



## Outdoor Play Canada May 2024 Newsletter

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

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### Regional Outdoor Play Feature: Nova Scotia Outdoor Play Network

**In July 2023**, our network came together at Dalhousie University to discuss the NS Outdoor Play Report and harvest ideas for next steps, building off the [nine priorities for the outdoor play sector](#) as identified by Outdoor Play Canada. Key action areas were identified and are being used to spark ongoing discussions.

**In December 2023**, Drs. Son Truong (PI) and Michelle Stone (Co-PI) were awarded a New Health Investigator Grant from Research Nova Scotia (Jan 2024-Dec 2025) to develop a more integrated, multi-sectoral approach to outdoor/nature-based recreation and mental health services to support youth wellbeing in Nova Scotia. The research objectives are to: 1) develop an understanding of existing nature-based services, resources and programs that support youth mental health and wellbeing, and identify gaps or disparities in provision and access in NS; 2) develop an understanding of NS youth perspectives, needs, values, and barriers related to nature, and accessing natural spaces and nature-based programs in their communities; 3) identify recommendations,

including a youth-designed action plan, to guide policy and program decisions, and research related to nature-based services for youth in NS.

**At the end of March**, play champion, IPA Canada board member, and founder of PlayGroundology, Alex Smith, reached out to members in our network to share the exciting news that the UN General Assembly had approved a draft resolution establishing an [International Day of Play](#) to be recognized on June 11<sup>th</sup> of each year, starting in 2024. Since then, our group has been meeting regularly to discuss how we could work within our interdisciplinary team (health, recreation, education, research, landscape design, government, community partners) to generate discussion and awareness of the value and importance of children's play through celebrating this inaugural day in the Halifax Regional Municipality and Nova Scotia. Stay tuned for updates on activities!

Finally, a partnership between South Shore Active Communities and Recreation Nova Scotia, with funding from the Province of Nova Scotia, led to a new digital and print resource entitled: [Why Outdoor Play Matters for Children: a practical guide for parents and caregivers](#). 15,000 English and 2,000 French books were distributed through pre-primary classrooms, Before and After School Programs (BAP), and first-time families at post-natal discharge from hospitals.

Want your region to be next? Send us an email at: [info@outdoorplaycanada.ca](mailto:info@outdoorplaycanada.ca)

## Unveiling the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play!

The public unveiling of the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play and Forest Explorers building is finally (almost) here! On **June 27<sup>th</sup>**, join Outdoor Play Canada, Andrew Fleck Children's Services, Algonquin College, and the CHEO Research Institute in celebrating the opening of the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play, a research-practice-policy collaboration to advance outdoor play and learning for the overall health and wellbeing of children in Canada!

[Register for the event here!](#) Proudly supported by the Government of Canada and ParticipACTION.

## Blog post: Just childhood games – or new worlds of discovery? How and why children develop microcultures during competitive play

A wealth of research demonstrates that there are developmental benefits for children's participation in competitive play, when they attempt to outperform their peers in activities such as "Tag." The role of competition in children's development of microcultures, however, remains poorly understood. Microcultures consist of smaller peer communities children develop where children adopt new roles and identities (e.g., becoming a builder of a tree fort), construct new cultural customs together (e.g., requiring everyone to bring logs to a fire), and engage their imagination and creativity for the purposes of building new worlds. In this blog post, Drs. Bauer and Pike from the Department of Pediatrics at the University of British Columbia describe their latest research examining how and why children may develop microcultures during their competitive play outdoors.

[Read the full blog post here!](#)

## Blog post: Navigating the Landscape of Active Play: Insights from Global Surveillance and Monitoring

In today's dynamic world, the significance of active play in children's development cannot be overstated. Yet, understanding the global landscape of active play and its monitoring practices poses a complex challenge. In this guest blog post, Dr. Eun-Young Lee and colleagues describe their recent [comprehensive review published in the Journal of Exercise Science and Fitness](#) that explores global surveillance and monitoring efforts surrounding active

play, focusing on previous [Global Matrix\\*](#) initiatives, providing valuable insights into this critical aspect of childhood.

[Read the full blog post here!](#)

## Blog post: CPS says risky play crucial for child development, experts urge embracing outdoor adventure

Following the release of the Canadian Pediatric Society's Position Statement on Risky Outdoor Play, Carleton University journalism student Sarah Forrest sought out OPC's Executive Director, Dr. Louise de Lannoy, and CHEO postdoctoral fellow, Dr. Maeghan James, to chat more about the Position Statement, the importance of risky play for children's health and wellbeing, concerns around safety, how to support parents in managing their feelings of fear, and how all this intersects with recent changes to outdoor play spaces in several Ottawa schools.

[Read the full blog post here!](#)

## Blog post: What we carry in our heart shapes our lives – An interview with Dianne Whelan about her new film, 500 Days in the Wild

500 Days in the Wild is a new film that follows filmmaker Dianne Whelan through her six-year journey to cover the entire 24,000km of the [Trans Canada Trail](#) without a motor – by foot, bicycle, canoe, and kayak. Her story is one filled with joy and frustration (mostly at keeping a tent intact), highs and lows. But what really stood out over the 124-minute film is her deep gratitude for the earth, for the people she met, and for the six years she had the opportunity to spend, outdoors. So when Dianne's agent reached out to Outdoor Play Canada to see if we would be interested in chatting with Diane about her journey – we emphatically said yes!

