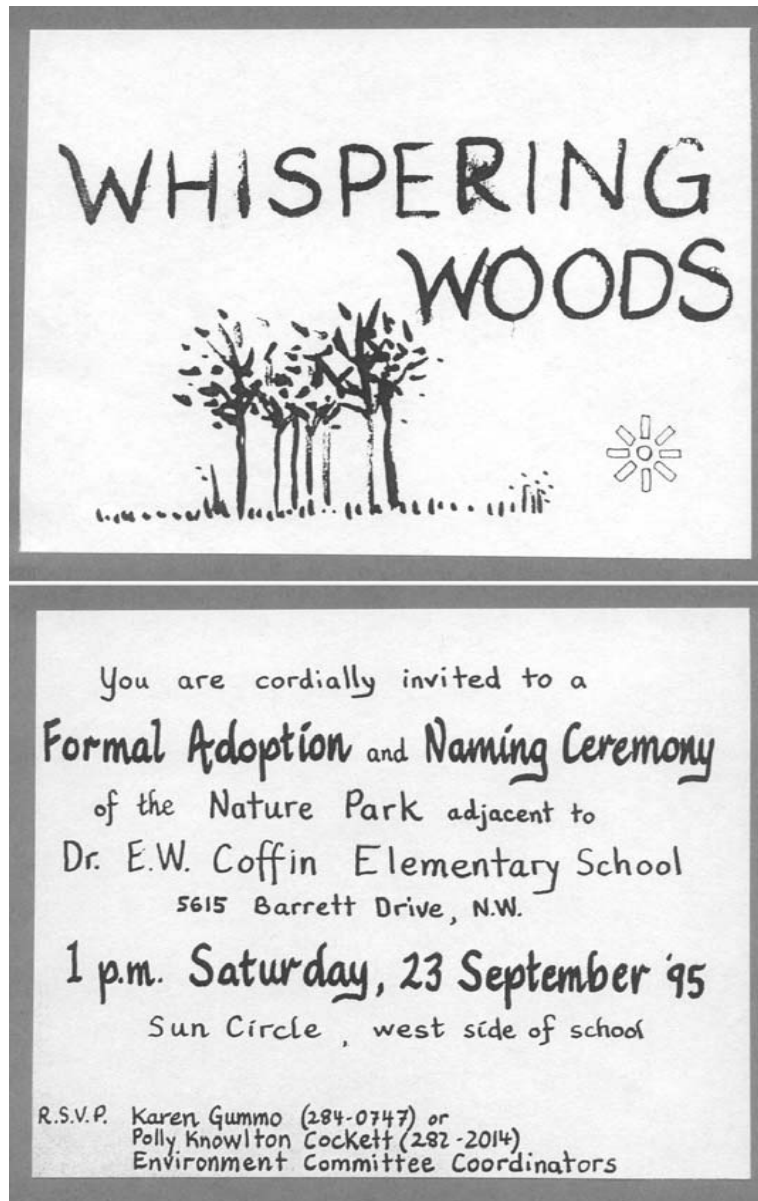


## Whispering Woods

### Adoption Celebration

The Sun Circle provided us with the perfect place to celebrate the beginning of another important outdoor project. In September of 1995, the Dr. Coffin School community officially adopted Whispering Woods through the City of Calgary Parks and Recreation Adopt-A-Park program. The natural area park is a remnant of Nose Hill, left behind after the development of Brentwood Heights in the 1960s.



## AGENDA

1. *Ribbon Dance- Dr. Coffin Students*  
*Shanna Daly*  
*Heather Gummo*  
*Patricia Minor*  
*Maddy Nixon*  
*Charlotte Wyvill*
2. *Welcome & Introduction*  
*Barbara Bannon - Principal*  
*Joan Dean - Teacher*
3. *“Whispering Woods” Information*  
*Polly Lee Knowlton Cockett*  
*Environment Co-coordinator*
4. *Dedication of “Whispering Woods”*  
*Karen Gummo*  
*Environment Co-coordinator*
5. *Procession to “Whispering Woods”*



*A Ribbon Dance begins the celebration*

## Whispering Woods Dedication, September 23, 1995

by Karen Gummo

We turn our attention today to this small piece of wilderness (bounded on all sides by the city) as we prepare to adopt it and care for it. But before we descend upon it in our lively, noisy way, let's stop and listen to the whispering of the woods.....

