



## Outdoor Play Canada May 2022 Newsletter

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

### Special Issue of the OPC Newsletter!

This month's OPC Newsletter features stories from the [Lawson Foundation's Outdoor Play Strategy \(OPS\) Phase 2 cohort!](#) These demonstration projects focus on benefiting early learning and child care (ELCC) across Canada and aim to affect systemic change in the areas of ELCC legislation, post-secondary education, ongoing professional learning for educators, and the implementation of ELCC programs in communities everywhere. Read on to learn more about some of these ambitious and innovative projects!

Stories from OPS Phase 2 Projects...

- [The first 18 months of the "Creating Optimal Outdoor Spaces for Infants and Toddlers in Early Learning and Child Care" project](#)
- [Informing Early Learning and Child Care Legislation in Newfoundland and Labrador](#)
- [PROmoting Early Childhood Outside \(PRO-ECO\): An Outdoor Play Intervention for Children Aged 3 to 5 Years in Early Learning and Child Care Programs](#)
- [More from the OPS Phase 2 cohort](#)

On the horizon...

- News: [OPC UNICEF Report Card 17 Echo Event!](#)
- News: [Save the date for the 2023 Breath of Fresh Air Summit!](#)
- [Join us!](#)

## The first 18 months of the "Creating Optimal Outdoor Spaces for Infants and Toddlers in Early Learning and Child Care" project

The "*Poupons et trottoirs ouverts vers le monde extérieur* : Creating Optimal Outdoor Spaces for Infants and Toddlers in Early Learning and Child Care" project is based on the premise that every child needs space and freedom to grow. The primary idea is to provide infants and toddlers, housed in a community of children, the opportunity to spend as much time as possible outdoors during the day: to be allowed to not only explore the outdoors, but to sleep outdoors, play outdoors, and live outdoors.

In this first year of the project, we have put everything in place so that the Play to Grow spaces in our three pilot project spaces can be planned and developed in parallel. The dream of seeing children free in their discoveries, curious about the world and eager to learn, will come true thanks to the educators, landscape architect, architects, manufacturers, and contractors who have combined their respective expertise to create a whole, a living environment conducive to children's optimal development.

Read the full story on the first 18 months of this project here ([EN/FR](#)).

## Informing Early Learning and Child Care Legislation in Newfoundland and Labrador

A colleague and I are writing a book together. We're calling it "Things You Didn't Think You'd Do As An ECE". Today's entry was about what to do when you find a dead blue jay. Last week we wrote a risk assessment on feeding buck goats in the kidding season. There's also an entry about the time we had to shovel out the chicken coop after a storm because the chickens didn't like having cold feet.

Values of land, nature, creativity and whimsy are what we are trying to instill in our own community at Cloudberry Forest School, in which the common adjective from teachers, children, parents and licensing officers is "magic". This belief in land, in weather, in childhood freedom and the role of the adult led us to our project with the [Lawson Foundation](#). We are creating a demonstration centre, lab school and proof of concept - showing as best we can how we take these values and blend them with the checklists, safety protocols and best practices of early childhood education and care, child care services legislation and regulation.

Read the full story about the [Cloudberry Forest School Project here](#).

## PRoMoting Early Childhood Outside (PRO-ECO): An Outdoor Play Intervention for Children Aged 3 to 5 Years in Early Learning and Child Care Programs

Sunshine, rain, hail and snow! The PRoMoting Early Childhood Outside (PRO-ECO) research team have been collecting data on children's outdoor play in all kinds of weather during the month of April. This study takes place at eight early childhood education centres operated by the YMCA of Greater Vancouver and aims to evaluate the impact and acceptability of an outdoor play intervention on children's outdoor play. As part of the outdoor play intervention, four early childhood education centres received new additions to their outdoor play spaces at the end of 2021. Children at these sites are now navigating new risks and challenges on an innovative natural cedar play structure or catching rain water in a new child-friendly water pump. Four additional centres will receive new additions to their outdoor play space in the next few months as part of the PRO-ECO project.

Learn more about the PRO-ECO project [here](#).

## More from the OPS Phase 2 cohort

While the above is just a small sample of the OPS Phase 2 cohort project activities, you can learn more about these and the other demonstration projects on the [Lawson Foundation's website](#). You can also learn more about the Lawson Foundation's OPS approach and anticipated outcomes by reading their [theory of change](#).

## OPC UNICEF Report Card 17 Echo Event

Join Outdoor Play Canada on May 25<sup>th</sup> 12-pm ET for our UNICEF Report Card 17 Echo Event! This online event will include panelists [Dr. Raktim Mitra](#) (Toronto Metropolitan University School of Urban and Regional Planning, Outdoor Play Canada leadership member), [Dr. Richard Larouche](#) (University of Lethbridge Faculty of Health Sciences, Director of the Physical Activity, Transport & Health Research Group), and [Gillian Petrini](#) (Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment, Child and Nature Alliance of Canada practitioner) who will collectively discuss how their work addresses the intersection of outdoor play and meeting/addressing UNICEF's Report Card indicators, including those on ambient air pollution exposure, children's environmental capital (awareness of climate change), urban green space, and child road traffic concerns.

Don't forget to also join-in for UNICEF's launch of Report Card 17 on May 24<sup>th</sup> as well as many other pop-up and echo events. [Learn more here.](#)

## Save the Date for the 2023 Breath of Fresh Air Summit!

Save the date for the Biennial Breath of Fresh Air Summit, **September 27-29<sup>th</sup>, 2023** at Wesley Clover Parks, in Ottawa ON! [Breath of Fresh Air](#) is a multi-day Outdoor Play Summit where thought leaders, practitioners, researchers, and policy makers can connect and share best practices.

The theme for the 2023 summit is 'Research, policy, and practice – their intersections for the promotion of outdoor play'. The summit will feature inspiring keynote addresses and open conversations on how these three elements may promote and shape the future of outdoor play in Canada and abroad.

*Have an idea for a sub-theme or presentation you'd like to see? Interested in presenting at the summit? [Contact us!](#)*

## Join Us!

Join the movement, become an OPC member! Show your support of our effort to promote, protect, and preserve access to play in nature and the outdoors for all people living in Canada.

Membership benefits include being highlighted in this newsletter, discounts at Outdoor Play Canada endorsed events, access to resources to support your outdoor-play related work, as well as many professional engagement & development opportunities.

[Learn more here.](#)

*We welcome blog posts and summaries of relevant research studies for publication on the [OPC website](#). If you have any items that you think would be of interest to fellow OPC members, please contact [info@outdoorplaycanada.ca](mailto:info@outdoorplaycanada.ca). We respect the amount of unnecessary emails you receive so the plan is for a maximum of one OPC newsletter every other month. Your feedback and comments are always welcome.*