Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play / Centre canadien du jeu à l'extérieur

Decolonization, Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion in Outdoor Early Learning and Play

A Resource Guide for the Educators Teaching Educators: Canada's Outdoor Early Childhood Education Continuous Professional Learning Framework



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Contents

Land Acknowledgement..... 3

Overview 4

Decolonization Section 8

Introduction..... 9

Decolonization Resources 11

Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Section 30

Introduction..... 31

Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Resources 33

Glossary..... 57

References..... 61

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 is based out of Ottawa, however, our 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

Overview

The Decolonization, Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Outdoor Early Learning and Play Resource Guide ("Decolonization & JEDI: A Resource Guide") serves as a companion resource to the Educators Teaching Educators: Canada's Outdoor Early Childhood Education Continuous Professional Learning Framework ("Outdoor ECE Framework"). Developed by the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play (CCOP) in partnership with organizations and individuals across Canada, the Outdoor ECE Framework reflects the expertise, experiences, and diverse perspectives of ECE professionals and identifies three Rooted Pedagogical Principles of Outdoor Early Childhood Education ('Rooted Principles'): **Active Engagement**, **Holistic Development**, and **Meaningful Connections.**

Underpinning these principles is a recognition that children's learning, development, and participation are strengthened when they experience a sense of belonging within their learning environments, relationships, and communities. As early learning settings become increasingly diverse, fostering belonging has become an important consideration for educators and organizations alike. With ongoing global change, increased immigration, and growing societal pluralism, belonging has received growing attention in early learning research and practice (Eek-Karlsson & Emilson, 2023).

Research and early learning frameworks across Canada in particular recognize belonging as a foundational component of learning that supports children's well-being, identity development, engagement, and meaningful participation through equitable, inclusive, and culturally responsive practices (Allen et al., 2025; Erwin et al., 2024; Locchetta & Joseph, 2025). Building on this understanding, this Guide aims to support ECE professionals by providing resources, information, and practical guidance for advancing Decolonization, upholding JEDI principles, fostering belonging in outdoor learning environments, and navigating outdoor ECE spaces in thoughtful, culturally responsive, and inclusive ways.



The Rooted Pedagogical Principles of Outdoor Early Childhood Education, as described in the Outdoor ECE Framework.

The Decolonization & JEDI Guide includes items, documents and resources from Outdoor Play Canada and other organizations. This document has been separated into two main focuses: Decolonization and JEDI. This distinction is important because, while related, Decolonization and JEDI are conceptually different. Decolonization has a distinct history, a distinct set of goals and aims to address distinct structural issues that often fall outside the focus of traditional JEDI frameworks (Gambrell, 2026; Steinman, 2016; Tuck & Yang, 2012). JEDI frameworks are the result of a collective effort to address discrimination, improve representation for those who have been historically excluded in many spaces (due to race, gender, sexuality, or ability) and uphold equitable practices for all through fairness (Meriem Webster, n.d.; York University, n.d.). JEDI initiatives often operate within existing institutional structures, seeking to make them more equitable and inclusive. In contrast, Decolonization describes a social and political movement centered on Indigenous self-determination and the collective liberation of humans and non-humans from colonial power, structures, and ways of thinking (York University, n.d.). Decolonization calls for a critical examination of those very structures and the colonial assumptions that sustain them.

Recognizing these differences is essential for meaningful action. This document therefore approaches JEDI and Decolonization as parallel and complementary pathways that may intersect in practice, while remaining grounded in different histories, responsibilities, and measures of accountability. Preceding each section, we provide an overview of each term within the context of outdoor ECE, to help establish a shared understanding of Decolonization & JEDI before moving into the resources available to support this work.

See the **Glossary of Terms** section on page 54 for additional terminology and concepts used within this document related to Decolonization & JEDI. Each blue term in the Glossary directly links to its corresponding reference, similar to the terms defined throughout the document within blue bubbles.



Within this document are a range of practical and informational resources intended to support and guide early learning professionals in thoughtfully applying a Multi-Lens approach to their professional practice. This resource list was developed through a comprehensive search of the Outdoor Play Canada (OPC) website, supplemented by an environmental scan of relevant resources available online. The scan included reviewing publicly available reports, toolkits, policy documents, and educational materials to identify current, credible, and evidence-informed resources. Materials were selected for their capacity to support the application of a multi-lens approach to outdoor play and learning, including social, cultural, environmental, and equity-informed perspectives. As outlined in the Outdoor ECE Framework, applying a multi-lens approach involves engaging in practice that centres Decolonization while attending to all dimensions of JEDI. This inherently includes accessibility and supports the establishment of outdoor environments that are inclusive and enable every child to reach their full potential.



	**Podcasts**
	**Videos**
	**Case Studies**
	**Publications/Reports**
	**Guides/Frameworks/Tip Sheets/Courses**
	**Blogs**
	**Webpages/Articles**
	**Resource Compilations (Mixed Media)**
	**Books**
	**Outdoor-Specific Resource**
	**Informational**
	**Practical**

Table 1. Symbol Legend

Every resource is accompanied by an icon that identifies its format — such as a video, podcast, paper, case study, framework, or guide (see Table 1. Symbol Legend). Each clickable resource title is also categorized as informational, practical, or both, allowing users to quickly determine the type of content provided and access materials that best support their professional learning and practice. Outdoor-specific resources are also identified with a tree icon, highlighting content that is particularly relevant to outdoor learning environments.



Defining Terms

Multi-Lens Approach: Using Decolonization and JEDI lenses to critically reflect on and strengthen relationships, environments, policies, and practices by centring Indigenous perspectives, addressing systemic barriers, and promoting equity, inclusion, and belonging.

DECOLONIZATION

RESOURCES



Introduction

Outdoor play and learning in North America takes place on Indigenous lands that have been shaped by ongoing processes of dispossession, displacement, and erasure (Lees & Bang, 2023). Because of this, Decolonization must be made explicit within outdoor learning contexts rather than treated as implied or assumed. Decolonization is an active, relational, and political process that requires ongoing learning, responsibility, and meaningful engagement with Indigenous Peoples, knowledges, and Lands. Without intentionally understanding, naming and/or engaging with Decolonization, professionals within outdoor learning and play programs risk overlooking historical contexts and reinforcing colonial narratives that frame Land as empty, pristine, or universally accessible (Calderón, 2014; Shah, n.d.). It also risks dismissing Indigenous presence, sovereignty, and long-standing responsibilities to place. It is important to note that Decolonization is not a metaphor, a checklist, or a single event, nor is it achieved by simply including Indigenous stories, symbols, or activities in programming. Decolonization is not about incorporating Indigenous Peoples into existing colonial systems, it is about fundamentally changing those systems. Using Decolonization metaphorically and loosely (e.g., "decolonize the curriculum," "decolonize thinking,") risks diluting the specific content of what Decolonization really involves, making it serve settler agendas, which includes maintaining colonial power structures (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Appleton, 2019).



Decolonization does not have a single, fixed definition, as it can take different forms and emerge from diverse lived experiences, histories, and worldviews (Thurston, n.d.). As Niigaan Sinclair explains, Decolonization involves taking a critical look at how Indigenous Peoples in what is now called Canada have been affected by colonization and responding to the oppression they have faced. Anishinaabe Elder Chickadee Richard describes Decolonization as a *return* — to ceremony, to history, to identity, and to self-governance — recognizing it as a pathway back from the harms of colonization and the loss of Indigenous self-determination (Richard, as cited in Thurston, n.d.).

At its core, Decolonization can be broadly understood as the active dismantling of colonial structures and systems that continue to marginalize, overlook, and exclude Indigenous Peoples (York University, n.d.). This includes critically examining dominant Western worldviews that have shaped education and outdoor learning, particularly those rooted in individualism, hierarchical power structures, capitalism, excessive resource extraction, anthropocentrism, and environmental crises (Adams, 1999; Bowers, 2007; Rasmussen, 2001, as cited by Root, 2010). Decolonization calls for challenging these assumptions and practices, and making space for Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and relating to Land.

Including Indigenous content without addressing political realities such as Land theft, sovereignty, and self-determination risks maintaining colonial comfort while avoiding accountability. Decolonization requires educators and institutions to reflect critically on how Land is framed, whose knowledge is centered, and whose presence is normalized within outdoor learning spaces.

This section offers a wide range of resources, including written, audio, visual, and infographic materials, to support ECE professionals in directly naming and engaging with Decolonization. Rather than treating Decolonization as a metaphor or a set of performative practices, these resources encourage educators to critically examine the historical and ongoing impacts of colonization, particularly within educational systems. By providing clear definitions, resources grounded in Indigenous-led perspectives and authored by Indigenous peoples, and concrete examples, this section aims to move ECE professionals beyond tokenistic inclusion toward a more intentional, reflective, and accountable approach.





Decolonization Resources

A Seasonal Pedagogy

Written by Dr. Hopi Lovell Martin from Edge of the Bush, this piece introduces an Ojibwe-inspired seasonal pedagogy that sees learning and child development through the cycle of the seasons — Birth, Movement, Relationships, and Passing. It connects Land-based play with Indigenous knowledge, inviting readers to deepen relationships with Land and support respectful, relational early learning.



