

BREATH OF FRESH AIR OUTDOOR PLAY SUMMIT SEP 25-27, 2025

Book of Abstracts





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Land Acknowledgement

The work we support and lead is at its core about repairing our relationship with the land, and with each other as caretakers and stewards of the land. We acknowledge the traditional land defenders who have been here for millennia, and who are still here. When we look around us, breathe the fresh air, admire the rich biodiversity, this is an opportunity to thank the ancestors who sustain these lands so that we can benefit from them today. In our work, we strive to consider how future generations will benefit from the time, energy, and intention we put into it. We have a responsibility to carry forward these teachings.

Outdoor Play Canada is based in Ottawa, on the un-ceded and un-surrendered Algonquin and Anishinaabe territory. Our treaties challenge us to see our common purpose, share the gifts of the land, and step into our role as caretakers.

Introduction

Dear Breath of Fresh Air Community,

On behalf of Outdoor Play Canada and the Breath of Fresh Air (BoFA) Organizing Committee, it is a great honour to welcome you to the 2025 Breath of Fresh Air Outdoor Play Summit.

The theme for the 2025 BoFA Summit is ‘Play Across the Ages – Nature’s Call to All’. Across practice, policy, and research, this year’s Summit aims to explore how the landscape of outdoor play across generations has changed due to screen time, concerns over safety, and climate change, to name a few! Looking to the past, present, and future of outdoor play, the 2025 summit aims to inspire conversation and action on the value of play in fostering community, inclusive play environments, environmental stewardship, and overall health and well-being.

This Book of Abstracts offers a glimpse into the inspiring work and ideas that will be shared over the course of our three-day gathering. Inside, you will find details about our keynote speakers, a full list of presenters and presentations, and the summit schedule. Whether you are joining as a practitioner, researcher, policymaker, or advocate, we hope these pages spark connection, curiosity, and collaboration.

We are thrilled to welcome you to this vibrant community of outdoor play champions!

Warmly,

The BoFA Organizing Committee

Breath of Fresh Air Summit

An Outdoor Play Summit for thought leaders to connect and share their passion for outdoor play.

BoFA is a three-day Outdoor Play Summit where thought leaders, practitioners, researchers, and policy makers can connect and share best practices.

This national outdoor play event takes place in an open air environment. It features inspiring talks, hands-on workshops, and open conversations on the future of outdoor play in Canada and abroad. Breath of Fresh Air is organized by Outdoor Play Canada (OPC) in partnership with Andrew Fleck Children's Services, the Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group (HALO), the International Play Association (IPA) – Canada chapter and the National Institute for Play.

OPC is committed to promoting, protecting, and preserving access to play in nature and the outdoors for all people by championing an equitable, inclusive, and sustainable approach informed by JEDI (justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion) principles. For the BOFA Summit, this means:

- Prioritizing the safety of all participants, ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, feels valued, respected, and safe in outdoor spaces
- Fostering environments where justice, equity, and inclusion respond to the historical exclusion of equity-deserving communities from outdoor spaces, not just as ideals, but as active restorative practices that inform our decisions as we work to reshape outdoor culture into one that reflects, welcomes, and uplifts all communities
- A commitment to building and deepening meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities, so that Indigenous voices are not only heard but honoured through ongoing involvement grounded in trust, respect, and collaborative engagement
- Addressing Truth and Reconciliation and striving to decolonize outdoor play, in an effort to honour Indigenous knowledge, history, and traditions
- A commitment to transparency and accountability, with clear communication being at the heart of our efforts to foster trust, collaboration, and lasting change.

Through these principles, we aim to create a future where play outdoors and in nature is accessible, inclusive, and supportive for all people, especially those from equity-denied communities.

This is in alignment with the action items identified within the [Outdoor Play in Canada: 2021 State of the Sector Report](#) priority on Advocating for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Outdoor Play.

BoFA 2025

Organizing Committee



Paula ter Huurne - Chair

Paula is a Registered Early Childhood Educator, an outdoor enthusiast, and a lifelong learner. Paula has over a decade of experience working with children and families in diverse early learning and community settings. She is also a dedicated Camp Quality volunteer, serving pediatric oncology families for 18 years, with experience in providing outdoor programs, fundraising, and event coordinating. Paula is passionate about equitable social change, environmental stewardship, and outdoor opportunities for people of all ages and abilities.



Dr. Louise de Lannoy - Co-Chair

Louise holds a PhD from Queen's University in clinical exercise physiology and is the Executive Director of Outdoor Play Canada. Louise is passionate about environmental stewardship, finding daily joy and wonder outdoors, and thinking creatively and collaboratively about whole-of-community challenges. She routinely delivers outdoor play and learning presentations at local, regional, national and international conferences and events. Outside of OPC, Louise enjoys exploring Ottawa by running, cycling and skiing through it.



Lynn Campanella - General Member

Lynn is a play and recess specialist. As a play and recess specialist, Lynn has been passionate about offering sustainable and effective procedures and strategies to school boards and municipalities that promote and nurture authentic play on and off the recess playground for over a decade. Lynn serves as the VP for IPA Canada and has chaired several related events, including the Ontario Physical Literacy Summit (the longest-running physical literacy conference in the world!). Lynn organized and led the Hamilton Play Days and has contributed articles to magazines and newspapers in both Canada and the US.

BoFA 2025

Organizing Committee



Alessia Capone - General Member

Alessia (she/her) is a second year PhD student working under the supervision of Dr. Kelly Arbour-Nicitopoulos in the ADAPT Lab at the University of Toronto, in collaboration with the CCOP. Alessia received a Master of Professional Kinesiology (MPK) at the University of Toronto in 2022.



Emily Collins - General Member

Emily is a registered early childhood educator with experience that has spanned over a decade, covered an array of philosophies, and carried her across our beautiful country. She has been so lucky to study and work in Reggio Emilia, Montessori, and Forest & Nature School inspired environments in Vancouver, Winnipeg, Kenora, and now Ottawa. In her current role as Assistant Program Coordinator at Forest Explorers, her aim is to share her passion and curiosity in order to help build a high-quality child-led & nature-based program alongside the children and educators.



Mallory Donaldson - General Member

Mallory Donaldson is a Registered Early Childhood Educator with an advanced diploma in pre-health science and honours graduate of the Bachelor of Early Learning and Community Development degree program at Algonquin College. In 2023, Mallory was selected as the first Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play fellow. During her term, Mallory co-authored the nationally agreed-upon Educators Teaching Educators: Canada's Outdoor Early Childhood Educators Continuous Professional Learning Framework. After her fellowship, Mallory joined the Children's Services team at Lanark County as the Early Years Specialist.

BoFA 2025

Organizing Committee



Ipek Epikmen - General Member

Ipek Epikmen (M.Sc.A.) holds a master's in Environmental Design from Université de Montréal and a bachelor's in Urban Studies from Concordia University. Ipek has worked as a playworker and researcher, focusing her research on unstructured outdoor play in Montreal's green public spaces through a lens of affordances. She has contributed to initiatives promoting children's rights to participation, play, and independent mobility in cities, and is thrilled to join the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play as the new Fellow.



Dr. Maeghan James - General Member

Maeghan holds a PhD from the University of Toronto and is currently a post-doctoral fellow with the Healthy Active Living and Obesity (HALO) Research Group. Her research and advocacy interests include promoting inclusive active and outdoor play for children of all abilities to support holistic development and well-being in the early years. Outside of her research, Maeghan enjoys spending time being active outdoors, camping and reading a good fiction novel.



Bayan Kaid - General Member

Bayan is a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) and a graduate of the Bachelor of Early Learning and Community Development (BELCD) program. She holds diplomas in Advertising and Marketing Communications Management, as well as Early Childhood Education. Her primary aim is to instill a sense of belonging in all spaces, while prioritizing Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and applying a de-colonization lens.

BoFA 2025

Organizing Committee



Priya Mistry - General Member

Priya (she/her) is a graduate of a Bachelor of Arts Honours in Health Studies with a minor in Psychology from Queen's University. She is in her first year of a Master of Science at Queen's University in Health Promotion and Epidemiology under the supervision of Dr. Eun-Young Lee at the In Situ Population Health Research Lab.



Nikoleta Odorico - General Member

Nikoleta is an occupational therapist, OT Reg. (Ont.) and PhD Candidate in the Rehabilitation Sciences Institute at the University of Toronto. Her research aims to create a protocol to support children in returning to active play following concussion. Throughout her academic and research career she has and continues to prioritize supporting quality play experiences for all children in a variety of play contexts.



Tammy Potter - General Member

Tammy is an RECE and Forest Practitioner. In her role, she is a leader, educator, learner, and collaborator who is passionate about quality early learning in the outdoors. Her current position is as a Supervisor for Andrew Fleck Children's Services, Licensed Forest Explorers Early Learning and The Ottawa Forest and Nature School.

Organizing Bodies

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Become a Partner of the 2025 Breath of Fresh Air Summit!

By joining us as a sponsor you will have the opportunity to connect with and showcase your organization to 400+ outdoor play stakeholders and enthusiasts from across Canada and beyond!

The 2025 Summit presents several unique opportunities for our sponsors and exhibitors. We will be having a 'speed-greeting' session to introduce our attendees to the many exhibitor booths at the Summit. We encourage you to put together a 2-minute pitch for that session and an interactive (think playful!) activity to engage with attendees during subsequent scheduled exhibitor time. These scheduled times will be around nutrition breaks and located centrally at the Summit to maximize your exposure and opportunity to chat and connect with Summit attendees. Please note that exhibitor space will be outdoors, so plan accordingly!

Contact us to reserve your spot and discuss sponsorship options.

See the BoFA 2025 Sponsorship Package here: [EN](#) [FR](#)



Information for Attendees

Welcome to BoFA 2025! Here's everything you need to take care of before the summit kicks off:

Register for the Summit

Haven't registered yet? Register at www.outdoorplaysummit.ca/registration-form!

Book Your Accommodation

We've secured discounted rates and nearby options for attendees at the Wesley Clover Parks Campground and the Hyatt Hotel. Find more information at www.outdoorplaysummit.ca/accommodations!

Know the Site

The BoFA Summit takes place at the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play, the Ottawa Forest and Nature School, and Wesley Clover Parks Campground (411 Corkstown Road, Ottawa, ON) in the National Capital Region of Canada. We'll be gathering across multiple natural and outdoor venues throughout the campground, so we have a few tips to help you stay fully engaged throughout the summit:

- Wear layers, long pants, and bring bug spray
- Bring a reusable water bottle and travel mug
- Review attendee information prior to arrival (cell service may be limited in some areas)
- **Stay tuned for more information and details coming your way!**

View the Schedule

Find the daily and concurrent session schedules starting on [page 38](#).

Stay Connected

Check out the last page of this book for our online platforms!

Interested in Vounteering?

Join our on-site team and help make the summit an unforgettable experience. Find more information at www.outdoorplaysummit.ca/volunteer!

Accessibility Considerations

For more information, or to inquire about specific accessibility or inclusion accommodations available, please contact us at: info@outdoorplaycanada.ca!

Things to look forward to at BoFA 2025!

Launching the 2025 Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play

National ECE and Land-based Learning Panel Discussion

Keynote address by Dr. Stuart Brown, his daughter, and granddaughter

Outdoor Exhibits, Poster Presentations, and Community Partners

Minds-on Symposium, Research, and Practice Presentations

Exhibit by the Legacy of Hope Foundation

Hands-on Workshops

Connecting with the Land and Nature Journaling

Morning Hikes and Evening Campfires

And so many more opportunities to engage and play outdoors!

Ottawa Travel Guide

Weather

Daytime High : 15-20 °C / 59-68 °F
Nighttime Low : 5-10 °C / 41-50 °F

Cool but comfortable fall weather. Expect occasional rain. This time of year also brings beautiful fall colours, with vibrant red, orange, and yellow leaves throughout the city!

Ottawa Airport YOW

Ottawa Macdonald-Cartier International Airport

Transportation

OC Transpo Public Transit, Uber, Lyft, and taxis are all common

Time Zone

EDT Eastern Daylight Time (GMT-4)

Currency

\$ CAD

Things to Do

Ottawa Essentials

Parliament Hill - Take a free Guided Tour of Ottawa's iconic Parliament Hill, home to Canada's federal government.

Rideau Canal - Stroll or cycle along the downtown section of the UNESCO World-Heritage Rideau Canal, a scenic 202 km waterway connecting the Ottawa River to Lake Ontario.

ByWard Market - A year-round, outdoor market operating since 1826, filled with over 175 vendors offering everything from artisan chocolates to handcrafted souvenirs.

Museums

Canadian Museum of History - Located just across the Ottawa River in Gatineau, Quebec, explore Canada's most visited museum with the world's largest collection of totem poles and the largest exhibition about Canadian history.

National Gallery of Canada - Enjoy contemporary Canadian art and rotating exhibitions at the vibrant and world-renowned art museum.

Canadian Museum of Nature - Residing in the first building in Canada to house a national museum, this national historic site contains over 14 million specimens of the natural world.

Outdoors

Gatineau Park - Just 30 minutes north of Ottawa, enjoy the changing fall colours with a hike or bike ride through Gatineau Park's beautiful trails.

Paddle Rentals - If weather permits, view some of Ottawa's most iconic landmarks from the water by renting a paddleboard or kayak from Dow's Lake or along the Ottawa River.

Dominion Arboretum - Located on 64 acres near the Rideau Canal, the arboretum features about 4,000 woody plant specimens tested for hardiness in Canada's climate.

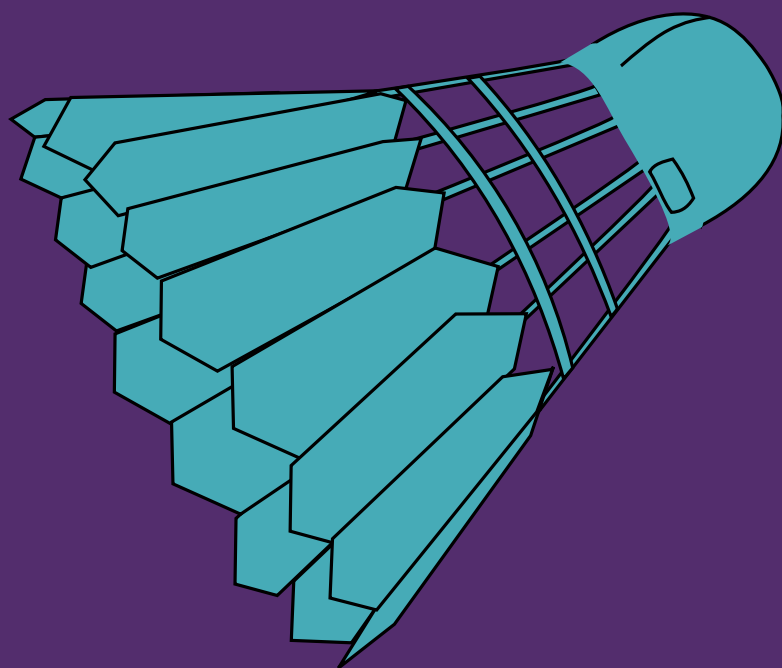
Mādahòkì Farm - A year-round Indigenous cultural site featuring Ojibwe Spirit Horses, a marketplace, and Land-based experiences, welcoming thousands of visitors annually.

Nearby Destinations

Montreal - Experience the vibrant culture, world-class dining, and historical charm of old-town Montreal just a 2 hour train ride from Ottawa.

Kingston - Discover Kingston's rich history and waterfront views, just a 2-hour train ride away.





