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## **Outdoor Play Canada May 2025 Newsletter**

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

**In this issue...**

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# Outdoor Play Canada is Seeking Applicants for its Subcommittees!

We are looking to fill the following Subcommittee roles (see terms of reference for each committee in the affiliated links):

- [Nominations Committee](#) (for 2026)
- [Sustainability and Fundraising Committee](#)
- [BoFA Organizing Committee](#)

[See the full call here.](#)

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## [Breath of Fresh Air Summit : Registration is open!](#)

Registration is open for the 2025 Breath of Fresh Air Outdoor Play Summit! The theme for the 2025 Breath of Fresh Air 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!

[Learn more here.](#)

## [Breath of Fresh Air Summit : Call for Volunteers!](#)

Looking for a fun way to give back to your community, while surrounded by nature and nature-loving folk? Then come volunteer with us! There are endless ways your help is welcome – in planning, promoting, scheduling, setting up, answering questions, guiding attendees, and more!

[Reach out to us](#) to find out how your skills can help make this event a success!

## [Nominations are Open for the Outdoor Play Canada 2025 Awards!](#)

The Outdoor Play Canada 2025 Awards will be presented at this year's Breath of Fresh Air Outdoor Play Summit! If you know of an individual or organization that has demonstrated exceptional commitment and leadership in the promotion of outdoor play, nominate them for an OPC award!

Awards category include: 2023 OPC Honour Award, Dr. Mariana Brussoni Award, Policy Award, Practice Award, Research Award and Youth Award!

**The deadline for nominations is June 30th, 2025!** [Learn more here.](#)

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## [Brianna Nasrallah, M.Sc. Student with the HALO Research Group, Presents her Masters Research at Carleton University](#)

Congratulations to [Brianna Nasrallah](#) for presenting her Master's research on the 2025 Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play at Carleton University's Health Science Research Day! Brianna was also awarded the 2025 Best Graduate Poster! Brianna's poster reviewed the development of the Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play and survey development and results.

Check out Brianna's poster [here](#).

## [New Study: Outdoor Play and Learning \(OPAL\) in Schools: Community-Based Research \(OPAL 1.0\)](#)

In collaboration with the Richmond School District, the Outside Play Lab (OPL) at UBC, led by [Dr. Mariana Brussoni](#) is excited to launch a new study called Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) 1.0. This one-year study is supported by the CIHR Catalyst Grant [2025-2026] to explore how outdoor play and learning (OPAL) currently happens in Canadian elementary schools and how it can become a meaningful part of the daily school routine.

This study builds on earlier work that created [an online tool](#), designed to support OPAL for elementary teachers. That study was led by Megan Zeni – a key member of the OPL and Outdoor Play Canada, and a teacher at the Richmond School District. Thanks to strong partnership and past research, the OPL and Richmond School District are bringing the OPAL program – already tested in early childhood education settings – into elementary schools. Ultimately, the study aims to shape an OPAL program that reflects the District's needs and priorities – helping take learning outdoors, strengthening children's connection to nature, and promoting their physical health and mental well-being. This study will lay the groundwork for a future, larger-scale rollout of OPAL in the District to expand its reach and test its effectiveness.

For more information about this research and other active studies at the Lab click [here](#).

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## [4 Seasons of Indigenous Learning confirmed for 2025-2026!](#)

**Outdoor Learning Partners** are very excited to share with you that, as promised, super early bird registration is **now open** for the 2025-2026 [4 Seasons of Indigenous Learning Course!](#) (Open until 30th of June!) They have brought together an *incredible* [group of Indigenous presenters](#) for the year ahead! Beginning in the Fall and running until the Spring each year, this course serves to support participants in deepening their understanding of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives while strengthening connections with the local Land and supporting more respectful, reciprocal relationships.

\*Bonus!\* Use the following OPC coupon code to take **25% off the course fee: 4Seasons25%**

Learn more about the [4 Seasons of Indigenous Learning Course here](#)

## [The Lawson Foundation and Taylor Newberry's New Case Study of the Cloudberry Forest School Project: Informing Early Learning and Child Care Legislation in Newfoundland and Labrador](#)

This project, part of the Lawson Foundation Outdoor Play Strategy 2.0, explored changes to provincial legislation in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) that would allow outdoor-based programs such as Forest and Nature Schools to operate as licensed Early Learning and Child Care programs (ELCCs). The NL government provided Cloudberry Forest School with an exemption to operate as a full-time ELCC so that Cloudberry could serve as a learning lab. Officials could visit the program in action—to learn, dialogue about practice and policy, and conduct mock inspections—and use their learning and experiences to inform policy recommendations.

You can find the full report [here!](#)

## [The Lawson Foundation Report: The Power of a Relational, Values-Driven Approach to Building Adult Capacity: A Practical Resource for ECE Leaders](#)

The Lawson Foundation's Outdoor Play Strategy 2.0 (OPS 2.0) was a pan-Canadian initiative focused on building adult capacity to support outdoor play in early childhood education (ECE). This resource translates the evidence and learning from OPS 2.0 into a practical resource that ECE leaders—such as

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faculty, directors, and pedagogical leaders— can use on their journey to creating high quality outdoor play experiences for young children. It includes four calls to action to support ECE leaders seeking to build adult capacity among the early learning community and multi sector partners.

