

Outdoor Play in Canada: 2021 State of the Sector Report Webinar

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Land Acknowledgement

Outdoor Play Canada projects and activities encompass all traditional territories of the Indigenous Nations of Turtle Island, within the land we now call Canada.



Outdoor Play Canada – What it is

Our Mission: Outdoor Play Canada (OPC) is a network of advocates, practitioners, researchers, and organizations working together to **promote, protect, and preserve access to play in nature and the outdoors for all people living in Canada.**

Our vision: *Outdoor play is a valued part of daily life for all people living in Canada*

OPC provides leadership to galvanize the outdoor play movement across Canada to promote the health and wellness of Canadians and the environments in which we live.



Outdoor Play Canada – A Brief History

In 2014, we asked:

- Have we, as a society, lost the appropriate balance between keeping children healthy and active and protecting them from serious harm?
- If we make too many rules about what they can and can't do, will we hinder their natural ability to develop and learn?
- If we make injury prevention the ultimate goal of outdoor play spaces, will they be any fun?
- Are children safer sitting on the couch instead of playing actively outside?



The Benefits of Outdoor Play

Children
move more,

sit less,

and
play longer.



Kids learn to balance
risky play
and their own
safety.



Active lifestyle associated
with improved
blood pressure,
cardiorespiration,
and
**musculoskeletal
fitness.**

Increased
resilience,
self-regulation,
and skills for dealing with
stress.



Position



“Access to active play in nature and outdoors – with its risks – is essential for healthy child development. We recommend increasing children’s opportunities for self-directed play outdoors in all settings – at home, at school, in child care, the community and nature.”

- *Informed by 2 systematic reviews*
- *Interpreted by Canadian experts from 14 organizations and reviewed by >1,600 stakeholders.*
- *To date, there are **404 supporters** of the Position Statement, including endorsement by the Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health*
- *Research-grade report: www.mdpi.com/journal/ijerph.*
- *Public facing document: https://www.outdoorplaycanada.ca/portfolio_page/the-2015-position-statement-on-active-outdoor-play/*





Impact of the Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play

Legal Precedent

In 2015, the District of Saanich was ruled not negligent in a case of a child getting hurt during a game of grounders, citing the Position Statement as evidence.

Charitable Sector Strategic Direction Shift

The Lawson Foundation invested \$4.5 million in 18 projects between 2013-2018 that support Canadian communities to increase children's opportunities for outdoor play.

Senate of Canada Policy Report

Obesity in Canada 2016 Report, led by the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, was informed by the Position Statement, and cited declining rates of active play as an important contributor to childhood obesity.

Endorsement by the Chief Medical Officers of Health

In 2018, the Position Statement was endorsed by the Chief Medical Officers of Health in their own statement on active outdoor play.

Municipal Policy

The Peterborough & Region Public Health Policy Report was informed by the Position Statement and included free play as an important component of outdoor gathering spaces.