Summit Highlights



BOFA



Launch of the 2025 Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play

The [2015 Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play](#) highlighted the benefits of active outdoor play for children's physical, mental, social, and emotional health, well-being, and development. It served as a galvanizing force for the outdoor play sector in Canada and an inspiration for aligned organizations worldwide. The Position Statement brought together previously disconnected groups from education, community, health, environment, wildlife, ecology, law, and Indigenous rights, amongst others, that collectively shared a passion for outdoor play. It also provided direction and a common purpose: to promote healthy child growth and development in harmony with the outdoor, natural environment. In Canada, it inspired significant philanthropic investment in outdoor play initiatives, informed a British Columbia Supreme Court decision, led to a 10-fold increase in academic publications on outdoor play, and inspired the launch of Outdoor Play Canada and the global Play, Learn and Teach Outdoors Network (PLaTO-Net).

On September 25, 2025, we will celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the Position Statement and the many projects, initiatives, and other successes it has inspired by launching the 2025 Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play (AOP10 hereafter). AOP10 extends the original Position Statement by being global in scope, broader in scope of content, inclusive of all ages, while exploring the benefits of active outdoor play for people (of all ages, cultures and abilities), communities, environments, and the planet. This initiative has been an extensive and intensive two-year process, involving an international Leadership Group consisting of researchers and thought leaders from every inhabited continent, alongside a larger Steering Committee consisting of over 130 researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and other active outdoor play-relevant actors and groups. Collectively this team has helped guide, inform, and provide input on the development of the AOP10 project.



Click the logo to learn more!





2025 POSITION STATEMENT ON ACTIVE OUTDOOR PLAY



AOP10 
A project led by Outdoor Play Canada

**LAUNCHING
SEPTEMBER**



AOP10 Speakers

Dr. Mark Tremblay

AOP10 Launch

Dr. Mark Tremblay is a Senior Scientist with the Healthy Active Living and Obesity (HALO) Research Group at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute and Professor of Pediatrics in the Faculty of Medicine, University of Ottawa. He is a Fellow of the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, Fellow of the American College of Sports Medicine, Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences, President of the Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance, Founder of the Sedentary Behaviour Research Network, President of Outdoor Play Canada, and Adjunct/Visiting/Honorary Professor at six other universities on four continents.

Dr. Tremblay has published >600 scientific papers and book chapters in the areas of childhood obesity, physical activity measurement, exercise physiology, sedentary physiology, outdoor play and health surveillance.

According to Scopus, his h-index is 111 and his published research has been cited >54,000 times, consistently placing him on the Clarivate list of highly cited researchers (top 1% in the world).

Dr. Tremblay received an honorary doctorate from Nipissing University, the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, the King Charles III Coronation Medal, the Lawson Foundation 60th Anniversary Award, the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology Honour Award and John Sutton Memorial Lecturer Award, the Victor Marchessault Advocacy Award from the Canadian Pediatric Society, the Vic Neufeld Mentorship Award in Global Health Research from the Canadian Coalition for Global Health Research, the International Network of Time-Use Epidemiologists



Laureate Award, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research Senior Researcher Trailblazer Award in Population and Public Health Research, and the Obesity Canada Distinguished Lecturer Award for his leadership contributions to healthy active living in Canada and around the world.

Dr. Tremblay's most productive work has resulted from his 36-year marriage to his wife Helen, yielding four wonderful children.

Louise de Lannoy

AOP10 Launch

Dr. Louise de Lannoy completed her PhD at Queen's University in clinical exercise physiology. Her interests in population health and knowledge translation led her to join the Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Team at the CHEO Research Institute where she became involved in and helped grow Outdoor Play Canada into the not-for-profit organization it is today. Louise is passionate about environmental stewardship, finding daily joy and wonder outdoors, and thinking creatively and collaboratively about whole-of-community challenges. She routinely delivers outdoor play and learning presentations at local, regional, national and international conferences and events, including local outdoor early childhood education professional development days, the national Outdoor Learning Conference (Canada), and the International Play Association Conference (Glasgow). Outside of OPC, Louise enjoys exploring Ottawa by running, cycling and skiing through it and winding down at the end of the day on the couch with a glass of wine, her partner Jeff, and their geriatric puppy.



Dr. Eun-Young Lee

Keynote Speaker

Dr. Eun-Young Lee is an Associate Professor at Queen's University with appointments in Kinesiology & Health and Gender Studies, and an Affiliated Investigator at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute. They are a population health researcher whose work lies at the intersection of climate change, movement behaviours—including outdoor play—and social and health equity. Dr. Lee holds a PhD in Health Psychology and Behavioural Medicine, with postdoctoral training in Epidemiology and Population Health. Their scholarly contributions include over 100 peer-reviewed publications and notable service roles such as Senior Associate Editor for the Journal of Physical Activity and Health, Research Advisory Member of ParticipACTION, and Board Member for Outdoor Play Canada and the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute. In recognition of their leadership and impact, Dr. Lee was recently awarded the King Charles III Coronation Medal. They recently completed a Global Visiting Fellowship at Seoul National University (South Korea) and will complete a Visiting Fellowship at the Columbia Climate School's Center for Sustainable Urban Development (USA) in 2026. Dr. Lee has delivered keynote presentations on outdoor play at major international conferences and institutions within the past year, including the North American Society for Pediatric Exercise Medicine (USA), University of Santa Catarina (Brazil), Yonsei University (South Korea), and National Taiwan University of Sport (Taiwan). Looking ahead, their work will focus on developing global youth climate leadership through outdoor play.

Their most humbling and persistent challenge has been to convince their naturally sedentary dachshund to embrace the great outdoors alongside them.



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Keynote Speakers

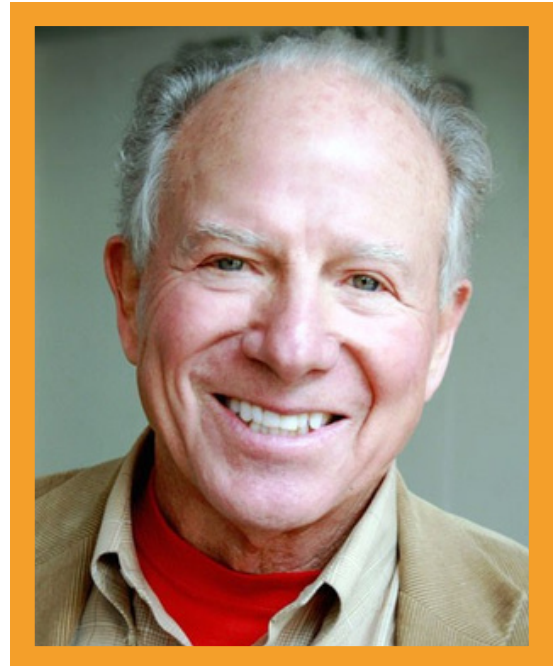
Sponsored by Canadian Playground Advisory Inc.



Dr. Stuart Brown

Keynote Speaker

Dr. Stuart Brown trained in general and internal medicine, psychiatry and clinical research. He first recognized the importance of play by discovering its absence in the life stories of murders and felony drunken drivers. His years of clinical practice and review of over 6000 personal play histories affirmed the importance and need for healthy play throughout the human life cycle. His independent scholarship and exploration of the evolution and neuroscience of human and animal play have led to the establishment of the National Institute for Play. The Mission of the National Institute for Play (NIFP) is to bring the unrealized knowledge, practices and benefits of play into public life.



Dr. Brown was the instigator and Executive Producer of the three-part PBS series, “The Promise of Play,” and coproduced the BBC-PBS series “Soul of the Universe.” His experience as a medical administrator, producer, and scientific consultant or creator to numerous other productions on Joseph Campbell, Cosmology, Animal Play, and Stress, plus his scientific and popular writings have identified him as the foremost “practical champion of the knowledge of play.” Dr. Brown’s book: *Play: How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul* has been translated into twelve languages. He has co-taught *From Play to Innovation* at the Hasso Plattner School of Design at Stanford University, and has been the “Key Strategist” for the Nevada Medical Center’s Global Play Science Institute.

In 2020 he was awarded the Joe L. Frost award for distinguished research by the USA Play Coalition, and in 2024 received the USA International Play Association Doctor of Play Award for lifelong research advocacy and promotion of the child’s right to play.

In addition to regular creative scholarly contributions for the PlayCore company, he enjoys other international corporate and academic consulting on play and its many contributions through their engagement with it, as it enhances overall human well-being. As the information base about play grows, it is evident that play is a public health necessity. Our species, he says, “is built for play, and built by play.”



Lauren Sundstrom

Keynote Speaker

Lauren Sundstrom is proud to serve as a Board Member and Strategic Advisor for the National Institute for Play, continuing the legacy of her father, Dr. Stuart Brown, a pioneer in the science of play. A graduate of Colorado College also attending St. Peter's College, Oxford University, Lauren began her career in Washington, D.C., where she served as a legislative aide to Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska and later worked as a lobbyist for Holland & Hart. She went on to become a partner at Western Land Group in Denver, specializing in public-private collaborations.

Lauren and her husband, Steve, raised their two children, Mia and Leo, in Boulder, Colorado, where she was actively involved in community and sports initiatives. Both children attended a renowned play-based preschool and later a K-8 charter school that embraced self-directed, playful learning, fostering creativity and curiosity through limited tests, grades, and homework. A self-described "social kinesthete," Lauren is passionate about integrating play into daily life and championing its transformative power for individuals and communities.



Mia Sundstrom

Keynote Speaker

Mia Sundstrom is an assistant coach for the University of Denver D1 top-10 gymnastics team and the part-time character dimension project manager in the Office of the Chancellor. She has led character workshops and delivered keynotes for students, boards, and faculty and staff, and developed a play and character integration plan for the University of Denver.

Mia earned her Masters in Public Policy in '23 and her Bachelors in Business Information and Analytics in '21, both from the University of Denver. During her time as a student, Mia competed for the D1 gymnastics team for five years, serving as team captain for two years and president of the Student Athlete Advisory Committee for one year.

Mia is granddaughter to Stuart Brown and daughter to Lauren Sundstrom. Under their guidance, she has followed her kinesthetic play personality and passion for play throughout her athletic and professional career.

An Interactive National Panel Discussion

Advancing Licensing of Outdoor and Land-based Early Childhood Education Across Canada

Hosted by members of the National Panel on Licensing Outdoor ECE, convened by Outdoor Play Canada

Join members of the CCOP National Panel on Licensing Outdoor and Land-Based Early Childhood Education (OL-ECE) for an open, thought-provoking conversation on the future of licensing OL-ECE in Canada.

This 90-minute session will be led by the National Panel. The National Panel serves to advance efforts towards changing OL-ECE licensing regulations across provinces in Canada. The ultimate goal is to achieve – in part through policy, system, and sector advocacy by the National Panel – a commitment by provincial governments to support equitable access to OL-ECE for all children living in Canada. The National Panel recently formed four subcommittees to guide their work: professional development; quality of outdoor learning and spaces; justice, equity, diversity, inclusion and access; licensing and regulations.

These four subcommittees will form the structure of the conversation, with subcommittee members discussing the work they are involved in, with an invitation to attendees to share experiences, raise questions, and explore strategies to bring licensing change to life in their own communities. The format of this session will prioritize participant engagement.

Through this discussion we aim to bring together practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and advocates interested and involved in OL-ECE to have an informed discussion on equitable, safe, and culturally rooted licensing systems for outdoor and land-based early learning. Whether you are deeply involved in licensing advocacy or newly curious about how outdoor programs can become more widely recognized and supported, this is a space for you.

This session is not just a dialogue—it's an invitation. Come learn, connect, and leave with tools and ideas to help advance licensing for outdoor and land-based ECE in your region.

Learn more about [the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play](#) and the [National Panel](#).



Members of the National Panel on Licensing OL-ECE

Name	Sector Affiliation	Province/Territory
Louise de Lannoy	Co-chair, Outdoor Play Canada Executive Director	Ontario
Lisa Lalonde	Co-chair, Coordinator & Professor Bachelor of Early Learning & Community Development, Algonquin College	Ontario
Danielle Alphonse	BC Regional Innovation Chair for Aboriginal Early Childhood Education	British Columbia
Jane Cawley	Educational Consultant, Physical Literacy in the Early Years (PLEY) research project, Dalhousie University	Nova Scotia
Diane Daley	CEO, Family Day Care Services	Ontario
Lori Dalton	Executive Director of Cloudberry Outdoor Play and Education Centre	Newfoundland
Beverlie Dietze	Director of learning and teaching at Okanagan College	British Columbia
Joe Doiron	Independent Specialist, Physical Activity and Population Health, Joe Doiron Consulting	Nova Scotia
Enid Elliott	Early Learning and Care Instructor, Camosun College	British Columbia
Kim Hiscott	CEO, Andrew Fleck Children's Services	Ontario
Mavis Lewis Webber	ECE Consultant	Manitoba
Alyson McMullen	Program Manager, Natural Curiosity	Ontario
Sylvie Melsbach	Soutien au partenariat et aux aires de jeu RCPPEM, Directrice technique de l'IQSAJ	Quebec
Belva Stone	Early Childhood Educator	British Columbia
Kelly Stone	Board Chair Great Kids (US), Board Director Families Canada	Ontario
Christine Alden (Guest)	Program Director at Lawson Foundation	Ontario

Symposiums

The English-language launch of A 360° Vision of Play, a tool that helps decisionmakers better plan for play

Margaret Fraser & Stéphanie Watt

How can we help municipalities and urban planners enhance and diversify play opportunities in public spaces? Metalude, a Montréal-based play and participation consultancy, and the Centre d'écologie urbaine have developed an easy-to-use, get-outside tool to do just that. With A 360° Vision of Play, planners and city builders embark on a journey that prioritizes children's choices, experiences, and freedom. The goal? To help them understand how space, people, programming, and materials can come together in diverse and complementary ways to support play—from the doorstep to the park. Join us for the launch of the English version of A 360° Vision of Play! We'll introduce the tool, discuss its applications, and then experience it firsthand in the space around us.



Click the image to learn more!



The Presenters



Margaret Fraser is the co-founder and co-director of Metalude, where she integrates child- and person-centered facilitation techniques with a strong focus on inclusion. She designs playful and thoughtful participatory processes to explore complex issues, while honouring the lived experiences of all participants.



Stephanie Watt is the co-founder and co-director of Metalude, a non-profit that supports the creation of child-inclusive cities. She designs participatory processes that generate insights and results that shape how adults think and decide, while centering children's rights and the quality of their experience. ■

Bridging Research-to-Practice on Quality Participation in Active Play for Children and Young Persons with Disabilities Across Different Contexts

Kelly Arbour-Nicitopoulous & Jennifer Leo & Louise de Lannoy

Introduction: Active play is a right for all individuals. Despite its health benefits, many individual and barriers prevent children and youth with disabilities (CYD) from fully participating in active play, especially outdoors. Our Active Play Team of the Canadian Disability Participation Project has embarked upon foundational research to identify knowledge and resource gaps on quality participation (QP) in active play, including outdoor play, for CYD. This work will guide us in identifying directions for future research within our Active Play Team.

This symposium aims to (i) share findings of active play research our Team has conducted, (ii) discuss next steps for research on QP and active outdoor play in CYD; and (iii) brainstorm strategies to connect research to practice.

Methods: We will begin with a 20-minute ‘quick-hit’ segment from the leads of the Active Play Working Groups to share key research findings on QP and active play in: (i) Early Years (CYD aged 0 to 4 years); (ii) School (resource and educator capacity-building); (iii) Risky Play (caregiver and CYD perspectives); and (iv) Community Spaces and Places (interventions supporting CYD in the community). A 25-minute panel will follow to discuss challenges and opportunities for research on QP and active outdoor play in CYD. The final 30-minute segment of the symposium will involve small-group discussion on practical application of the quick-hit findings and panel takeaways for educators, programmers, and policymakers.

