

Canadian
Centre for
Outdoor Play



Educators Teaching Educators: Canada's Outdoor Early Childhood Education Continuous Professional Learning Framework

2024



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Section 1: Introduction

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Land Acknowledgement

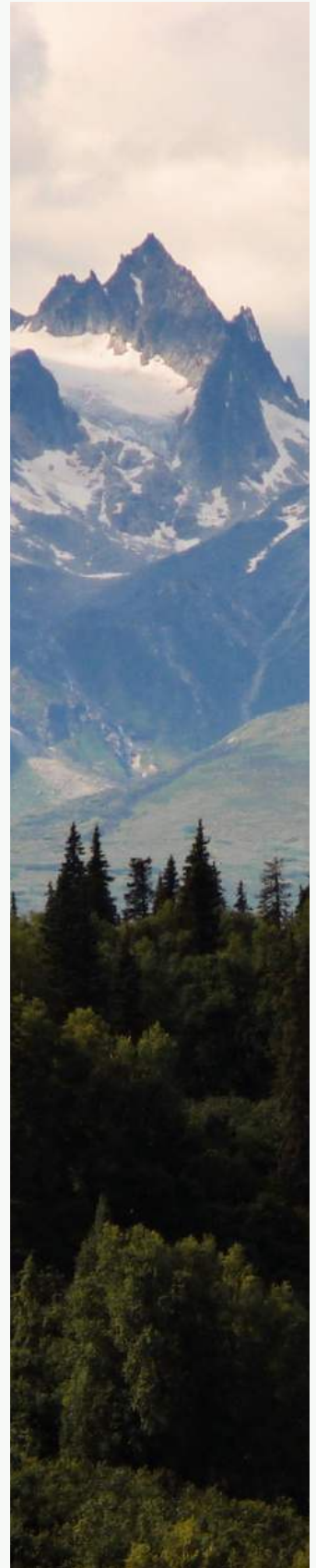
Let us be reminded that the projects we are developing are, at their core, about repairing our relationship with the Land, and with each other as caretakers and stewards of the Land. And so, we acknowledge the traditional Land defenders who have been here for millennia, and who are still here.

In our day to day, each time we step outside it is an opportunity to breathe the fresh air, admire the rich biodiversity, thank the ancestors who sustained these Lands so that we can benefit from them today, and consider how future generations will benefit from the time, energy and intention we each put into the Land. We each have a responsibility to carry forward these teachings.

The Ottawa area is built on un-ceded and un-surrendered Algonquin Anishinaabe territory. Our treaties challenge us to see our common purpose, to share the gifts of the Land, and to step into our role as caretakers.

The Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play projects and activities encompass all traditional territories of the Indigenous Nations of Turtle Island, within the Land we now call Canada.

–Norma Peltier, Member of the Wiikwemkoong First Nations on beautiful M'nidoo M'nising





Executive Summary

The purpose of the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play (CCOP) is to inspire a commitment to advance outdoor play and learning by fostering available, accessible and habitually accessed outdoor play for the overall health and well-being of children in Canada. The objectives of the CCOP are to lead demonstration projects, inform policy and practice, provide continuous professional learning opportunities, conduct applied research, and lead nationwide knowledge translation and mobilization efforts to promote and support children, their care providers, their families and the environment in which they play, learn and live. Learn more about the [CCOP here](#).

Framework Fact

The CCOP is a collaboration between:

- Outdoor Play Canada (OPC)
- the Healthy Active Living and Obesity (HALO) Research Group at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) Research Institute
- Algonquin College
- Andrew Fleck Children's Services (AFCS)
- as well as partners such as ParticipACTION and the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCF).

The CCOP collaborative is uniquely positioned to lead this project, as it brings together expertise in outdoor play leadership and advocacy, outdoor education, continuous professional learning opportunities, applied health research, and knowledge translation and dissemination for the purpose of increasing and improving the quality of outdoor early childhood education (ECE) in Canada.

OPC, which is leading this project, is a national not-for-profit organization that brings together advocates, practitioners, researchers and partner organizations to promote, protect and preserve access to play in nature and the outdoors for all people living in Canada.

OPC's strategic priorities are to provide leadership and strategic direction, amplify efforts and successes, convene and facilitate collaborations, and use its website to serve as a central portal of credible information for the outdoor play sector in Canada.

AFCS provides licensed early learning and group childcare in 19+ locations throughout Ottawa as well as licensed home childcare, EarlyON programming, inclusion support for children with special needs, and services for marginalized children.

Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play



The CCOP collaborative brings together expertise in outdoor play leadership and advocacy, outdoor education, continuous professional learning opportunities, applied health research, and knowledge translation and dissemination for the purpose of increasing and improving the quality of outdoor ECE in Canada.

The CCOP consists of 4 main partners: OPC, Algonquin College, AFCS, and HALO. OPC, which is leading the CCOP, is a national not-for-profit organization that brings together advocates, practitioners, researchers and partner organizations to promote, protect and preserve access to play in nature and the outdoors for all people living in Canada. OPC's strategic priorities are to provide leadership and strategic direction, amplify efforts and successes, convene and facilitate collaborations, and use its website to serve as a central portal of credible information for the outdoor play sector in Canada.

The Algonquin College ECE faculty guides students through a play- and inquiry-based curriculum with hands-on learning opportunities throughout their learning journey.

Framework Fact

HALO is a multidisciplinary team of leading scholars who work to advance the understanding and promotion of health and wellness where children live, play and learn. It is based in the CHEO Research Institute (Ottawa, ON). HALO **is spearheading the CCOP living lab and training site for applied outdoor play research and advocacy** and aims to enhance the evidence base and coordinate national and international research efforts in outdoor play and learning.

Algonquin College's Bachelor of Early Learning and Community Development degree includes several upper-level nature-focused early learning courses and a practicum, which are all rooted in evidence-based theory and integrated with high-quality professional practice.

As part of the CCOP, AFCS is delivering an outdoor licensed program that provides full-time care each year for 73 children aged five years or under, with an initial intake in the summer of 2024. This program fits within current licensing regulations and demonstrates the value of outdoor time for educational and learning experiences. It serves as a proof of concept for licensed outdoor ECE programs and traditional ECE programs to expand outdoor play opportunities in different environments. This program is the foundation of the CCOP: a 'living lab' that supports training, research and policy development in outdoor-based learning for infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers.

AFCS provides licensed early learning and group childcare in 19+ locations throughout Ottawa as well as licensed home childcare, EarlyON programming, inclusion support for children with special needs, and services for marginalized children.

Our collaboration provides a unique opportunity for cyclical benefit, in which practice, policy and research all inform, and are informed by, each other.



Section 2: Purpose and Play

Purpose

Among the CCOP's major projects is the development of a nationally agreed-upon outdoor ECE continuous professional learning framework, motivated by the reality that many outdoor ECE continuous learning opportunities already exist in Canada, but few of them speak to each other. Moreover, because ECE is regulated provincially, there is no national oversight on key pedagogical practices of this type of continuous learning.

The CCOP aims to bring together those already doing this good work, to learn from them, to identify what they perceive as key pedagogical practices in outdoor ECE continuous learning, and then to put this all together through the development of **Educators Teaching Educators: Canada's Outdoor Early Childhood Education Continuous Professional Learning Framework ('Outdoor ECE Framework')**.

The purpose of this evidence-informed Framework was to achieve consensus and serve as a pedagogical document that will promote consistency in training and supporting outdoor ECE practitioners across Canada in their work. The intended goal of the 'Rooted Principles' (the key pedagogical practices in outdoor ECE continuous professional learning that were identified in this process, as described below) and the larger Outdoor ECE Framework was to support educators teaching educators.





Defining Play

Play is defined as voluntary engagement in activity that is fun and/or rewarding and usually driven by intrinsic motivation. This definition was reached as part of the [Play, Learn, and Teach Outdoors—Network \(PLaTO-Net\) international consensus project on terminology, taxonomy, and ontology related to outdoor play, learning and teaching](#).

In 2024, [the Canadian Paediatric Society \(CPS\)](#) released a position statement on [outdoor risky play](#) that encourages paediatricians to think of outdoor risky play as one way to help prevent and manage common health problems such as obesity, anxiety and behavioural issues in children. The CPS position statement differentiates ‘risk’ from ‘hazard,’ and seeks to reframe perceived risk as an opportunity for situational evaluation and personal development. Additionally, the CPS lists numerous recommended tools and resources to support early childhood educators, such as the Child & Nature Alliance of Canada’s [Risk-Benefit Assessment Toolkit](#), [the Consortium for Health, Intervention, Learning and Development’s \(CHILD’s\) 7Cs: An informational guide to young children’s outdoor play spaces](#) and [Outsideplay.org](#). View the CPS’s [Outdoor Risky Play Position Statement](#) for the full list of recommended tools and resources.

See [Glossary of Terms](#) section on page 51 for additional terminology and concepts used by our authorship group related to outdoor play.

Definitions

The three forms of play we refer to in this project, as defined by the PLaTO-Net project, are:

OUTDOOR PLAY: a form of play that takes place outdoors.

ACTIVE PLAY: a form of play that involves physical activity of any intensity.

RISKY PLAY: a form of play that is thrilling and exciting, which involves uncertainty, unpredictability, and varying degrees of risk-taking. Risky play can be categorized into various types of play including playing at height, at speed, involving tools, involving potentially dangerous elements, rough-and-tumble play, play with risks for disappearing or getting lost, play involving impacts, and vicarious play.

A photograph of a person in a forest, wearing a green shirt and a hat, looking through binoculars. The person is positioned in the center of the frame, with their arms raised to hold the binoculars. The background is filled with green foliage and tree trunks. A yellow vertical bar is on the left side of the image. A semi-transparent white box with a yellow border is at the bottom, containing the section title.