Just as we have an infinite need to communicate with one another, our natural environment also has a complex "talking" network. There are messages there for us too if we are ready to receive them.

Our city noises so easily dominate that we really have to block them out to focus on the "whispering of the woods"...

*O quaking aspen decked in autumn's final coat of green  
whisper away, we are listening.  
O chipping sparrow, fool us again with your  
cricket-like song.  
O common snipe, bring your friends and family to our wood,  
make your rare visits more common  
O luminous Lacewing may you grace us  
next spring with your beauty.  
O soft prairie crocus, teach us to use our ears  
to listen to the earth as you do  
O whispering woods, who speaks now?*

As we wander through your woods we find your seeds ready to be dispersed. We marvel at the diversity of your plant life. We have gathered some of your seeds. (Speaking to seed holders) Let's tell what seeds we've found and get ready to return them to the place from where they came.

(Seeds are named and dropped into 5 baskets)

(To the crowd) You are all invited to join in the "whisper" and then the chant that these 5 students will lead us in as we follow them down to Whispering Woods where they will scatter the seeds. They will be the first to enter the woods, we'll stay outside the fence and watch. Then when they come to you offering buckets of water you may dip a hand in and toss water droplets to nourish the seeds!

Girls huddle to begin chant, "Whispering woods, whispering woods, whispering, whispering, whispering woods." Then Shanna Daly will lead us off toward wood.

Whispering Woods is now ours to care for, enjoy, protect, and discover.



*A student leading a tour for community member, Jill Kirker*



*Students lead their families on tours of Whispering Woods*



*The Dedication and Naming is completed with the scattering of native seeds into the natural area, and the sprinkling of water*

## Fall Fair

Now to celebrate, with a Fall Fair on the autumnal equinox.

Where else, but back in the Sun Circle!

Tethered to a picnic table, Fall Fair guests could ride high for an overview of the Sun Circle, Whispering Woods, the Rockies to the west, downtown Calgary to the southeast, and Nose Hill to the north. We could not have had a more glorious day for our equinoctial celebration. A Tea Garden was set up behind the Portable classroom, where one could relax with Earl Grey tea and crustless cucumber or watercress sandwiches, enjoying one of the most spectacular mountain views, right from our Sun Circle, and just beyond, our Whispering Woods.



*Face painting near the gardens*



*The Sun Circle, and the Tea Garden. The Fall Fair was a hive of activity  
Shot from hot air balloon*



*Information booths and autumn blossoms*

## Exploration and Stewardship

Since adopting Whispering Woods, students and teachers and families have been quietly and continuously visiting the park. Earth Day storytelling fests, litter patrols, insect investigations, seasonal observations, and simply walking through, have all become part of the routine for children at Dr. Coffin School. Integrating the curriculum into the outdoors whenever possible has been a paramount objective for many teachers.

Every April, it is very exciting to watch for the first emerging prairie crocuses. I remember going to Whispering Woods or to Nose Hill to look for the early prairie crocus flowers. A sure sign of spring. Sometimes before we went we would say altogether:

### The Crocus Hunt adapted from a traditional chant by Karen Gummo

*Going on a crocus hunt.  
Going on a crocus hunt.  
I'm not afraid!  
I'm not afraid!  
Creep over the grass.  
Creep over the grass.  
Slip into the woods.  
Slip into the woods.  
Take a look around.  
Take a look around.  
Do you see what I see?  
Do you see what I see?  
A soft and fuzzy thing!  
A soft and fuzzy thing!  
Let's get up close.  
Let's get up close.  
Oh, someone rode his bike here!  
Someone rode her bike here!  
So much for that flower.  
So much for that flower.*

