**What beautiful nature is in our backyards**

Last week I had the pleasure to join an education session at Cumbernauld Academy. The secondary school is perfect for outdoor activities, the Glen is right on their doorstep!

We discussed how nature is great for our health and wellbeing and practised grounding activities. The grounding activities allowed students to connect with their senses helping them enjoy the full presence of the outdoors whilst alleviating daily stresses. After the session, we asked pupils to rate out of 5 how they felt from being outdoors and all of them were 5s.

Pupils didn’t just feel the mental benefits of the outdoors they got to experience the physical benefits. Students were taught practical outdoor skills such as shelter building using tarps and ropes. The S2 Class were cooperative and adaptive using the natural surroundings to build their shelter; they picked an amazing spot that allowed them to hook the tarp eyelets to branches. The activity was enjoyable and educational teaching them methods of building shelters to protect themselves from adverse weather conditions.

Catherine Leatherland and I demonstrated fire safety before we showed the students how to work a Kelly kettle. We discussed what is needed for fire oxygen, heat, fuel, and something to extinguish the fire. As a group, we discussed the best wood for the fire -dry seasoned wood- as unseasoned wood is moist and difficult to light. Students got to practise using flint and steel so they would know how to safely ignite the fire. We created a fire circle to indicate a safe distance from the Kelly Kettle. Whilst waiting for the kettle to boil we talked about the Scottish Outdoor Access code about leaving no trace at the site and fire considerations based on the environment. We all enjoyed a hot chocolate, made memories, and gained valuable outdoor skills.