Section 3: Multi-lens Approach



Multi-lens Approach

3.1 Decolonization

A decolonization lens in outdoor ECE is imperative for several reasons. First, it acknowledges the historical context in which outdoor education operates, recognizing its roots in colonialist ideologies that perpetuate oppression, particularly for Indigenous communities. Second, decolonization entails challenging dominant narratives, valuing Indigenous ways of knowing, and dismantling Eurocentric perspectives that may dominate outdoor ECE curricula and pedagogy. Centring Indigenous perspectives, knowledge systems and voices in educational practices is another crucial aspect of decolonization, fostering inclusivity and equity. Moreover, decolonizing outdoor education promotes environmental relationships by honouring Indigenous connections to the Land and traditional ecological knowledge. Finally, decolonization contributes to reconciliation and healing efforts with Indigenous communities by fostering collaboration, respect and understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Overall, integrating a decolonization lens into outdoor ECE creates more inclusive, respectful and empowering learning environments for all children, irrespective of their cultural background or identity.

The Outdoor ECE Framework aims to apply a decolonization lens and is deeply intertwined with the goals of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015) in the following ways:

Active Engagement

A decolonization lens emphasizes active participation and engagement with Indigenous perspectives, knowledge and communities. By integrating a decolonization lens into the Outdoor ECE Framework, the CCOP hopes to encourage educators to actively seek out and engage with Indigenous teachings, practices and voices. This active engagement will foster a deeper understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing and being, enriching educators' practice and promoting more culturally responsive and inclusive outdoor education experiences for children.

Holistic Development

A decolonization lens recognizes the interconnectedness of all aspects of life, including physical, emotional, spiritual and environmental well-being. This approach aligns with the Rooted Principle of holistic development, which aims to nurture children's overall growth and well-being. By incorporating a decolonization lens, educators can ensure that their continuous professional learning addresses the diverse needs and experiences of children from various cultural backgrounds, promoting holistic development in a culturally responsive manner.

Meaningful Connections

A decolonization lens emphasizes the importance of building meaningful and respectful connections with Indigenous communities, Lands and knowledge systems. In outdoor ECE, meaningful connections with the natural world and Indigenous perspectives are essential for fostering children's sense of belonging, identity, and relationships with the Land. By integrating a decolonization lens into the Outdoor ECE Framework, the CCOP hopes to encourage educators to cultivate meaningful connections with Indigenous communities and landscapes, enriching their own practice and facilitating more authentic and impactful learning experiences for children.

These three principles – Active Engagement, Holistic Development and Meaningful Connections – are the basis, or Rooted Principles, for the entire Outdoor ECE Framework. Overall, a decolonization lens is essential to both the Outdoor ECE Framework and these Rooted Principles.

Through this lens, outdoor ECE serves as an opportunity for intergenerational healing, where Indigenous Elders, families and community members may share knowledge and stories, fostering dialogue and understanding. Furthermore, community engagement is crucial in the reconciliation process, and outdoor ECE provides a space for collaboration between Indigenous nations and educators, policy-makers and ECE community members, ensuring culturally appropriate and responsive programs aligned with Indigenous values.

In summary, applying a decolonization lens to outdoor ECE in Canada acknowledges the truth as it relates to addressing historical and present day injustices committed against Indigenous communities in order to advance reconciliation by promoting cultural reconnection, education equity, environmental relationships, intergenerational healing and community engagement. Educators can work toward creating more inclusive, equitable, culturally responsive and sustainable outdoor education experiences for all children by centring Indigenous perspectives, knowledge and voices in their continuous professional learning and practice.



3.2 Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Looking at the Outdoor ECE Framework through a justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI) lens ensures that all children have equal opportunity and access to engage in outdoor play and learning experiences. By prioritizing JEDI, educators work to eliminate barriers that may prevent children from marginalized communities or with disabilities from fully participating in outdoor ECE programs/services. Educators can create environments that celebrate and respect diverse perspectives, cultures and abilities, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment among children and families within their communities. This approach promotes inclusivity by recognizing and addressing systemic inequalities that affect access to outdoor play and learning. Through the creation of environments that are equitably accessible to all children, outdoor ECE becomes a vehicle for fostering social equity, empowerment and lifelong connections to the natural world.

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 and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts” (UNICEF, 1989).



By prioritizing JEDI, educators work to eliminate barriers that may prevent children from marginalized communities or with disabilities from fully participating in outdoor ECE programs/services.



Moreover, this priority draws on and is reinforced by concepts and advocacy-based frameworks such as the Racial Equity Impact Assessment framework (Race Forward, 2009), which encompasses a systematic approach to examining and minimizing the effects of proposed actions or decisions that will likely and adversely impact different racial and ethnic groups and Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression frameworks, similar to the City of London’s (2022), which is broader and applies to various forms of oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, ableism) across different context. It is also informed by both the Wheel of Power and Privilege (Government of Canada, n.d.), which helps to understand and address the systemic inequalities present in society (Figure 1), and by the “invisible knapsack” (McIntosh, 1989), which highlights the unearned advantages and privileges that White people possess. These frameworks and concepts collectively advocate for an inclusive approach that acknowledges and addresses the diverse needs and rights of all children in outdoor ECE.

Figure 1. Wheel of Power and Privilege

The "Wheel of Power and Privilege" illustrates how social identities like race, gender, and class impact access to power in a Canadian context. The closer one is to the center of the wheel, the more privilege they have, while those further out face greater disadvantage, reflecting how privilege operates in Canadian society. This tool also highlights how intersectionality—the combination of multiple identities—can shape an individual’s experience of privilege or marginalization in Canadian society.





**Section 4:
Implementation
Strategy and Activities**

Implementation Strategy and Activities

Framework Fact

The development, release and promotion of the Outdoor ECE Framework included:

- securing funding;
- conducting an environmental scan;
- utilizing the National Panel on Licensing Outdoor ECE in Canada, the Outdoor ECE Community of Practice Consultation Group, and a robust consultation process;
- distributing, analyzing and summarizing the results from Community Surveys to achieve national consensus;
- writing the nationally agreed-upon Framework; implementing a knowledge translation and dissemination strategy;
- translating all items into French;
- posting all materials on the CCOP webpage within the OPC website and social media outlets (Instagram, X, and Facebook);
- and releasing and continuously evaluating the Outdoor ECE Framework (see Appendix A).

4.1 Funding

Funding for the Outdoor ECE Framework was secured through a grant in memory of John and Suzanne Graham. The CCOP Leadership Group and all other participating individuals and organizations (Table 1, under Consultation Group- Part Three) provided in-kind support for the overall development, dissemination and promotion of the Outdoor ECE Framework.

4.2 Environmental Scan

An environmental scan was conducted from May 2023 to January 2024 to identify key pedagogical practices in outdoor ECE continuous professional learning opportunities. The search consisted of three main parts: i) scan of outdoor ECE resources on the Outdoor Play Canada (OPC) website; ii) grey literature and data search of Google; and iii) three consultation processes.

Grey Literature Search

The OPC online library is a large database that has identified outdoor play- and learning-related initiatives and organizations both in Canada and internationally. In the summer of 2023, resources related to outdoor ECE learning within the online library were reviewed by a summer student intern (Sydney Osborne) in the Algonquin College Bachelor of Early Learning and Community Development (BELCD) degree program. As part of the key informant consultations step of this environmental scan, relevant educational institutions were additionally contacted to gather additional information where needed. Osborne compiled, organized, and summarized findings into a single document containing all relevant outdoor ECE continuous professional learning resources identified through the OPC online library and Google searches. Data collected included the following subjects: post-secondary micro credential programs; ECE learning models; ECE philosophy; ECE forest and nature programs; global outdoor ECE practices; the environment as the “third teacher”; outdoor ECE developmental benefits;

risk in outdoor play; outdoor ECE practitioner essential skills; outdoor ECEs fostering an Indigenous lens; and current outdoor ECE programs/services (see Appendix B).

Using the initial document compiled by Osborne, CCOP Fellow Mallory Donaldson and Lisa Lalonde, Professor of Early Childhood Education and Program Coordinator of the Bachelor of Early Learning and Community Development Degree Program at Algonquin College, conducted a second environmental scan from June to July 2023 (see Appendix B). Based off of the OPC website resources, Google search, and expertise presented within the first consultation group (see description below), Donaldson and Lalonde utilized the artificial intelligence (AI) tool ChatGPT to analyze and sort all relevant content compiled from May to July 2023. Throughout this process, the initial document developed into the first draft of the Outdoor ECE Framework.

The program identified the following overarching terms as the key pedagogical practices in outdoor ECE continuous professional learning opportunities across Canada. These identified key pedagogical practices in outdoor ECE continuous professional learning were titled The Rooted Pedagogical Principles of Outdoor Early Childhood Education ('Rooted Principles').



Active Engagement



Holistic Development



Meaningful Connections

An additional, systematic Google search was conducted from September to October 2023. The phrase ‘outdoor early childhood education professional learning’ was searched, and the first 20 links generated on Google were screened for relevance. Once a website relevant to the search phrase was identified, the next 10 links were reviewed; this process was continued until no additional relevant links were identified. Any new outdoor ECE professional learning resources were extracted and used to further inform the development of the Rooted Principles (Appendix B).

4.3 Consultation Process

Consultation Group- Part One

In June 2023, an initial consultation process was held with the following outdoor ECE leaders in the sector to learn more about existing outdoor ECE professional learning opportunities in Canada and to build relationships with those leading these opportunities:

- Cyndi Frizelle (YMCA-SWO) and Beverlie Dietze (Okanagan College);
- Heather Lewis, Fran Defilippis, Lindsey Carrier, Louise Jupp and Tracy Rogers (Seneca College – Forest and Nature Early Years Practitioner Microcredential);
- Linda O’Donoghue, Henna Viertio, Lori Gray Toma, Tyra Richmond and Janet Steeves (Bow Valley College – Early Childhood Education and Development);
- Karen Eliersen and Jessica Holder (Discovery Child Care – Professional Learning Division); and
- Rachel Ramsden (University of British Columbia – School of Population and Public Health).