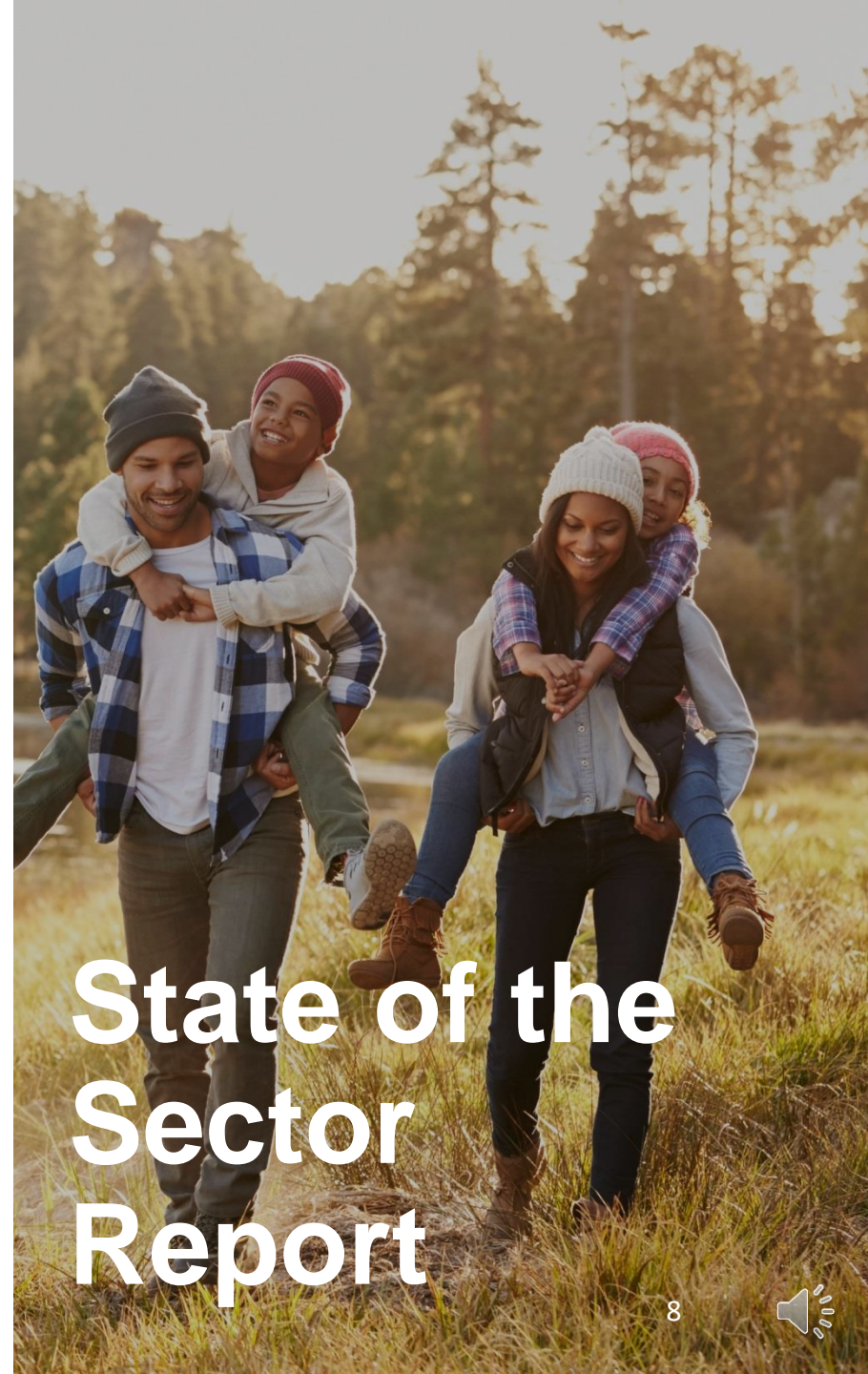


State of the Sector Report Purpose:

- A chronology of what has happened within the outdoor play sector since the publication of the Position Statement 6 years ago
- An account of where we are now
- A map of where we need to go from here in Canada to ensure that outdoor play is a valued part of daily life.