Goals: By the end of this symposium, attendees will be able to: (1) Describe what QP in outdoor active play can look like for CYD; (2) Identify strategies for research and practice to enhance QP in active outdoor play for CYD across multiple contexts, including early years settings, school, and community; (3) Use evidence-informed recommendations to advocate for the right to active outdoor play for CYD in their communities. Significance of work: Including CYD in all active play discussions is essential.

This symposium encourages innovative thinking to support QP for CYD across diverse play settings. We aim to raise awareness of how research can inform and enhance policies and programs related to active outdoor play.

The Presenters



Kelly Arbour-Nicitopoulos, is a Full Professor in Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education and an Advisory Member of the Mental Health and Physical Activity Research Centre at the University of Toronto in Ontario, Canada. She is also the Co-Chair of the Active Play Team of the Canadian Disability Participation Project and an Associate Editor of the Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly journal. Situated within the field of behavioural medicine, her research program is theory-driven, using both quantitative and qualitative methods to measure, understand, and change physical activity behaviour in children and youth experiencing disability. Kelly’s work is founded in knowledge mobilization, where she collaborates with families and persons experiencing disability as well as community organizations to ensure her research is able to address relevant and timely needs of the disability community. The research products that her research team has developed and disseminated include physical activity program training manuals and curricula for children and adults with disabilities, health professional training resources to support physical activity in disability populations, and tools to enhance individuals’ awareness of physical activity programs and policies.



Jennifer Leo, PhD is the Director of The Steadward Centre for Personal & Physical Achievement in the Faculty of Kinesiology, Sport, and Recreation at the University of Alberta. With over 15 years of research and community-based experience, Jennifer has focused on understanding experiences of access, inclusion, and participation in adapted physical activity settings. Jennifer prioritizes learning from those with lived experience of disability and she is committed to developing and supporting young people experiencing disability to become leaders in the community. Collaboration and partnerships are critical to Jennifer as she is a Co-Director of the Active Play Team in the Canadian Disability Participation Project and is a Member of the Leadership Team for the Inclusive Sport and Recreation Collective in Alberta.



Dr. Louise de Lannoy completed her PhD at Queen's University in clinical exercise physiology. Her interests in population health and knowledge translation led her to join the Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Team at the CHEO Research Institute where she became involved in and helped grow Outdoor Play Canada into the not-for-profit organization it is today. Louise is passionate about environmental stewardship, finding daily joy and wonder outdoors, and thinking creatively and collaboratively about whole-of-community challenges. She can't believe her luck in finding such a joyous, satisfying, and playful form of work that aligns almost magically with these passions. Outside of OPC, Louise enjoys exploring Ottawa by running, cycling and skiing through it and winding down at the end of the day on the couch with a glass of wine, her partner Jeff, and their geriatric puppy. ■

Risky Teaching: A research to practice guide for risky play in schools

Megan Zeni & Mariana Brussoni

Introduction/Purpose: This symposium will introduce our upcoming book, *Embracing Risky Play at School*, co-authored by Megan Zeni & Mariana Brussoni. We will offer a conversational space to discuss the research that supports risky play in schools, alongside practical implementation strategies shared in the book. Three broad topics will be addressed: 1) what is risky play (and why it is important in schools), 2) planning for, and implementation of, risky play in schools; and 3) risky play issues, challenges and recommendations in the school context.

The Presenters



Dr. Megan Zeni is a teacher consultant in the province of British Columbia. She has 3 decades of professional K-7 teaching experience in classrooms, outdoor classrooms, and school gardens. Megan supports schools, school districts, non-profit organizations, university faculty, teacher education programs, funding agencies, and education specific think tanks interested in building capacity for effective and sustainable implementation of risky play, school gardens, and outdoor classrooms in elementary schools. Learn more and follow her work at meganzeni.com



Dr. Mariana Brussoni is the Director of the Human Early Learning Partnership and Professor in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of British Columbia. She is an investigator with the British Columbia Children's Hospital Research Institute and BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit. Mariana is a founding member and current board member of Outdoor Play Canada. Her research investigates child injury prevention and children's risky play, focusing on parents' and educators' perceptions of risk, and design of outdoor play-friendly environments. Details can be seen at outsideplay.org. ■

Outdoor Ways of Learning and Sharing (OWLS) – A collaboration to bring learning outside to build resilient school communities in Northeastern Ontario

Heather Dabrowski, Primary Prep Teacher, Near North District School Board

Eileen Berwick, Experiential Learning Special Assignment Teacher. Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board

Josee Bisson, Community Health Promoter, North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit

Coral Bissett, Programs and Administration Manager, Canadian Ecology Centre

Outdoor Ways of Learning and Sharing (OWLS) offers curriculum-linked learning experiences to students and provides professional development for educators in their school's outdoor settings, during class time. Explore the benefits of learning in the outdoors, inquiry/exploration based activities and encouraging risky play as a vehicle of improving social-emotional growth, executive functioning, and overall resiliency of students' and teachers' well-being. The OWLS partnership is a collaboration between school boards with the Canadian Ecology Centre and the local Public Health Unit to implement and evaluate the program in primary, junior and intermediate classrooms (JK to grade 8). The presentation will highlight:

1. The OWLS partnership and the evolution of the delivery model that encourages bringing the learning outside while also finding ways to bring elements of that learning back into the classroom.
2. Students' experiential learning, social and emotional development, environmental connection, and the encouragement of building resiliency to engage with nature during all seasons and weather.
3. Building educators' pedagogy, knowledge, confidence and ability to bring all areas of the Ontario curriculum outside through mentorship.
4. Evaluation framework and data summary: A report was produced for each participating school board linking outcomes to their strategic plan. The reports provide a summary of student and educator outcomes, challenges and recommendations.
5. Explore OWLS future with collaborative practices, school board administrative guidelines (policy), next steps for this program and the partnership. ■

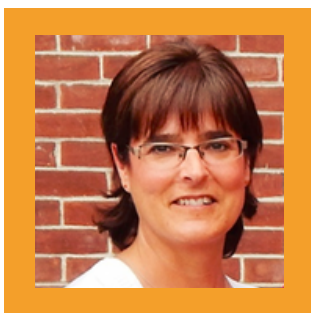
The Presenters



Heather Dabrowski is a certified teacher (OCT) at Silver Birches Public School in North Bay. With a strong background in outdoor education, Heather co-founded the OWLS (Outdoor Ways of Learning and Sharing) program during her time at the Canadian Ecology Centre. She has also worked with ALIVE Outdoors and the Cambridge Farm and Forest School. A qualified Forest School Practitioner, Heather is dedicated to connecting children to nature through engaging outdoor learning experiences.



Eileen Berwick began her 20 year teaching career in Scotland before moving to North Bay, where she continues to inspire learning with the Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board. As the Experiential Learning Lead, Eileen supports school communities in fostering hands-on, exploratory learning opportunities that are guided by students' interests, talents and passions, helping them navigate their educational journey towards relevant career-life pathways.



Josee Bisson is a Community Health Promoter at the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit with 25 years of experience in public health. Over the past decade, Josee has collaborated closely with school board partners to support schools in creating healthier learning environments that enhance student achievement and wellbeing.



Coral Bissett is a certified teacher and Forest School Practitioner who has spent the past 18 years teaching at the Canadian Ecology Centre in Mattawa. As the lead instructor of the OWLS (Outdoor Ways of Learning and Sharing) program, Coral is passionate about creatively connecting curriculum expectations to outdoor learning, while focusing on student's social-emotional well-being through enriching experiences in nature. ■

Working Wild: Outdoor Mentorship and Training

Monique Lozeron

Outdoor education, nature based programming, forest school... is more than an alternative teaching method—it is a powerful tool for enhancing educator effectiveness and well-being. This session will examine how staff, after receiving targeted training and mentorship, can maximize the benefits of working outdoors to improve engagement, creativity, and resilience. By participating in structured outdoor training, educators gain the skills and confidence to integrate nature-based learning into their daily practices. Hands-on mentorship ensures they feel supported as they transition from theory to application, fostering an environment of continuous learning. Staff who engage in outdoor programming report increased job satisfaction, a stronger connection with students, and a greater sense of professional fulfillment. Additionally, outdoor learning cultivates adaptability, problem-solving skills, and teamwork—essential qualities for responding to disruptions in education. Beyond professional growth, outdoor programming significantly enhances educators' physical and mental well-being. Exposure to natural environments has been linked to reduced stress, improved mood, and heightened cognitive function.

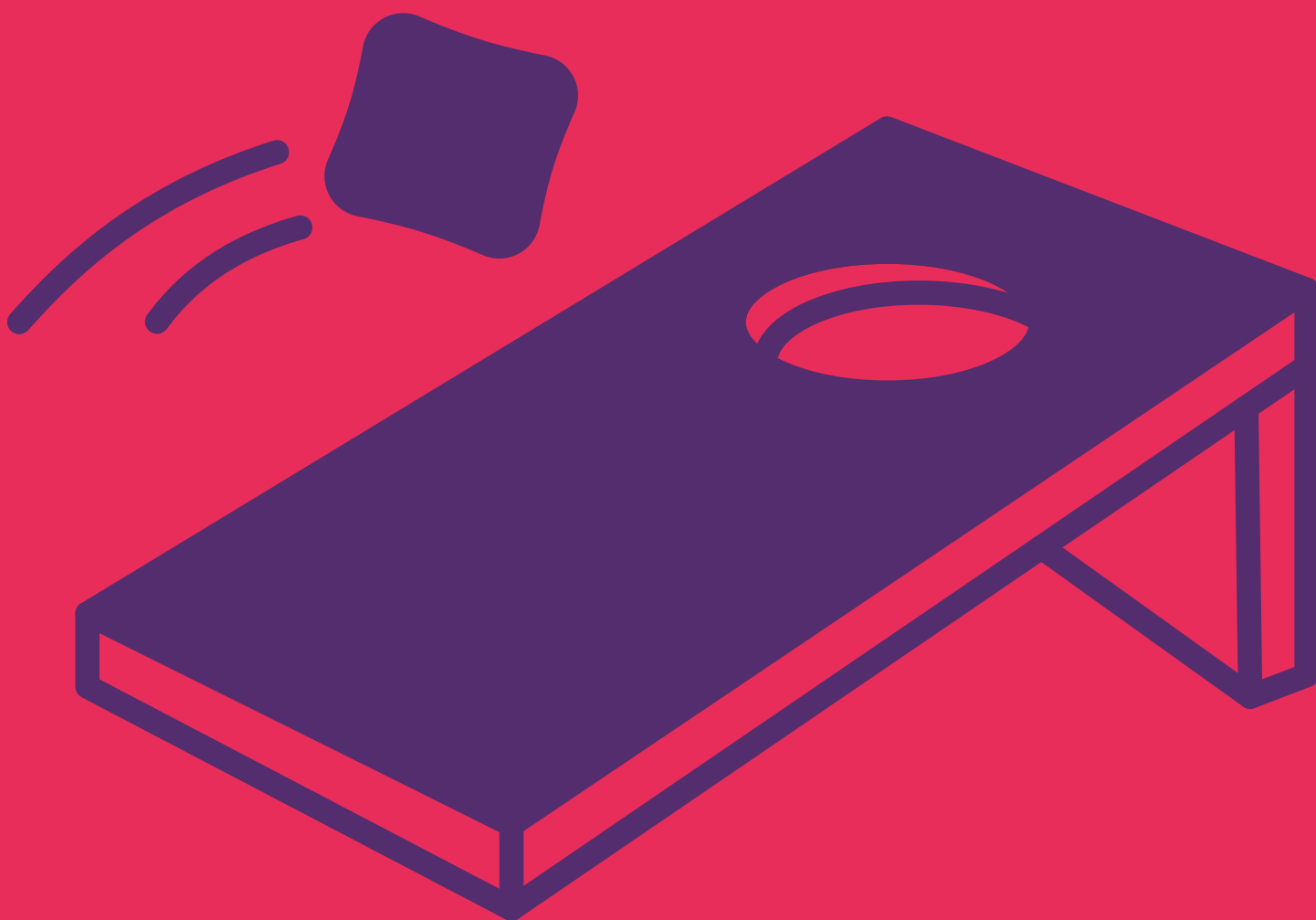
By working outdoors, staff build resilience, making them better equipped to support students' learning and emotional needs. The collaborative nature of outdoor education also strengthens relationships among staff, creating a supportive and cohesive teaching community. This session will present key findings from successful training programs, share firsthand experiences from educators, and provide practical strategies for implementing outdoor learning in any educational setting. Attendees will leave with a clear understanding of how working outdoors after training and mentorship leads to more engaged, adaptable, and resilient educators. This session will also explore the effect a nature based program has had on parents and caregivers and if their own view of the outdoors has changed through the interactions and communication of confident and capable staff.**This could also be an oral workshop! With tips and tricks to support parent and caregiver 'buy in'.

The Presenter



Monique Lozeron is a passionate advocate for physical literacy, play, and outdoor nature programming. Her enthusiasm, positivity, and open-minded approach deeply influence her work with children and co-workers, inspiring educators and parents to reconsider and reframe their perspective on adult-child interactions. With a BPE in Adapted Physical Activity, Monique encourages a holistic view of physical engagement and learning.

She is a self-proclaimed 'spreader of joy', residing on Treaty 6 Territory in Alberta, where she enjoys adventures with her husband and two young children while embracing nature and outdoor activities. ■



Event Schedule



Event Schedule

Day 1

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 25 th	
Time	Event
10:00 am - 6:00 pm	Welcome and Registration Tent
11:30 am - 12:30 pm	Outdoor Exhibit Area
12:30 pm - 1:00 pm	Opening Ceremony
1:00 pm - 2:45 pm	Launch of the 10-Year Anniversary Update of the Position Statement on Outdoor Play, followed by 'Play Around the World' Play Session
3:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Concurrent Sessions - Block 1
4:30 pm - 6:30 pm	Outdoor Exhibit Area
5:15 pm - 6:15 pm	Speed Greeting and Networking
6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	Dinner and time to play!
8:00 pm - 9:30 pm	Evening Activity

Concurrent Sessions - Block 1

Day 1: Thursday 25th - 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm

	3:00 pm - 3:30 pm	3:30 pm - 4:00 pm	4:00 pm - 4:30 pm	4:30 pm - 5:00pm
Block 1A	<u>Risky Teaching: A Research to Practice Guide for Risky Play in Schools</u> <i>Dr. Megan Zeni, Dr. Mariana Brussoni</i>			
Block 1B	'The State of Play in Outdoor Play': Exploring Global Indigenous Knowledge of Outdoor Play: A scoping review <i>River McRae; Geoff Kira</i>	Introducing a Global Measure of Outdoor Time for Young People: The Global Adolescent and Child Physical Activity Questionnaire (GAC-PAQ) Project <i>Richard Larouche, PhD</i>	Rooted in Justice & Belonging: Living the ECE Framework through Land, Relationship, and Practice <i>Lisa Lalonde, RECE; Pooja Dubey, RECE; Bayan Kaid, RECE</i>	
Block 1C	The Giving Tree: A Metis Learning Workshop <i>Angie-Lee Coture</i>		"I remember when": A Reflective Lifeworld Approach to Understanding the Relationship Between Early Childhood Educator Play Beliefs and Professional Identity <i>Merril Miceli, M.Ed. Doctoral Student</i>	
Block 1D	Designed to Stay Inside: How Tech Works Against Outdoor Access <i>Rachel Franz, M.Ed.</i>	Adopting a Perspective of Affordances in Children's Play Spaces <i>Ipek Epikmen, M. Sc. A.</i>	Living & Learning with Nature: A Permaculture Project Based Approach to Outdoor Play Space Design <i>Cara Caudle, M.Ed, RECE</i>	
Block 1E	Outdoor Learning for Students with Complex Needs: All You Need is An Open Mind! <i>Carolyn Johnston; Carolyn Fornataro</i>		Digging In: How Outdoor Loose Part Play Supports the Roots for Self- Regulation, Connection and Growth in Young Children <i>Jill Bienenstock</i>	
Block 1F	Nature Journaling <i>Amy Agostini</i>			