Read the full report [here](#).

## [New Findings in Preschool Children’s Fundamental Movement Skills Development: Structured Active Play Comparable to Skill-Oriented Physical Education](#)

The preschool period is a critical window for the development of Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS). A systematic review and meta-analysis published in *BMC Public Health*, synthesizing data from 23 studies involving 2,201 children aged 2–6 years, revealed equivalent efficacy between structured active play and skill-oriented physical education in improving FMS, offering novel insights for physical activity interventions.

[Learn more here.](#)

## [A global PhD network for research and collaboration: Supporting future researchers in school-based outdoor learning and teaching – Part I](#)

In this first of three blog posts, Dr. Karen Seierøe Barfod and Dr Mads Bølling introduce an international PhD network that creates space for thematic peer exchange across institutions and borders. They explore how the network emerged, what it offers its members, and how it supports both individual development and a collective research culture in outdoor learning and teaching. The next two posts will explore emerging research trends from the network’s PhD projects and reflect on the broader value of cross-institutional collaboration.

To access the blog post and learn more about the network click [here!](#)

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## [A Guide on Environmental Considerations of Outdoor Play](#)

Applying an Indigenous Two-Eyed Seeing approach – taking the strengths from both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing, [this resource guide](#) was developed by Katy Cameron, a First Nations female and MSc former graduate student with the HALO Research Lab, as an information tool for families, practitioners as well as professionals to learn more about key considerations and principles to be aware of when playing outdoors in our natural environments. The guide includes an extensive list of resources on Indigenous teachings, Land-based learning, outdoor play initiatives across Canada and much more!

This guide comes with an informative [infographic for practitioners and professionals](#) and an [infographic for families!](#)

## [Elements Society: Education with Impact](#)

**Elements Society** is a Canadian non-profit organization dedicated to inspiring environmental action through education. By employing an interdisciplinary, systems-thinking approach, the organization highlights the interconnectedness of the natural world and our role within it. The Elements Society website offers a rich collection of resources—including lesson plans, professional development opportunities, and impact reports—designed to promote sustainability and empower youth to become changemakers in their communities. These tools are valuable for educators, community leaders, and anyone committed to environmental education.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

## [FERN \(Facilitating Environmental Resilience and Nature-Connectedness\)](#)

The Elements Society is proud to launch **Find Educational Resources Now (FERN)**—a dynamic, centralized platform that connects educators and learners with environmental education programs across British Columbia and Alberta (for now!). FERN supports educators in fostering environmental literacy, resilience, and nature-connectedness, particularly in early childhood education. The interactive online hub features accessible, research-informed tools, lesson ideas, and professional learning modules that promote outdoor, inquiry-based learning grounded in sustainability and care for the Earth.

To learn more about FERN and its resources, [click here](#).

## [Get Kids Paddling!](#)

Get Kids Paddling is a national not-for-profit organization actively working towards a future vision where

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paddling experiences are accessible to all children and youth across Canada. They hope to achieve this through: supporting organizations that foster these experiences

Promoting opportunities for kids to safely play and learn through paddling self-propelled watercraft

Connecting children and youth across Canada with local paddling experiences and more remote expeditions

The Get Kids Paddling website houses lots of useful resources, including a growing library of FREE webinar recordings that explore a wide variety of topics related to getting more kids paddling! Our hope is that these webinars will contribute to a long-overdue nationwide dialogue, resulting in more paddling opportunities for young people across Canada. Please share and utilize these resources to spark conversations about getting more kids paddling in your community!

You can access their main website [here](#) and access recordings of all their past webinars [here](#)!

## [39 Ways to Play Outside in Spring by Active for Life!](#)

[A new article](#), created by Active for Life, offers a diverse collection of activities that encourage physical movement, creativity, and exploration this season. 39 Ways to Play Outside in Spring, covers nature walks and gardening to games that can be played in the backyard or at the park. These simple yet fun outdoor play ideas are designed to help children build confidence, develop new skills, and enjoy the benefits of active play in nature.

[Check out the article here!](#)

## [Outdoor Learning School has published 7 new Outdoor & Indigenous Learning Resources](#)

Outdoor Learning School has released these 7 brand new [Outdoor & Indigenous Learning Resources](#) are all written and developed by Canadian educators, authors and organizations:

1. [Claws, Paws & Jaws](#) Predator Learning Kit
  2. [Dreaming Alongside](#) Children's book by Monique Gray Smith
  3. [Together, a Forest](#) Children's book by Roz MacLean
  4. [52 Ways to Reconcile](#) Book for adults by David A. Robertson
  5. [The Everyday School Garden](#) Resource book by Karine Céré & Marie-Pascale Brown
  6. [Jardiner à l'école](#) Une ressource par Karine Céré et Marie-Pascale Brown
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## 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!](#)

### Join Us!

In an effort to improve accessibility and inclusivity, the OPC membership now consists of two options: general (\$0-99) and champions (\$100) members.

All members have access to the members-only section of the website regardless of payment. 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.*

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