Aboriginal Head Start BC: Connecting to the Land Series

Aboriginal Head Start BC's YouTube page features a thoughtful video series focused on Connecting to the Land through physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual practices. The videos highlight Indigenous perspectives, encouraging movement, reflection, and cultural teachings that strengthen relationships with nature, community, and personal wellbeing while supporting holistic early childhood learning and lifelong connections for families, educators, and children across diverse communities.

Algaujaut Atuqhugit Nukaqhiinut Using Puppets with Young Children

This guide by the Government of Nunavut explains practical ways to use puppets in classroom instruction to enhance engagement, communication, and learning. It outlines puppet-based activities, tips for fostering inclusion and cultural responsiveness, and strategies to support language development, social skills, and student expression. The resource offers lesson ideas and puppeteering techniques that make learning interactive, creative, and supportive for diverse learners in early and elementary education.

Canadian Council of Learning: First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model



The First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model presents learning as an ongoing, interconnected process rooted in Indigenous worldviews. Represented as a tree, it shows how knowledge from community, culture, Land, and relational experiences supports lifelong growth across emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental dimensions, integrating Indigenous and Western knowledge for individual and collective well-being.

Canadian Council of Learning: Inuit Holistic Lifelong Learning Model



The Inuit Holistic Lifelong Learning Model describes Inuit learning as a continuous, circular journey that links individual knowledge and community well-being. Grounded in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) values and beliefs, it uses a blanket toss graphic to show how learning from culture, people, Land, and life force across all life stages supports lifelong education and community health.

Questions to Consider

- How am I moving beyond awareness into action towards Decolonization?
- How do I engage in ongoing self-reflection about my own perspectives, assumptions, experiences, and how they influence my everyday practice?
- How do these resources challenge my own educational upbringing?
- Do I have opportunities to stop, slow down, and reflect in my practice? If not, when and where might I take these opportunities?

Canadian Council of Learning: Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model

The Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model illustrates learning as a living, interconnected process rooted in Métis culture, values, and community well-being. Represented as a tree, it shows how spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental growth occurs through family, community, Land, language, and traditions across life stages, supporting identity and lifelong learning.

Colonialism in Early Education, Care, and Intervention: A Knowledge Synthesis

This article synthesizes research on how colonialism shapes early childhood education, care, and intervention for Indigenous families. It highlights how mainstream disability and intervention systems reflect colonial assumptions that conflict with Indigenous worldviews. The authors argue for culturally grounded, relational approaches that honour Indigenous perspectives on childhood, development, and family well-being to counter ongoing colonial harms

Defining Terms

Colonialism: A deliberate process in which a political power from one territory asserts unequal political control over another, using policies or practices such as governance, settlement, occupation, and economic exploitation.



Decolonial Toolbox: Educational Pathway



The Decolonial Toolbox: Educational Pathway is a free, self-guided resource created by Mikana, Concordia University's Office of Community Engagement, and the Montreal Indigenous Community NETWORK. It offers over 22 hours of curated content — including Indigenous-produced readings, videos, and audio — that introduces historical and contemporary Indigenous realities, terminology, colonial history, and supports reflection toward Decolonization and allyship. It can be used individually or in group learning circles to deepen understanding and challenge colonial perspectives.

Decolonization Handbook: Whose Land is it Anyway?



The Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC (FPSE) Decolonization Handbook brought together Indigenous scholars and activists to examine colonial history, Land dispossession, Indigenous resistance, and pathways toward true Decolonization and Reconciliation. It highlights how colonial laws and structures continue to oppress Indigenous Peoples and calls for greater emphasis on Land rights, Indigenous resurgence, and the reclamation of power, knowledge, and relationships as central to decolonizing society.

Decolonization Toolkit



The Decolonization Toolkit created by VIDEA is a toolkit designed to support conversation and growth to better support Decolonization and Reconciliation. The toolkit is aimed at youth leadership but has information that can be applied to other settings. The toolkit looks at self-location, Reconciliation and Decolonization, and the importance of engaging with Indigenous communities and elevating Indigenous voices.

Decolonizing and Antiracist Resources



The Decolonizing and Anti-racist Resources collection from the University of British Columbia supports educators with curated links, research guides, and tools for decolonial and anti-racist practice. It includes guides from UBC's Xwi7xwa Library, allyship workshops, online media collections on Reconciliation and race, educational maps and tools, teacher federation strategies, and projects that help integrate Indigenous, anti-racist, and equity-centered perspectives into teaching.

Decolonizing and Co-Constructing Contexts that Welcome Indigenous Practices and Knowledges in Early Childhood Education



This article from the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario explores how to support Decolonization in early childhood education. By examining college programs for ECEs and the influence of colonialism, this article highlights the Eurocentric nature of ECE. The importance of educators learning about Indigenous culture and teaching methods is highlighted, and the perspectives of both Western research and Indigenous knowledge are taken into account.

Decolonizing Environmental Education: A Resource Guide for Non-Indigenous Educators



This resource guide helps non-Indigenous environmental educators confront settler colonial assumptions in their teaching by centering Indigenous voices and perspectives. It offers self-reflection prompts, critical analysis tools, and Indigenous-authored curricular resources to support decolonizing environmental education. Using transformative learning and social justice frameworks, it guides educators toward self-decolonization and more just, Indigenous-centered practices.

Decolonizing Our Practice - Indigenizing Our Teaching



Decolonizing Our Practice, Indigenizing Our Teaching discusses how three university educators worked to transform higher education by decolonizing their teaching and Indigenizing curriculum and classroom practices. It focuses on centering Indigenous knowledge, challenging colonial assumptions, and creating respectful education that benefits all students.

Encouraging Indigenous Cultural Identity at Home and in Child Care



The article offers practical ideas for supporting Indigenous children's cultural identity at home and in early learning settings, such as using traditional language, music, stories, foods, engaging with Elders and collaborating with families. It emphasizes intentional, respectful inclusion of culture and language, helping practitioners build equitable, culturally responsive, and accessible environments that support belonging and identity.

First Nations Child & Family Caring Society



The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society's Early Childhood resources provide ECE professionals with tools to integrate Reconciliation, Indigenous history, culture, and concepts of fairness and justice into their programs. Through guides, videos, and suggested activities, educators can plan meaningful experiences — such as Have a Heart Day or Bear Witness Day — that foster empathy, awareness, and culturally responsive practices in early learning environments.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Education Resources



To enhance members' learning and teaching practices, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) has created a range of resources and publications that centre First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) perspectives and ways of knowing. These materials are developed by ETFO members — Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike — in collaboration with Indigenous communities as well as partners in the education and labour sectors.

Questions to Consider

- How am I supporting children in developing critical awareness of fairness, equity, and diverse ways of knowing?
- How do I make space for ongoing reflection, unlearning, and growth — for myself and my colleagues — in this work?
- How am I building reciprocal, respectful relationships with Indigenous communities, beyond tokenistic inclusion?
- In what ways do my decisions (curriculum, environment, routines) reflect or resist dominant Eurocentric perspectives?

First Nations Perspective on Health and Wellness



The First Nations Perspective on Health and Wellness from the First Nations Health Authority presents a First Nations perspective on health and wellness, emphasizing balance, interconnectedness, and relationships with community and Land. It invites readers to move beyond Western medical models and understand wellness as holistic, relational, and rooted in Indigenous knowledge and values.

First Peoples Principles of Learning



The FNESC Learning First Peoples poster presents Indigenous principles of learning as holistic, relational, and rooted in Land, memory, history, and story. Learning supports the well-being of self, family, community, Land, ancestors, and spirits, involves responsibility and identity, values Indigenous knowledge, requires time and patience, and respects sacred knowledge shared only with permission.

Four Simple Ways to Grow Your Relationship with the More than Human World in Your Day to Day, Wherever You Are



In this essay, Petra Bongartz outlines four simple ways to strengthen your relationship with the more-than-human world in daily life. She encourages noticing local plants and animals, honoring natural rhythms, and practicing reciprocity with the living world. These small, intentional actions foster connection, care, and presence, helping readers integrate respect for nature into everyday routines.

From the Inside be Outside: Nature and Spiritual Development in the Early Years



In this reflective blog, Diane Kashin highlights the often overlooked spiritual and aesthetic domains of early childhood development, arguing that nature experiences deepen children's sense of wonder, connection, and inner life. She shares how being "outside from the inside" — engaging deeply with the Land and Indigenous ways of knowing — supports spiritual development and relational learning beyond traditional indoor settings.

Gifts of the Land: A Guided Nature Tour with Robin Wall Kimmerer | The Commons KU



In this guided nature walk, Robin Wall Kimmerer invites viewers into springtime at Clark Reservation State Park, sharing teachings about seasonal renewal, attentiveness, and reciprocity with the natural world. Drawing on Indigenous knowledge and scientific insight, she encourages a deeper relationship with Land, more-than-human relatives, and the cycles that sustain life.

