



Welcome to the Outdoor Play Canada November 2025 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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Join Us!

Learn more about Outdoor Play
Canada membership!

Learn more about our
Community of Practice!

Featured Announcements

[The CCOP National Panel on Regulating Outdoor and Land based \(OLB\) Programs is looking for subcommittee members!](#)

The CCOP National Panel on Regulating OLB Programs is looking for new members to join its subcommittees! The National Panel aims to promote changes in Early Learning and Child Care regulations, to help mainstream outdoor and land-based ECE in Canada. The four subcommittees are:

- **Professional Development:** Exploring ways of ensuring quality training and professional development for OLB practitioners and leaders.
- **Regulation Subcommittee:** Exploring changes needed in the regulatory and legislative frameworks to allow OLB programs to be recognized and subsidized.
- **Quality Subcommittee:** Exploring ways of ensuring spatial and pedagogical quality in OLB programs.
- **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigeneity (EDII) Subcommittee:** Exploring ways of ensuring EDII principles are embedded across all aspects of OLB programs.

If you'd like to get involved with one of the subcommittees, we invite you to send a short Expression of Interest (max. 500 words) describing which subcommittee you are interested in joining, your related background and experience, and how you hope to contribute.

Learn more about the CCOP and the National Panel at www.outdoorplaycanada.ca/ccop

[Click here to submit your application!](#)

[Announcing the 2025 Outdoor Play Canada Award Winners!](#)

The 2025 OPC Awards were presented at the biennial Breath of Fresh Air Outdoor Play Summit at Wesley Clover Parks in Ottawa. [Learn more here!](#)

Policy Award 2025 Winners: Dr. Suzanne Beno and Dr. Emilie Beaulieu



Dr. Suzanne Beno (left) and Dr. Emilie Beaulieu (right) led the development of the Canadian Paediatric Society's Outdoor Risky Play Position Statement, Healthy childhood development through outdoor risky play: Navigating the balance with injury prevention.



Practice Award 2025 Winners: Carolyn Fornataro and Sarah Regan

Carolyn Fornataro (left) and Sarah Regan (right) have been honored for their exceptional dedication to quality outdoor play practice: Carolyn for bringing daily outdoor learning to CHEO School students with complex medical needs, and Sarah for designing and leading a full-immersion outdoor classroom and garden curriculum that weaves unstructured play into academic learning.

Research Award 2025 Winner: Dr. Eun-Young Lee

Dr. Eun-Young Lee is an internationally recognized scholar whose research has advanced the equity-driven study of outdoor play at the intersection of climate change, social justice, and public health. Their pioneering contributions include several first-author publications that critically examine how environmental conditions and climate change impact diverse groups' opportunities for safe, active outdoor play.



Youth Award 2025 Winner: Trinity Lowthian

Over the past two years, Trinity has been an integral partner on the Sending Preschoolers Outside (SPROUT)-able study led by the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play, where she has consistently demonstrated a deep commitment to advancing outdoor play opportunities for children of all abilities. Trinity is a true champion of inclusion, using both her professional and lived experiences to inform and strengthen projects aimed at promoting equitable access to outdoor play.

Andrew Fleck Children's Services' Forest Explorers Building Honoured in the 2025 Ottawa Urban Design Awards

Outdoor Play Canada is thrilled to share that CSV Architects has been awarded a 2025 Ottawa Urban Design Award—in the Urban Infill category—for their design of Andrew Fleck Children's Services' Forest Explorers building, home of the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play!

The building was recognized at the November 6, 2025 Ottawa Heritage and Urban Design Award Ceremony at Ottawa City Hall, where the City of Ottawa celebrated urban design excellence and built heritage conservation across the city. The 2025 Ottawa Heritage and Urban Design Awards showcased outstanding projects completed in Ottawa since 2023.

Ottawa Heritage and Urban Design Awards

Prix du patrimoine et de l'esthétique urbain d'Ottawa

Award of Excellence | Urban Infill
Prix d'excellence | Aménagement des terrains intercalaires

Forest Explorers Outdoor Early Learning Centre | Centre d'apprentissage plein air les explorateurs de la forêt

Project Team/Equipe du projet :
Andrew Fleck Children's Services
CSV Architects
WSP
Novatech Engineering Consultants Ltd.
Lashley + Associates
Goodkey, Weedmark & Associates
Gemtec
Fuller Construction Co.

Mark Sutcliffe
Mark Sutcliffe
Mayor / Le maire

2025

The certificate features a photograph of the Forest Explorers building at dusk, with the year '2025' prominently displayed in large white numerals on a dark background.