Symposium

Presentation

Workshop

Event Schedule

Day 2

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26th

Time	Event
7:30 am - 9:00 am	Breakfast and Morning Activities
8:00 am - 6:00 pm	Welcome and Registration Tent
9:15 am - 10:00 am	Welcome day 2 & OPC Awards Presentation
10:00 am - 11:30 am	Keynote address – Dr. Stuart Brown
11:30 am - 2:30 pm	Outdoor Exhibit Area
12:15 pm - 2:00 pm	Lunch
2:15 pm - 3:55 pm	Concurrent Sessions - Block 2
4:15 pm - 5:55 pm	Concurrent Sessions - Block 3
6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	Dinner and time to play!
8:00 pm - 9:30 pm	Evening Activity

Concurrent Sessions - Block 2

Day 2: Friday 26th - 2:15 pm - 3:55 pm

	2:15 pm - 2:45 pm	2:55 pm - 3:55 pm
	2:15 pm - 3:00 pm	3:10 pm - 3:55 pm
Block 2A	Working Wild: Outdoor Mentorship and Training <i>Monique Lozeron</i>	
Block 2B	What is the Relationship between Outdoor Risky Play and Health in Children? Results from a Systematic Review. <i>Dr. Mariana Brussoni</i>	The Role of Weapon Play in Early Childhood: Social-Emotional Learning Through Imaginative Play <i>Shelley Bettker, Certified Forest and Nature School Practitioner, ECE2, B. Ed.</i>
Block 2C	Wondering With Water <i>Laurel Donison</i>	Embracing Nature in Early Childhood with PLT Canada's "Trees & Me" Guide <i>Ellen Long</i>
Block 2D	Strategic Planning for Inclusive Outdoor Play <i>Alessia Capone</i>	Learning Kits for Inclusive Outdoor Play <i>Amy Jo Smith, RECE; Paula ter Huurne, RECE</i>
Block 2E	A Partnered Approach to Understanding the Benefits of Schoolyard Greening <i>Jean Buckler, PhD; Jennie McCaffrey, MA</i>	Changing the Recess Culture <i>Lynn Campanella</i>

Symposium

Presentation

Workshop

Concurrent Sessions - Block 3

Day 2: Friday 26th - 4:15 pm - 5:55 pm

	4:15 pm - 4:45 pm	4:50 pm - 4:20 pm	4:25 pm - 5:55 pm
Block 3A	The English-language launch of A 360° Vision of Play: A Tool that Helps Decision Makers Better Plan for Play <i>Stéphanie Watt, Margaret Fraser</i>		
Block 3B	Bridging Research-to-Practice on Quality Participation in Active Play for Children and Young Persons with Disabilities Across Different Contexts <i>Kelly Arbour-Nicitopoulos, Jennifer Leo, Louise de Lannoy</i>		
Block 3C	Journey through Childcare, Burnout, and Finding Outdoor Play <i>Lori Dalton</i>	Campfire Circle <i>Maddie Rawling</i>	EmbraceWellness <i>Arlene Lusterio</i>
Block 3D	Case Study of a School-Level Approach to Outdoor Learning: A Study Protocol and Immersive Exploration of Walking Interviews <i>Tanya Halsall</i>	Nature Beyond Nature: Implementing Forest School Pedagogy With Limited Access to Nature <i>Monique Lozeron</i>	
Block 3E	Infants and Toddlers Open to the Outside World in Early Childhood <i>Sylvie Melsbach</i>	Insights from the Sending Preschoolers Outside (SPROUT) Study: Understanding the Impact and Lessons Learned from Nature-Based Childcare Research <i>Maeghan James, PhD</i>	Landscape of Outdoor Play in Early Learning and Child Care Environments: Insights from the Measuring Early Childhood Outside (MECO) Pan-Canadian Survey <i>Rachel Ramsden</i>

Symposium

Presentation

Workshop

Event Schedule

Day 3

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 27th

Time	Event
7:30 am - 9:00 am	Breakfast and Morning Activities
8:30 am - 1:30 pm	Welcome and Registration Tent
9:15 am - 11:45 am	Tours of Forest Explorers, Home of the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play
9:15 am - 11:15 am	Concurrent Sessions - Block 4
9:15 am - 10:45 pm	National ECE and Land-based Learning Panel Discussion
12:00 pm - 12:30 pm	Closing Ceremony

Concurrent Sessions - Block 4

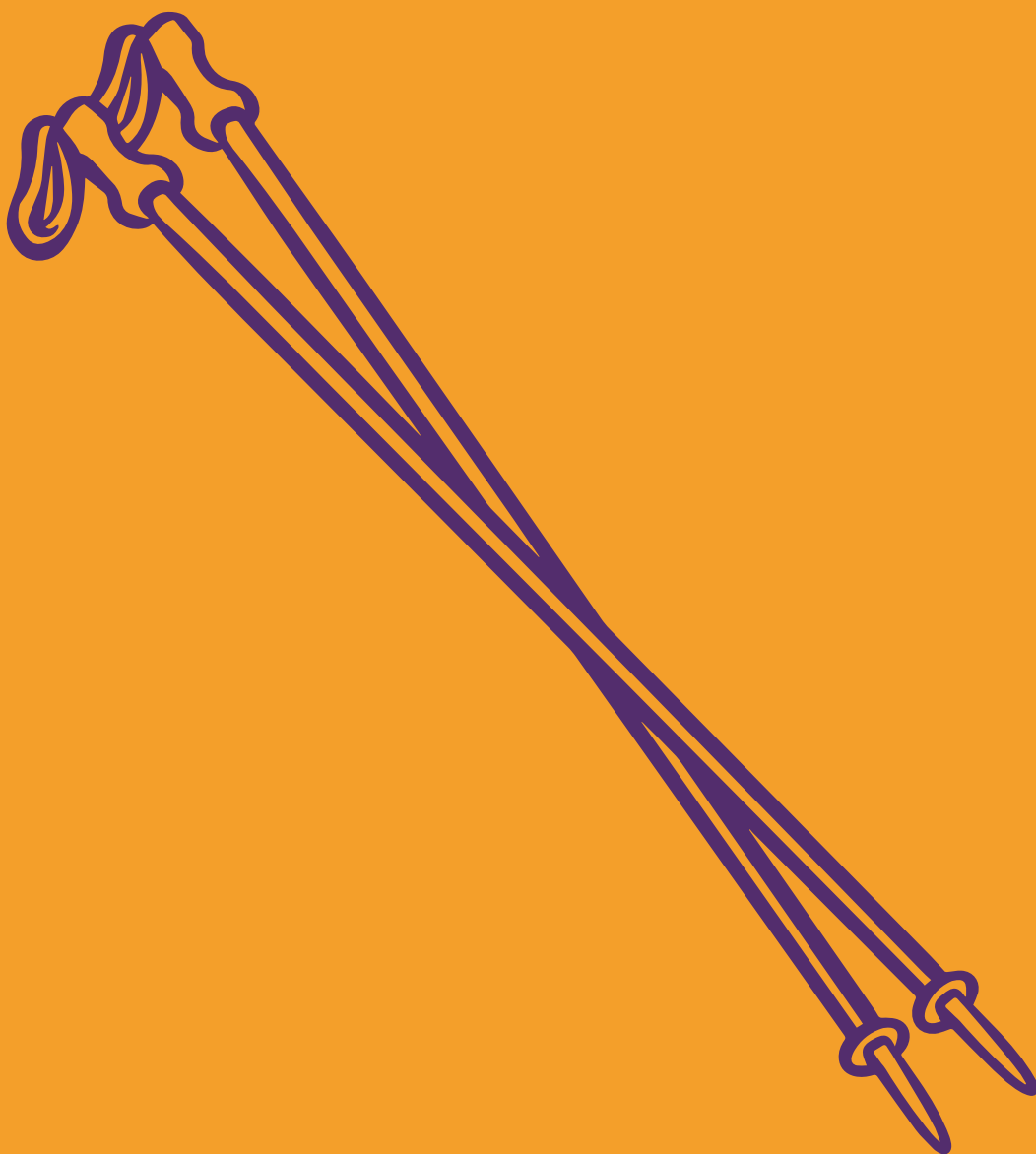
Day 3: Saturday 27th - 9:15 am - 11:45 am

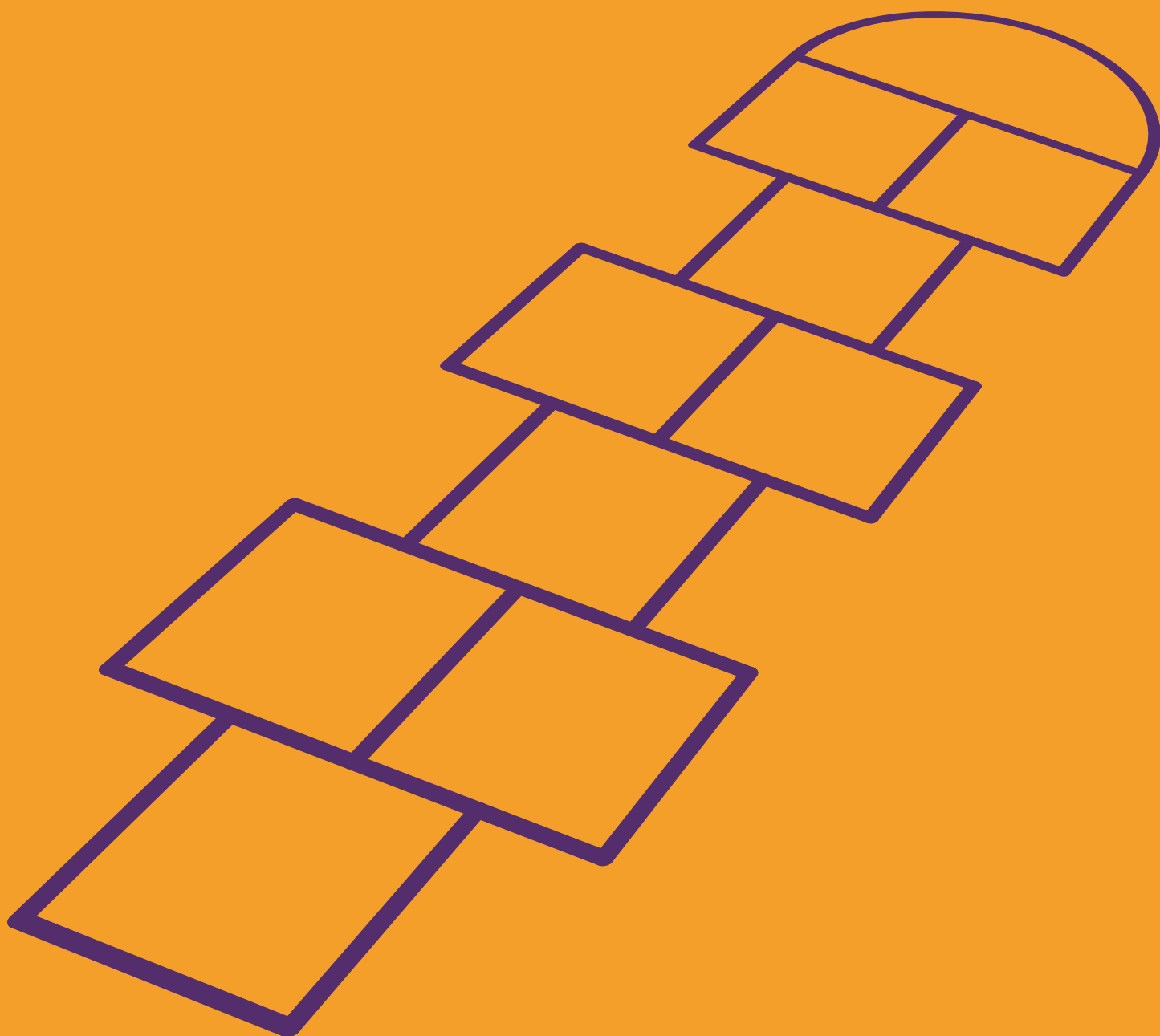
	9:15 am - 9:45 am	9:45 am - 10:45 am	10:45 am - 11:45 am
	9:15 am - 10:15 am	10:15 am - 11:15	
Block 4A	Outdoor Ways of Learning and Sharing (OWLS): A collaboration to bring learning outside to build resilient school communities in Northeastern Ontario <i>Heather Dabrowski, Eileen Berwick, Josee Bisson, Coral Bissett</i>		
Block 4B	Math Trails, Micro-Stories & Learning Reflections <i>Lauren Maclean</i>	Promoting the Foundations of Literacy Outdoors <i>Jill Bienenstock</i>	
Block 4C	‘There Are So Many Good Things Outside, Let Me Tell You’: Children’s Qualitative Perspectives of Outdoor and Risky Play at Early Learning and Child Care. <i>Rachel Ramsden</i>	May We Be Peaceful: Daily Practice for World Peace <i>Dana Fedorchuk (she/her) B.Ed, M.Ed</i>	
Block 4D	Think Like a Mycelium: Building Solidarity from the Ground Up <i>Nicolas Parra Pena</i>	Democratic Practices: Building Relational Understandings Through Land-Based Learning <i>Taryn McSherry, RECE; Alexa Imbesi, RECE; Laura Ashfield, RECE; Pooja Dubey, RECE</i>	
Block 4E	An Interactive National Panel Discussion: Advancing Licensing of Outdoor and Land-based Early Childhood Education Across Canada		
Block 4F	Tours of Forest Explorers, Home of the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play		

Symposium

Presentation

Workshop





Abstracts



Hands-on Workshops

Join facilitators for 60-minute hands-on workshops that spark curiosity and active learning. These interactive sessions offer a unique opportunity to learn by doing in an open-air setting, encouraging collaboration, exploration, and fresh perspectives.

Title	Nature Journaling
Speaker	Amy Agostini, OCSB Educator

This proposal outlines a nature journaling workshop designed to cultivate a deeper connection with the natural world through observation and creative expression. The workshop aims to guide participants, both novice and experienced, in utilizing diverse journaling methods to capture their outdoor experiences. I will begin by fostering a sense of wonder and curiosity about the immediate environment, encouraging participants to slow down and notice the subtle details often overlooked. I will then demonstrate various journaling techniques, including traditional writing focused on sensory details and data recording, sketching and painting for visual representation, combining text and art for comprehensive records, and incorporating natural materials like pressed specimens. Digital nature journaling, sensory journaling, and phenology journaling will also be introduced, offering a wide range of approaches to suit individual preferences. Participants will learn to integrate these methods, transforming passive outdoor time into active, meaningful engagement. The workshop will emphasize mindful observation and reflection, promoting a deeper understanding of local ecology and seasonal changes. We will explore how nature journaling can be used to track phenological events, identify species, and record personal responses to the environment. The goal is to empower participants to continue their nature journaling practice beyond the workshop, fostering a lifelong appreciation for the natural world and its interconnectedness. By providing practical tools and inspiration, we aim to cultivate a community of nature enthusiasts who value the importance of observation, reflection, and creative expression in their relationship with the environment. Through this workshop, participants will discover that nature journaling is not just a record of observations, but a pathway to personal growth, environmental awareness, and a profound sense of connection to the world around them. ■

Title	Digging In: How outdoor loose part play supports the roots for self-regulation, connection and growth in young children
Speaker	Jill Bienenstock

Providing children time and space outdoors with simple loose parts and tools leads the way to essential sensory exploration, heavy work and problem-solving opportunities (physical-risk assessing, socially and cognitively). These simple experiences support children from infancy to school age with self-regulation, confidence and resilience while cultivating a deep connection to themselves, others and nature.