*Going on a crocus hunt.  
Going on a crocus hunt.  
Take a look around.  
Take a look around.  
Do you see what I see?  
Do you see what I see?  
A fuzzy purple... Huh?  
A fuzzy purple... Huh?  
Oh, someone brought her dog here.  
Someone brought his dog here?  
And forgot the plastic bag.  
And forgot the plastic bag.  
Ooey! Pueey!  
Ooey! Pueey!  
Going on a crocus hunt!  
Going on a crocus hunt!  
I'm not afraid.  
I'm not afraid.  
Take a look around.  
Take a look around.*



*Do you see what I see?  
Do you see what I see?  
A gorgeous little flower!  
A gorgeous little flower!  
Let's go and pick it!  
Let's go and pick it!  
Slap! Slap! Slap!  
Slap! Slap! Slap!  
(Gently slap your own hand!)  
Let's get the camera.  
Let's get the camera.  
Or we could bring our sketchpad!  
We could bring our sketchpad!  
Paint a beautiful picture.  
Paint a beautiful picture!  
Put it up on the wall.  
Put it up on the wall.  
Going on a crocus hunt.  
Going on a crocus hunt.  
Let's do that again!*

## Metamorphosis Meander Scavenger Hunt


with Dr. Lynn Moore, 'The Bug Lady'

Dr. Lynn Moore, entomologist and teacher, visited our school several times. Once, over a two day period, she spent an hour with each and every classroom in Whispering Woods, telling stories and working with the children, helping them discover dozens and dozens of little critters hiding amongst the grasses, leaves, and trees. Look closely, and listen carefully; there is far more here than meets the eye.

Look for:

- a caterpillar
- a mass of insect eggs in tree bark
- a leaf with edges rolled under and woven together with silk to form a tent
- a butterfly
- spittlebug spit on a plant stem with nymphs living inside
- a bee on a flower
- insect eggs laid on the underside of a leaf
- a grasshopper nymph — too young to have developed wings
- a cricket
- ant eggs under a rock or log
- insects caught in a spider web

## SCAVENGER HUNT

 Whispering Woods

- ① 1 piece of plastic (or 2 more)
- ② 3 yellow dandelion heads
- ③ 1 bunch of curly clover seed
- ④ 3 white dandelion head (gone to seed) 
- ⑤ 2 pieces of candy or food wrap 
- ⑥ 3 green goatsbeard plants (bad weed — try to pull the whole root!) 
- ⑦ 3 prairie crocus seeds 
- ⑧ 1 dead goatsbeard plant. 
- ⑨ 1 wrinkled wild rose hip 
- ⑩ 4 of last years buckbrush berries (all shrivelled up) 
- ⑪ Describe your favorite pink purple or yellow flower in Whispering Woods.

## Fire! Fire!

On Easter Monday, 1999, flames again threatened Dr. Coffin school. Again, it was arson, but this time set in Whispering Woods, and blowing straight up the hill toward the school. Luckily, roofers were working atop the school roof, and spotted the billowing plume of smoke. They phoned 911 from their cell phone, and fire trucks were soon on the scene. It had been a very dry spring, and the scent of burning grass was often in the air, but this was a little too close, even though fire is an important factor in natural prairie ecology.



*Calgary firefighters arrive, and address the fire at the top of Whispering Woods*