How Can We Decolonize the Outdoors? An article by Lisa Kalner Williams



This article by Lisa Kalner Williams explores what it means to decolonize outdoor spaces by applying a framework of Availability, Accessibility, Awareness, Affordability, Appropriateness, and Acceptability to examine equity in access to trails and nature. She shares that Decolonization involves reshaping outdoor recreation beyond token gestures to remove systemic barriers and expand inclusion for diverse communities.

Indigenous Canada Online Course



Indigenous Canada is a free 12-module Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) offered by the University of Alberta's Faculty of Native Studies that examines Indigenous histories, contemporary issues, and Indigenous-settler relationships from Indigenous perspectives. The curriculum covers topics like worldviews, treaties, colonial impacts, Land rights, activism, and cultural expression. Learners can study at their own pace and earn a shareable certificate

Indigenous Land-Based Learning



The Indigenous Land-Based Learning guide from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario discusses Indigenous worldviews connecting people with the Land, shares educators' learning journeys, and offers strategies to integrate Indigenous land-based perspectives into teaching. It emphasizes relationship, stewardship, Indigenous knowledge, and reflective practice for educators.

Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada

The Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada is an educational mapping tool showing Indigenous communities, languages, reserves, residential schools, and more. Developed collaboratively with Indigenous partners, it supports understanding of past, present, and future Indigenous experiences and promotes learning toward Reconciliation. It includes large and tiled maps plus lesson activities for educators and students.

Indigenous Place-Thought & Agency Amongst Humans and Non-Humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European World Tour!)

This article by Vanessa Watts explores “Indigenous Place-Thought”, an Indigenous worldview that understands agency as shared among humans, Land, and non-human beings. It contrasts this relational perspective with colonial ideas that separate humans from the natural world, arguing that such separation underpins colonial violence and erases Indigenous epistemologies.



Interconnectedness

This page from the First Nations Pedagogy Online Project explains the Indigenous worldview of interconnectedness — often expressed as “All My Relations” — where humans, Land, plants, animals, ancestors, and spirit are deeply connected and mutually responsible. It highlights how this philosophy shapes relationship, learning, and well-being in First Nations ways of knowing and teaching.

Kinship with the More Than Human World (Online Series)

“Kinship With the More-Than-Human World” is a TTBOOK podcast series exploring humans’ deep connections with animals, plants, landscapes, and other non-human beings. Through interviews with scientists, writers, and thinkers, the series shares stories and insights about relational ways of knowing, care, and responsibility, encouraging listeners to recognize and nurture their place within the broader living world.





Land as Teacher: Understanding Indigenous Land-Based Education

This feature explains that Land-Based education is rooted in Indigenous worldviews, centering respect, relationality, language, stories, and responsibilities tied to the Land rather than simply outdoor activities. It emphasizes culturally relevant learning, intergenerational knowledge transfer, healing, and challenging colonial perspectives, with implications for Reconciliation, environmental stewardship, and reshaping relationships with the Land.

Land-Based Learning: A Report by the Canadian Education Association (CEA)

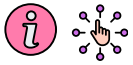
This report by the Canadian Education Association explores Indigenous-centered Land-based learning, showing how outdoor, culturally grounded practices connect learners with Land, community, and Indigenous worldviews. It offers practical insights and educator recommendations for integrating these approaches in education, fostering engagement, belonging, and inclusive pedagogy. This aligns with accessible, equitable early learning by valuing diverse knowledges, relationships, and learning environments beyond classrooms.

Learning from Indigenous Perspectives: Land-Based Learning in the Early Years



The Learning from Indigenous Perspectives: Land-Based Learning in the Early Years research project was a four-year research initiative (2020–2024) from George Brown College's School of Early Childhood that involved working with 20 educators from 10 Toronto childcare centres to integrate Indigenous perspectives and pedagogies into early years education. It produced guides and practical resources to support educators, families, and communities in applying Land-based learning concepts in practice.

Learning Resources about First Nations, Inuit and Métis across Canada



The Government of Canada offers a searchable directory of learning resources related to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis histories, cultures, languages, and experiences. Users can filter by Indigenous group, topic, and resource type to find books, videos, lesson plans, reports, and educational materials to support teaching, learning, and understanding of Indigenous perspectives across Canada.

Defining Terms

Land-Based Learning: Land-Based Learning (LBL) is about learning on and with the Land, guided by Indigenous Peoples and teachings. It is grounded in Indigenous worldviews that understand the Land as both a relative and a teacher, and recognize its central role in human life and learning. LBL emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living things and the relationships and natural laws that sustain them, typically taking place outdoors or in close connection to the natural environment.

Outdoor Play Canada: Indigenous Peoples & Land-Based Outdoor Play Resource Archives



The Outdoor Play Canada Resource Library includes a category focused on Indigenous knowledge, land-based learning, and outdoor play. This section features a range of open-access resources, including research projects, guides that integrate Indigenous and Western perspectives, capacity-building reports, youth programs, Indigenous-led organizations, and outdoor learning hubs that support educators, communities, and practitioners.

Outdoor Play Canada: Outdoor ECE Online Resource Directory



Outdoor Play Canada's Online Resource Library is designed to support outdoor play policy, practice, research, and knowledge mobilization. It features hundreds of tools and materials organized by audience — such as organizations, parents, and outdoor ECE — as well as topic areas such as policy, practice, research, and the Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play.

Queen's University: Resources for Decolonizing Your Teaching



Queen's University Library's Resources for Decolonizing Your Teaching guide offers curated materials to support educators in understanding and dismantling colonial assumptions in their teaching. It provides readings, tools, and links on Indigenous perspectives, Land acknowledgements, decolonizing education, and Indigenous learning approaches. The guide encourages ongoing personal learning and un-learning to integrate more inclusive, culturally respectful pedagogies.

Reconciliation from a Métis Lens



In this final episode of the Métis Speaker Series, Métis Citizen Lauren Petersen explores Reconciliation through a Métis lens. She reflects on self-Reconciliation, healing from harm, and the emotional work involved in Reconciliation. The conversation emphasizes relationship-building with First Nations as a vital and ongoing part of meaningful Reconciliation.

Robin Wall Kimmerer on the Language of Animacy



In an interview with Orion, Robin Wall Kimmerer discusses how language shapes our relationship with the natural world. Comparing English with Potawatomi, she explains how Indigenous language recognizes plants, animals, and landscapes as living beings, encouraging kinship, respect, reciprocity, and responsibility toward nature.

Robin Wall Kimmerer: Speaking of Nature



Robin Wall Kimmerer explores how the language we use to describe nature shapes our relationship with the natural world. Rather than focusing specifically on Potawatomi grammar, this article examines how referring to nature as "it" can distance humans from other living beings, and considers how language can foster connection, respect, and reciprocity.

Did you know

?

The term 'Reconciliation' emerged after WWII to mark socio-political processes of healing and transformation due to gross human rights violations and major political conflicts. In Canada, it refers to addressing colonialism and building respectful relationships between Indigenous Peoples and the government. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada defines it as an ongoing process that requires repairing trust through apologies, reparations, and meaningful action.

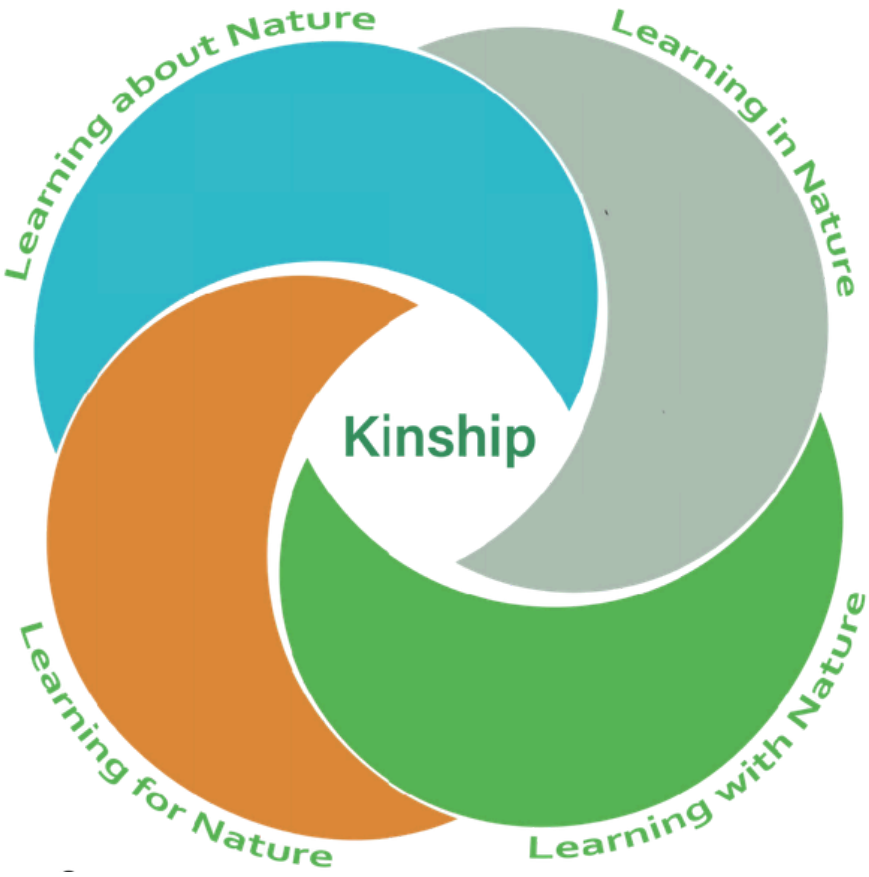
However, the concept is contested. Many Indigenous perspectives argue colonialism is ongoing and that true Reconciliation requires substantive change — such as Land return, compensation, and self-determination, not just symbolic gestures. Critics also question the term itself: "Reconciliation" implies returning to a past relationship that never existed and carries religious (Catholic) connotations. **For more information, visit: https://indigenous.uwo.ca/assets/docs/pdfs/Indigenous-Initiatives-Key-Terms.pdf**.