The consistent building of these skills via these experiences, lays the foundation for environmental stewardship, lifelong learners and promotes advocacy behaviors. This session will focus on the importance of outdoor unstructured free play. We will explore why it is essential to whole child development and how it supports the foundational skills for learning and life. We will showcase a variety of outdoor loose parts and tools that can be used in all types of weather to create child-led, inclusive experiences where all learning styles, abilities and personalities shine through. ■

Title	Promoting the Foundations of Literacy Outdoors
Speaker	Jill Bienenstock

In this workshop, we will step outside the standards of reading and writing and explore how outdoor unstructured free play supports motor, creative, social, and language skills needed to assist in the foundations of literacy for young children. We will take you on a hands-on journey to understand how a well-planned and sensory rich outdoor environment naturally provides these activities and experiences to support the physical prerequisites needed for literacy. We will provide educators with the tools to understand not only the building blocks of literacy but the importance of using the outdoors as a springboard for learning where educators support and expand children's play. A part of this workshop will cover the importance of providing opportunities for children to risk assess. The life skills developed through healthy risk-taking support a child's journey in believing in themselves to be confident and capable readers and writers. Its all connected.

Results/Goals:

- Understanding the importance of physical foundations as part of the equation with respect to developing literacy skills.
- Identifying activities that promote literacy skills in the playground.
- Learning how to bring language arts outside by using natural materials and loose parts.
- Transforming and building areas in your playground that support language development by creating both dramatic and quiet areas where social opportunities can flourish.

Attendees will have the chance to engage with the materials as if they were the children. They will play. We will have different outdoor stations set up for small groups to rotate through and experience. Attendees will walk away with a deep understanding on how to take learning outdoors and promote the physical foundations for literacy through child-led play. This workshop accompanies an online landing page where attendees can access handouts from the session as well as research and articles that our session is inspired and based upon. ■

Title	Changing the Recess Culture
Speaker	Lynn Campanella, Playocracy Inc.

Research, evidence, and over a dozen years of collaboration with schools across Canada have consistently demonstrated that recess provides an ideal play opportunity that supports a child's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive growth and development.

Yet, this time on the school timetable is severely underutilized, undervalued, and underdeveloped. A successful recess is founded on intentional and purposeful planning, enabling children to return to the classroom refreshed and ready to learn without any lingering negative effects. This does not imply that recess must be structured; rather, with some preparation, it can be a time filled with play, joy and learning beyond the classroom walls. While the premise of recess is to allow children the time and opportunity to explore new activities and develop friendships, we know this does not always happen. Many play-deprived children lack the social and emotional coping mechanisms required for authentic, unstructured play during recess. The solution is not to conform children to work within an antiquated recess model but instead to modify the recess model to support children’s needs. This presentation will guide participants through various strategies and steps to create a quality recess experience for the entire school. We will explore different types of play that can be included on every playground, and we’ll examine a fun and simple strategy for incorporating social skills into play. Finally, we’ll play some unique cooperative recess games because . . . it’s RECESS!

Outcomes:

- 1. **Increased Engagement:** Providing a variety of play patterns during recess enriches play more than just supplying balls.
- 2. **Improved Social Interactions:** Enhanced social skills will foster better relationships with peers and reduce conflicts during play.
- 3. **Empowered Leaders:** Children will gain confidence and leadership skills, positively impacting their overall development. ■

Title	Living & Learning with Nature: A Permaculture Project Based Approach to Outdoor Play Space Design
Speaker	Cara Caudle M.Ed., RECE, FNP, Childhood Connect

I am writing today to propose a hands-on session exploring the possibilities of integrating permaculture design to enrich outdoor learning spaces. Currently, economic pressures are straining funding, and climate change continues to escalate, highlighting the need for a permaculture approach to outdoor play space design as a sustainable solution for enhancing educational environments and experiences. This session will follow my first-hand account of a project I led in partnership with a team of Reggio Emilia and Forest School-inspired Early Childhood Educators to develop a living dome in an outdoor childcare space. Our aim was to bring more nature into the outdoor setting and incorporate it in a way that meaningfully enhanced children’s learning experiences. My approach to the Living & Learning with Nature session will be a storytelling-style delivery while showcasing artifacts, photographs, and pedagogical documentation. These materials will be shared around the group, fostering engagement and deeper discussion. By the end, we will have formed a circle of project evidence, weaving together ideas, connections, and outcomes for further observation, reflection, and discussion. I will ensure time is provided for Q&A exchanges and knowledge sharing during the session’s concluding activities. By the end, participants will have a refined understanding of permaculture fundamentals and the potential for integrating permaculture into outdoor early learning spaces. They will also gain actionable strategies and tools to advocate for, plan, and sustain living domes and other permaculture-inspired outdoor play space designs.

With renewed understanding and the tools to translate intention into action, participants will be well-supported in applying their learning to their personal and professional settings. In conclusion, current social and environmental pressures magnify the importance of designing outdoor spaces that prioritize sustainability, connection, and eco-conscious values. This is not only critical for the environment but also for modeling these values for the youngest citizens of our society, our future leaders. I appreciate your time and consideration and would be honored to present Living & Learning with Nature at the Breath of Fresh Air 2025 Conference. ■

Title	The Giving Tree- a Metis learning workshop
Speaker	Angie-Lee Coture, Métis Legacy Learning

Educators, how much do you know about Métis history and culture? Are you interested in bringing experiences to your school yard that promote learning that is land-based and grounded in Indigenous story and teachings? Well, look no further! Led by Angie Coture, Métis RECE and Forest School facilitator extraordinaire, these sessions will prompt learning about: Métis history and culture, Reciprocity and respect for the land and each other, Offering gratitude. You'll experience engaging storytelling, songs, and games - hands-on and active learning! Perfect for any time of year but could especially relate to what you're learning during June (National Indigenous History Month) and September (TRC focus). As educators, offering workshops like this reinforces our responsibilities to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action for educators (specifically, #62i and #63i+iii). I have created different workshops that can be offered as professional development or child driven, my overall goal is to Empower Educators across Turtle Island to feel confident in sharing Metis culture within their spaces. In order to get through TRC we need to walk beside each other with love and kindness and a willingness to unlearn and relearn. In Kindness, Angie Coture. ■

Title	May We Be Peaceful: Daily Practice for World Peace
Speaker	Dana Fedorchuk (she/her) B.Ed., M.Ed., Renert School, University of Calgary

As humanity grapples with the challenges of living in harmony with ourselves, with each other, and with Nature; media outlets broadcast grim reminders and evidence that we are in a downward spiral. Are we? With our deepening understanding of the complexity that surrounds us, we are obliged to hold our world at arm's length and ask, "What is needed? Where does it hurt?" In alignment with this inquiry, I'd like to share my research with reference to Essentials of Theory U by Otto Scharmer, and through self study methodology to explore the practice of daily outdoor experience which I adopted with my Grade 2 class during challenging times. What if we intentionally attuned to our human nature on a daily basis? We sought refuge from the "downward spiral" among the leaves and changing seasons. With deliberate attention to our inner condition, we improved our intervention.

We interrogated extractive practices and colonial doctrine; so deeply embodied and embedded that we didn't know they could be shed or needed shedding. We found within ourselves through the green lens of our daily ritual, a return to our grounding among the roots, and the joy of emergence and flow. This practice of outdoor education applies widely with many different manifestations. How do we bridge the gap between "knowing and doing"? Practice, practice, practice. ■

Title	Outdoor learning for students with complex needs: all you need is an open mind! L'apprentissage en plein air pour élèves ayant des besoins complexes: tout ce qu'il faut, c'est l'esprit ouvert!
Speaker	Carolyn Johnston, CHEO; Carolyn Fornataro, CHEO

Participants will explore what it means to experience outdoor learning without limits. Often adults focus their well-meaning attention on the barriers present in outdoor learning for students with complex physical and communicative needs. This workshop shines light on the possibilities for all our learners engaging in outdoor learning and the importance of universal design when developing outdoor learning activities. Participants will ideally come away with a fresh appreciation for the wonder and awe of the natural world, as seen by children with complex needs. Participants exploreront ce que signifie l'apprentissage en plein air sans limites. Souvent, les adultes concentrent leur attention bienveillante sur les obstacles à l'apprentissage en plein air pour les élèves ayant des besoins physiques et communicatifs complexes. Cet atelier met en lumière les possibilités pour tous nos apprenants de s'engager dans l'apprentissage en plein air et l'importance du design universel lors du développement d'activités et d'expériences d'apprentissage en plein air. Participants en ressortiront idéalement avec une appréciation nouvelle de l'émerveillement et de la crainte du monde naturel, tels qu'ils sont vus par des enfants ayant des besoins complexes. Description of Workshop: First activity to highlight the idea of 'sit spots for all'- participants chose their sit spot and how they want their body positioned-then they are assigned a physical position for the second part of this activity. Introduction to our backgrounds and how we have become comfortable with developing meaningful outdoor learning opportunities for our young students who have special needs. Second activity: Using a premade scavenger hunt in pairs - each participant will be given a role in the partnership- the pair works together to complete their scavenger hunt. Third activity: using board maker boards to increase meaningful outdoor learning activity-same pair (1 role of educator 1 role of student)-pairs will be given an activity based on the board type provided-strand of numeracy- data management. All resources used for the workshop will be bilingual and all learning activities will be differentiated. After each activity there will be time to discuss their experiences and ask questions before moving on to the next activity. ■

Title	Rooted in Justice & Belonging: Living the ECE Framework through Land, Relationship, and Practice
Speaker	Lisa Lalonde, RECE; Pooja Dubey, RECE; Bayan Kaid, Algonquin College, Play, Learn, and Teach Outdoors graduate certificate

This interactive workshop invites participants to explore the Educators Teaching Educators: Canada’s Outdoor Early Childhood Education Continuous Professional Learning Framework as a living document — one shaped by educators, for educators, in relationship with land, place, and people. Through storytelling, hands-on activities, and dialogue, we will examine how the Outdoor ECE Framework supports a relational approach to professional learning grounded in justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) principles. The Framework invites us to move beyond technical skills or compliance-driven practices towards an engaged, community-held approach to learning that honours multiple ways of knowing, including embodied, land-based, and culturally situated knowledge.

Participants will be invited to share their stories of connection to outdoor play and co-construct a shared understanding of how the Rooted Principles can be lived — not just learned — within their unique contexts. Together, we will reflect on critical provocations:

- How do we move from compliance to commitment in embracing outdoor play pedagogy?
- How do we nurture outdoor play pedagogies where JEDI principles are visible, relational, and embedded in daily practice?
- How do we centre children’s right to outdoor play and connection to the land while engaging in our continuous learning?

Participants will leave with reflective prompts, practical resources, and localized strategies for fostering responsive, inclusive, and relational professional learning communities. Session Objectives: This session will:

- Reframe professional learning as a relational and justice-oriented practice rooted in land, community, and relationship.

- Debunk the “expert model” of professional learning by centring educators as knowledge holders, storytellers, and co-constructors of practice.
- Create space for unspoken and courageous conversations about equity, belonging, and the complexities of outdoor ECE — including tensions, challenges, and possibilities for transformation.
- Explore how the Outdoor ECE Framework supports educators in living JEDI principles through everyday interactions, pedagogical choices, and community engagement.

The workshop will be guided by Pooja Dubey, RECE, Bayan Kaid, RECE, and Lisa Lalonde RECE, all who have connections to the framework as well as the development and delivery of the Play, Learn, and Teach Outdoors graduate certificate at Algonquin College. ■

Title	Embracing Nature in Early Childhood with PLT Canada's "Trees & Me" Guide
Speaker	Ellen Long, Director of Education and Forest Literacy, Project Learning Tree Canada

This hands-on workshop will invite participants to explore many activities from PLT Canada's Trees & Me guide that promote outdoor play, such as sensory walks, tree observations, and community-focused projects. Through PLT Canada's resources, children will engage with nature, develop a deeper connection to their surroundings, learn about sustainability, and be encouraged to think critically about the world around them. Trees & Me offers 12 engaging activities that encourage young children to explore and connect with nature. The guide provides practical ideas for both indoor and outdoor settings, designed to support children in sensory experiences, scientific inquiry, and creative play. Through each activity, children not only learn about trees and forests, but also build foundational skills in literacy, math, and environmental stewardship. All activities are connected to the First Peoples Principles of Learning and pan-Canadian global competencies, which emphasize respect for the environment and the importance of community relationships. Participants will also be introduced to free resources, including downloadable music for movement activities and QR codes linking to interactive audio experiences that bring nature to life. ■

Title	Nature Beyond Nature: Implementing Forest School Pedagogy with Limited Access to Nature
Speaker	Monique Lozeron

No forest? No problem. This workshop will address the challenge of offering nature-based programming when traditional "natural" settings are inaccessible or limited. Nature is not limited to physical spaces; it's a mindset of relationships, curiosity, and exploration. So how does one support outdoor learning, education and play without access to nature? This workshop is all about finding the forest through the non-existent trees and diving into what nature-based learning is ALSO about... relationships, connection, curiosity and exploration. Through storytelling, practical ideas and individual discovery or "ah-ha" moments, participants will reframe what nature means to them and push beyond what is traditionally thought of as forest school or nature-based learning. The workshop will focus on recreating the benefits of nature, while broadening the concept of nature, to a way of being while inspiring participants to bring their curiosity, wonder and joy back to their unique spaces.

- 1. Connection:** nature is merely a lens for observing, questioning, and engaging, regardless of location. The focus will shift to how the participants can use the principle of connection to their everyday practice within their own work/home/play spaces.
- 2. Curiosity:** sparking curiosity is as simple as finding a sense of wonder in the world around you.
- 3. Exploration:** redefine exploration to include play and discovery in unconventional spaces.
- 4. Relationships:** shifting the traditional adult-child dynamic to one of mutual learning.

The second part of the presentation will focus on relationships and connection, the backbone of forest school pedagogy as it is the practice of how it is taught, not just what is taught or the content being delivered.

1. Co-learner Approach: the adults model curiosity, ask “why?”, problem-solving.

2. Empowering Children: shift the mindset from instruction adult knowledge to facilitation. Throughout the workshop the presenter will continually circle back to how the principles are all interconnected and woven into one another and how this pedagogy can reshape practice not only in professional settings but also in personal and social settings. The final wrap-up will demonstrate the context of this practice in adult-adult relationships by focusing on collaborative, respectful, and growth-oriented dynamics. ■

Title	Math Trails, Micro-Stories & Learning Reflections
Speaker	Lauren Maclean, Teach Outdoors

Math is everywhere - hidden in patterns, shapes, movements, and everyday play. But how do we help students see it, engage with it, and document their discoveries? This hands-on workshop explores Math Trails—an inquiry-based, outdoor math approach—along with creative ways to capture and celebrate student thinking through Micro-Stories, photography, and reflective journaling. Inspired by the 100 Moments of Learning and Play inquiry, this session will help educators design engaging outdoor math experiences that make learning visible.

Methods: Participants will go on a guided Math Trail, exploring real-world math concepts through playful, hands-on tasks. Through measurement, estimation, pattern recognition, and spatial reasoning, educators will experience how outdoor environments provide natural opportunities for mathematical exploration. Activities might include finding two objects that together measure exactly one meter, sketching or photographing a natural pattern, using found materials to create a shape with a specific area, or representing multiplication equations using natural objects. After completing the Math Trail, participants will explore creative documentation strategies to capture and reflect on students’ mathematical discoveries. Using photography and sketching, they will document patterns and concepts they encounter. They will also learn how to craft micro-stories and captions that showcase students’ thinking in a meaningful way. Finally, they will experiment with collaborative math journals, combining images, sketches, and reflective writing to create a cohesive narrative of the learning journey.