Consultation Group- Part Two

From August 2023 to March 2024, the CCOP utilized a Community of Practice (CoP) approach through the Storypark application. The initial open call to join the CoP consisted of a [Sign-Up Survey](#), which was promoted on the OPC, CCOP and AFCS social media platforms. Louise de Lannoy, Executive Director of OPC, and Lisa Lalonde, Professor of Early Childhood Education and Program Coordinator of the Bachelor of Early Learning and Community Development Degree Program at Algonquin College, disseminated this initial survey broadly within their networks. This Sign-Up Survey [remains open](#). Note that the names of CoP members are not listed in this document since membership is constantly in flux, as participants join and leave depending on their needs; however, the names of those who expressed interest in being recognized for their contributions to the Framework have been included on pages four to six.

With regard to the Outdoor ECE Framework, the purpose of the CoP is to provide input on the Framework throughout the development process by asking members what needs to be added and what needs to be refined, and, finally, asking whether they agree with the final product. For example, prior to the first virtual meeting (held on August 9, 2023), CoP members received the following prompt via Storypark: “Consider spending some time reflecting on the attached Rooted Principles being developed within Canada’s Outdoor Early Childhood Education Continuous Professional Learning Framework and come prepared to discuss your thoughts. E.g., What is missing, needs adjustment and/or can be confirmed as representing outdoor pedagogical practices in Canada?”

While there was general alignment from the group with the Rooted Principles, CoP members strongly expressed the need to have a clear understanding of the process that went into developing the Rooted Principles before they would be able to discuss what else was needed.

Next, we sought to hear what educators/practitioners in the CoP viewed as priorities in their practice. The following prompt was posted via Storypark: ‘We encourage you to post a story to the ‘Your Practice – Your Voice’ room and share three pedagogical priorities you hold for outdoor play in early learning. You can include photos, a video description, artifacts, even art if you want. We hope this starts getting our collective minds thinking creatively and critically about our practice.’”

At the second CoP virtual meeting (held on October 17, 2023), we shared our methods with the CoP, after which practitioners were again asked to reflect on the most recent draft of the Rooted Principles and share those reflections in breakout groups during the virtual meeting. Feedback shared during that meeting was integrated into the next iteration of the Outdoor ECE Framework.

Consultation Group- Part Three

A third consultation process was held in January, 2024, with the National Panel on Licensing Outdoor ECE in Canada, a 12-person panel that was set up as part of a five-year initiative of the CCOP and is comprised of representatives from ECE practice and policy, as well as Indigenous representatives, outdoor ECE leaders and scholars from across the country. This group meets at least twice per calendar year (once in person), with the first meeting being held in June 2023. The members of the Consultation Group are presented in Table 1.

Framework Fact

The **purpose** of the National Panel is to advance efforts toward changing ECE licensing regulations across Canada to allow for more time spent in outdoor learning and play. The **ultimate objective** is to achieve – in part through policy, system and sector advocacy by the National Panel – a commitment from provincial and territorial governments to support equitable access to outdoor ECE for all children living in Canada by making fully outdoor ECE programs (e.g., forest and nature schools) eligible for fee subsidy through local municipalities.



Table 1. Consultation Group – The National Panel on licensing outdoor ECE in Canada

Name	Sector Affiliation	Province/Territory
Louise de Lannoy	Co-chair, Outdoor Play Canada Executive Director	Ontario
Lisa Lalonde	Co-chair, Coordinator & Professor Bachelor of Early Learning & Community Development, Algonquin College	Ontario
Mallory Donaldson	Former Co-chair and CCOP Research Fellow	Ontario
Danielle Alphonse	ECEC Indigenous Researcher/Scholar	British Columbia
Mariana Brussoni	Outdoor ECE Scholar	British Columbia
Jane Cawley	Outdoor ECE Scholar	Nova Scotia
Diane Daley	ECE Leadership	Ontario
Beverlie Dietze	Outdoor ECE Educator	British Columbia
Joe Doiron	Policy Representation	Nova Scotia
Mavis Lewis Webber	ECE Consultant	Manitoba
Alyson McMullen	Indigenous Land-Based ECE Leader	Ontario
Sylvie Melsbach	Outdoor ECE Leader	Quebec
Lisa Menzies	ECE Leadership	Alberta
Laura Molyneux	Outdoor Educator, Leader and Policy Advocate	Newfoundland and Labrador
Kelly Stone	Government & Not-For-Profit Sector Executive	Ontario

Following the first round of national community surveys distributed on February 12, 2024 (see the next section), the National Panel met on April 19, 2024, to discuss the Rooted Principles. Highlighted action items from this meeting included adding a section within the Outdoor ECE Framework that highlighted safety in outdoor play, expanding upon risky play and providing a direct link to the CPS’s Outdoor Risky Play Position Statement and affiliated resources, and adding OPC’s Glossary of Terms to the document. These suggestions were incorporated into the next version of the Rooted Principles and the next version of the National Community Survey.

4.4 National Community Surveys

The aim of the national community surveys was to receive input from outdoor ECE educators, leaders and community members on the Rooted Principles, to ensure that these principles represented the outdoor ECE professional development sector in Canada, and to inform the development of a nationally agreed-upon outdoor ECE continuous professional learning framework.

The initial community survey was developed and circulated to more than 350 outdoor ECE community members from February 12-26, 2024. A total of 137 responses were received. Under the guidance of the CHEO Research Ethics Board, ethics approval was not pursued for this survey as it was considered a consultation with experts. Nonetheless, a one-page informational overview of the survey was included at the start of the survey, in alignment with best practices for online surveys as outlined by the CHEO Research Institute. In that overview, participants were advised that taking part in the survey was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the survey at any time with no penalty. Consent was assumed upon submission of the survey.

Once survey results were collected, feedback (including from the National Panel on Licensing Outdoor ECE in Canada; see the section directly above) was integrated to create the second community survey. This survey was circulated to more than 360 outdoor ECE community members on April 24, 2024, with the aim of achieving national consensus. The second community survey closed on May 24, 2024.

Survey participants were invited to publicly disclose their support for the final Outdoor ECE Framework. Community support for the Outdoor ECE Framework is presented on pages four to six.



A young child with dark hair and bangs, wearing a light blue shirt, is smiling and holding a small green seedling with soil in their hands. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with green foliage and sunlight filtering through, creating a bokeh effect. A yellow vertical bar is on the left side of the image.

Section 5: The Rooted Principles



The Rooted Principles

Following the three consultation phases and the two rounds of national community surveys, a final draft of the Rooted Principles was developed. It is important to note that when reflecting on these principles, it is essential for educators to refer to the concepts and frameworks outlined on pages 17 to 18 to effectively support children from equity denied communities, who may face heightened challenges and hesitation due to distinct barriers to outdoor and nature-based opportunities—such as safety concerns, feelings of exclusion, a lack of culturally sensitive provision, language limitations, and issues related to program scheduling and affordability (Das et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2022). In doing so, educators can equitably support the overall health and development of all children in their care.

Table 2. The Rooted Principles

Active Engagement	Holistic Development	Meaningful Connections
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to play-based learning • Embracing nature-based learning • Fostering experiential-based learning • Supporting inquiry-based learning • Prioritizing the importance of a continuum of play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social-emotional growth • Curiosity and exploration • Nurturing communication • Physical literacy • Health and well-being • Supporting risky play and building resilience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a sense of community • Fostering environmental relationships • Understanding history • Connecting with the Land • Navigating time • Being present in space and place • Nurturing the spirit, heart, mind and body

Aim and Intended Audience

The Rooted Principles serve as the guiding light for the Outdoor ECE Framework, embodying a holistic and comprehensive approach to ECE. The aim of this Framework is to achieve consensus and promote consistency in training and supporting outdoor ECE practitioners across Canada in their work. The intended audience of the Rooted Principles and the larger Outdoor ECE Framework is educators teaching educators.

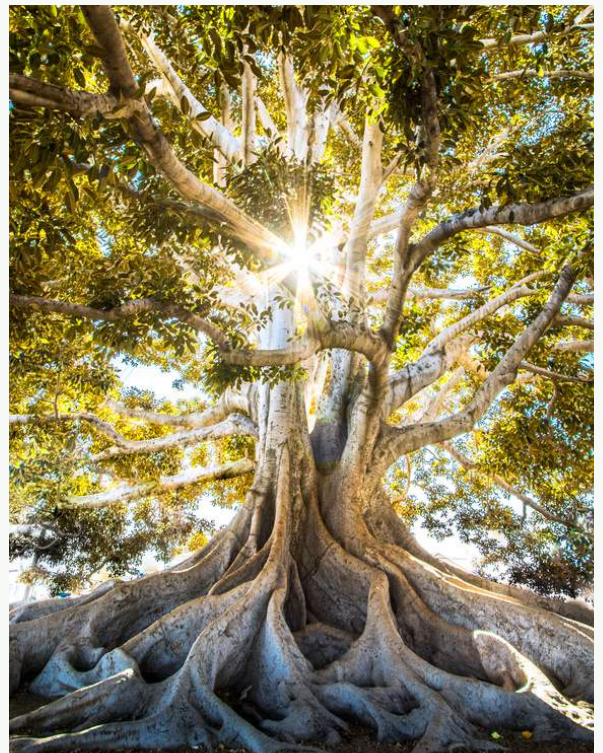
The Outdoor ECE Framework is a living document that will be continuously evaluated and updated to reflect the values and priorities of the outdoor ECE sector.