*Firefighters soak the trees and ground*



*Flames lick at the base of an aspen grove*



*Steaming heaps of ash are left behind*



*Hosing the ground creates a plume of ashen steam*

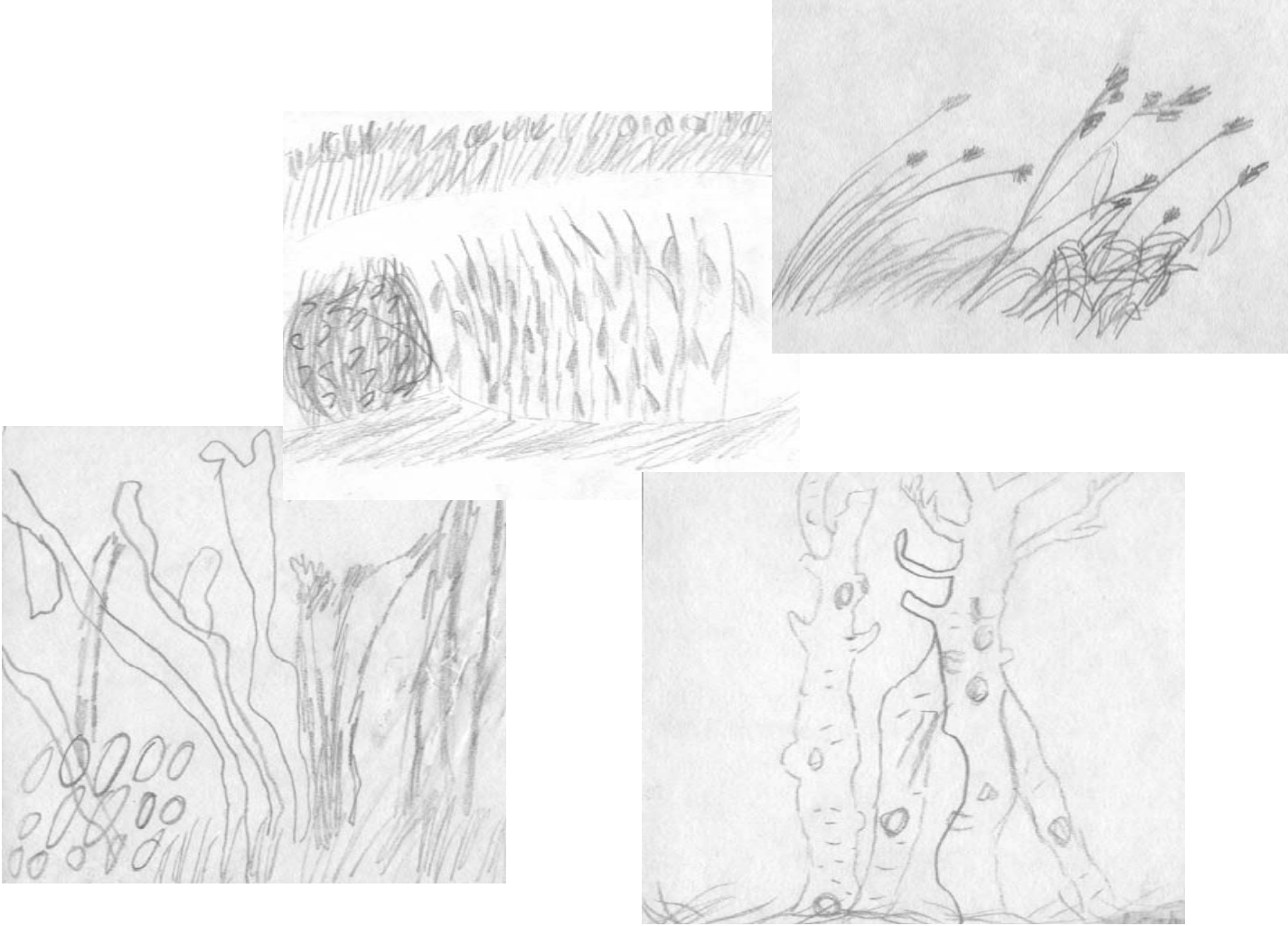


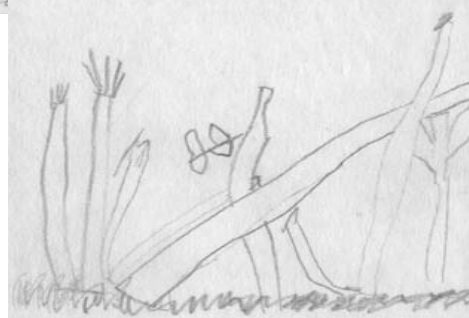
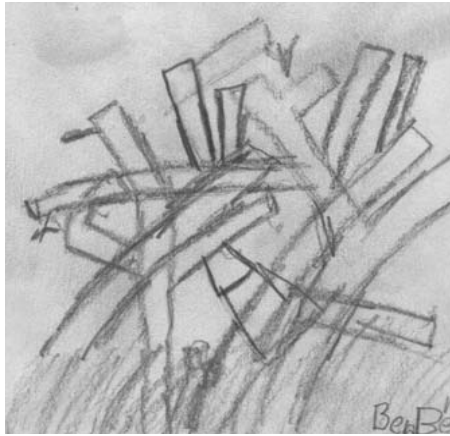
*Rowan Cockett, with the scorched ground behind him*



*Community members respond to the scent of smoke, and arrive to see the fire and its devastation*

# Children's Drawings of Whispering Woods





## Environmental Awareness

### Sightings and Reflections

by Students



Sightings, by Jillian Lemmen and her mom, Colleen Connolly

More than a dozen Mountain Bluebirds were spotted on a tree near the portable and in two alcoves by the library on Friday, 14 April 2000.

Sightings, by Joey Shapkin

Joey saw a Yellow-Shafted Northern Flicker recently. A woodpecker, the Flicker likes to eat ants; but also it squishes ants and uses the remains to preen itself. The formic acid in the ants can kill parasites on the skin and feathers of the bird.

Sightings, by Grayson, Rowan, and Audrey Lane Cockett

We often see the Jackrabbit bounding by. It's white in the winter, and goes brown in the summer. It must visit our Sun Circle, because there are little pellets of compost left behind, and many plants get nibbled.



## Circles of Community

















by Polly Lee Knowlton Cockett





















Dr. Coffin School, the Sun Circle, and Whispering Woods have quietly and continuously drawn my family into ever widening Circles of Community. Friendships have been forged while weeding and watering, perched on the edge of a Sun Circle planter. Neighbors have been met while composting and bricklaying. New knowledge has been gained and shared while down on hands and knees in Whispering Woods, or telling stories while hidden amongst the fluttering leaves of the trembling aspens.

