Results/Goals: Participants will learn how Math Trails transform outdoor spaces into dynamic, hands-on math classrooms. They will gain tools to document mathematical thinking through visual storytelling and reflective writing, making learning more tangible and engaging. Educators will leave with practical strategies for documenting playful math discoveries, helping students connect mathematical concepts to the real world in any outdoor setting. **Conclusion/Significance:** When math is made visible, it becomes more engaging and meaningful for students. This workshop equips educators with practical strategies to design, implement, and document outdoor math learning, fostering curiosity, critical thinking, and creativity. By integrating playful, outdoor math experiences into their teaching, educators can create a richer, more connected approach to learning that extends beyond the classroom walls. ■

Title	"I Remember When": How Childhood Play Experiences and Memories Inform Early Educator Professional Identity
Speaker	Merril Miceli, M.Ed., Doctoral Student, Early Childhood Education and Care, University of Massachusetts Boston

Introduction: This workshop is grounded in the findings of my phenomenological study, which explores how early childhood educators perceive and remember their lifeworlds. The study emphasizes educators' childhood outdoor play experiences and their perceived influence on beliefs, pedagogical practices, and professional identity. The importance of outdoor play emerged as a theme among participants, often serving as a touchstone for the philosophies and playful pedagogies they uphold in their current practice.

Methods:

- Three early childhood educators were recruited from the Playful Outdoor Spaces Community of Practice (CoP) that the researcher facilitates.
- Study participants engaged in three individual semi-structured interviews, each lasting one to one and a half hours.
- Interviews were transcribed using Zoom transcripts and edited for accuracy.
- Participant interviews were coded using NVivo and organized into themes.

Significance: This study centers the lived experiences of early childhood educators, exploring how life events—including outdoor play—shape professional identity. These identities influence autonomy, decision-making, and pedagogy (Akaba et al., 2022). Understanding the impact of lived experience is especially important amid growing schoolification pressures in early childhood education (Rentzou et al., 2010). These findings can inform future research into how childhood play experiences may shape early educators' resolve to uphold playful philosophies and practices. Goals of the Workshop: Phenomenology is both a philosophy and a qualitative research method. It invites one to examine an experience—or phenomenon—again and consider how we perceive that experience. In my self-examination of the study's phenomenological interview process, I realized how supportive it was to provide the time and space for the participants to engage in the critical work of reflecting on their childhood play experiences. Through the reflective dialogue process, connections were made visible from life experience to current philosophical and pedagogical practices. In this minds-on workshop, I propose to invite participants to delve into a phenomenological mindset to reflect on their lifeworld, engage in reflective dialogue with fellow participants, and draw connections to current beliefs and practices centering outdoor play and nature-connection. After this participatory experience, I will briefly overview my study findings. ■

Title	Think like a Mycelium: Building Solidarity from the Ground Up
Speaker	Nicolas Pena Parra

Think like a Mycelium is a hands-on workshop that aims to provide practitioners, educators and like-minded folks to reflect on environmental issues through the use of web-like structures and connections inspired by the fungi world.

This workshop invites participants to analyze and reflect on their own environmental realities through a series of case studies, and work collectively to support each other and build a more sustainable future. We will explore cultural perspectives on sustainability and examine biodiversity within local ecosystems. This includes Indigenous ways of being and the interconnectedness of all things on the planet. Emphasis is given to community-ecological development, focusing on integrating environmental, economic, and social objectives to create sustainable communities, emphasizing resource management, ecological integrity, and the well-being of both people and the environment. Overall participants will go through a series of activities that highlight community support by role-play and gamification. ■

Title	Learning Kits for Inclusive Outdoor Play
Speaker	Amy Jo Smith, RECE, Children's Inclusion Support Services, Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play; Paula ter Huurne, RECE, Outdoor Play Canada, Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play


This workshop will introduce practical tools from the inclusive outdoor learning kit available through the Outdoor Learning School & Store for the purpose of exploring creative new ways to make outdoor play experiences accessible and engaging for children of all abilities.

The workshop will provide early years educators and practitioners with information, collaborative discussion, and hands-on opportunities to play and engage with different materials and equipment. The workshop will be structured in three parts:

1. Introduction and information sharing
 - Introduction to the kit and why it was developed
 - Why each item was included and how it can be used to support children of all abilities and those with specific disabilities
2. Break-out play stations
 - Time to explore each aspect of the kit first-hand
 - Discuss possible uses and specific needs they can support
 - Share experiences of barriers and successes
3. Connecting as a group
 - Opportunity to ask questions and share tips and tricks from their own experiences
 - Summarize our learning

The goals of this workshop are to:

- Introduce the kit and provide participants with information on how and when to use the resources in the kit.
- Provide an opportunity to connect with peers, engage in collaborative dialogue, and share experiences of overcoming barriers and successes in outdoor play with children of different abilities.
- Provide a hands-on opportunity to play with the different materials and equipment to become more familiar with how they work and can be used
- Provide practical tools and ideas to implement in early learning programs



By providing an informative and hands-on workshop to participants about creating inclusive outdoor play and learning environments for children 0-8 years of age, we continue to serve the sector in an area that educators and practitioners have directly expressed interest in and need for in a fun and engaging way. This workshop will support educators and practitioners in feeling inspired and empowered to create inclusive and meaningful outdoor play and learning environments and opportunities for children with disabilities. As a result, this workshop will contribute to the goal of building more inclusive communities. ■





Minds-on Oral Presentations

Join presenters for 30-minute presentations highlighting research and practice in the outdoor play sector. These concise, focused sessions share fresh insights, innovative approaches, and real-world applications to inspire and inform your work.

Title	The Role of Weapon Play in Early Childhood: Social-Emotional Learning Through Imaginative Play
Speaker	Shelley Bettker, Certified Forest and Nature School Practitioner, ECE2, B. Ed., Explorers Forest School and TimberNook Saskatoon

This interactive session explores the misunderstood concept of weapon play in early childhood and its critical role in social-emotional development. Drawing from Rethinking Weapon Play in Early Childhood and the 1000 Hours Outside podcast, the session will highlight how children use imaginative weapon play (like stick swords and toy guns) to explore complex themes such as power, control, and conflict in a safe environment. Participants will learn how weapon play helps children process difficult emotions such as death, loss, and divorce, building emotional resilience and coping skills. The session will also delve into how weapon play fosters key social-emotional learning (SEL) skills such as empathy, emotional regulation, and communication. ■

Title	What is the Relationship between Outdoor Risky Play and Health in Children? Results from a Systematic Review
Speaker	Dr. Mariana Brussoni, University of British Columbia

Background: In recent years, a wealth of research has been published in response to heightened awareness of the unique benefits related to children's outdoor risky play. This systematic review investigates the relationship between health outcomes and outdoor risky play among children aged 3-12 years. Methods: A systematic literature search of five academic databases identified eligible studies that assessed children's outdoor risky play and associations with health outcomes. Abstract review, full-text review and data extraction required two reviewers and consensus to be met. Extracted data were assessed by narrative synthesis and qualitative synthesis. Results: A total of 69 studies met criteria for inclusion for this review. Studies examined overall risky play as an exposure (n=12), as well as through constructs of rough and tumble play (n=22), supportive environments for risky play (n=20) and independent mobility (n=15). Health outcomes related to physical health and fitness (physical activity, motor competence, etc.), affective and emotional outcomes (well-being, self-efficacy, etc.), social competence and interpersonal skills (peer relationships, communication, etc.), cognitive and academic outcomes (perceptual awareness, problem-solving, etc.) and injury and risk competence (risk perception, risk acceptance, etc.).

The results of this review outline overall positive associations between risky play and children’s physical health and fitness outcomes. The relationship between risky play and affective and emotional outcomes yielded mixed findings. While positive associations were found with mental health, self-efficacy, self-regulation, and resilience, some negative links were observed between rough-and-tumble play and mental health and well-being, along with increases in aggression. Mixed results were also found for social competence and interpersonal skills, cognitive and academic outcomes, and injury and risk competence.

Conclusion: This review provides a comprehensive overview of the current evidence on the relationships between children’s outdoor risky play and health outcomes. The findings provide critical insights into how different domains of children’s health and well-being are influenced through participation in thrilling and challenging and risky play and supportive environments. ■

Title	A Partnered Approach to Understanding the Benefits of Schoolyard Greening
Speaker	Jean Buckler, PhD, University of Victoria; Jennie McCaffrey, MA, BC Parks Foundation

Jean Buckler, PhD, University of Victoria; Jennie McCaffrey, MA, BC Parks Foundation

Access to nature and natural spaces is inequitable, with greater tree canopy and park density in higher income neighbourhoods. Given the extensive and growing knowledge of the mental, physical, and emotional benefits of time in and around nature, systemic change is needed to ensure all children have the same access to nature. Schools may provide an opportunity to equitably bring nature to children, through schoolyard greening. Schoolyard greening is the addition of nature, including trees, plants, and non-traditional groundcover (i.e. not grass or asphalt) to existent schoolyards. The BC Parks Foundation is championing an innovative project to add nature to 25 schools across BC by 2027. The BC Parks Foundation has partnered with the University of Victoria to track and monitor the health and educational benefits of schoolyard greening. We have also developed multisectoral partnerships with education, health, municipalities, and school districts to identify shared goals and priorities for climate action, to ensure a sustainable approach. The purpose of this project is to identify the barriers and facilitators to schoolyard greening. Methods: Representatives from the health and education sectors, will participate in a goal setting and data collection planning day in May 2025, where we will identify key shared goals and outcome metrics that serve each group’s climate priorities. We have identified five pilot schools, representing the five health authorities across BC with diverse climate profiles. Pilot schools are collecting school, teacher, and student level data in spring 2025 in preparation for schoolyard greening. Results: Shared priorities of increasing tree canopy, decreasing ground surface temperature during heat related events, increasing and maintaining urban biodiversity, and managing stormwater have already been identified through initial conversations with our partners. Further priorities will be identified in May and shared. Data from our five pilot schools will be shared through images generated by students. Significance: A partnership approach to understanding the importance of schoolyard greening is critical given the overlap of climate action priorities between education, health, municipalities, and school districts. Our approach may act as a template for other jurisdictions to action schoolyard greening across Canada. ■

Title	Strategic Planning for Inclusive Outdoor Play
Speaker	Alessia Capone

The Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play (CCOP), housed with the Forest Explorers (FE) Outdoor Early Learning Centre, is a place where practice, policy, and research come together to advance outdoor play across Canada. Early learning outdoors creates an opportunity for holistic development through physical activity, cognitive and socio-emotional development, and a connection to the natural world. The first annual evaluation process was completed to support FE and the CCOP, in their mission to advance outdoor play, learning, health and well-being for children of all abilities across Canada.

Methods: Using a World Café approach 12 CCOP partners attended an in person meeting to reflect on their experiences and perceptions of the FE program. Partners shared their views about the accessibility of outdoor and indoor spaces. The four topics used in the World Café considered built and social environments in licensed play areas (2 topics) and in unlicensed play areas (2 topics).

Attendees had 4 opportunities to spend 20 minutes discussing 1 of the 4 topics. Rooted in engagement principles, the World Café method leverages the power of conversations and the unique expertise each participant carries by placing equal value on the knowledge of all members to intentionally address power dynamics. The comments shared by cafe participants were then analyzed using a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis. Results: The SWOT analysis led to the identification of four strategic foci for better inclusion in the outdoors: (1) Forest Framework and Pedagogical Practice; (2) – Journey to Play; (3) Progress of Practice; and (4) Community Connection. These foci were developed with action plans to operationalize inclusion in the Forest Explorers program. Collectively the information shared by community members and discussed within the CCOP leadership and research teams has led to the generation of a 2025-2026 strategic plan to enhance inclusion within the FE program. Conclusion: Through this plan, we seek to promote inclusive pedagogy in outdoor spaces; to support educators in working with children with diverse needs; and, to connect the CCOP nationally. This session will focus on discussing and reflecting as a group on these foci and the resultant strategic plan. ■

Title	Journey through Childcare, Burnout, and Finding Outdoor Play
Speaker	Lori Dalton, Cloudberry Outdoor Play and Education

I will discuss my journey through working in childcare and burnout, then finding self-care and renewing my passion for Early Learning through the Outdoor Learning Environment. Mental Health Benefits of the Outdoor Early Learning Environment. Supporting self-regulation and balance working in the Outdoor Early Learning environment. And sharing tools to add to our personal toolbox to support individual journeys. Grounding activities, Body Scans, Journaling, Body Movements, Reflection, and more." ■

Title	Wondering With Water
Speaker	Laurel Donison, Brock University & Kings Western University

Outdoor play spaces in childcare centers are entangled with time, seasons, and weather, all of which shift over time. While children play in these spaces, they become entangled with both human and more-than-human elements that are present. In this presentation I draw on pieces of data from my PhD ethnographic research project that focused on young children's experiences and perspectives of an outdoor play space at an urban childcare center in a lower-income area in the greater Toronto area. I focus on the children's entanglements with water, in the outdoor space. Using moments of wonder and relationality embedded in new materialism I provide details about the children's encounters with water, that unfold in multiple ways. Following relational approaches, I explore the connections and networks that make up the social world including human and more-than-human entities (Spyrou, 2018). In this presentation I share photographs, quotes from the children, soundscapes and interpretations/wonderings about the water encounters. In line with MacLure (2013) I understand moments of wonder as "moments that exert a kind of fascination and have a capacity to animate further thought" (p.228). The stories that will be told will share the children's unique perspectives and experiences and my own as an ECE and researcher. This presentation will inform educators and other early childhood professionals about children's engagements and wonderings with water and highlight the many connections that are formed. It will also share the importance of paying close attention to small moments that can grow and create curriculum in early childhood spaces. It is essential that we provide children in early childhood education with opportunities to be outdoors and connect with the spaces around them. In my project this was especially important because a large amount of the children in the childcare center are living in apartment buildings or basement apartments and their access to play outdoors outside of their time in childcare is limited. ■

Title	Adopting a Perspective of Affordances in Children's Play Spaces
Speaker	Ipek Epikmen, M.Sc.A., Université de Montréal

The benefits of play for children are innumerable; however, we are observing a decline in outdoor play in cities, tied to sedentarization and an obesity epidemic in young children. This situation is attracting increasing interest in academic and municipal contexts. Until recently, North American cities' efforts were limited to the provision of segregated children spaces. Now that some cities are ready to rethink the place of play in our cities at a larger scale, it becomes important to better understand urban outdoor play and the environments making it possible. This research is based on a critical ethnographic approach conducted as a playworker in a day camp promoting free play in three green public spaces of Montreal during the summer of 2021. We explore a variety of physical and social factors influencing children's outdoor play from a perspective of affordances. It discusses the influence of space characteristics on play, the importance of supervising adults' perception of risk, the conflicts with other users and the influence of different approaches to management and maintenance of public spaces. This research attempts to offer a holistic and critical view on the adequacy of public spaces in terms of facilitating play, in the Montreal context.