[Read the full blog post here!](#)

[Watch the full interview here!](#)

## Blog post: Why Children Need Risk, Fear and Excitement in Play – And why adults' fears put them at risk

In April 2023 Jon Haidt was invited to [give a lecture](#) at the University of British Columbia. Given that he was flying out to Vancouver, he wanted to meet Professor [Mariana Brussoni](#), Canada's leading expert on outdoor risky play research (and OPC Board member). Their hour-long meeting expanded his thinking about risk and play, and helped him write Chapters 2 and 3 of [The Anxious Generation](#). Jon was so encouraged by Mariana and her work that he gave her an open-ended invitation to write whatever she wanted at After Babel.

[Read Dr. Mariana Brussoni's After Babel essay here!](#)

## New paper: Children's independent mobility, school travel and the surrounding neighborhood

In this article, Dr. Larouche and colleagues examined the associations between features of the built environment (using GIS; geographic information systems) and children's independent mobility and active transportation based on a national Canadian sample including over 2,000 parents of 7- to 12-year-olds. The built environment features they explored included park density, blue space, population density, greenspace, and intersection density (e.g., number of street intersections in a given area, indicative of a denser road network). The authors found no associations between built environment features and children's independent mobility; however, children living in neighbourhoods with more greenspace and greater intersection density were more likely to engage in active transportation.

[Read the full article here.](#)

## New paper: Being “outdoors” in a new country: associations between immigrant characteristics, outdoor recreation activities, and settlement satisfaction in Canada

In this article, Charles Ulises Rodriguez and Dr. Richard Larouche investigated associations between immigrant characteristics and participation in outdoor activities and settlement satisfaction among adults living in Canada using data from over 15,000 participants from the 2016 Canadian General Social Survey. The authors found that participation in outdoor leisure activities is associated with a greater sense of belonging and integration among immigrants. However, immigrants engaged in much fewer outdoor activities than non-immigrants, underscoring a need for promoting these activities for improving the settlement process.

[Read the full blog post here.](#)

## Dr. Mariana Brussoni wins 2024 Joe L Frost Distinguished Research Award at the US Play Coalition Conference!

Congratulations to OPC Board Member, Dr Mariana Brussoni, who was awarded the 2024 Joe L Frost Award for distinguished research at the US Play Coalition Conference in Indiana held April 16-18, 2024! In the mid-2000s, Mariana dared to push back against the accepted attitude that play should be 'as safe as possible' instead of 'as safe as necessary', recognizing that this approach to raising children was likely problematic for their physical, mental, social, and emotional health and wellbeing. This conviction, backed by nearly two decades of research (with Mariana's research group often leading the charge), has led to a revolutionary shift in mindset that will undoubtedly support the healthy development of children in Canada and abroad.

Congrats Mariana! [Learn more here.](#)

## Open Streets Hamilton 2024!

Open Streets is a Hamilton, Ontario event promoting sustainable modes of travel, opening up a 3.6km portion of King Street East, allowing people to walk, cycle, roll and play up and down the street, car-free. This year's event runs 10am-2pm on both Sunday May 26th and Sunday June 23rd. The 3.6KM corridor will serve as host to dozens of activities from community partners at their 5 Activation Hubs and King St businesses along the route.

Interested in volunteering, visit [this sign up form](#) or reach out to [OpenStreets@EnvironmentHamilton.org](mailto:OpenStreets@EnvironmentHamilton.org). You can also check out the [City of Hamilton's website](#), and [follow on social media](#). Open Streets is brought to you by the City of Hamilton in partnership with Environment Hamilton. Proudly supported by TD.

## Blueprints for Building Quality Participation on Playgrounds for Children and Youth with Disabilities - Programmer and Caregiver versions

A team of researchers and practitioners with expertise in childhood disability, inclusive play, and community programming have produced two Quality Participation on Playgrounds Blueprint resources. They are adapted from the Canadian Disability Participation Project's Blueprint for Building Quality Participation in Sport for Children, Youth, and Adults with a Disability. The resources present 20 evidence-informed strategies for building quality participation on playgrounds for children with disabilities.

[Learn more here.](#)

## Join Our Outdoor Early Childhood Education Community of Practice!

The Outdoor Early Childhood Education Community of Practice, led by the [Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play partnership](#), is geared towards early childhood educators across Canada that are interested in and/or already in support of regularly bringing children outdoors!

The overarching ethos is to promote collaboration, empower practitioners to promote outdoor play opportunities across a variety of settings, and ensure outdoor early childhood education programming is culturally appropriate and place-based. [Learn more and sign up here!](#)

## 10-Year Anniversary of the Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play

In 2025, it will be 10 years since the release of the [Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play](#). To mark this milestone, an initial group of researchers from the [CHEO Research Institute](#), [Outdoor Play Canada](#), [Queen's University](#), [ParticipACTION](#), [the Alana Institute](#), the [National Taiwan University of Physical Education and Sport](#), [University of Ghana](#), [Auckland University of Technology](#), [International Play Association](#), and the [Copenhagen University Hospital](#) have come together to begin developing an update to the Position Statement, to describe its impact, make it global in reach and relevance, and draw on insights gained from the past decade, including the global COVID-19 pandemic.

We are looking for insightful and energetic individuals who share our passion for outdoor play to join us in this endeavour! [Learn more about how to join, here.](#)

## New OPC Membership Structure - Join Us!

We have changed the OPC membership structure in an effort to improve accessibility and inclusivity. Membership now consists of two options: general (\$0-99) and champions (\$100) members.

All members now have access to the members-only section of the website regardless of payment (but you still have to renew). Champions have the added bonus of being celebrated on our [About Us](#) page and will have a tree planted in their honour at our new [Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play](#), located at Wesley Clover Parks in Ottawa, ON!

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.

[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.*