Overview

The Three Rooted Principles collectively inform the Outdoor ECE Framework, creating a dynamic and adaptable structure that seeks to empower educators in the outdoor ECE realm. By integrating 1) Active Engagement, 2) Holistic Development, and 3) Meaningful Connections, the Outdoor ECE Framework promotes a pedagogical approach based on evidence-informed practices, tailored to responsively address the unique needs of each child. The intention of the Framework is to support educators so they are well equipped to foster rich, experiential learning environments that promote inclusivity, resilience and a deep sense of connection to the world. In essence, these Rooted Principles stand as the pillars of a transformative and forward-thinking approach to outdoor ECE, reflecting Canada's commitment to providing children with meaningful and impactful outdoor play and learning experiences.

It is important to recognize that while we have identified three distinct Rooted Principles of Active Engagement, Holistic Development and Meaningful Connections, there is in fact substantial overlap among them. By weaving together these principles within the Outdoor ECE Framework, we hope to encourage educators to approach their professional learning journey with a sense of curiosity, openness and commitment to lifelong learning, continually refining their practice to better meet the needs of children, families and communities, while promoting meaningful outdoor experiences. Through this Framework, educators become empowered advocates for outdoor ECE, championing its benefits and potential for enriching children's lives by placing the woven Rooted Principles at the service of young learners.

It is important to recognize that while we have identified three distinct Rooted Principles of Active Engagement, Holistic Development and Meaningful Connections, there is in fact substantial overlap among them.





Section 5.1: **Active Engagement**

Active Engagement

The Rooted Principle of Active Engagement encapsulates an approach to early childhood education emphasizing dynamic and immersive learning experiences that actively involve children in an exploration of the world. This principle encompasses a spectrum of dynamic approaches to learning and exploration. At its core lies a deep commitment to play-based learning, recognizing children's innate inclination toward curiosity, creativity and discovery (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2020). Coupled with this commitment is an embrace of outdoor play and learning, acknowledging the profound connections between children and the natural world. Furthermore, fostering experiential-based learning enables children to actively engage with their environment, encouraging a curiosity about the world (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019; Makovichuk et al., 2014).

Supporting inquiry-based learning empowers children to ask questions, explore their surroundings, and construct their knowledge through hands-on experiences (Australian Government, 2023). Finally, prioritizing the importance of a [continuum of play](#) (Pyle, 2020) ensures that learning remains joyful, interactive and developmentally informed, nurturing a lifelong love of learning and exploration. In all, the Rooted Principle of Active Engagement celebrates children's agency, curiosity and connection with their environment, fostering a rich and transformative outdoor play and learning experience.

It is essential to recognize that while the Rooted Principle of Active Engagement encompasses all the previously mentioned concepts and practices, it also considers the importance of a daily rhythm that allows children to pause and take moments for restorative rest and reflection. This reflection is important to promote critical thinking and knowledge consolidation, enabling thoughts and ideas to be generalized and applied to various situations (Epstein, 2003). By encouraging analytical thinking from a young age through targeted educational interventions and practice, cognitive reflection can be improved, leading to better problem-solving and reasoning skills throughout life (Shtulman & Young, 2022).



There are five main components to how this Rooted Principle is reflected in educators' pedagogy (Figure 2):

1. COMMITTING TO PLAY BASED LEARNING in outdoor ECE is essential because it aligns with children's natural inclination to explore, discover and learn through hands-on experiences. Outdoor environments provide rich and diverse settings where children can engage in imaginative play, creative expression and physical activity (Brussoni et al, 2017). Play-based learning guides outdoor ECE as it provides a natural, holistic and inclusive approach to learning that fosters children's development, connection with nature, social interaction and well-being (Bento & Dias, 2017). Through play, children explore, discover and make sense of the world of which they are a part, laying the foundation for lifelong learning and fostering reciprocal relationships with the Land (Dietze & Kashin, 2019).

Components 2, 3 and 4 are considered both as a subset of play-based learning and as distinct forms of learning:

2. EMBRACING OUTDOOR PLAY AND LEARNING provides a dynamic and stimulating environment where children can engage in sensory exploration, problem-solving and imaginative play (Bento & Dias, 2017). By immersing children in nature, educators foster a sense of wonder, curiosity and respect for the Land. Nature-based learning also promotes physical activity, mental well-being and creativity, contributing to children's overall development and fostering a lifelong appreciation for the natural world (Johnstone et al., 2022).

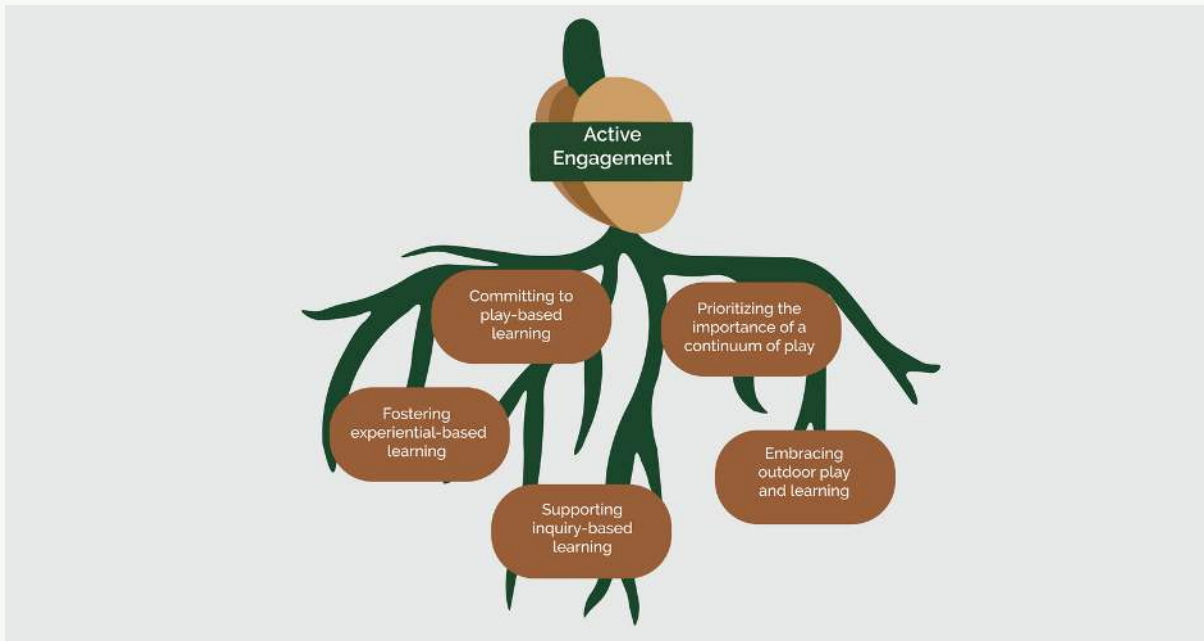
3. FOSTERING EXPERIENTIAL-BASED LEARNING enables children to directly interact with their environment, promoting a hands-on and immersive approach to learning. Through experiential learning, children may actively participate and enrich their learning experiences by engaging their senses, deepening their understanding of the natural world, stimulating curiosity, and in turn contributing to the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Johnstone et al., 2022; Bento & Dias, 2017; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014). Overall, fostering experiential-based learning in outdoor education cultivates a profound relationship between children and nature, nurturing education for sustainability and global citizenship (Dietze & Kashin, 2019).

4. SUPPORTING INQUIRY-LED LEARNING encourages children to ask questions, explore their surroundings and actively construct their knowledge through hands-on experiences. In outdoor environments, children have the opportunity to investigate natural phenomena, observe wildlife and engage with the elements, fostering curiosity and critical thinking skills (Australian Government, 2023). Inquiry-based learning promotes a sense of agency and ownership over learning, empowering children to pursue their interests and develop problem-solving abilities (Queen’s University, n.d.; Australian Government, 2023). By supporting inquiry-based learning, educators cultivate a culture of exploration and discovery

5. PRIORITIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF A CONTINUUM OF PLAY

acknowledges the diverse and evolving nature of children’s play experiences. A continuum of play underscores that play is not a fixed or linear concept but a dynamic spectrum that includes learning through games, playful learning, collaboratively created play, inquiry play and free play. This recognition allows educators to support a range of play styles, fostering active engagement and catering to children’s individual needs within the outdoor learning environment (Pyle, 2020).

Figure 2. Rooted Principle – Active Engagement





Section 5.2: Holistic Development



Holistic Development

In outdoor pedagogical practice, the Rooted Principle of Holistic Development serves as a compass guiding the diverse, global growth of young learners. This principle encapsulates a comprehensive approach to nurturing children's growth and well-being. Embracing this principle involves addressing various aspects of development, including social-emotional growth, curiosity and exploration, physical literacy, health and well-being, while also nurturing communication, encouraging risky play, and fostering resilience. By recognizing the interconnectedness of these facets, educators strive to create learning environments that foster children's holistic development, empowering them to thrive intellectually, emotionally, physically and socially. Each component of Holistic Development incorporates more-than-human members of the outdoor environments where young learners can learn, play and connect with these elements, contributing to their comprehensive growth and flourishing.

This principle encapsulates a comprehensive approach to nurturing children's growth and well-being.



Moreover, by recognizing how concepts like identity, place and context influence various facets of children's overall development – such as self-awareness, environmental awareness and engagement with diverse temporal and spatial contexts – and by embracing the seven C's framework (Herrington et al., 2016), which underscores factors crucial to early childhood development and enriching play experiences (i.e., character, context, connectivity, change, chance, clarity and challenge), outdoor early childhood education can significantly enhance support for young learners in their outdoor learning and play activities.

There are six main components to how this Rooted Principle is reflected in educators' pedagogy (Figure 3):

1. SOCIAL EMOTIONAL GROWTH in outdoor play and learning supports children's overall well-being and development of essential life skills. Outdoor environments provide opportunities for children to explore and regulate their emotions, develop empathy and co-operation through social interactions, and build resilience and problem-solving skills by encountering and working through challenges in nature (Brussoni et al., 2015; Johnstone et al., 2022). Engaging with the natural world fosters a sense of wonder, connection and mindfulness, promoting emotional regulation and mental health (Szczytko et al., 2020; Dietze & Kashin, 2019). By prioritizing social-emotional growth in outdoor education, educators may nurture children's self-confidence, interpersonal skills and sense of belonging, laying the foundation for positive relationships, academic success and lifelong resilience.