Take Me Outside: Resource Directory

The Take Me Outside Resource Directory is an extensive online collection of hundreds of outdoor learning resources, including articles, lesson plans, activities, research, and tools that can be filtered by theme, subject, and type to support educators' planning and practice. It helps connect educators with diverse materials to enhance outdoor and nature-based education across age groups and topics.

The Children's Environmental Kinship Guide

The Children's Environmental Kinship Guide promotes a holistic, relationship-based approach to education that connects children with the natural world. It emphasizes learning about, in, with, and for the Earth through Indigenous-informed principles of kinship, stewardship, reciprocity, and respect for all beings. The guide supports educators in fostering ecological awareness, responsibility, and interconnected learning rooted in Land and community.



Fox, Gessler, Higgins, Meade, Warden, Williams Ridge, 2020

Case Study

The University of Manitoba's Community Engagement Learning department facilitates Land and Water curriculum for children through the lens of Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. In 2024–2025, for example, it explored Indigenous relationships with waterways and the species that inhabit and depend on them.

Students are ice fishing, tanning fish hides, and learning other land-based skills and knowledge while engaging in discussions about pollution, climate change, and microplastics.



The program engages Indigenous elders, knowledge carriers, artists and cultural teachers to lead its discussions and workshops.

The program's two Métis coordinators, one of whom holds a Master of Education in Indigenous land-based education, work with these experts to use traditional ways of learning, including storytelling, experiential, relational and place-based approaches to help students connect with each other, the Land and community.

Defining Terms

Kinship: A worldview that recognizes the deep interrelationship of all beings, positioning humans as part of — not apart from — the living world.

This case study is sourced from UNESCO Canadian Commission led by the University of Manitoba

Reflective Questions

- *What do I envision when I think of the word "classroom", and what emotions arise when I challenge my assumptions about learning spaces?*
- *What responsibilities do I carry when engaging in Land-based learning rooted in Indigenous knowledge?*

Did you know

?

Only 14 of the 94 Calls to Action have been completed, with 4 requiring ongoing follow-up. The majority remain either in progress or not yet started, highlighting the continued gap between commitment and meaningful change. These Calls to Action, outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), were intended to address the ongoing impacts of residential schools and advance Reconciliation across Canada.

Learn more about the progress of the TRC's Calls to Action here: indigenouswatchdog.org/2025/12/06/trc-calls-to-action-status-may-13-2022/.

Indigenous Watchdog, 2026

The Experience and Expression of Spirituality in Childhood: A Systematic Review and Qualitative Synthesis of the Literature



This systematic review explores how young children experience and express spirituality, highlighting its importance in early development and everyday life. It synthesizes existing research to show that spirituality is a meaningful and diverse aspect of childhood, connected to relationships, wonder, and a sense of connectedness to others and the world.

The Secret Life of Canada



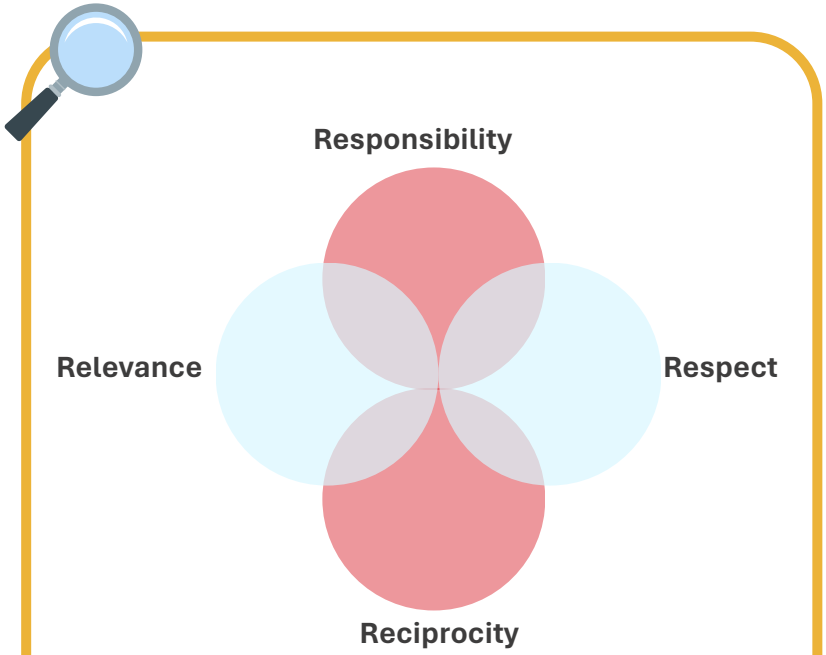
The Secret Life of Canada is a CBC podcast hosted by Leah-Simone Bowen and Falen Johnson that uncovers the lesser-known and untold stories of Canadian history, such as The Indian Act. The podcast explores Indigenous histories, immigrant experiences, social movements, and overlooked cultural moments. Through research, interviews, and storytelling, the hosts discuss how these stories have shaped modern Canada, challenge mainstream narratives, and encourage listeners to think critically about the nation's identity, legacy, and ongoing social issues.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action lists 94 specific recommendations to address the legacy of the residential school system and advance Reconciliation across Canada. They cover areas such as child welfare, education, health, justice, language, and culture, and call on governments, institutions, and individuals to implement concrete policies that acknowledge historical harms, support healing, and foster equitable relationships with Indigenous Peoples.

Two-Eyed Seeing (Etuaptmumk) Tip Sheet

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) University tip sheet describes Two-Eyed Seeing (Etuaptmumk), a framework by Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall that blends Indigenous and Western ways of knowing. It encourages co-learning, respect for Indigenous knowledge, context-specific understanding, and building equitable relationships. The approach promotes seeing with both "eyes" together, drawing on strengths from each worldview and prioritizing community-guided, culturally safe engagement.



In action, these Guiding Principles present as:

- Supporting Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination.
- Creating an environment that empowers Indigenous perspectives and promotes cultural safety.
- Benefitting all partners and co-learning in unison.
- Developing community goals and needs and aligning initiatives to meet them.

Guiding Principles of Two-Eyed Seeing: The Four Rs (4)

Wahkohtowin - Kinship

Elder and Residential School Survivor Belinda Vandenbroeck shares the Cree concept of wahkohtowin, which describes the deep interconnectedness and mutual responsibility between all relations, including people, Land, and all living beings. She reflects on how wahkohtowin guides ethical relationships, community care, and healing, especially in the context of intergenerational trauma and Reconciliation.



Wanna Be An Ally?

"Wanna Be an Ally?" from Decolonial Futures provides guidance for supporting Decolonization in meaningful, accountable ways. It emphasizes listening to Indigenous voices, recognizing and checking personal power and privilege, and taking action with humility rather than saviorism. The resource encourages ongoing self-reflection, learning, and relationship-building, offering practical steps for allies to contribute responsibly to Indigenous-led initiatives while respecting sovereignty, knowledge, and community priorities.

Why Making Vital Distinctions Between Indigenous and Dominant Worldviews is Not a "Binary Thinking Problem"

This article argues that comparing Indigenous and dominant Western worldviews is not a harmful binary but a crucial reflection for addressing global crises like climate change and inequality. It highlights Indigenous perspectives as holistic, interconnected, and life-sustaining, while contrasting them with dominant dualistic hierarchies rooted in colonial systems. Rather than framing these perspectives as oppositional, the authors emphasize the importance of engaging multiple worldviews together to inform transformation, Decolonization, and responses to ecological and social challenges.

JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION

RESOURCES



Introduction

Outdoor and nature-based education has historically centered White, Western, middle-class norms, often positioning these experiences and ways of knowing as universal (Child & Nature Network, n.d.). Without intentional JEDI work, outdoor learning spaces can unintentionally reproduce patterns of exclusion, harm, and inequity rather than disrupt them. In present day, safety concerns continue to limit participation in outdoor spaces for many people from equity-deserving populations, as fear of discrimination, harassment, or violence have long shaped who feels welcome outside (Francisco, 2024; Gosalvez, 2020) . Community members from Black, Indigenous, and other People of Colour (BIPOC) populations, women, and members of the LGBTQ+ community frequently report feeling unsafe or unwelcome in outdoor and recreational environments, a pattern supported by numerous studies on racial discrimination in park use, outdoor leisure, and sports (Francisco, 2024; Stuck, 2020). Although much of this research is based in the United States, its findings are highly relevant to Canada, which has its own history of slavery and anti-Black policies (McCullough & McRae, 2023).