It highlights the transgressive nature of play and its confrontation with everlasting regulatory practices of public space management. The presentation expected to last 20 minutes, will focus on adopting the perspective of affordances while designing public spaces that are conducive to unstructured play, the importance of natural and artificial loose parts and malleability as well as the regulatory limitations in doing so in the Canadian context. ■

Title	Designed to Stay Inside: How Tech Works Against Outdoor Access
Speaker	Rachel Franz, M.Ed., Early Childhood Advocacy Program Director at Fairplay; Rene Mejia, Early Childhood Advocacy Campaign Organizer, Fairplay

While outdoor play advocates work tirelessly to get kids outside, children's technology is designed to do the opposite. Through persuasive design techniques like infinite scrolling, auto-play, and gamified rewards, digital platforms exploit the brain's dopamine-driven reward system, making it harder for kids to unplug and engage with the natural world, leading to additional disparities for kids who are already marginalized. This talk will break down the mechanics of persuasive tech, revealing how design choices shape behavior and make it increasingly difficult for children to access the outdoors. By understanding these digital forces, we can advocate for child-centered design, increase public awareness, and push for system changes that prioritize real-world engagement outdoors. ■

Title	Case Study of a School-Level Approach to Outdoor Learning: A study Protocol and Immersive Exploration of Walking Interviews
Speaker	Tanya Halsall

In spite of the clear benefits, Outdoor Learning (OL) is not yet accessible to most students. This issue is particularly salient for low-income and racialized communities who lack access to green space. Based on our previous research, we have also learned that: 1) OL may offer an important opportunity to enhance educator wellbeing, 2) school administrators are important champions that can support policy to scale OL practice, 3) OL may have the potential to influence healthy school climate and 4) OL research can be used to elevate children's voice and support children's rights. Purpose: We are implementing a study that is focused on the following objectives: 1) perform an in-depth examination of the implementation of OL at a whole school level 2) explore associations between OL and school climate 3) investigate the underlying mechanisms of influence related to risky play and 4) capture student perspectives of OL through participatory arts-based methods. Our presentation will include: an in-depth introduction to the study protocol and an immersive activity to explore walking interviews as a method to understand student experiences in OL.

Methods: In order to support an in-depth examination of the implementation of OL within the school, we are collecting semi-structured interviews that include questions that explore implementation context and theory of change. We will also capture data with respect to student involvement in risky play and how disposition might interact with this engagement. We will examine the relationship between outdoor learning time and school climate perceptions across classrooms. Finally, student perspectives will be captured using two arts-based methods: Photovoice walking interviews and Story Workshop.· Significance of work: This research addresses several gaps in the literature, including the need to better understand whether OL might be associated with school climate and by extension, student wellbeing. We will also strengthen our understanding of the underlying mechanisms of risky play and how it can create positive outcomes. Finally, will capture lessons learned related to the development of school policy and practice in OL. This project will result in the advancement of critical knowledge that can enhance OL practice. ■

Title	Insights from the Sending Preschoolers Outside (SPROUT) Study: Understanding the Impact and Lessons Learned from Nature-Based Childcare Research
Speaker	Maeghan James, Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute (CHEO)

Introduction Active outdoor play during early childhood supports health and development for all children. However, outdoor play is declining, and indoor, screen-based childhoods are becoming the norm. Early childhood education (ECE) centres provide a critical opportunity to foster inclusive outdoor play, yet research on the benefits of nature-based childcare remains limited. This study addresses this gap by evaluating one of Canada’s first licensed nature-based ECE programs. The primary (prospective) objective of this ongoing study is to compare a nature-based ECE program to conventional, indoor-focused ECE programs to assess the effects of outdoor play on child health and development, parent attitudes toward outdoor play, and educator health, wellbeing and job satisfaction. Methods: This study follows a repeated measures design over three years (year one completed). Children and educators are being recruited from one nature-based and three conventional ECE centres in Ottawa, Ontario. Assessments take place every six months. Measures include direct child assessments (e.g., anthropometry, motor skills, accelerometry) and caregiver and educator questionnaires. Mixed effects modeling will examine changes over time for child, caregiver and educator outcomes. Goal of Presentation: To date, 81 children (Mage=30 months, 52% girls, 49 nature-based, 32 conventional) and 23 educators (11 nature-based, 12 conventional) have been enrolled into the study. This presentation will share findings from the first year of the SPROUT study (three time points total), providing insights into the potential impact of nature-based ECE on early childhood health and development and educator wellbeing and job satisfaction. Additionally, we will discuss practical considerations in conducting outdoor play research in early years settings, including lessons learned, challenges encountered, and recommendations for future research in nature-based childcare environments. Significance of work: Findings will inform practitioners, researchers, and policymakers on the potential value of nature-based ECE in supporting child development and addressing public health concerns such as physical inactivity and excessive screen time. This research also aims to provide practical guidance for those interested in conducting similar studies within ECE settings. Funding: We acknowledge funding support from the Public Health Agency of Canada - Healthy Canadian and Communities Fund, and the Waltons Trust. ■

Title	The Global Adolescent and Child Physical Activity Questionnaire (GAC-PAQ) project
Speaker	Richard Larouche, PhD, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Lethbridge

More time spent outdoors is associated with higher physical activity and numerous positive physical, mental, social, and spiritual health indicators. Yet, a standardized measure of outdoor time (OT) is lacking. Using pilot data from the app-based Global Adolescent and Child Physical Activity Questionnaire (GAC-PAQ) project in 12 countries (Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Malawi, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, and United Arab Emirates), we examined the socio-demographic correlates of a standardized OT question. We also assessed the convergent validity of child- vs. parent/proxy-reported OT. Methods: In all countries, a sample of 8- to 17-year-olds stratified by sex and urbanicity was recruited. Participants and one of their parents/guardians (as proxy) completed the GAC-PAQ questionnaire, which included an item about OT in hours/day during the past week. Data on socio-economic characteristics were also collected. Binary logistic regression models were used to examine the correlates of OT (>2h/day) while controlling for gender and country. Agreement between child- and parent/proxy-reported OT was assessed with Cohen's kappa. Results: A total of 421 children (50.4% girls, 12.2±2.9 years) completed the questionnaire. Participants reported spending 1.9±1.5 hours/day outdoors. 34.3% of participants reported spending >2h/day outdoors. This proportion varied from 16.3% in Nigeria to 60.0% in Malawi. Compared to children in Malawi, children in Colombia (OR=0.30; 95% CI: 0.11-0.79), Mexico (OR=0.22; 95% CI: 0.08-0.65), Nigeria (OR=0.13; 95% CI: 0.05-0.39), and Thailand (OR=0.16; 95% CI: 0.05-0.53) were significantly less likely to report spending >2h/day outdoors (all p<0.05). Living in a rural vs. urban area was associated with more OT (OR=2.15; 95% CI: 1.37-3.40). No other sociodemographic characteristics were significantly associated with OT. Cohen's kappa was 0.47, suggesting moderate agreement between child and parent/proxy reports. Conclusion: Our findings show substantial variation in OT by country and level urbanization, while providing some preliminary evidence of convergent validity of a standardized measure of OT. Future research is needed to further unpack the correlates of OT within and between countries to better understand sources of variation and inform the development of interventions to promote OT among children and adolescents. ■

Title	EmbraceWellness
Speaker	Arlene Lusterio

The EmbraceWellness workshop empowers the extensive self-esteem research and development from EmbraceHealthFoundation and EmbraceHealthInnovations to support generational and inclusive wellness in mental and physical health and wellbeing that is designed around play outdoors to advance mental health and resilience with a supportive awareness of self-regulation. This initiative supports awareness and building narratives and best mental and physical health practices outdoors with play to support lifelong awareness and commitments to build on for the future. Research is shared with the group and it is appropriate for everyone inclusive of practitioners. Demonstrations on breathing and mindset are done. Introduction to the self-esteem assessment tool indicators are discussed. Role play, communication are discussed. Research specific to play and self-esteem and our mindfulness routines are discussed. Our early mindfulness routines incorporated into play that support creative approaches to build on. This advances into more discussions on family mindfulness and youth mindfulness research and practices that are based on the self-esteem research and development and play. There is an overview of youth mindfulness and instrumental ways to support and integrate these experiences for youth. There is a generational overlay where generational self-esteem research is shared, and generational mindfulness is discussed and demonstrated to support wellness and encourage communication and healing of the generations. Mindfulness routines and physical health routines are assimilated into examples of play and physical activity. There is also the spiritual component and integrations of accountability to self others and the planet here that support the experience. Self-regulation is supported by pushing narratives and boundaries and by utilizing self-awareness integrations from the extensive self-esteem research and development. All theory, data is explained with a demonstration. All results and goals are made attainable measurable and sustainable to the individual. The pursuit of self-expression and support of cognition is a key theme for EmbraceHealthFoundation and this meshes the structure of the approaches to yield best practice outcomes. Short introduction to our new platform EmbraceTimeCommunity.com as it aligns with this workshop. In conclusion, an overview with key focuses given. Supportive materials given and access to portal will be given. Questions and support. ■

Title	'The State of Play in Outdoor Play' - Exploring Global Indigenous Knowledge of Outdoor Play: A scoping review
Speaker	River McRae, Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute; Geoff Kira, Massey University

For millennia, indigenous culture viewed outdoor play as a normalised behaviour across the lifespan that supported knowledge-building, environmental partnerships, social structure and survival. Western influences have changed the face of indigenous outdoor play to the extent that much knowledge was lost. Our aim is to provide a foundation of indigenous outdoor play knowledge to pave the way for future research. Methods: A comprehensive search of six academic databases (MEDLINE, EMBASE, CINAHL, Scopus, Sportdiscus and Cochrane Library) identified studies examining Indigenous peoples and active outdoor play, traditional games, physical activity (PA), sport, and recreation

Eligible studies observed the outdoor activity of Indigenous youth, adolescents, and adults and any associations. A narrative synthesis and meta-synthesis of qualitative studies and indigenous knowledge were conducted. We acknowledge the subjectivity of what constitutes “play” for different Indigenous populations across different age groups. Results: The search yielded 1202 studies for initial screening with 260 duplicates. Reviewers screened 942 studies and 854 were not relevant. An additional 21 studies were included and submitted to the review team by the Indigenous advisory group. The results are based on 109 studies. Outdoor play is seen by indigenous peoples as a way to commune with nature and is related to our ancestors and spirits. There are conceptual and interpretive differences between studies on indigenous people and studies with indigenous people. Indigenous outdoor play is multiplicitous and can simultaneously be fun, work, educative, spiritual and challenging. Conclusion: Outdoor play and PA are new terms for indigenous people, but movement is natural and expected in the indigenous world. Outdoor play is seen very differently by indigenous peoples. Scientific understanding of indigenous outdoor play can be skewed without indigenous knowledge. When indigenous knowledge is applied to studies of indigenous people, a deeper, intimate and more appropriate understanding can be drawn from data. Support from non-indigenous researchers, ethics bodies and publishers is needed to raise indigenous knowledge as equally worthy as science. Indigenous solutions will achieve more for indigenous peoples. Keywords: Indigenous, outdoor play, knowledge, traditional, games, sport. ■

Title	Democratic Practices : Building Relational Understandings through Land-Based Learning
Speaker	Taryn McSherry, RECE, Kanata Research Park Family Centre; Alexa Imbesi, RECE, Kanata Research Park Family Centre; Laura Ashfield, RECE, Kanata Research Park Family Centre; Pooja Dubey, RECE, Kanata Research Park Family Centre

On behalf of the Kanata Research Park Family Centre, we would like to submit a proposal for a multi-panel piece of pedagogical documentation created as part of a centre-wide educational research and documentation project. The Family Centre is a non-profit, licensed early learning and care centre with age groups from toddlers to a full day Kindergarten, in Kanata, Ontario. The foundation of this submission is from the Kindergarten program, aged three to 6 years, documenting the child’s and children’s collective relationship and connection to the land, the significant spaces that they have daily encounters with, while documenting our evolving ecological identity at the Family Centre. Our urban context offers access to green and forested spaces nestled within an urban technology park, and through these daily encounters, as we journey to these spaces, we chance upon child-discovered moments in unexpected places. Our documentation panels capture the value of the democratic process that unfolded during a land-based research project using maps and representations designed and created by the children. ■

Title	Infants and Toddlers Open to the Outside World Early Childhood
Speaker	Sylvie Melsbach

Quebec daycare centres do not have the tools to create rich outdoor environments adapted to the needs of the infants and toddlers in their care, so that they can use them every day, regardless of the season, and develop optimally. We also found that parents are not aware of the importance of outdoor play for the very young children's healthy development and need to be made aware of this issue. Expected long-term outcome of the project: ALL daycare centres in Quebec will have access to the necessary tools to transform their outdoor play areas into everyday spaces for infants and toddlers that support their optimal development. Conclusion: After three years of implementation, the project demonstrates that it is possible for CPE teams to initiate changes in practice and implement new arrangements so that infants and toddlers can spend more time outdoors and explore their environment independently. We will present three pilot projects carried out in daycare centres in the Montérégie region of Quebec and the adaptations that had to be made to meet the needs of infants, toddlers and adults in order to provide children with an outdoor living space where they can live happily, in complete freedom and comfort, in all seasons. Educators have everything they need to support the children without having to restrict or limit their desire to play outside. ■

Title	Landscape of Outdoor Play in Early Learning and Child Care Environments: Insights from the Measuring Early Childhood Outside (MECO) Pan-Canadian Survey.
Speaker	Rachel Ramsden, University of British Columbia

Introduction: Early learning and child care settings are important environments for children's outdoor play and provide experiences that may not be available in home or community settings. There is a data gap around the current provision of outdoor play in Canadian early learning and child care programs. The results of the Measuring Early Childhood Outside (MECO) national survey aim to fill this gap and examine the factors associated with children's outdoor and risky play in early learning and child care programs. Methods: A national survey was distributed in Summer and Fall 2023 to early learning and child care centres providing full-day licensed group care (birth to school entry) in Canada. The survey measured the extent and quality of outdoor play provision, the available physical infrastructure, training and policy supports, and outdoor play pedagogy. Data were analyzed through descriptive analyses, multiple regression models and qualitative thematic analysis. Primary outcomes included outdoor play frequency, outdoor play duration and risky play occurrence. Findings: A total of 1,187 early learning and child care centres responded to the MECO survey (9.8% response rate), of which 67.2% were non-profit providers. Most centres went outside every day, regardless of the season, though they spent less time outside in the winter than in the summer. Risky play was limited, with play at heights being the most common, and use of fire the least common.


Variables that emerged as positively associated with most outcomes across infant/toddler and preschool-aged programs related to training of directors and staff, giving children the autonomy to make decisions about going outdoors, providing all-weather gear, including diverse affordances (loose parts, gardening elements, fixed equipment), having outdoor spaces larger than required by licensing requirements, and the use of off-site spaces. Conclusion: The results from the MECO survey provide timely insights into the current state of children's outdoor play in early learning and child care centres. These findings will increase national and international understanding of outdoor play provision in the early years, and showcase key areas for future research and policy consideration. ■

Title	'There Are So Many Good Things Outside, Let Me Tell You': Children's Qualitative Perspectives of Outdoor and Risky Play at Early learning and Child Care.
Speaker	Rachel Ramsden, University of British Columbia

Outdoor play in early childhood supports physical, emotional, cognitive and social development. Early learning and child care (ELCC) environments offer important opportunities for outdoor play not otherwise experienced in a home or community setting. This study outlines children's perspectives of outdoor and risky play at ELCC centres across British Columbia from two recent studies. In the PRO-ECO pilot study, 20 children aged 3-5 years participated in observations, semi-structured interviews, child-led tours and map-making. In the PRO-ECO 2.0 study, one-on-one semi-structured qualitative interviews were completed with 118 children aged 2-5 years. An inductive and reflexive approach to thematic analysis identified emergent themes relating to outdoor and risky play and associated affordances, as expressed by children. Results from this analysis identified common environmental play features identified by children as affordances for outdoor play including sandboxes, tricycle paths, gardening areas, play houses, climbing structures, water features, and stumps and logs. Additionally, providing loose parts such as sticks, rocks, and hammers, were shown to afford diverse levels of risky play opportunities. These findings provide important considerations for best-practice for ELCC centres' outdoor space design, including the importance of accessible sensory elements, diverse forms of challenge, and integrated traditional and natural play features. This research illustrates effective methods for prioritizing children's voices and establishes young children as capable research participants, contributing deeper insights to the field of outdoor play research. ■

Title	Campfire Circle
Speaker	Maddie Rawling, Campfire Circle

Campfire Circle, a non-profit organization based in Ontario, offers transformative, play-based recreation programs for children affected by serious illness, as well as their families.