In winter, we can hunt for rabbit tracks in the snow by the gardens, or watch the noisy flocks of Bohemian Waxwings forage for red berries in the mountain ash tree by the parking lot, or catch a glimpse of a Bald Eagle soaring overhead, white head sharp against the blue of a winter sky. In spring we watch for the return of birds: will any nest by the school this year? Or we might receive a phone call from a classmate when they've made an exciting discovery, such as when a flock of about two dozen male and female Mountain Bluebirds took asylum from the snowstorm of 14th April 2000 in the alcoves by the school library. It was an extraordinarily special treat to see the glorious azure blue of these shy country birds in our neighborhood. The following dawn, their assemblage decorated the poplar tree by the Portable, as they awaited the brightening day and the storm's abatement. Then, off they flew, pair by pair, to their less urban destinations. We are especially thankful for these shared school sightings.









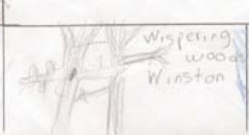

We might watch a summer's setting solar eclipse with neighbors, from the Portable's back staircase. Or take a supper on a soccer game night to the school picnic tables. We have memories of Sun Circle cake walks at school fairs, and students pulling Goat's Beard in Whispering Woods. Sun Circle quizzes; Spring and Fall scavenger hunts in Whispering Woods; potatoes, potatoes, and more planter potatoes. Space flown canola seed plants sprouting in the western planter. A coyote trotting through the school parking lot, headed off to Nose Hill. Or a rejoicing in the fall when the beaming sunflowers nod a welcome back to the all the students and teachers, ready for another school year.