Beyond safety, the lack of diversity in outdoor spaces is also influenced by historical exclusions such as segregation and discriminatory practices, cultural perceptions reinforced by media and marketing that portray outdoor recreation as predominantly White. Economic barriers related to the cost of equipment and access, and structural or institutional barriers, including limited inclusive programming within organizations that have traditionally served White communities (Francisco, 2024). Historically, systemic barriers, including racism, ableism, colonialism, and socioeconomic inequities, have limited access and participation for many communities. For example: Indigenous children have been disconnected from their traditional Lands, Black and racialized children have faced surveillance and discrimination in public parks, and children with disabilities have often encountered physical and social barriers to inclusion (National Health Foundation, 2020; Rowland-Shea et al., 2020).



The reality is that outdoor spaces are still rarely viewed as places that are inclusive of many equity-deserving communities, and they are rarely designed with their experiences, needs, or safety in mind. As a result, these spaces can feel unwelcoming—a form of experiential exclusion that operates alongside the historical, cultural, economic, and structural barriers that already limit access. Gosalvez (2020) highlights this imbalance clearly, noting how White people often move through parks and hiking spaces without a second thought, while those from BIPOC communities must often carefully plan outings, travel in groups, and remain hyperaware of how they are perceived. This need for caution reinforces the message that outdoor spaces are not neutral or equally accessible, but instead reflect long-standing assumptions about who "belongs" in nature and who does not.

Similar patterns of exclusion are also evident for LGBTQ+ individuals within outdoor spaces. Despite nature often being framed as a place of freedom, escape, and connection, queer and trans people have historically encountered discrimination, exclusion, and violence in these environments, reinforcing feelings of not belonging. These experiences further demonstrate that outdoor spaces are not inherently inclusive and must be intentionally shaped to support diverse identities (Lundin & Bombaci, 2022).

The following section includes resources intended to support ECE professionals in engaging in intentional, reflective JEDI work that acknowledges how identity, power, and history shape outdoor environments for those from equity-deserving communities.



Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion Resources

A Blueprint for Building Quality Participation on Playgrounds for Children with Disabilities

This Blueprint from the Canadian Disability Participation Project provides evidence-informed guidance for playground programmers to support meaningful participation of children with disabilities. It outlines practical strategies for choosing inclusive playgrounds and facilitating play that promotes autonomy, belonging, engagement, challenge, mastery, and meaning. The guide addresses common participation barriers and emphasizes physical, social, emotional, and mental benefits of inclusive play experiences for children with a disability.



A Seat At The Table TedTalk

This video explores origin stories and how preconceived notions of the "other" are formed. It encourages listeners to consider whether examining and unpacking these assumptions can create space for people to come together in more meaningful ways to foster inclusive environments. The video highlights how intentional social interaction and shared common ground can drive meaningful change in communities, policy, and inclusion efforts.

A Teacher's Guidebook for Learning Outside

A Teacher's Guidebook to Learning Outside by the Child and Nature Alliance of Canada supports educators in moving learning outdoors. It discusses outdoor pedagogical documentation, cultivating wonder in schoolyards, establishing routines and rituals, and responding to challenging behaviours, with practical guidance and examples, particularly highlighted in pages 46–54 of the guide.

Defining Terms

Accessibility: The degree to which physical, pedagogical, financial, social, and administrative structures are (re)designed to enable the full, meaningful, and equitable engagement of all community members.

A Scoping Review of Evidence-Informed Recommendations for Designing Inclusive Playgrounds

The article by Brown et al. (2021) synthesizes evidence from 35 studies to inform the development of recommendations for inclusive playground design that addresses physical and social barriers to play for children with disabilities. Key elements include accessible entry points, pathways, play features, staffing, and co-design processes. This research highlights how intentional design and inclusion practices can support equitable access, aligning with accessibility and justice principles relevant for early learning professionals.

Accessibility, Inclusion, and Quality Participation

This report, developed as a companion to *A Quick Guide to Accessibility, Inclusion, and Quality Participation*, explores the interconnected concepts of accessibility, inclusion, and meaningful participation. Although focused on disability in sport, its definitions and frameworks are highly applicable to early learning settings. The resource supports educators in examining how policies, environments, and practices can foster belonging, remove systemic barriers, and promote equitable participation, aligning with JEDI and decolonizing commitments in education.

Active for Life: Adapted and Inclusive Physical Literacy

Active for Life describes inclusive physical literacy as supporting all children, including those with disabilities, to develop the skills, confidence, motivation, and enjoyment needed for lifelong movement. This resource highlights inclusive practices, adapted activities, and supportive environments that promote participation, belonging, and positive experiences in physical activity. It emphasizes social inclusion, personal growth, and accessible opportunities for active engagement and success.

Addressing Racism in Outdoor Education: Supporting Student Well-being Through Nature Connection



In this video, Jaclyn Angotti, Education Director for Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Southern Alberta outlines recommendations for making the outdoors a more inclusive space. These recommendations are guided by Jaclyn's research on racism in outdoor spaces. This resource can be used for ECEs seeking to create an outdoor learning space for all.

Andrew Fleck Children's Services (AFCS) - Children's Inclusion Support Services (CISS) Resource Library



AFCS CISS offers a bilingual inclusion resource library in Ottawa, Ontario, featuring books, teaching materials, and disability-specific information to support educators and parents of children with special needs. In addition to its in-person collection, AFCS provides digital tip sheets, videos, and social media content that share inclusive practices, strategies, and stories, extending access beyond Ottawa and promoting active participation and understanding for all children in child care and learning environments.

Anti-Bias Leaders ECE



Anti-Bias Leaders ECE provides tools and carefully curated resources to support anti-bias education in early childhood settings. The collection includes planning worksheets, professional development activities, children's books, guides, and bibliographies, alongside a wide range of articles, podcasts, and videos from experienced practitioners. Together, these resources support reflective teaching and promote diversity, inclusion, equity, and meaningful anti-bias practice across diverse learning communities and educational contexts.

Anti-Oppressive Framework: A Primer



The Anti-Oppressive Framework: A Primer from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario guides understanding and action against oppression in schools and communities. It defines anti-oppression, explains how systems like racism, colonialism, and ableism cause inequities, and offers strategies to challenge power, centre marginalized voices, address bias, embed intersectionality, and work toward systemic change.

Anti Racism and Belonging in Outdoor Play and Learning



This webinar, presented by the Canadian Child Care Federation and the Child and Nature Alliance of Canada, examines how White supremacy culture and colonial power structures shape outdoor play and learning. It challenges the movement's exclusion of racialized and Indigenous families and invites participants to interrupt colonial practices to create safer, braver, and more inclusive Land-based learning spaces.

Anti-Racism Charter in Recreation



The Anti-Racism Charter in Recreation from Recreation Nova Scotia is a resource that promotes equity and inclusion within sport and recreation. It includes a formal charter document outlining principles and commitments to address racism, along with an action plan and supporting video to help organizations learn about, adopt, and implement anti-racism practices and training in their communities.



Application Tips from Nova Scotia Recreation's

Anti-Racism Charter in Recreation

1. Acknowledge and address racism
2. Provide ongoing training and education
3. Build racially representative communties
4. Design equitable and inclusive opportunities

To learn more about these tips, watch this 2-minute video.

Breaking Down the Lack of Diversity in Outdoor Spaces



This article by the National Health Foundation explores how racism, historical segregation, economic inequality, and ongoing threats of violence have contributed to a significant diversity gap in outdoor recreation, with BIPOC individuals underrepresented in national parks and forests despite making up a large portion of the population. It also highlights the need for racial justice–focused policies, community outreach, and programs that expand access so all people can safely enjoy nature.

Building Inclusive Community Toolbox



An educational webpage for community support workers and ECEs with a focus on when and how to build inclusive communities. This webpage provides step-by-step guidance on building a community that respects each citizen and promotes equal treatment and opportunity, while working to eliminate all forms of discrimination. The webpage includes a checklist, examples, and toolbox to help educators and practitioners assess and evaluate inclusivity in their space.

Canadian City Parks Report: Being Black in Public



This case study is part of the 2024 Canadian City Parks Report, which highlights projects, people, and policies across Canada addressing key challenges facing city parks. It examines how systemic racism shapes experiences in public spaces, often leading racialized individuals to avoid parks due to fear of discrimination or violence. Drawing on lived perspectives, the study offers strategies to strengthen Black cultural identity and inclusion in parks.

Child and Nature Alliance Canada: Risk Benefit Assessment Toolkit



The Risk-Benefit Assessment Toolkit guides practitioners working with children outdoors to identify risks and benefits of outdoor spaces for play and learning. It helps identify hazards, assess potential rewards from challenging play, and make informed decisions that support children's development while managing safety. The toolkit offers practical strategies, planning tools, and context-specific advice so outdoor experiences are both enriching and responsibly supervised.

