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# NEWS RELEASE

## **New, natural school playground promotes creative play, reduces bullying** *Grand opening June 5 of new creative playground to replace vandalized equipment*

For two years after the lone play structure at King Edward Community School was vandalized beyond repair, Duncan Hanson spent many outdoor recesses with no desire to play in the barren schoolyard.

“I would bring a sweater, find a shady spot and take a nap,” said the Grade 6 student.

Duncan and his school mates now have a huge variety of play options, thanks to the redevelopment of the school grounds into a natural recreation setting for students, community-based organizations and the community.

“There’s more of everything now – there’s more space, more structures, and more kids happy,” said Duncan, 12.

The new playground features distributed play areas that promote safety and have been shown to reduce bullying, and a landscape design that supports healthy and active living for all ages while recognizing and honouring the Aboriginal culture of the community. The school is celebrating its new place to play with a grand opening celebration this week, which will also incorporate Arbour Day. *Media and the community are welcome to attend this event.*

**When: Thursday, June 5 at 2:30 p.m.**

**Where: King Edward School playground, 825 Selkirk Street, Winnipeg**

The new playground features an early years play area with sand, boulders, wiggle walls and balance logs, distributed play equipment, an amphitheatre, a berm with a built-in slide, paved fitness loop for bikes, rollerblades and strollers, a family picnic area, a re-sodded playing field and new trees, as well as LED light posts to enhance community safety.

“Our goal was to think outside the box and create a little bit of Assiniboine Park within the North End. The kids now have a space where there’s so much diversity that allows them to play in different ways,” said Principal Aaron Benarroch.

“How they interact at recess is totally different. The kids would just climb all over each other and get into trouble, but now they are dispersed and playing more creatively. The rough-housing has been cut down,” added Benarroch.

The playground was built with generous funding from the Building Communities Initiative (a joint fund between the Province of Manitoba and City of Winnipeg), the City’s Community Incentive Grant Program, the Winnipeg Foundation, The Winnipeg School Division, the Winnipeg School Division’s Children’s Heritage Fund, The Richardson Foundation, The Thomas Sill Foundation, The City’s Land Dedication Reserve Fund, Manitoba Hydro, Winnipeg Jewish Foundation, and local fundraising by the school community.

“The Board of Trustees is pleased that this new playground and community park will bring families and the school community together to enjoy the outdoors and promote healthy activities,” said Winnipeg School Division Board Chair Suzanne Hrynyk.

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