Lawson Foundation's new Policy Brief on Regulating Outdoor and Land-Based Early Learning Programs is out!

A new policy brief from the Lawson Foundation is grounded in experience and evidence from leading practitioners, policymakers, and researchers in Canada

Policy Brief
October 2025

Regulating Outdoor & Land-based Programs as Early Learning and Child Care

Context

The Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (EWELCC) system is evolving as demand for high-quality, affordable spaces grows across the country. Outdoor and Land-based Programs (OLBs) provide a unique opportunity to expand access to Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC), advancing healthy child development, early learning, equity, environmental stewardship, and reconciliation. Currently, OLBs are not yet regulated or licensed as independent programs due to regulatory

and abroad. The policy brief explains the unique features of OLBs and provides a conceptual framework for developing a new category of regulations and licensing for OLBs. Why? Simply put, distinct programs need distinct regulations. For OLBs, we need to move to licensing the program, not the facility. [Access the brief here!](#)

Frameworks designed around facility-based care models, which make it challenging to accommodate outdoor and land-based approaches. As a result, efforts to license OLBs within existing frameworks often feel like forcing a square peg into a round hole.

Without regulation, these transformative programs are excluded from the CWELCC system and remain inaccessible to many families, perpetuating inequities and denying benefits and opportunities to children.

Opportunity

Provincial and Territorial governments can exercise their jurisdiction over ELCC to develop a distinct regulatory category and licensing process for OLBs, separate from existing centre-based, home-based, and home agency-based care.

What are Outdoor and Land-Based Programs?

An Outdoor and Land-Based Program (OLB) is a model of ELCC that

- operates primarily outdoors/on the Land for most of the scheduled day, in an unfenced natural space, in all weather and all seasons (except for during extreme weather), and
 - is delivered by specially trained and qualified staff, guided by a philosophy of outdoor and Land-based learning, and aligned with the provincial/territorial early learning framework.
- To ensure safety and quality, OLBs operate with high educator-to-child ratios and safety standards.

Practice

[SPROUT-able's Modules on how to support children with disabilities in engaging in outdoor play and learning in natural spaces.](#)

The [SPROUT-able team](#) has put together five videos and tip sheets to help caregivers and families wishing to support children with disabilities in engaging in outdoor play and learning in natural spaces.

Module 1: Communicating with Families – Health Concerns

Module 2: Communicating with Families – Physical Safety

Module 3: Sensory Needs – Dressing for Outdoor Play

Module 4: Risky Play

Module 5: Supporting Inclusion Outside with Puppets

[Check out the SPROUT-able videos and tip sheets here!](#)



[Active for Life's Guide to How to Help Your Kids Connect with Nature as the Weather Cools Down](#)

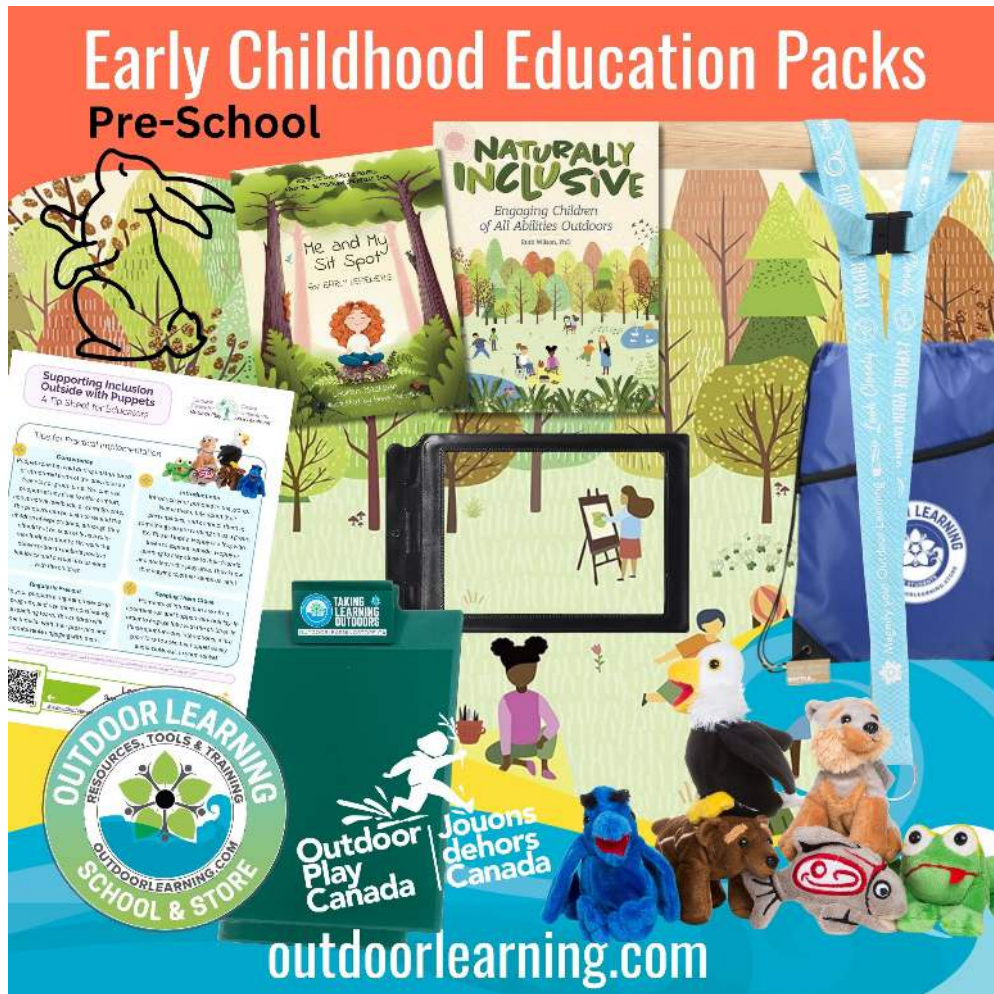
Even when it's chilly outside, it's important for kids to connect with nature, work through discomfort, and build resilience. Here are some tips for how to help them do just that. [Read more here!](#)