Child Care Ed: Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Child Care

Child Care Ed outlines strategies for culturally responsive teaching in early childhood, showing how educators can promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. It highlights a 2-hour training that helps providers reflect on bias, use inclusive practices, create welcoming environments, connect with diverse families, and build curricula that respects all children's cultural backgrounds.

Children's Spirituality: Implications for Practice

This article by the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCF) explains how children's spirituality — a sense of connectedness, wonder, and inner meaning — supports their emotional well-being and holistic development. It describes spirituality as linked to relationships, identity, compassion, and connection with others and nature, and suggests that early childhood settings should intentionally embrace spiritual expression to strengthen social bonds and emotional health.



Cool Rules: Preventing Heat Stress In Special Needs Children



The article by Midgett (n.d.), outlines practical strategies to prevent heat stress in children with special needs — with emphasis on recognizing vulnerability, hydration, sun protection, cooling breaks, and symptom awareness. It emphasizes the importance of individualized planning, anticipating needs, and caregiver support to help address barriers to safe participation in outdoor environments for children with a disability.

Creating Inclusive Naturalized Outdoor Play Environments



This Child Encyclopedia article "Creating Inclusive Naturalized Outdoor Play Environments" describes how outdoor play in nature-rich settings benefits all children's development, health, and well-being, including those with disabilities. It emphasizes the importance of universal design and accessible natural spaces, identifies barriers to inclusive outdoor play, and advocates for environments that support exploration, social interaction, and meaningful connections with nature.

Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Awareness Checklist



This cultural competence self assessment checklist can be used to aid in considering your interactions with others. This tool helps individuals critically reflect on awareness of personal values, culture, biases, assumptions, and stereotypes of others when interacting and observing diverse environments in both personal and professional settings. This tool aims to support intentional growth, respect, and engagement.

Cultural Awareness Checklist

- ☑ I view human difference as positive and a cause for celebration.
- ☑ I have a clear sense of my own ethnic, cultural, and racial identity.
- ☑ I am aware of my stereotypes as they arise and have developed personal strategies for reducing the harm they cause.

La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium, n.d.

Embrace Race: Supporting Healthy Racial Learning in Early Childhood

Embrace Race provides a rich collection of resources focused on race and early childhood. The site includes links to webinars, research-based articles, children's books, and practical action guides. These materials support educators, caregivers, and families in having developmentally appropriate conversations about race, identity, and equity, helping young children build awareness, empathy, and positive racial understanding from an early age through intentional teaching, reflection, and inclusive classroom practices.



4.5 YEARS

A 2020 study showed that adults tend to think children start processing race much later than they actually do — by about **4.5 years**. In reality, this process begins in infancy.

Rucinski, 2023

Equity and Empowerment Lens: 5 Ps Worksheet



Developed by Multnomah County, this tool is part of the Equity and Empowerment Lens project and supports equity-centered planning and decision-making. The worksheet guides users through reflective questions focused on People, Place, Process, Power, and Purpose, encouraging critical examination of how policies, programs, and initiatives are developed, implemented, and resourced to better advance racial equity and inclusive outcomes.

Equity Lens Toolkit



Nova Scotia's Barristers' Society created the Equity Lens Toolkit, which helps users apply an "equity lens" to decision-making and services by identifying how policies, practices, and systems exclude equity-seeking groups. It offers worksheets, definitions, reflection questions, and guidance to recognize bias, eliminate barriers, and build inclusive practices that respond to diverse needs, histories, and experiences.

Families Embracing Anti-Bias Values



A documentary that features families who use an anti-bias lens to teach and guide their children starting from early life. This documentary poses the question “what world do we want our children to grow up in,” and addresses how we can accomplish diversity, equity, and inclusion practices through parenting styles. This documentary demonstrates examples of what an anti-bias lens approach looks, sounds, and feels like in everyday contexts and interactions.

From The Inside Out: Diversity, inclusion & Belonging TedTalk



A story-based video lecture which aims to teach leaders about unconscious and conscious bias. This video encourages self-reflection to support understanding of how our biases about ourselves interfere with creating truly diverse and inclusive communities. This video acknowledges suppressed internal thoughts and emotions, and how our inner voice can reflect outwardly onto other people. By addressing our full range of suppressed and projected thoughts, insecurities, and discomfort with ourselves, we can become more accepting and welcoming of others.

Growing Minds: Equity, Inclusion & Anti-Bias Resources



The Growing Minds Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Bias Resources page curates tools for educators and families to address diversity and racism in early learning. It includes children’s books, articles, videos, and teaching guides that promote inclusive practices, reflect diverse cultures, challenge bias, and support equitable, respectful learning environments for all children.

Hope for Diversity in Outdoor Learning



This article on Take Me Outside’s website features educator Nevella Schepmyer-Venton reflecting on her lifelong passion for nature and the importance of promoting diversity in outdoor education. As a kindergarten teacher, Nevella actively encourages her students and their families to engage with nature, sharing resources like the Family Nature Club Toolkit. This toolkit provides families with templates and planning sheets to help with the process of planning an outdoor family gathering.

Inclusion Ottawa: Flexibility Video



This video by Inclusion Ottawa highlights the importance of adaptability for educators in meeting the dynamic needs of children. It provides practical strategies, such as adjusting the program schedule to support children's natural curiosity, modifying pre-planned activities, and offering tools like fidget toys when needed. By embracing flexibility, educators can approach each day on a case-by-case basis, focusing on the needs of the moment and creating a responsive learning environment.

Inclusion Ottawa: Empathetic Responses Video



This video highlights the importance of empathetic responses when working with children, offering practical tips such as getting on their level, using supportive phrases when strong emotions are felt, and allowing space for authentic expression. It demonstrates how empathy helps build trust and strengthens children's self-regulation.

Inclusive Design for Outdoor Spaces



This Resource by Green Schoolyards America outlines inclusive outdoor strategies supporting diverse needs. It highlights ways to support visual and motor skills through calming activities and pathways for regulation and communication. Suggestions include unobstructed, even surfaces to support safe movement for children with gross motor challenges, while varied terrain can be included if transitions are clearly marked (e.g., with strong colour contrast). It also outlines how to support gross motor and hearing through collaborative design, mobility considerations, noise reduction, and assistive listening devices.

Inclusive Schools Network: Inclusion Resources



The Inclusive Schools Network offers an extensive resource library full of materials focused on inclusion in education. These links connect you to a wide range of tips, tools, and strategies designed to support inclusive practices, including guidance on using inclusive language, planning for risks and setting appropriate boundaries, and establishing effective protocols and practices to improve inclusion for all learners within schools and classrooms.

Intersectionality: An Equity Framework



A podcast that introduces intersectionality and enhances equity frameworks within classrooms and workplaces. Educators gain the “what” and “how” of equity practices to translate into their own philosophy of teaching. This video examines terminology, identity, bias, and stereotypes, and their connection to anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice in early childhood education settings.

Implementing Children’s Rights into Early Childhood Curriculum



This resource from the Canadian Child Care Federation explains how to integrate a Children’s Rights-Based Approach into early childhood curriculum, grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It guides educators in recognizing children as rights holders and includes practical strategies — such as consent practices, storytelling, role-play, visual aids, and classroom dialogue — to help children feel valued, heard, and empowered.

Learning to Give: Inclusive Communities



This toolbox is aimed at helping youth recognize and speak up for accessibility and inclusion in their community. It additionally provides lessons and activities to teach youth about disability and inclusion, race and racism, cultural celebration, mental health awareness, and critical conversation. By using this toolbox, youth learn to be culturally competent peers and ambassadors to equity-denied groups.

Making Outdoor Field Experiences More Inclusive for the LGBTQ+ Community



This article outlines practical actions for making outdoor and field-based programs more inclusive for LGBTQ+ participants, including using inclusive language and pronouns, addressing safety and accessibility concerns, and intentionally designing programs that affirm diverse gender and sexual identities. The authors emphasize proactive leadership and institutional change to create safer, more welcoming outdoor environments.

What is a rights-based approach to learning?

A rights-based approach in ECE focuses on acknowledging and honouring the fundamental rights of all children from the earliest stages of development. This approach emphasizes educators' responsibility to support children's physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development while ensuring their rights are respected in every learning environment. Decision-making, curriculum planning, and program practices are guided by what is in the best interests of the child. This framework is grounded in the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).