10/4/2021



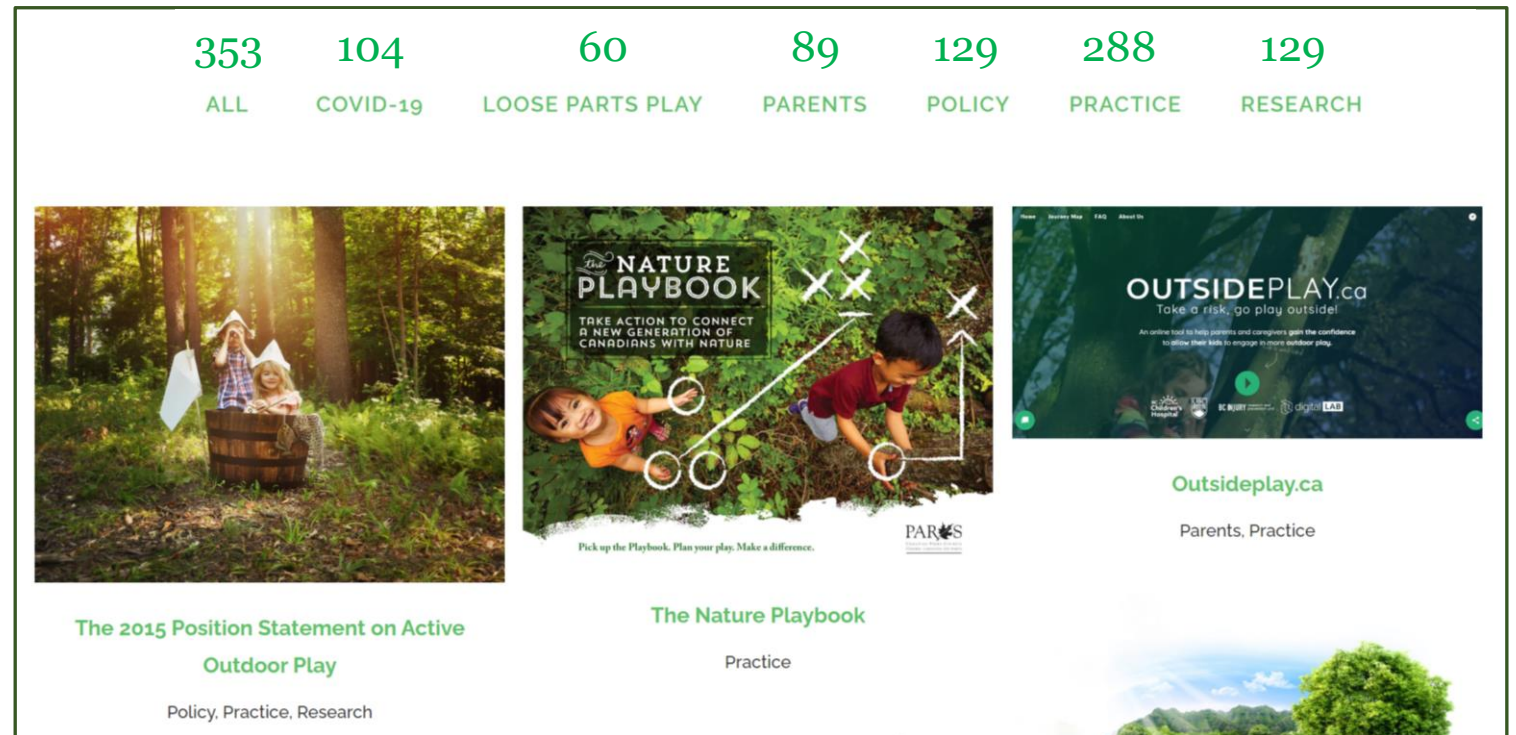
State of the Sector Report



Where we have been

An Online Library of Outdoor Play Resources

- A compendium of outdoor play projects, programs, services, and initiatives in Canada since 2015
 - Informally collected through social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram) and through our larger outdoor play networks
 - A living library of ongoing efforts in Canada (and internationally)
 - Collectively, we have identified >350 items (and counting)



Where we have been

Scoping Review of Outdoor Play in Canada: 2015-2021

- A review of academic outdoor play publications written by Canadian authors since the Position Statement
 - When it was published, the Position Statement was informed by 49 publications related to outdoor play (not exclusive to Canada).
 - For this scoping review, we identified a total of **418 publications** related to outdoor play in Canada
 - Analysis is underway...



Where we are now

Environmental Scan of Canadian Outdoor Play-Based Programs, Projects, Services, and Activities during the COVID-19 Pandemic

- A review of both academic and non-academic efforts to support outdoor play during COVID-19

TOP 5 ways Canadians are coping through the pandemic

sonnet INSURANCE | PARTICIPATION

| | | |
|----------------------------------|--|------------------------|
| 1 Getting Outdoors | 2 Talking with Family or Friends (IRL or online) | 3 Eating |
|----------------------------------|--|------------------------|



Where we are now

Environmental Scan of Canadian Outdoor Play-Based Programs, Projects, Services, and Activities during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Systematic Search of Academic and Grey Literature

Child and youth-oriented programs, projects, services, and activities related to outdoor play that have emerged in response to COVID-19 restrictions



Key Informant Consultations

Input from a 63-person Consultation Group with representatives from government, policy, not-for-profit, and for-profit organizations, education, and research



Outdoor Play During COVID-19 Survey

distributed to child and youth outdoor play program providers



Where we are now

Environmental Scan: Systematic Search of Academic and Grey Literature

- 79 academic articles, grey literature, and resource items
- National in scope
- Focused on supporting parents in bringing children and youth outdoors
- Largest effort was in bringing materials online



A child in a purple shirt and tan shorts is walking barefoot on a path made of stacked tires. The scene is outdoors with greenery in the background.