2. CURIOSITY AND EXPLORATION in outdoor play and learning encourages children to ask questions, seek answers, engage in hands-on exploration with their surroundings and actively participate in a variety of diverse sensory experiences. In outdoor environments, children encounter a wealth of natural phenomena and diverse stimuli, plants, animals and ecosystems, sparking their curiosity and prompting inquiry. This fosters a sense of wonder, critical thinking and problem-solving skills as children observe, investigate and make connections with the world they are a part of (Brussoni et al., 2015; Brussoni et al., 2017; Szczytko et al., 2020). These learning experiences equip children with essential skills for lifelong learning, contributing to their overall well-being and a deeper understanding of the natural world.

3. NURTURING COMMUNICATION in outdoor play and learning environments offers a rich array of experiences that provide opportunities for children to articulate, question, use symbols, expand their vocabulary, engage in meaningful dialogue, share emotions and express themselves both verbally and non-verbally (Herrington et al, 2016). Nurturing communication provokes children's curiosity and storytelling, and facilitates the articulation of observations, exploration and shared discoveries. These experiences have the potential to encourage children's language and foundational literacy skills.

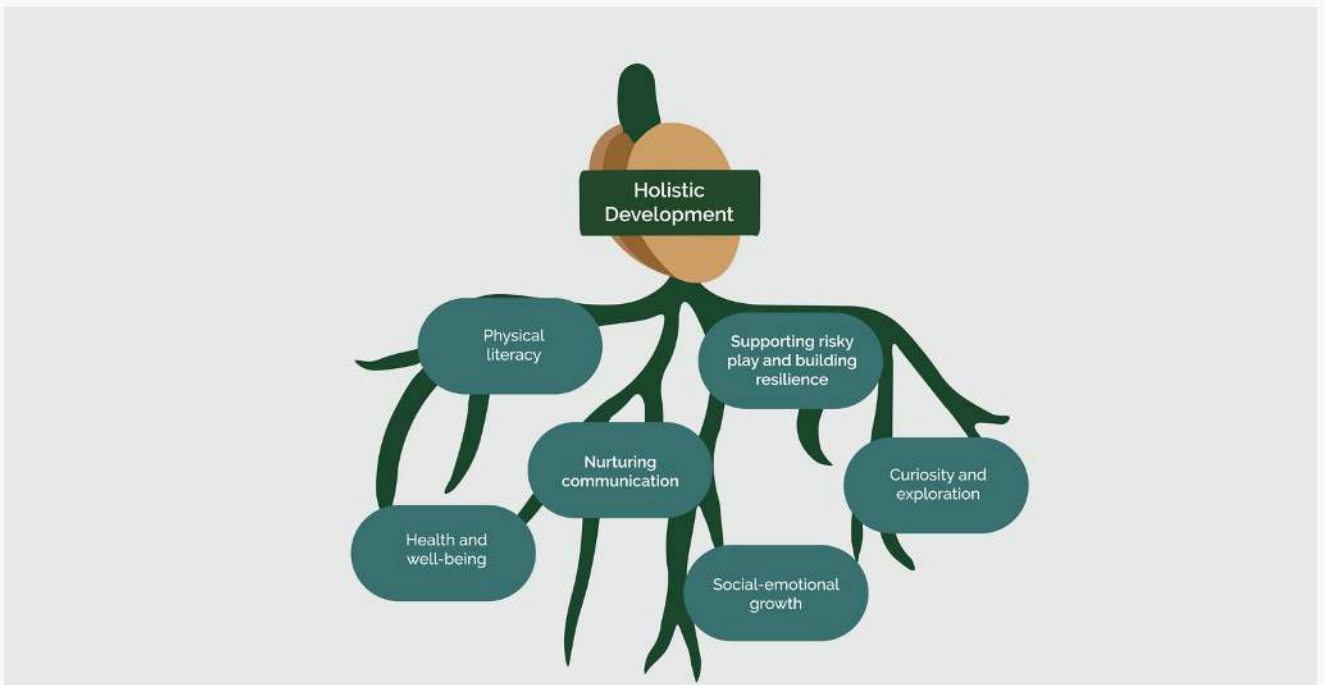
4. PHYSICAL LITERACY is a vital aspect of holistic development that children can significantly enhance through outdoor activities (Caldwell et al., 2023). Engaging in activities within outdoor environments supports the development of physical literacy by offering children opportunities to build fundamental movement skills, confidence and motivation, and to explore the natural world. By developing fundamental movement skills such as crouching, grabbing, running, jumping, climbing and balancing, children enhance their gross and fine motor movements and coordination, enabling them to navigate outdoor environments safely and effectively (Caldwell et al., 2023). Physical literacy also promotes a positive attitude toward health and well-being and an active lifestyle that is connected to the outdoors (Gray et al., 2015; Francis et al., 2016). Additionally, these experiences foster resilience, self-confidence and a positive relationship with one’s body and mind, laying a foundation for lifelong enjoyment of outdoor activities, contributing to overall physical and mental health (Tremblay et al., 2015).

5. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING are supported in outdoor play and learning environments as these environments offer opportunities for physical activity, exploration and sensory experiences (Tremblay et al., 2015). Moreover, connecting with nature has been linked to improved mental health, reduced stress levels and increased feelings of happiness and well-being (Mental Health Foundation, 2023). Outdoor play and exploration also foster social interaction, collaboration and positive relationships with peers and adults, contributing to emotional and social well-being (Kinsner, 2019). By prioritizing overall well-being in outdoor education, educators create nurturing environments where children can thrive, develop a strong sense of belonging, and build meaningful relationships with both the natural world and those around them (Beaulieu & Beno, 2024).



6. SUPPORTING RISKY PLAY AND BUILDING RESILIENCE equips children to overcome challenges (e.g., adverse mental health), adapt to new situations (e.g., due to climate change) and develop confidence in their abilities. The [Canadian Paediatric Society](#) differentiates ‘risk’ from ‘hazard,’ and their new Position Statement seeks to reframe perceived risk as an opportunity for situational evaluation and personal development (Canadian Paediatric Society, 2024). Outdoor play and learning environments offer opportunities for children to engage in adventurous, risky play and explore their physical limits in a safe and supervised manner (Brussoni et al., 2015). When playing outdoors, children encounter unpredictable circumstances, such as changing weather conditions or unfamiliar terrain, which may foster resilience through problem-solving and perseverance. By allowing children to take measured risks, educators empower them to assess challenges, make decisions and learn from their experiences. Additionally, encouraging risk-taking in outdoor ECE helps children develop a sense of agency and independence while fostering a healthy relationship with uncertainty and adversity, ultimately contributing to their overall growth and development (Canadian Paediatric Society, 2024).

Figure 3. Rooted Principle – Holistic Development





Section 5.3: **Meaningful Connections**



Meaningful Connections

In outdoor ECE, the Rooted Principle of Meaningful Connections transcends boundaries, inviting young learners to embark on a journey in which they will interact and interconnect with the world. At its core, this principle recognizes the interconnectedness of various elements of the educator's outdoor teaching and learning journey, including creating a sense of community, fostering environmental relationships, understanding history, connecting with the Land, navigating the constructs of time, being present in space and place, and nurturing the spirit, heart, mind and body.

Spirituality can be viewed as a multi-faceted and dynamic concept that encompasses a sense of connection to something beyond oneself or an awareness of a greater dimension, characterized by personal identifiable values related to self, others, nature, life and whatever one considers to be most important (Williams, 2019; Hawks, 1994). Spirituality includes both content and process facets, with the content aspect referring to specific objects of spirituality, such as belief systems or the content of prayers, while the process aspect involves spiritual activities and functions like prayer, meditation and reflection (Heintzman, 2010). Spirituality can also be viewed as a collective and communal experience, essential for healing and social justice, connecting people and fostering resilience (Baskin, 2016).

While spirituality often overlaps with religion, it is not confined to structured religious practices. Instead, it represents an individual's subjective relationship to the unknowable aspects of existence and how this relationship informs their worldview, values and sense of meaning (Senreich, 2013). It is also important to note that while spirituality is distinct, it is often intertwined with aspects of emotional and social health, contributing to a holistic sense of well-being. Spiritual health can influence emotional and social health outcomes, sense of belonging, respect for self and others, and appreciation of the unknown (Harris, 2016). In children, spirituality can be characterized by wonder, a connection with nature, and the development of meaningful relationships with family and community. It can nurture holistic development, creativity, and a sense of joy and fulfillment (Miller, 2015).

Spiritual health can influence emotional and social health outcomes, sense of belonging, respect for self and others, and appreciation of the unknown.



Children are often in tune with their spirituality in nature-rich experiences. Children actively and imaginatively engage with nature in their play, seldomly experiencing it as merely a backdrop or stage for their play (Wilson, 2008).



In Indigenous worldviews, spirituality is deeply interconnected with the Land, emphasizing the equal and interdependent nature of all life (Williams, 2019). While spiritual beliefs differ across the multitude of Indigenous cultures, many dominant Indigenous cultures share common elements, such as interconnectedness with nature, community and social cohesion, personal fulfillment and healing, and cultural preservation and education (Boelen, 2023; Baskin, 2016).

The principle of Meaningful Connections also emphasizes the importance of balancing exploration with deep care for the outdoor environment. By teaching children to respect and protect natural boundaries (e.g., avoiding activities that may cause harm to the environment), educators cultivate a profound reverence for the natural world. This balanced approach helps to build a sense of responsibility and care for our surroundings, ensuring that our interactions with nature are both meaningful and sustainable (García-González & Schenetti, 2022).