[The Outdoor Learning School & Store's Winter Courses](#)

The Outdoor Learning School & Store is offering a series of free and accessible online workshops and courses this winter designed for educators and practitioners interested in outdoor and nature-based learning.

- New Early Years Kits offered in partnership with Outdoor Play Canada → [Find the toolkits here.](#)
- New Early Years Outdoor Play and Learning Certification Program → [Learn more here.](#)
- Upcoming Outdoor Learning Courses & Certifications → [Learn more here.](#)
- Indigenous Language Learning Opportunities for the Winter → [Learn more here.](#)



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Research

[Sharing Knowledge on Inclusive Outdoor Play: Alessia Capone Presents the SPROUT Study at ISAPA and ECSEPS](#)

This year, Alessia Capone, PhD candidate at the University of Toronto in collaboration with the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play, had the opportunity to share research on inclusive outdoor play at two exciting events: the International Symposium of Adapted Physical Activity (ISAPA) in Kerry, Ireland, and the Eastern Canada



Sport and Exercise Psychology Symposium (ECSEPS) in London, Ontario. [Learn more here.](#)



[Presentation by Dr. Shawnda Morrison to the WHO-Health-Enhancing Physical Activity \(HEPA\) Europe](#)

Dr. Shawnda Morrison gave a presentation on OPC's global [2025 Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play](#) to the World Health Organization Health-Enhancing Physical Activity (HEPA) Europe – Environment working group, which focuses on Environmental Approaches to HEPA in the European region. Dr. Morrison's presentation was titled "The 2025 Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play: A project led by Outdoor Play Canada". [Read more here.](#)



[The Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play's 2024 - 2025 Annual Report](#)

The CCOP Annual Report serves to highlight the work our research-practice-policy collaboration has done over the past year, from the launch of the Forest Explorers building in June 2024 to May 2025. [Access the Annual Report here.](#)



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Become an Outdoor Play Canada Member!

We believe that if all parents, neighbours, care providers, practitioners, policy makers, researchers, educators, insurance providers, schools and municipalities better understood the value of outdoor play for physical, mental, emotional, social and environmental health and development, they'd be more likely to prioritize, initiate, nurture and support efforts to get everyone, of all ages, outside.

If we want outdoor play to be an integral part of daily life in Canada, we're going to have to get our hands dirty. [Roll up your sleeves and join us!](#)

In an effort to improve accessibility and inclusivity, the OPC membership now consists of two options: general (\$0–99) and champion (\$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 the [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.

Become a Member Now!

Join our 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 who are interested in and/or already support 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. We organize regular quarterly gatherings focused on discussion and engagement on a variety of topics related to outdoor play and learning.



Learn more and sign up 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. 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.

Thanks for reading and have fun until our next newsletter!





Don't know what to play? Check out our Adventure Calendar!

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Our mailing address is:

Outdoor Play Canada, 415 Corkstown Rd, Ottawa, ON, K2K 2Y1

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