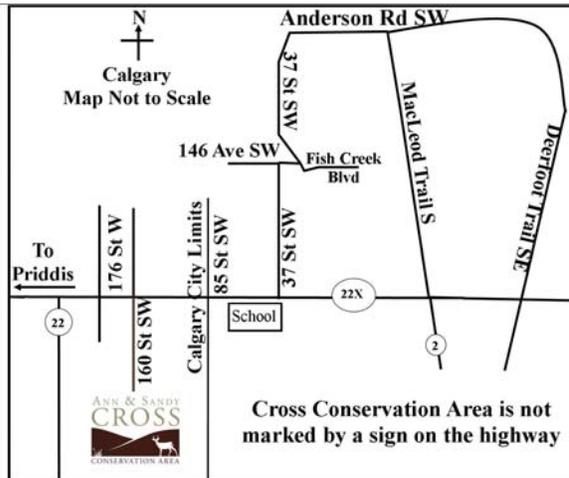
### **Program Feedback and Follow-up**

Once your week is over, we will send you a program evaluation to help us improve our program. We also appreciate examples of student, teacher and parent work that we can use in displays, to show other teachers, and promote this amazing program. Some classes have a celebration of learning following their week and an invitation to attend would be welcomed! As well, students often express an interest in taking action on issues that arise during the week and we are available to assist with finding resources, ideas etc.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Where is the Cross Conservation Area?**

The Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area is located at 160St and Hwy 22X SW, 1.6 kms from the Calgary City Limits.



### **How big is the Cross Conservation Area?**

The Area is 4800 acres of aspen forests and grasslands within the M.D. of Foothills.

### **Did the Cross' own all the land?**

In partnership with The Nature Conservancy of Canada and the province of Alberta, Ann and Sandy Cross donated 4800 acres of their land to conservation between 1987 and 1996. The Area is now run as the Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area.

### **Who leads the week?**

The teacher leads the week with support from the Cross Conservation School Coordinator and Area volunteers to lead some activities and assist as trail guide. Classroom management and classroom atmosphere is created by each individual teacher. Teachers are responsible for class supervision, safety, and discipline at the Cross Conservation School. It is important to be flexible as plans change according to weather, teachable moments (a herd of deer walk by), student interest and discussions that arise.

Each class at the Cross Conservation Area School will have a unique week that will be developed together with the Cross Conservation School Coordinator encompassing your Big Idea, long-term study and curriculum. How your time is spent each day and what focus you would like the week to have is determined by you. When developing your ideas, remember to use the outdoor emphasis as much as possible. Activities that are classroom based can always be completed upon returning to regular school or Belvedere House in some cases.

## **What resources are available during the week?**

### *Belvedere House*

This interpretive building will be your home base and indoor classroom during the week. It includes washrooms, an open area for classroom use, cubby areas for students to hang up and leave extra belongings, and space to leave supplies for the week.

### *In-House Displays*

The Cross Conservation Area School is located in our education center Belvedere House. Our education center offers a variety of in-house displays that can be used to demonstrate or teach conservation concepts. We also have a large selection of natural biofacts available to use throughout the week.

### *Outdoor Shelters & Outhouses*

There are several semi-covered shelters available to use for lunch breaks and stops along the trails. Outhouses are the only washroom facilities along the trails and are located near all shelters and at other areas along the trail too.

### *Area Volunteers*

Our Conservation Educators are dedicated and knowledgeable volunteers who lead our dayschool programs. They will help to lead activities, guide your class on the trails and provide natural history and information on the Area.

### *Guest Speakers*

We have a handful of experts that can be scheduled to present to your class, depending on availability. As we are a small organization with only 5 full-time employees, our number of guest speakers is limited compared to other sites.

### *Program Activities*

A summary of activities from our six dayschool programs can be found in our *Binder of Possibilities*, which is given to you during the planning meetings. You are welcome to incorporate relevant activities into your week plan. However, we do not recommend scheduling more than one or two of these per day.

## **What should I bring?**

Teachers should be prepared for an outdoor experience. Advanced planning of your trip is essential to avoid problems and ensure a successful field study. Planning allows the teacher/leader to adapt to situations and be flexible while keeping objectives in mind.

Belvedere House and the Conservation Area are considered your classroom for the week and extra supplies can be left here during the week.

### *What teachers need to bring*

See the list of student clothing to bring

- School supplies
- Camera

- Garbage Bags (Large and small) – For garbage and rain coats
- Extra set of student gear (in case someone forgets)
- Student Permission Forms and Medical Information
- Extra water
- Hand sanitizer (see the Safety and Emergency Information in the Appendices).