By weaving these components together, educators embark on a journey that honours diverse perspectives, embracing peaceful and inclusive societies, cultivates respect for the environment, acknowledges the significance of cultural heritage, and may facilitate a deep sense of belonging and connection within outdoor learning environments.

There are seven main components to how this Rooted Principle is reflected in educators' pedagogy (Figure 4):

1. CREATING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY in contemporary times can be viewed as the development of a complex and dynamic network of relationships that encompasses all human and non-human life, integrating intergenerational and interspecies connections within shared environments (Fry, 2023). This holistic view of community acknowledges the interconnectedness of all beings and the importance of collaborative, multi-faceted actions to meet the diverse needs of individuals, populations and species. The foundation of any community lies in the social ties and emotional bonds formed among its members, with meaningful connections serving as the cornerstone of these bonds. These connections are essential for creating a sense of belonging and relationship, regardless of whether the members are human or non-human (MacQueen et al., 2001). Communities are built on a strong understanding and promotion of concepts such as belonging, justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (Usanmaz, 2024). An example of a truly inclusive community is one that integrates intergenerational and interspecies health equity, ensuring that actions today do not hinder future generations or other species from meeting their needs. This holistic approach is reflected in traditional practices and generational knowledge of many Indigenous communities, which emphasize the interconnectedness of all beings and the importance of holistic views that incorporate physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual aspects (Cull et al., 2018). In early learning spaces, the creation of a sense of community establishes a supportive and collaborative environment where children, educators, families and community members connect meaningfully. This sense of community may help foster positive responsive relationships, emotional well-being and a shared commitment to outdoor learning spaces. By coming together in outdoor environments, children have the opportunity to build positive relationships, develop empathy and learn from one another. A strong sense of community promotes inclusivity, respect for diversity and a shared voice to advocate for the environment (Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan, 2017). Through community-building activities, outdoor education becomes a collaborative endeavour that enriches learning experiences, strengthens social connections, and fosters a sense of belonging and ownership among all participants.

2. FOSTERING ENVIRONMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS in outdoor ECE cultivates a deep connection between children and the natural world (Chawla, 2020). By spending time outdoors, children develop an appreciation for nature’s beauty, complexity and interdependent systems (e.g., food webs, ecosystem dynamics, pollinator networks). Through hands-on experiences, such as planting seeds, observing wildlife or exploring natural habitats, children can develop a sense of value in their relationship with the environment (Mygind et al., 2019). These experiences not only promote environmental awareness and sustainability but may help foster empathy, respect and a lifelong connection with the earth, nurturing future generations of environmental advocates and caretakers.

3. UNDERSTANDING HISTORY and exploring aspects of the environment, Land and community allows children to appreciate the interconnectedness of past, present and future. By exploring the historical significance of outdoor spaces, educators can help children develop a deeper understanding of cultural heritage, Indigenous perspectives, and the impact of human interactions with the environment over time. Understanding history helps foster empathy, respect and appreciation for diverse cultures and traditions, contributing to a more inclusive and informed approach to outdoor learning experiences (Dragon Smith, 2019).

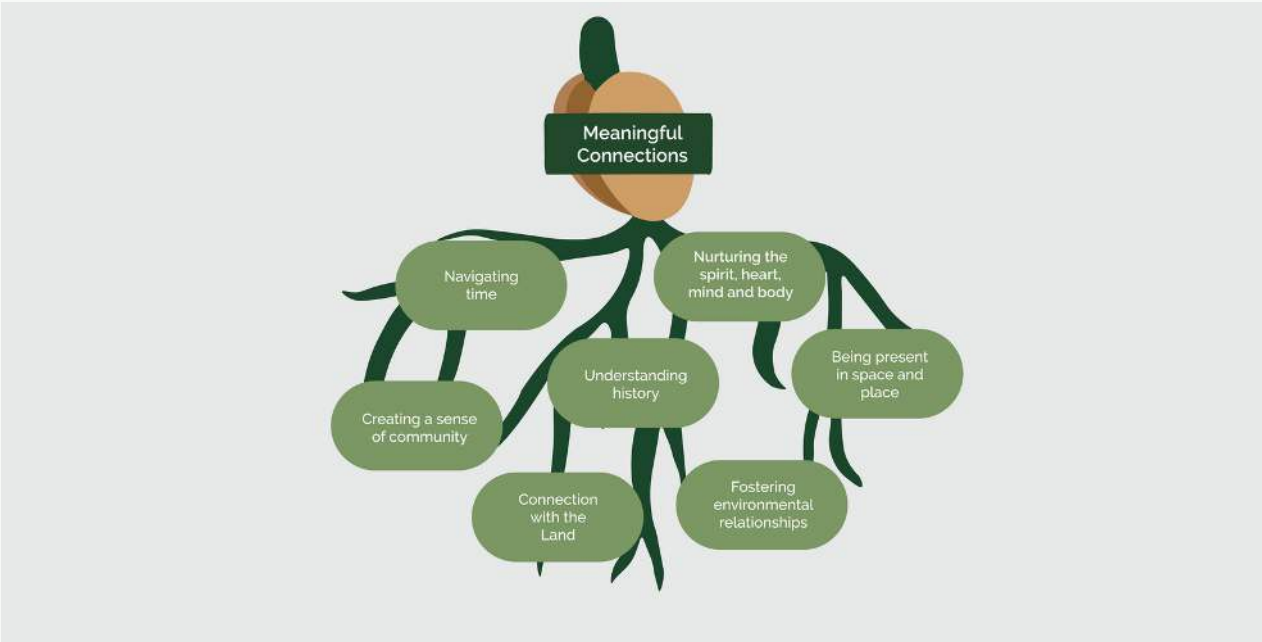
4. CONNECTING WITH THE LAND fosters meaningful connections that go beyond the physical environment. By exploring and interacting with the Land, and understanding that Land itself is pedagogy, children may foster their environmental awareness, empathy, and appreciation for Earth's ecosystems, all of which in turn nurtures children's eco-literacy and green behaviour (Dragon Smith, 2019; Setiawati et al., 2020), inspiring them to form lifelong connections with the environment and become caretakers of the Land. As they play in and explore the outdoor environment – which acts as a third teacher, equalizer and abundant gift-giver – children may develop a deep respect for their surroundings, enriching their journey of discovery and growth. Additionally, engaging with the Land offers opportunities for sensory exploration, inquiry-based learning and cultural enrichment, enhancing children's overall development and well-being (Dragon Smith, 2019). A strong connection with the Land can be fostered through the development of intentional and action-based Land acknowledgments that honour Indigenous histories, recognize ongoing relationships with the Land, and commit to respectful and sustainable practices (Native Governance Center, 2024).

5. NAVIGATING TIME allows educators to embrace the natural rhythms and seasonal changes of the environment. By incorporating seasonal activities, observations and explorations, educators can help children develop an understanding of time as cyclical and interconnected with nature. This approach encourages children to notice changes in the environment, such as weather patterns, plant growth and animal behaviour, fostering a deeper connection with the natural world and promoting education for sustainability and global citizenship from a young age (Dragon Smith, 2019; Middlemiss, 2018).

6. BEING PRESENT IN SPACE AND PLACE and exploring aspects of the environment, Land and community allows children to appreciate the interconnectedness of past, present and future. By exploring the historical significance of outdoor spaces, educators can help children develop a deeper understanding of cultural heritage, Indigenous perspectives, and the impact of human interactions with the environment over time. Understanding history helps foster empathy, respect and appreciation for diverse cultures and traditions, contributing to a more inclusive and informed approach to outdoor learning experiences (Dragon Smith, 2019).

7. NURTURING THE SPIRIT, HEART, MIND AND BODY goes beyond the physical environment, encompassing a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the interconnectedness of all living things. In this context, making spiritual connections to the natural world means fostering a sense of wonder, awe and reverence, enhancing children’s appreciation for the environment and their place within it. By acknowledging and honouring the spiritual dimensions of outdoor settings as well as the holistic benefits of outdoor play, educators create opportunities for children to develop a deep sense of belonging, connection, and respect for nature, ultimately nurturing their spirit, heart, mind and body (Diamond, 2014).

Figure 4. Rooted Principle – Meaningful Connections





Section 6: Framework Life Cycle

Life Cycle

6.1 Planting the Rooted Principles in the Outdoor ECE Framework

The Rooted Principles are the foundation of the Outdoor ECE Framework (Figure 5). We envision the Framework growing from the Rooted Principles, with goals, objectives, strategies and resources being added in regular consultation with the outdoor ECE community. How we have started this process, and how we plan to continue, is outlined below:

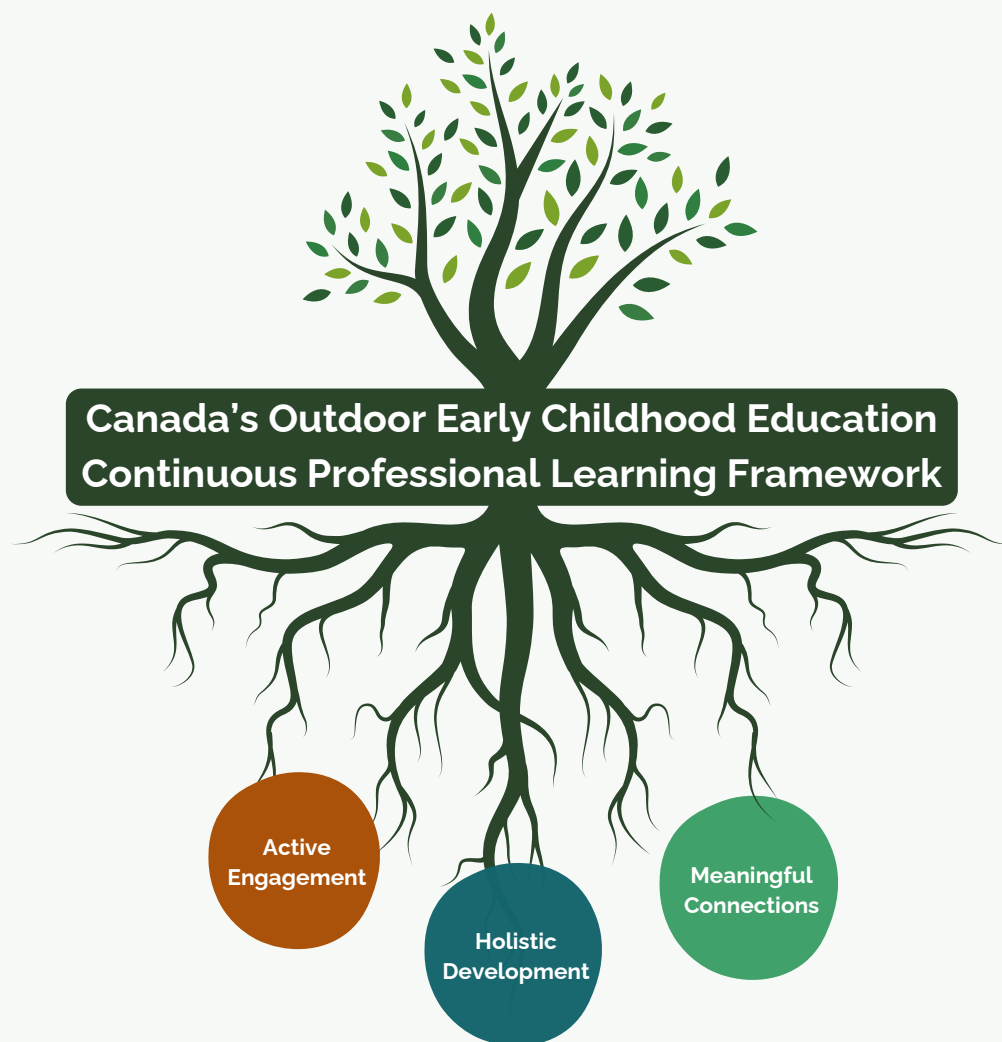



Figure 5. Graphical representation of the Outdoor ECE Framework

This graphical representation showcases how the Outdoor ECE Framework and the Rooted Principles are interconnected. Our tree imagery symbolizes this ever-growing relationship, with the branches, leaves and blossoming fruit being the framework, and the principles planted in the roots nurturing this living and breathing ecosystem.

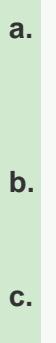
6.2 Outdoor ECE Framework Intentionality

The Outdoor ECE Framework is part of a five-year initiative of the CCOP and is intentionally designed to support educators in their ongoing work fostering meaningful and transformative outdoor learning experiences. As described above, this dynamic Framework is rooted in three guiding principles: Active Engagement, Holistic Development and Meaningful Connections. The life cycle of the Framework involves several intentional stages, emphasizing continuous growth and adaptability.

1. Foundation and Development

- 
- a. **Consultation and Collaboration:** The development of this Framework was informed and guided by the expertise of educators, researchers, policy-makers and other practitioners across Canada on best practices for outdoor ECE and care.
 - b. **Identification of Evidence-informed Practice:** Informed by the extensive consultation process, the Rooted Principles – Active Engagement, Holistic Development and Meaningful Connections – were defined and articulated.
 - c. **Community Input:** We gathered input from diverse community members, including educators, administrators, parents, researchers and policy-makers, to ensure the inclusivity, relevance and longevity of the Framework. The aim is to ensure that the Framework remains a living document through the encouragement of ongoing feedback over time.
 - d. **Consensus-building:** We worked with community members to achieve national consensus on the Outdoor ECE Framework and Rooted Principles.

2. Framework Articulation


- 
- a. **Creation of Framework Components:** We developed detailed components of the Framework, outlining specific goals, objectives and strategies aligned with the Rooted Principles, informed by input from community members
 - b. **Development of Rooted Principles:** Informed by the above steps, the Rooted Principles were developed.
 - c. **Alignment with Regulations:** We have ensured that these Rooted Principles are in alignment with existing educational regulations and standards.

Through this process, we are now piloting the Outdoor ECE Framework at Algonquin College, adhering to the following:


3. Training and Implementation

- 
- a. **Professional Continuous Learning:** We are developing a certificate program at Algonquin College, informed by the Rooted Principles, launched in September 2024.
 - b. **Evaluation:** We will work with other outdoor ECE professional development to evaluate the alignment and ease of implementation of the Framework across diverse professional development settings in Canada.
 - c. **Feedback Mechanisms:** We will gather insights from educators and community members during the initial implementation phase.

4. Continuous Improvement

- 
- a. **Reflection and Evaluation:** We will encourage educators to reflect on their outdoor practices in alignment with the Framework, fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Our goal is to continuously engage with educators, parents, policy-makers and other community members to ensure the Framework's ongoing relevance.
 - b. **Regular Review:** We will conduct periodic reviews of the Framework, considering changes in educational philosophies, societal needs and research findings.
 - c. **Updates and Revisions:** The Outdoor ECE Framework is a living, breathing document. Continuous updates and revisions to the Framework are required to reflect the latest knowledge and address emerging challenges.

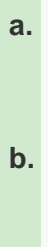
5. Documentation and Resource Development

- 
- a. **Resource Compilation:** We will develop a comprehensive set of resources, as needed, including guides, toolkits and case studies, to support educators in applying the Framework.
 - b. **Documentation Tool:** We hope to provide educators with tools for documenting their outdoor ECE practices and experiences aligned with the Rooted Principles.


6. Community Engagement and Networking

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- a. **Community Building:** We will continue to foster a community of practice where educators can share experiences, insights and challenges related to outdoor ECE.
 - b. **Networking Events:** We will organize events, conferences (e.g., the Breath of Fresh Air Summit) and workshops to facilitate networking opportunities and the exchange of evolving pedagogical practices.
 - c. **International Collaboration:** We will explore opportunities for international collaboration to enrich the Framework with diverse perspectives and global best practices.

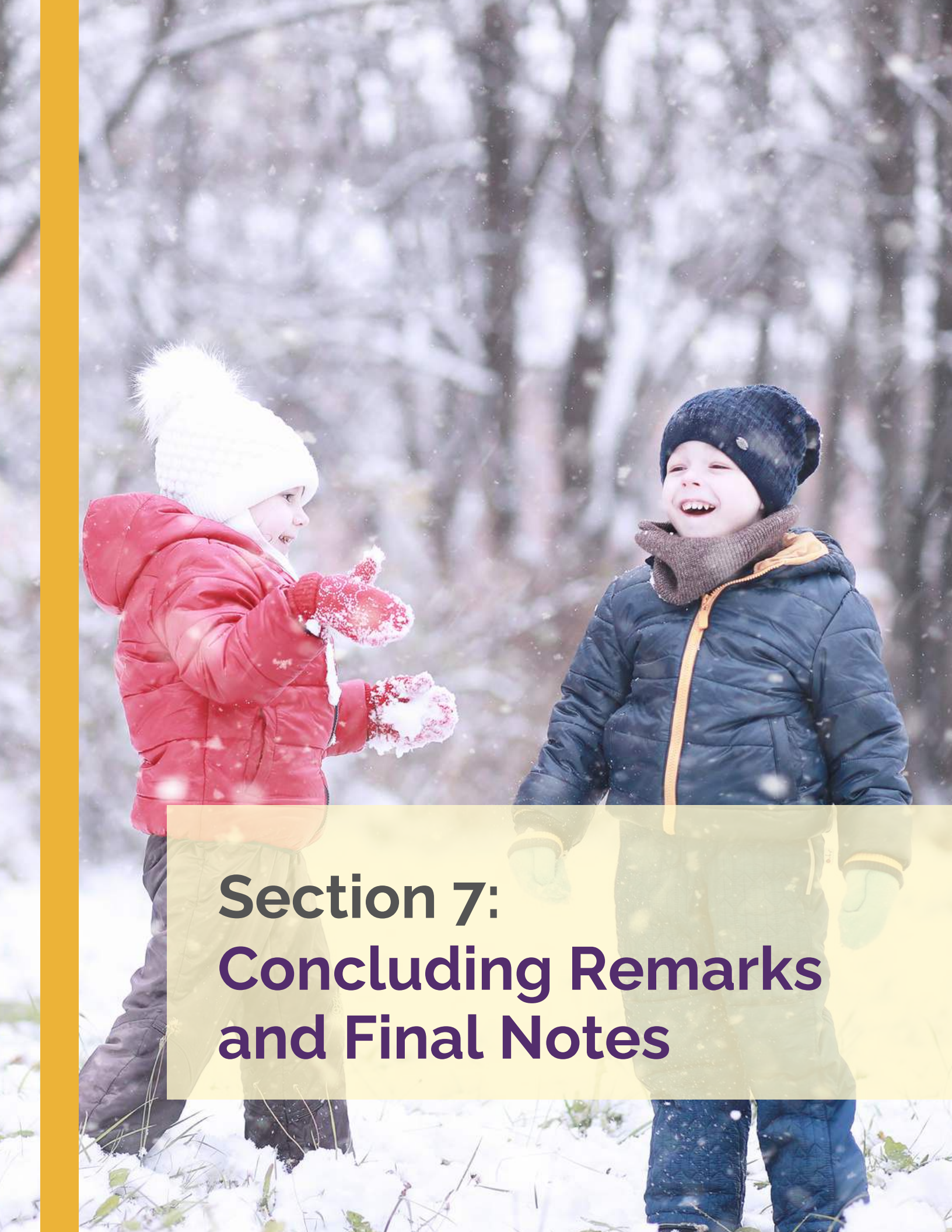
7. Research and Innovation

- 
- a. **Research Initiatives:** We aim to utilize the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play's living lab to initiate research projects exploring the impact of the Framework on educator efficacy in supporting children's learning outdoors.
 - b. **Innovating Integration:** We will integrate innovative approaches and emerging technologies into the Framework, keeping it dynamic and responsive to the evolving educational landscape.