Our programs aim to foster resilience, community, and joy by creating opportunities for families to connect, heal, and create lasting memories. One of our key programs is the Family Camping Trip, where families embark on an overnight camping adventure. This proposal will explore how these experiences, centered on connection, nature, and inclusive recreation, contribute to the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of families navigating life with a child living with serious illness. Methods: Family Camping Trips are designed to be accessible for all families, with all necessary camping equipment provided. Participants engage in various activities that foster connection with one another, and engagement with nature, such as cooking over an open fire, sharing stories around the campfire, and sleeping under the stars in tents. Each activity is adaptable to ensure that everyone can participate fully. Our approach includes both guided activities and space for informal play, allowing families the freedom to relax and bond at their own pace. Results/Goals: The session will focus on the impact of our Family Camping Trips, emphasizing how outdoor recreation fosters resilience, well-being, and a sense of community for families with a child facing a serious illness. Our goal is to provide practical insights into how intentionally designed programming can meet the unique needs of camper families. We will also share strategies and learnings for creating family-oriented outdoor experiences that cater to various ages, abilities, and cultural and emotional needs, along with insights into program evaluation. Conclusion/Significance of Work: Family Camping Trips demonstrate the transformative power of nature and outdoor play in promoting holistic well-being. By offering families the chance to disconnect from daily stress and immerse themselves in nature with those who have shared experience, we aim to support their mental, emotional and physical well-being. Through this presentation, we aim to inspire others to recognize the potential of outdoor-play based programming in strengthening family bonds and fostering resilience. ■





Poster Presentations

Outdoor Exhibit Area

Join our poster presenters, community partners, and booth hosts in the outdoor exhibit area on Thursday from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm and 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm, and on Friday from 11:30 am to 2:30 pm.

Title	Places and Spaces for Play among Children and Youth with Disabilities: An Umbrella Review
Speaker	Leanne Bien Abungin

Acknowledgement: This review is funded by the Canadian Disability Participation Project (CDPP) 2.0. **Introduction:** Children and youth with disabilities (CYWD) have fewer opportunities for play than their peers without disabilities. There is limited understanding on how CYWD define and perceive play, as well as the challenges and opportunities influencing their participation in play. To better support CYWD in play, this review aimed to: (1) examine how play is defined and perceived among CYWD and their adult facilitators (e.g., parents/guardians/caregivers/decision-makers) and (2) identify barriers, facilitators, and interventions influencing play among CYWD. **Methods:** An umbrella review methodology was used. Database searches were conducted in July 2024. The searches focused on peer-reviewed review articles concerning play, children, and disability. Articles were included if they examined CYWD aged 0–21 years and addressed a study objective. The socioecological modelling framework informed our synthesis of evidence. **Results:** The initial search revealed 2,711 articles. After removing duplicates and screening for eligibility criteria, 18 review articles were included. Ten articles discussed the definition, perception, and experiences of play among CYWD. Play was consistently defined by CYWD as fun, spontaneous, and intrinsically motivated, with some preferring intense, novel experiences. CYWD perceived play as valuable for exercising decision-making and fostering connections but often felt excluded from play with their peers without disabilities. Adult facilitators recognized the importance of play in the well-being of CYWD and tailored activities according to their unique requirements and preferences. Ten articles identified facilitators and barriers of play across five domains: (1) individual (autonomy, psychological factors, and body function and structure), (2) interpersonal (decision-making process, social support, and socioeconomic status), (3) organization (adapted physical demands of activities, and program and staff availability), (4) community (environment characteristics, activities, attitudes, and resources), and (5) public policy (policy gaps). Seven articles examined the effectiveness of play-based interventions, including instructional and behavioral strategies, assistive technologies, occupation-based interventions, and inclusive playground designs. **Significance of work:** This review provides a comprehensive overview of existing evidence concerning play among CYWD. The findings may inform researchers, practitioners, and policy makers on knowledge gaps regarding factors influencing play among CYWD. ■

Title	The National Active School Streets Initiative: Addressing Safety Barriers to Outdoor Play and Activity in School Neighborhoods
Speaker	Anguli Bharmota, Women+ and Children's Health Sciences, Human Early Learning Partnership, University of British Columbia, BC Children's Hospital Research Institute

Traffic safety issues has changed the outdoor play landscape for many school children, as it can discourage them from walking and playing along the streets of their schools. The National Active School Streets Initiative (NASSI) is a nationwide initiative led by Green Communities Canada, that temporarily closes streets around schools during drop-off and pick-up periods. This creates car-free zones to facilitate children's safe travel and provide them with the opportunity to play outdoors. Our objectives are to implement the NASSI initiative in Vancouver and examine how school streets influence children's physical activity, and to understand children's perspectives on walking or playing on the streets surrounding their school. This nationwide initiative is also being implemented and evaluated by researchers in Kingston, Mississauga, and Montreal, as national data collection can help us implement NASSI in other jurisdictions. This current project will focus on the implementation in Vancouver, with two elementary schools being chosen in equity-deserving communities. As we begin with pre-intervention data collection, we will survey kids about how they travel to school, and parents will be surveyed about safety concerns with their children independently walking and playing near their school. Importantly, we will conduct group discussions with children to understand current experiences on their outdoor activity when travelling on the streets of their school neighborhoods. Through this, we expect to uncover different barriers such as safety concerns that children presently face in their independent mobility and play along the streets of their school, and to measure how children are currently travelling to school. Preliminary data will be shared from the child group discussions, helping us gain perspective into the current outdoor play landscape of school children along the streets of their schools. Quantitative survey data from children will also be shared to highlight the ways they are currently travelling to school. This pre-intervention data will allow us to explore the different modes that children are using for school travel, and learn existing outlooks on their current walking and play habits in their school neighborhoods. This will ultimately help us examine how the intervention will have shaped their school street's outdoor landscape. ■

Title	Canadian Media Coverage and Representation of Climate Change and Active Outdoor Play
Speaker	Priya Mistry, Queen's University

There has been increasing attention in the media on the impact of climate change on the lives of people. The purpose of this study is to investigate how Canadian newspapers represent this connection, focusing on the narratives and discourse shaping public understanding as climate change becomes an increasingly urgent issue in Canada. Methods: Data collection was conducted using the Canadian Newsstream database. After two stages of independent screenings and conflict resolutions, a total of 87 newspapers have been included in the analysis. A mixed-methods approach was used, including quantitative descriptive analysis and qualitative content analysis. Results: Our findings identified the dominant issues, narratives, and arguments that Canadian newspapers deliver regarding the impact of climate change on active outdoor play.

There has been increasing newspaper coverage since 2018 with the greatest coverage by Postmedia Network Inc., followed by Torstar Corporation, especially once it started affecting eastern parts of Canada. The most common climate change topics discussed was general climate change issues and wildfires and the most common active outdoor play topic was outdoor recreation. Five major themes emerged from the newspaper articles were adaptation, resilience, mitigation, financial impacts, and inequities. Conclusion: This media analysis highlights the importance of understanding the complex and contextual nature of climate change impacts on active outdoor play among community members, participants, and parties engaging, planning, and regulating active outdoor play, as well as policymakers, and researchers. ■

Title	A Mixed-Methods Systematic Review of the Association Between Active Outdoor Play and Environmental Stewardship Outcomes Among Children, Youth, and Adults.
Speaker	Brianna Nasrallah, MSc Student, CHEO Research Institute, Carleton University

Active outdoor play (AOP) has been positioned as an opportunity to address concerns over climate (in)action and the rising trend in disconnection from the outdoors and nature. The objective of this systematic review was to examine the associations between AOP and connection to nature (CTN) and environmental stewardship (ES) across all ages. Methods: A systematic literature search of 5 bibliographic databases was conducted to identify quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method studies examining associations between AOP and CTN and ES. No limit was placed on year or language of publication. Five reviewers independently screened full-text articles in duplicate. A p-value synthesis or vote counting (quantitative data; where applicable) and narrative synthesis (qualitative data) was performed. Articles were eligible if they included human populations of any age, used one of 31 validated scales measuring CTN and/or ES, and explored associations between AOP and CTN and/or ES. Results: A total of 47 articles were included in the systematic review out of 676 articles reviewed in full-text: 26 qualitative, 19 quantitative, and two mixed-methods studies. Of the studies reporting p-values, 16 (84%; 16/19) demonstrated a statistically significant ($p < .05$) positive association between AOP and CTN and/or ES. The two studies that only reported direction of effect both demonstrated a favourable finding that more time spent in nature was associated with higher CTN scores. Qualitative data on AOP & CTN identified a spectrum of connections, from a sense of familiarity with natural spaces to profound relationships with the environment. The level of immersion of the outdoor experience often played a role in the depth of CTN. Qualitative data on AOP & ES highlighted subthemes discussing environmental values and attitudes, behaviour change, and precursors including childhood experiences, awareness of interdependencies, and reflection. Conclusion: There was an overall favourable relationship between AOP and CTN and ES. Qualitative data provided context to these relationships, highlighting nature immersion and the importance of early life experiences for fostering relationships with the environment. These findings have important public health and climate action implications for fostering the next generation of environmental stewards and imbuing these values among current global citizens. ■

Title	Creating a Protocol to Return to Active Play Following Concussion for Younger Children
Speaker	Nikoleta Odorico, PhD(c), MScOT, BKin, OT Reg., Rehabilitation Sciences Institute, Temerty Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto

Active play is crucial for younger children's (children aged 3 to 12 years) development, providing many physical, psychological, social, and emotional benefits. The outdoors affords ample opportunities for younger children to engage in diverse active play experiences, making it a common space for younger children to actively play. A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury that has a bi-directional relationship with active play; meaning concussion can occur during active play, and symptoms following concussion can impact how younger children re-engage in active play. Given the risk for all children to experience concussion, previous research and dissemination efforts have focused on return to play recommendations. However, these efforts have focused on older children/adolescents, and the 'play' emphasized has been specific to sport, thus not reflective of younger children's unique active play experience. Objective: This study aims to determine the extent of, and summarize, the literature on recommendations regarding return to play following a concussion for younger children aged 3-12 years, through scoping review methodology. Methods: The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses protocol extension for Scoping Reviews was followed for this review. Studies were included if they: 1) included participants aged 3-12 years who have had a concussion; 2) included recommendations for returning to play following concussion; 3) were published in a peer-reviewed journal; and, 4) were available in English. Six databases were searched. Results: 13 papers provided post-concussion return to play recommendations for younger children. Recommendations were analyzed inductively using content analysis. Three themes were generated: (1) assessment (i.e., having standardized testing from clinicians); (2) treatment (i.e., should be timely); and, (3) management (i.e., activity restrictions and a gradual return to play should occur). Most (69%) of studies also did not define or indicate the type of play that their recommendations were applicable to. Implications: This research provides a consolidation of the play literature which is important in determining what post-concussion evidence-based recommendations are known for younger children. This study offers a starting point to support future research and dissemination efforts that aim to create protocols to support younger children to return to play following concussion. ■

Title	Exploring the Concept of Risky Play Through the Lens of Disability Inclusion
Speaker	Nikoleta Odorico, PhD(c), MScOT, BKin, OT Reg., Rehabilitation Sciences Institute, Temerty Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto

Risky play is beneficial to child development contributing to children's physical activity, self-esteem, resilience, and problem solving. Risky play is characterized by possible physical injury and feelings of thrill, exploration and fear; generally occurring through outdoor physical activity. To date, less is known in the literature about risky play among children with disabilities (CWD). CWD experience less outdoor physical activity than their peers and often have their play highly managed to reduce risk. Thus, more research is needed to understand risky play among CWD. Purpose. The purpose of this study was to explore how risky play is perceived by CWD and their caregivers in the context of playgrounds designed to be inclusive.

Methods. A secondary analysis of 35 interviews with caregivers (n= 29) and CWD (n= 6) was completed using qualitative descriptive analysis. Transcripts were coded deductively for mention of the six categories of risky play outlined by Sandseter (2009) and inductively for other perceptions of risk expressed by caregivers and CWD. Results. Caregivers and CWD perceived that current risky play categories were reflective of risky play experiences for CWD. However, subjective interpretations of risk are individual to each child and may differ from general assessments of risk (e.g., how ‘great heights’ may be perceived by an observer compared to what actual distance off the ground provides risky play to the CWD). Additional categories of risky play for CWD were also identified and included social risk (e.g., entry to play, making a friend), playing in crowded places (e.g., large amounts of stimulation, bumps and jostles), and personal/unique risks (e.g., how a specific impairment interacts with different elements of play). Conclusion. While Sandseter’s definition of risky play is applicable to children with disabilities, it is paramount to consider how CWD and their families interpret risk based on their own experiences. Current definitions of risky play should be communicated more inclusively to promote discussion of, and engagement in, risky play for CWD. Attendees of this presentation will have the opportunity to discuss these findings and how risky play can be supported for children of all abilities in diverse outdoor contexts. ■

Title	Ottawa Outdoor Gear Library – Impact Evaluation Results 2024-2025
Speaker	Xandria Reece, Project Assistant, Ottawa Outdoor Gear Library; Felicity Hauwert, Sustainability Coordinator, Ottawa Outdoor Gear Library

The Ottawa Outdoor Gear Library (OOGL) addresses barriers faced by racialized and marginalized communities in accessing outdoor recreation, land-based programming, and the associated mental and physical health benefits. Through free gear-lending services, OOGL provides a range of equipment—including cross-country skis, ice skates, snowshoes, nature books, camping gear, and team sport equipment—to individual borrowers and community organizations. Operating in the Ottawa-Gatineau area on unceded, unsurrendered Algonquin Anishinaabeg Territory, OOGL promotes equitable access to outdoor experiences. Methods: With funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), OOGL is conducting a multi-year evaluation to assess the impact of its services on equitable access and the resulting health benefits. Using a mixed methods approach, the evaluation framework includes demographic data collection through the online membership portal, post-program surveys, focus groups, interviews, and bi-annual PHAC surveys. Survey questions assess participants’ skill and confidence in accessing healthy built environments and their sense of belonging in outdoor spaces after engaging with OOGL. Results: Preliminary results show that OOGL members have a positive view of the program, with 75% of survey respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that OOGL is a useful service. Nearly 60% of respondents reported that OOGL made them feel a greater sense of belonging in outdoor spaces, and just over 50% indicated that the program made it easier for them to access these spaces. Conclusion/Significance: This ongoing evaluation highlights the significant need for equitable outdoor recreation opportunities, particularly for marginalized and racialized communities. The findings underscore the importance of reducing systemic barriers to participation and provide a strong foundation for further research on equitable access to outdoor spaces and environmental stewardship initiatives across all age groups. By demonstrating the positive impact of inclusive outdoor programming, this work generates valuable insights that can inform policy, funding decisions, and future program development in the outdoor recreation sector. ■

Title	From Snow to Sunlight: Exploring Children's Outdoor Play Behaviours in Nature-Based Environments
Speaker	Kimberly Squires, PhD, RECE, OCT, University of Guelph, Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition





Outdoor play experiences can support children's holistic development. Although existing literature suggests features inherent in nature-based outdoor play environments can enhance the quality of play, further research is needed to understand how this occurs across different types of nature-based environments. With Canada's four-season climate, further research is also needed to examine children's outdoor play behaviours across different types of seasonal and environmental conditions. This exploratory study enhances understanding in these areas by examining and comparing children's play behaviours across two different types of nature-based outdoor play environments and two different seasons within an early childhood education and care setting. A place-centered coding approach, using the Tool for Observing Play Outdoors (TOPO-9) (Loebach & Cox, 2020), was employed to observe the outdoor play activities of preschool children in naturalized and natural (forested) environments and within the winter and summer seasons. This poster examines key differences between the children's outdoor play behaviours across these two types of environments and seasonal conditions. This research is valuable for understanding how children's play behaviours can be supported by different types of outdoor play environments and across different environmental conditions so that pedagogical, funding, and policy decisions with the highest benefits can be made. ■



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