Being on the Environment Committee at Dr. Coffin School has been an extremely rewarding personal involvement for me. Working with the students, teachers, staff, and many, many other parents, has increased my own sense of community, both within and without the school's immediate environs. Our indoor environmental initiatives, such as paper recycling, holiday crafts with reusable materials, and Earth Day art work, are all just as valuable as the outdoor projects for engendering a sense of awareness and stewardship for our Earth home. It has been a true delight to hear a couple of boys exclaiming, when chosen to go help plant or weed or water in the Sun Circle, "We are so lucky!" While digging together, I have been privileged to hear student stories of gardening at their grandmother's farm in Russia, or how their aunt taught them how to tend a tomato plant, or to hear them share with another student how their mother showed them how to transplant a perennial. As a parent, I have learned so much by being welcomed into the circle of learning at Dr. Coffin. By sharing in the sowing of seeds of friendship and understanding, we have reaped the rewards of community, for myself, for my family as a whole, and more importantly, individually for each of my three children, as they have attended the little school next door.

	<b>Tiq Chrisy</b>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Mr. B</td> <td>Mrs. H</td> <td>Mrs. B</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mr. H</td> <td>Mr. O</td> <td>David</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mrs. K</td> <td>David</td> <td>Mrs. D</td> </tr> </table>	Mr. B	Mrs. H	Mrs. B	Mr. H	Mr. O	David	Mrs. K	David	Mrs. D	
Mr. B	Mrs. H	Mrs. B										
Mr. H	Mr. O	David										
Mrs. K	David	Mrs. D										
	<p>The important thing about our Suncircle is that the people of Dr. Coffin made it. Kirsten Gr. 4          What is important about our Suncircle is that lots of people in our community helped make it and that is what makes it special. Aidenh Gr. 3          The Suncircle is important to me because it is the only one in Calgary. Alex T.</p>											
	<p>The sun circle is important to the Dr. Coffin community because we have bricks with names on it.</p> <p>April Austin T</p>											
	<p>The suncircle is very important to our school because it supports a good play and learning location. It also makes the school look beautiful.</p> <p>by Caelan Tatz</p>											
												
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>O'hearn Family</td> <td>Takahashi Family</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Kotowski Family</td> <td>Tanner Family</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Erin Lowman</td> <td>Larry Ogilvie</td> </tr> </table>	O'hearn Family	Takahashi Family	Kotowski Family	Tanner Family	Erin Lowman	Larry Ogilvie					
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B.C.		KV.	AB
	<p>My favorite field trip was the Bird Sanctuary. I liked the bird sanctuary because I like birds, especially Humming Birds. Last year I was studying Humming Birds.</p> <p>By Matthew Kwong</p>		
			
	<p>One of my favourite field trips was going to Bird School. I like birds. They are pretty colors. When I was there I saw a great horned owl, gulls, and pelicans.</p> <p>By Jamie Takahashi</p>		
			
			
		Kevin B	Jane Onick

 Jessica	 Elizabeth	 NC	 Jessica
 Leah	<p>I have seen a Deer in whispering Woods. It was Beautiful, Kylee</p> <p>coyote Prowling down from high hills in the darkness of the night with the light of the moon reflecting off his glaring eyes. By Nicola Mabey</p>		 Avidah
 Walter	<p>In whispering Woods I saw baby robins. They were in a tree.</p> <p>Matthew Challen</p>		 Natalie
 Ray			 Mitchell
 Kirsten			 Avidah
 Ben	 Kirsten	 Brandon	 She

 Dayna	 ST	 Dayna
<p>I like whispering Woods because it is pretty Dayna</p>		
 Matthew	<p>Last year there was a fire at Whispering Woods. After the fire it was all crunchy and brown.</p> <p>Matthew Poole</p>	
 Matthew		
 Matthew	<p>When Whispering Woods first burnt down, my class was monitoring the growth. It was really cool when we went out one day and saw the little points of grass.</p> <p>Rebecca Smyth, 2m7</p>	
 Matthew		
 JG	 Whispering woods Winston	 Anne