8. Advocacy and Policy Influence

- 
- a. **Advocacy Campaigns:** We will advocate for the recognition of outdoor ECE principles in educational policies and curricula at local, regional and national levels.
 - b. **Policy Influence:** We hope to engage with policy-makers to influence the development and enhancement of policies supporting outdoor ECE

This intentional life cycle ensures that the Outdoor ECE Framework remains a living and growing document, one that adapts to the evolving needs of educators, the field of outdoor ECE, and the children, families and communities it serves. Continuous feedback and collaboration, and a commitment to staying at the forefront of educational research and innovation are key to the Framework's success in fostering rich and impactful outdoor play and learning experiences for the early years.



**Section 7:
Concluding Remarks
and Final Notes**

Concluding Remarks

The aim of this Outdoor ECE Framework is to promote consistency in training and to support outdoor ECE practitioners across Canada in their work. The intended audience of the Framework and Rooted Principles is educators teaching educators. Our goal is for the Outdoor ECE Framework to exist as a living and growing document. If you would like to contribute to this growth, email us at info@outdoorplaycanada.ca.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the members of our Community of Practice, outdoor ECE colleagues across Canada, and our National Panel on Licensing Outdoor ECE in Canada (Table 1) who guided the development of this document.

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Glossary of Terms

The [Outdoor Play Glossary of Terms](#) document provides a compilation of terminology and concepts integral to outdoor play. The purpose is to be consistent in our use of terms and to build a shared understanding of language used in dialogue on outdoor play across Canada. These are working definitions developed by OPC founding members; the Lawson Foundation Outdoor Play Strategy cohort; and the Play, Learn and Teach Outdoors Network (PLaTO-Net) steering committee and broader membership, in addition to national and international advisors with expertise in play-based practice, policy and research. The process of compiling and defining these concepts included a systematic scoping review to identify common terms and definitions pertaining to play, learning and teaching outdoors, a review of commonly understood definitions derived from the Oxford Dictionary and the Merriam-Webster Dictionary as well as the Outdoor Play Canada Glossary of Terms.



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Appendices

Appendix A: CCOP Outdoor ECE Framework Timeline





Appendix B: Results from the Environmental Scan, Grey Literature and Google Search on Key Pedagogical Practices in Outdoor ECE Continuous Professional Learning Opportunities

Theme (Canada)	Title	Link
Post-Secondary Micro-Credential Programs/ Current Outdoor/Nature-Based Professional Continuous Learning	Algonquin College, Bachelor of Early Learning and Community Development (BELCD) (Honours) Degree Program	https://www.algonquincollege.com/wellness-safety-community/program/bachelor-of-early-learning-and-community-development/
	Bow Valley College Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) Diploma	https://bowvalleycollege.ca/programs-courses/community-studies/early-childhood-education-and-development-diploma
	Canadian Child Care Federation Online Outdoor Play Training Courses	https://cccf-fcsge.ca/ece-resources/professional-development/online-learning/early-childhood-education-online/
	Child and Nature Alliance of Canada, Forest and Nature School Practitioners Course	https://childnature.ca/forest-school-canada/
	Childhood by Nature Nature-Based Educator Training	https://www.childhoodbynature.com/nature-based-educator-trainings/
	Discovery Professional Learning	https://www.discoverychild.on.ca/educators/professional-learning-division/

Discovery Keynote Addresses and In-Person Training	https://www.discoveryprofessionallearning.com/in-person-learning
Educated by Nature Nature-Based Professional Learning Workshops	https://educatedbynature.com/programs/nature-based-programs-for-schools/nature-based-professional-learning/
Evergreen Professional Development for Educators	https://www.evergreen.ca/evergreen-brick-work/activities/professional-development-for-educators/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwmSzBhAsEiwAXE2Cv4oCiBlla-sCrhHe_zhqSao3SRb8wU6KiQM-nxpM--dKDL7svHDPvhoCqugQAvD_BwE
Humber College, Early Childhood Education, and A Two-Eyed Seeing Approach to Land-based Play and Co-learning in Early Learning and Child Care Ecosystems Project	https://healthsciences.humber.ca/future-students/why-humber/we-add-life/connecting-children-with-nature/two-eyed-land-based-play-and-co-learning.html
Lawson Foundation Outdoor Play Strategy Phase 2 (2021–2023)	https://lawson.ca/our-work/outdoor-play/second-phase/
Learning Outside Together (LOT) Program	https://www.ecebc.ca/professional-development/lot-program
New Brunswick Community College, Early Childhood Education	https://nbcc.ca/programs-courses/program-details?baseCurriculumId=0f3c9eb4-0c10-442a-b9ae-8c11e590bee7
Lawson Foundation, More Than a New Course	https://lawson.ca/MoreThanANewCourse.pdf

Okanagan College Outdoor Pedagogy in Early Childhood Education from Colleges to Communities	https://www.okanagan.bc.ca/learning-and-applied-research/lawson-foundation-project
Outdoor Learning Professional Development Resource List 2022–2023	https://www.outdoorplaycanada.ca/2022/09/07/outdoor-learning-professional-development-2022-2023/
Outdoor Learning Store Early Years Educator Resources	https://outdoorlearningstore.com/product/early-years-educator-resources/
Rivers to Ridges Curriculum Training & Development	https://www.riverstoridges.org/portfolio.htm
Seneca College, Forest, and Nature Early Years Practitioner	Seneca College, Forest, and Nature Early Years Practitioner
Southern Lakes Caribou Educator Training	Southern Lakes Caribou Educator Training
Take Me Outside Outdoor Learning Seasonal Virtual Workshop Series	https://takemeoutside.ca/resource-directory/professional-development-opportunities/
Thrive Outside Resources for Early Childhood Educators	https://childnature.ca/ece/

	The University of British Columbia, Online Micro-Certificate: Climate Vulnerability & Adaptation	https://forestry.ubc.ca/future-students/certificates/climate-micro-certificate
	Wild Spaces	https://cwf-fcf.org/en/explore/wild-spaces/?gclid=CjwKCAjwp8OpBhAFEiwAG7NaEry-Hv4FeEep1buf1ZRgaVaKxKleShh8vvT_9Lr7FW5ExytU60NQWBoC23wQAvD_BwE
ECE Learning Models	Child Nature Alliance Forest and Nature Model	https://childnature.ca/about-forest-and-nature-school/#:~:text=We%20define%20Forest%2FNature%20School,an%20extended%20period%20of%20time.
Risk in Outdoor Play	Child Nature Alliance Dynamically Assessing Risk	https://childnature.ca/dynamically-assessing-risk/
Outdoor ECE Fostering an Indigenous Lens	Brock University Decolonizing Education Through Outdoor Learning	https://dr.library.brocku.ca/bitstream/handle/10464/13489/Brock_Middlemiss_Alexandria_2018.pdf?sequence=1
	Child Encyclopaedia Indigenizing Outdoor Play	https://www.child-encyclopedia.com/pdf/expert/outdoor-play/according-experts/indigenizing-outdoor-play
	Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario Indigenous Land-Based Learning: The Learning Story of an Indigenous Kindergarten Teacher	https://etfofmi.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Book_Land-Acknowledgement.pdf

Theme (International)	Title	Link
Post-Secondary Micro-Credential Programs/ Current Outdoor/Nature-Based Professional Continuous Learning	Antioch University, The Nature-Based Early Childhood Education Certificate Program	https://www.antioch.edu/academics/education/certificates/nature-based-early-childhood-education-cert-aune/
	University of Cincinnati, Online Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Care & Education	https://online.uc.edu/associate-programs/associate-of-applied-science-in-early-childhood-care-and-education/
	University of South-Eastern Norway – Outdoor Education and Experiential Learning in Schools and Kindergartens	https://www.usn.no/english/academics/find-programmes/outdoor-education-and-experiential-learning/
	Western Norway University of Applied Sciences – Outdoor Education and Nordic Friluftsliv	https://www.hvl.no/en/studies-at-hvl/study-programmes/outdoor-education-and-nordic-friluftsliv-winter/
Global Outdoor ECE Practices and Resources and ECE Forest and Nature Programs	National Association for the Education of Young Children Outdoor Play Resources	https://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/outdoor
	Novak Djokovic Foundation – Forest Schools; A Philosophy of Child-Led Learning: The Early Years Blog	https://novakdjokovicfoundation.org/forest-schools-child-led-learning/
	The Outdoor Environment in Norwegian Kindergartens as Pedagogical Space for Toddlers' Play, Learning and Development	https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233242374_The_outdoor_environment_in_Norwegian_kindergartens_as_pedagogical_space_for_toddlers'_play_learning_and_development

	Outdoor Learning, Environment and Sustainability – Seeing the Big Picture	https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Zbigniew-Glabinski/publication/304251100_Tsunami_on_the_Baltic_Sea_how_to_get_knowledge_about_one's_own_region/links/576a98e108aefcf135bd270e/Tsunami-on-the-Baltic-Sea-how-to-get-knowledge-about-ones-own-region.pdf#page=137
	Udeskole in Scandinavia: Teaching and Learning in Natural Places	https://www.childrenandnature.org/resources/udeskole-in-scandinavia-teaching-learning-in-natural-places/
The Environment as the Third Teacher	Children and Place: Reggio Emilia’s Environment As Third Teacher	https://doi.org/10.1080/00405840709336547
ECE Learning Models	Montessori Educational Model	https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13158-020-00277-1#Sec1
	Reggio Emilia Educational Model	https://www.reggiochildren.it/en/reggio-emilia-approach/valori-en/
	Waldorf Education Model	https://www.sunbridge.edu/about/waldorf-education/