Where we are now

Environmental Scan: Outdoor Play During COVID-19 Survey

- 36 survey respondents
- The majority of respondents led outdoor programs before the COVID-19 pandemic
- The majority reported that demand had increased
- Largest barrier was in adhering to COVID-19 related safety protocols and procedures
 - *'kindergarteners are not very good at not spreading germs'*
- Greatest learning was that **children and youth thrive when outdoors**





Where we
need to go
from here

Develop a Common Vision for the Outdoor Play Sector

63-person Consultation Group

with representatives from government, policy, not-for-profit, and for-profit organizations, education, and research



Priorities and Actions for the Outdoor Play Sector

This group met 4 times over 4 months to identify, refine, and vote on the major priorities for the outdoor play sector, and the corresponding actions that need to be taken to move these priorities forward



State of the Sector Stakeholder Survey

>300 respondents from across Canada



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Priorities for Outdoor Play in Canada, 2021

Indigenous Peoples & Land-Based Outdoor Play

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

COVID-19

Safety & Outdoor Play

Health, Wellbeing & Development

Professional Development

Cross-Sectoral Connections

Outdoor Play Environments

Research & Data Collection



Priority: Promote the Health, Wellbeing and Developmental Benefits of Outdoor Play



Where we
need to go
from here



- Outdoor play is important for the physical, mental, emotional, and social development of children and the health and wellbeing of people of all ages.
- This priority is in recognition of these benefits and suggests how this information may be promoted across sectors



Priority: Promote, Protect, Preserve and Invest in Outdoor Play Environments



Where we
need to go
from here



- This priority is inclusive of all outdoor spaces in which outdoor play may occur: built environments and natural spaces.
- This priority takes into consideration the many factors associated with outdoor spaces (geographic, cultural, social, ecological) and differences between urban and rural, built cities and natural environments.



Priority: Advocate for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Outdoor Play



- This priority is grounded in and builds upon the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which recognizes ‘the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child’.
- This priority is both a stand-alone priority and is embedded throughout all priorities.





Where we
need to go
from here

Priority: Ensure that Outdoor Play Initiatives are Land-Based and Represent the Diverse Cultures, Languages and Perspectives of Indigenous Peoples of North America



- The phrasing of this priority was agreed upon by those who identify as Indigenous within the *State of the Sector Report* Consultation Group and was based on language used in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.
- This priority is both a stand-alone priority and is embedded throughout all priorities.



Priority: Reframe Views on Safety and Outdoor Play



Where we
need to go
from here



This priority focuses on the need to reframe the way in which we provide outdoor play so that there is a better balance between protecting against injury and promoting beneficial play opportunities.



Priority: Research and Support Data Collection on Outdoor Play



Where we
need to go
from here



This priority focuses on gaps in knowledge related to outdoor play, and what research and data collection efforts are needed to address those gaps.



Priority: Leverage Engagement Opportunities with the Outdoors During and After COVID-19



Where we
need to go
from here



- This priority highlights how the COVID-19 pandemic led to a rediscovery of the outdoors for physical and mental health, for enjoyment, fun, relaxation, and for a way to feel ‘normal’.
- This rediscovery and renewed appreciation of the outdoors has great potential to be an accelerator for all these outdoor play priorities.



Priority: Increase and Improve Professional Development Opportunities in Outdoor Play



Where we
need to go
from here



- This priority highlights the need to increase and improve professional development opportunities for all those involved in outdoor play (e.g., educators, parents, coaches, students).
- Professional development opportunities can help shift mindsets and provide the tools to advocate for and promote outdoor play.



Priority: Expand and Enable Cross-Sectoral Connections/Collaborations



Where we
need to go
from here



- Outdoor play initiatives, programs and projects are found across many sectors.
- This priority emphasizes the need to promote connections and collaborations across sectors so that we work together, learn from each other and amplify each other's work.





Join us!

Join the movement, become a member!

Benefits include:

- Professional identity, cohesion, and engagement
 - Membership certificate
 - Networking opportunities
- Professional development opportunities
 - Reduced registration fees for conferences, training
 - Opportunities to deliver OPC sponsored workshops and webinars
- Stay informed
 - Communication of important events, training
 - Notice of the latest research and ideas in outdoor play
- Recognition opportunities
 - Privilege of nominating candidates for OPC awards
 - Invitation for one representative to attend OPC annual general meeting

<https://www.outdoorplaycanada.ca/#join-us>



Thank you!

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