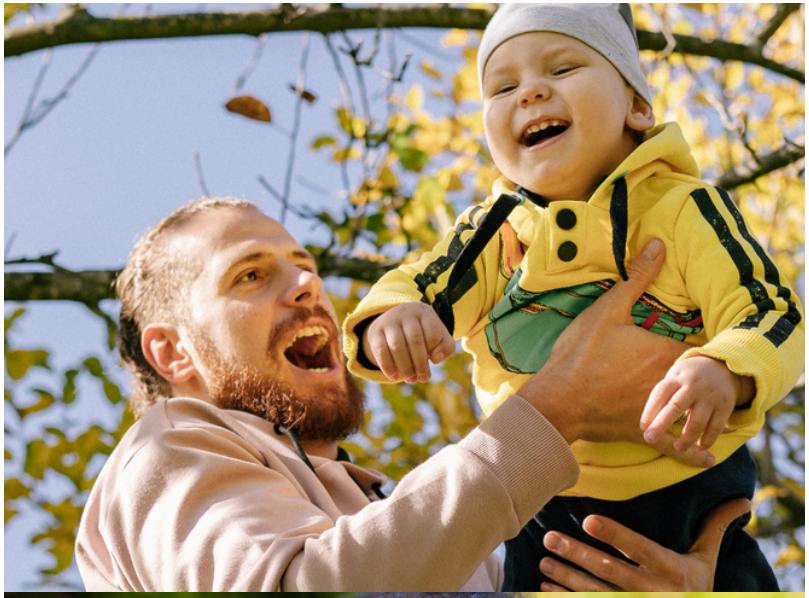
Canadian Child Care Federation, 2023

Making Outdoor Recreation and Adventure More Inclusive

This piece by the National Center for Outdoor & Adventure Education explores why outdoor recreation remains dominated by White participants and identifies historical, economic, social, and structural barriers that limit diversity. It also highlights positive trends in participation and offers practical steps — from acknowledging past exclusion to improving accessibility, outreach, marketing, hiring, and partnerships — to make outdoor spaces more welcoming to underrepresented groups.

NAEYC: Collection of Anti-Bias Resources

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) created a curated collection of anti-bias resources designed to support culturally responsive practice, equity, and inclusion in early childhood education. This comprehensive resource includes articles, books, blog posts, and practical guidance to help educators implement anti-bias activities, reflect on their own practices, and create inclusive, equitable learning environments where all children feel valued and supported.





Questions to Consider

- How do my strategies of inclusion change with the seasons?
- How can I bring flexibility with me into outdoor spaces?
- What is my definition of accessibility? Does it reflect the strategies used in the resource?
- Are the outdoor spaces I work, live and play in intentionally designed to be accessible, inclusive, and supportive of children of all abilities, including disabled and neurodivergent children?

National Workforce Center: Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide 2023



The Equity Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide is a practical resource for leaders working to advance equity within early childhood systems. It defines and distinguishes concepts like equity, equality, and inclusion, explores systemic inequities, and offers strategies, examples, and tools to build more fair, accessible, and effective early childhood systems.

Natural Start: Building Cultural Empathy and Celebrating Diversity in Nature-Based Early Childhood Education



The article “Building Cultural Empathy and Celebrating Diversity in Nature-Based Early Childhood Education” offers practical guidance for ECEs on welcoming and valuing children’s diverse cultural backgrounds in nature-based settings. It outlines six strategies — including self-reflection, listening, curriculum review, daily cultural inclusion, and inviting families — to help build cultural empathy, affirm identities, and make programs more inclusive for all learners.

"Naturally Inclusive" Outdoor Experiences for Children of all Abilities



This blog post shares excerpts from *Naturally Inclusive: Engaging Children of All Abilities Outdoors*, highlighting stories of children who thrive in nature and programs that support inclusive outdoor engagement. It shows how nature can boost physical, emotional, and social development for children with diverse abilities and offers practical tips for caregivers and educators to create flexible, supportive, and sensory-rich outdoor experiences.

Naturally Inclusive Resource Book: Engaging Children of All Abilities Outdoors



Naturally Inclusive is a 192-page guide exploring how to engage children of all abilities with nature, offering research, real examples, and inclusive practices for outdoor play and learning. It emphasizes reducing barriers, valuing diversity, and designing nature-based environments that support holistic development. This resource supports equitable, accessible, inclusive outdoor experiences for early learners.

Nature Gap: Why Outdoor Spaces Lack Diversity and Inclusion



This article from NC State University explains how outdoor recreation's roots in exclusion and racism have shaped today's lack of diversity in parks and natural spaces. It highlights historical discrimination, ongoing safety concerns, and underrepresentation of people of color, while also pointing to grassroots efforts and the importance of changing narratives, marketing, and leadership to make outdoor spaces more inclusive for all.

Outdoor Time in Childhood: A Mixed Methods Approach to Identify Barriers and Opportunities for Intervention in a Racially and Ethnically Mixed Population



This journal article by Haakenstad et al (2023) discusses research conducted to measure the amount of time children spend outside, with comparative results grouped by race/ethnicity. The article dives into the differences that exist among different races when it comes to accessibility to outdoor play and emphasizes the importance of incorporating outdoor play into learning. This article helps educators understand barriers to outdoor play and how to support children in their care.

Over-Protection of Children with Disabilities



This article by Waldman et al (2019) highlights how over-protection of children with disabilities can unintentionally limit inclusion, skill-building, and self-determination by prioritizing safety over participation. The piece emphasizes the importance of equitable access, supported risk-taking, and empowerment to help children with disabilities build confidence, independence, and a stronger sense of belonging.

Parents' Perspectives on Managing Risk in Play for Children with Developmental Disabilities



This study explores how parents of children with developmental disabilities, mostly autism, perceive and manage risk during play. Through interviews, parents described heightened safety concerns that lead them to control or limit risky play, especially outdoors or with peers. These cautious approaches can restrict social and physical play opportunities. The authors discuss supporting environments that balance safety with inclusive, meaningful play experiences for children with disabilities.

Park-use Behavior and Perceptions by Race, Hispanic Origin, and Immigrant Status in Minneapolis, MN: Implications on Park Strategies for Addressing Health Disparities



This study examines how social marginalization and migration status influence park use and perceptions in three low-income Minneapolis neighborhoods. Survey data show that residents from historically marginalized and immigrant communities use parks less frequently and perceive fewer health and well-being benefits, including exercise, relaxation, and family time. Participants also reported barriers such as feeling unwelcome, and cultural and language differences.

Place Matters: Communicating the Relationship Between Place, Racism, and Early Childhood Development



The Frame Works Institute developed a Strategic Brief with the purpose of identifying an effective strategy for talking about the connections between place, racism, and early childhood development. The brief offers recommendations to support this work and highlights how the design of places can impact access for children.

Place Matters:
Four Strategies to Connect Place with Early Childhood Development

This toolkit by Frame Works Institute was developed to assist advocates, practitioners, researchers, and other communicators in applying the framing recommendations laid out in the Place Matters Strategic Brief. The brief presents a set of evidence-based communications strategies for increasing public understanding on the ways in which structural racism shapes the environments that affect young children. This toolkit brings those strategies to life.

Place Matters: What Surrounds Us Shapes Us

This Harvard Center on the Developing Child infographic shows how systemic influences like racism, public policy, poverty, and access to services shape children's development by affecting their environments, relationships, and opportunities. It highlights how the places in which children live and grow influence lifelong health, learning, and well-being, thus making visible the effects of inequity on early development.

Placemaking: How to Build Kinship and Inclusive Park Spaces for Children with Disabilities

This article by Davison (2024) emphasizes designing inclusive outdoor spaces that support all children, especially those with disabilities. Drawing from personal experience, he critiques ADA standards for limiting engagement and advocates for universal design, sensory-rich activities, natural elements, accessible pathways, and quiet areas to promote well-being, belonging, and meaningful connection with nature.



The Wellness by Design Cycle (Davison, 2024)

Race and Nature in the City: Engaging Youth of Colour in Nature-Based Activities



The “Race and Nature in the City” report by Nature Canada assesses barriers that prevent racialized and underserved communities — especially racialized youth — from accessing and enjoying urban nature. It offers community-informed findings and recommendations to promote equitable access, make nature programming more welcoming, and increase diverse representation in urban nature spaces and within environmental organizations.

Rethinking the Meaning of “Participation” for People with Disabilities



The December 2017 Knowledge Translation Bulletin from the Canadian Disability Participation Project explains how “participation” for people with physical disabilities means involvement in meaningful life roles at home, work, school, and in the community. It highlights its importance for health and quality of life and identifies key elements that improve the quality and experience of participation beyond physical activity.

Questions to Consider

- Are different types of families meaningfully represented throughout your program environment, learning materials, pedagogical approaches, and social interactions?
- Are all staff members open, affirming, and provided with access to ongoing professional learning about diversity and inclusive family engagement?
- Are different perspectives being considered by educators in learning and play?
- Are materials and displays tokenistic, or meaningfully integrated?
- How are families from equity-deserving communities involved in decision-making?

Say "Yes!" to Kids with Disabilities: Stories and Strategies for Including ALL Kids

The Seattle PlayGarden Inclusion Toolkit shares stories and strategies for including children with disabilities in community spaces, such as parks, playgrounds, sports, museums, and everyday activities. It highlights barriers to participation, offers reflective questions, and provides practical ideas for welcoming all children, emphasizing play as a basic right and promoting inclusive practice.

Social Justice in Outdoor Experiential Education: A State of Knowledge Review

This resource by the Children & Nature Network discusses how outdoor experiential education has historically overlooked systemic inequities in access, participation, and safety for marginalized groups. It highlights the urgent need for the field to confront social justice issues by reevaluating curricula, training educators, and adopting more inclusive practices that dismantle barriers related to race, class, gender, and disability.