### *School Supplies*

School supplies are not included in the Open Minds program fee. Teachers should ensure all students come prepared for school, and bring all necessary materials for the week.

We recommend that the school supply journals for students to use during their week at the Cross Conservation Area. The journal will be used to record observations, journal writing, drawing, and keeping a living record of their experience. At school, research and activities should be included in this book. Many teachers use bound hardcover notebooks, which work especially well with elementary students.

### **What should the students bring?**

Students should be prepared for a week in the outdoors in all types of weather conditions. Please encourage students to wear old clothes that they wouldn't mind getting dirty. Prepare students mentally and physically. Discuss fears and concerns prior to your visit and resolve any potential problem situations (i.e., hazards or wildlife concerns).

Establish fair and reasonable expectations for behavior and discipline prior to the field study, and let students know where they stand.

### *Student expectations*

- Be dressed appropriately.
- Be prepared to be outside for 5 hours most days.
- Be prepared to hike for 4 km minimum.
- Bring a conserver lunch, a lunch with minimal wrapping and packaging.
- Be prepared to be in small groups of 5 when needed.
- Be prepared to listen to a CCA volunteer or staff.

### *Student list*

(All items of value should be left at home.)

- journals
- pencils, pencil sharpener and eraser
- crayons or felts
- reusable water bottle
- appropriate clothing
- conservation lunch

### *Summer/Fall*

- good hiking shoes (no sandals or dress shoes)
- hat

- sun screen
- water bottle
- rain gear
- long pants
- extra socks
- small plastic bags to put inside shoes if wet out (optional)
- camera (optional)
- Conservation lunch & snacks - reusable containers
- backpack

#### *Winter*

- back pack
- boots, extra socks, indoor shoes
- long johns/snow pants
- extra sweater
- toques
- gloves
- scarf
- Conservation lunch & snacks- reusable containers

### **How many parent volunteers do I need to bring?**

You are asked to recruit parents/volunteers to help support the program and to share in the week with the students. The supervision ratio recommended for this area is 1:6 (not including the teacher or CCA staff/volunteer) for grades 1-6. These meet or exceed the minimal acceptable standard of supervision for all off site activities for the CBE. We ask you limit the maximum numbers of parent volunteers to 10 per day.

Please supply your parent volunteers with information about your objectives and the trip activities. Parents that can participate for more than one day will help enhance the students' comfort level and experience. Journals should be made available to the parent volunteers, and they should be encouraged to use them during the week.

#### *Parent Information and Release Forms*

A parent information package should be sent home as early as possible to encourage parent involvement. As part of our funding agreement, we require that each student have his or her parent or guardian complete the release form enabling us to use written material and pictures from the class to promote the Chevron Open Minds program and the Cross Conservation Area. Release forms should be given to the Cross Conservation School Coordinator on your first day at the Cross Conservation School. We ask adult volunteers to complete a media release as well.

#### *Parent Expectations*

- Be prepared to be outside for 5 hours most days.
- Dress appropriately (see student list of things to bring).
- Be prepared to hike for 4 km most days.
- Bring a conservation lunch, a lunch with minimal wrapping and packaging.
- Be prepared to supervise small groups of 5 or 6 for activities led by Area volunteers.

- Be prepared to be responsible for the management of your group.
- Note there is no smoking on the property.

### **Who sponsors the program?**

Chevron provides funding for the Open Minds program. This project involves on-site education at a variety of sites around Calgary, including the Calgary Zoo, the Glenbow Museum, and the Calgary Science Centre. The Cross Conservation School is made possible by a partnership between Chevron and the Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area.

Thank you letters to our education sponsor, Chevron, shows a great deal of support towards the value of our programs and our site as an Open Minds host. School thank you letters to Chevron are greatly appreciated and can be passed on to the Cross Conservation School Coordinator or mailed directly to the address below:

Marlene Mulligan  
Public Relations Coordinator  
Chevron Canada Resources  
500-5 Ave SW  
Calgary, AB T2P 0L7

### **Who do I contact for more information?**

Information regarding the Chevron Open Minds program can be obtained from:  
Trish Savill (Dir)  
Campus Calgary Chevron Open Minds School Program  
Phone: 403-777-7971 ext. 2331  
Website: [www.chevronopenminds.ca](http://www.chevronopenminds.ca)

Information regarding Cross Conservation School can be obtained from:  
Kelly Small  
Cross Conservation School Coordinator  
Phone: 403-931-2042  
Fax: 403-931-1045  
Email: [ksmall@conservation.org](mailto:ksmall@conservation.org)  
Web site: [www.crossconservation.org](http://www.crossconservation.org)