SPROUT-able Resources and Modules



Outdoor Play Canada's SPROUT-able Project team has developed resources to support early childhood educators in supporting children with disabilities while they engage in outdoor play and learning in natural spaces. These include video modules, tip sheets, and a companion document that aim to address some of the most common concerns from both parents and educators alike.

Summer Safety Tips for Children with Special Needs



This BAYADA article offers summer safety tips for children with special needs, emphasizing hydration, cooling, and avoiding heat-related illness due to increased heat sensitivity and medication effects. It covers heat stroke prevention, recognizing symptoms, protecting skin and sensitive areas, and strict water safety around pools and open water to ensure fun and safety during summer activities.

Questions to Consider

- How do my strategies of inclusion change with the seasons?
- How can I bring flexibility and adaptability into outdoor spaces to better support accessibility, inclusion, and diverse needs and abilities?
- What is my definition of accessibility? Does it reflect the strategies used in the resource?
- How are families from equity-deserving communities involved in decision-making?

Supporting Children with Disabilities/ Exceptionalities Outside



This podcast highlights key strategies for supporting children with disabilities and exceptionalities in outdoor play. It emphasizes accessibility, inclusive design, and thoughtful planning that allows all children to explore nature safely and meaningfully. Recommendations include adapting environments, providing appropriate support and materials, training educators on inclusive practices, and promoting engagement, independence, and belonging outdoors. To listen to key points from the full podcast, click here.

Supporting Inclusion Outside with Puppets: Tip Sheet for Educators



This tip sheet developed by the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play (CCOP) offers practical ways to use puppets outdoors to support inclusion and engagement for all children. It shows how puppets can promote communication, social interaction, emotional expression, and confidence during outdoor play. The tips help educators create inclusive, playful outdoor environments that welcome diverse abilities and learning styles.



Tips and Tricks

from the CCOP's Supporting Inclusion Outside with Puppets: Tip Sheet for Educators

Puppets support inclusive practice by addressing barriers to participation through storytelling and role-play (Karaolis, 2020). The CCOP has developed a tip sheet to support educators in making use of puppets outdoors, highlighting tips such as:

- Introducing your puppets to the group. Name them, talk about their personalities, and find ways to connect them to your community.
- Making your puppets program regulars. Consistently find ways to include them in your daily happenings.
- Keeping your puppets close. Moments for connection are spontaneous and fleeting; having puppets nearby keeps them looped into your interactions.

To take a closer look at the tip sheet, click here.

The ABCs of Diversity and Inclusion: Developing an Inclusive Environment for Diverse Families in Early Childhood Education

This Zero to Three article, "The ABCs of Diversity and Inclusion: Developing an Inclusive Environment for Diverse Families in Early Childhood Education," discusses strategies for creating welcoming and inclusive early childhood education (ECE) settings for diverse families, including LGBTQ+ parents, adoptive, and multiracial families. Through language, professional development, and materials, educators can create spaces that feel welcoming to all families.

The Coin Model of Privilege and Critical Allyship: Implications for Health

Stephanie Nixon, professor at the University of Toronto, introduces the *Coin Model of Privilege and Critical Allyship* as a framework for understanding systemic inequality. It explains that social structures simultaneously produce marginalization for some groups and unearned privilege for others. Rather than focusing only on disadvantage, the model calls for critical self-reflection and accountability from those with privilege, encouraging active, informed allyship to challenge and transform oppressive systems.

Stop and Reflect !



The term 'Ally' in the context of JEDI typically reflects an **action —** someone who **proactively engages** in allyship. Instead of allowing spaces to incubate whiteness (understood as a powerful social construct with real, tangible, and harmful effects), an Ally **disrupts** and takes opportunities to teach others.

Accomplices in the context of JEDI, are those who take accountability, collective action — guided by Black, Brown, First Nations/Indigenous, and People of Color leaders — to actively challenge and disrupt systems of racism, colonization, and White supremacy.

Osler, 2019

The Dignity of Risk: Creating a System of Care to Support Children with Disabilities in Accessing Nature



This article by Davison (2024) shares that true accessibility to nature for children with disabilities requires more than physical design — it demands community support, confidence building, and inclusive care systems. It introduces concepts like “Wildometers” to track engagement and recommends paraprofessional support, volunteer networks, universal design, sensory experiences, and individualized nature plans.

The Education Hub: Outdoor Learning Environments in Early Childhood Education



The Education Hub explains how outdoor learning environments in early childhood education support play-based exploration, physical activity, and connection with nature. It describes what makes rich outdoor spaces — such as natural elements, variety of affordances, and flexible design — and highlights benefits for children’s development, health, agency, and environmental awareness. It also discusses the adult role and ways to extend outdoor learning beyond the centre.

The Urgency Of Intersectionality



A video describing the dangers of how gender and racial bias can combine to create harm. The speaker, Kimberlé Crenshaw, asks viewers to reflect on how individuals who experience multiple forms of exclusion are often affected by both. Crenshaw also acknowledges how gender and race universally impact awareness of victims, and emphasizes the importance of becoming more aware, speaking up, and bringing urgency to intersectionality.

Validating Big Feelings: A Video by Andrew Fleck Children’s Services



This video by Andrew Fleck Children’s Services supports early learning professionals by offering practical strategies and sample language for acknowledging and validating children’s big emotions. It provides concrete examples of developmentally appropriate phrases that help recognize feelings such as happiness, sadness, surprise, fear and anger, fostering emotional literacy and responsive caregiving in early learning environments.

Whiteness and Anti-Racism Learning Resources

The Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) has developed a curated collection of readings, videos, podcasts, webinars, and educational resources intended to support White individuals in engaging with anti-racism and allyship work. The resource list includes foundational materials on topics such as White privilege, whiteness, systemic racism, colour-blindness, allyship, and anti-Black racism, alongside reflections and educational tools focused on accountability and social change. It also connects readers to broader PSAC anti-racism resources.

Whiteness: Defined by The Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre

The Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre draws from various resources to define “whiteness”. This includes an introductory overview of whiteness as a social and systemic construct rather than a biological trait as well as an exploration of how whiteness is connected to power, privilege, and systemic racism. It also situates whiteness within broader conversations about colonialism, race, and inequity, offering definitions, reflective explanations, and related anti-racism resources for foundational learning.



Glossary

This glossary was compiled through a review of online resources and other publicly available glossaries to ensure clarity, accuracy, and consistency in terminology. It is intended to support shared understanding across contexts. For more detailed information, click on any term to access its full definition and original source. Definitions that include "**Click term for more detail**" are abbreviated for this glossary, with the full definition available via the linked term.

Accessibility: The degree to which physical, pedagogical, financial, social, and administrative structures are (re)designed to enable the full, meaningful, and equitable engagement of all community members.

Allyship: an active, consistent, and arduous practice of unlearning and re-evaluating, in which a person in a position of privilege and power seeks to operate in solidarity with a marginalized group.

Accomplice: In the context of JEDI, an Accomplice is a person who takes accountable, collective action — guided by Black, Brown, First Nations/Indigenous, and People of Color leaders — to actively challenge and disrupt systems of racism, colonization, and White supremacy.

Anthropocentrism: Rooted in many Western religions and philosophies, anthropocentrism is a viewpoint that posits that human beings are the central or most significant entities in the world. It holds humans as separate from and superior to nature and holds that human life has intrinsic value while other entities (e.g., animals, plants, mineral resources, etc.) are resources, justifiably exploited for the benefit of humans.

Anti-Bias Education: Learning systems that focus on preventing bias and discrimination towards children based on gender, language, religion, sexual orientation, physical ability, mental health, or class.

Anti-Oppression: In the context of ECE, anti-oppression is both a term and a framework. It focuses on exploring how oppressions such as racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. can manifest into individual biases and inequalities in certain social groups.

Anti-Racism: Actively opposing racial actions while promoting an equitable society.

Belonging: A feeling of being accepted and respected by a group of people.

Bias (implicit/explicit): Conscious (explicit) and unconscious (implicit) beliefs of certain individuals or groups of people.

Colonialism: A deliberate process in which a political power from one territory asserts unequal political control over another, using policies or practices such as governance, settlement, occupation, and economic exploitation.

Culturally Responsive Practice: A practice that ensures everyone's diverse, cultural, and educational needs are being met.

Decolonization: An ongoing process of dismantling colonial structures, systems, and ideologies.

Diversity: The scope of differences that exist among groups of people. This includes but is not limited to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and physical characteristics.

Environmental Stewardship: The responsibility to thoughtfully use, care for, and sustain natural environments through actions that protect, conserve, and restore ecosystems. It involves limiting behaviours that harm nature, and actively participating in practices that support environmental health, sustainability, and long-term ecological balance.

Equity: Fairness and justice in process and outcomes, often requiring differential treatment and resources to address barriers and ensure all individuals and communities can thrive.

Equity-Deserving Groups: People or groups who have been excluded or disenfranchised throughout history, and whose legacy includes day-to-day barriers that contributed to past, and perpetuate current, inequities which compound over time. **Click term for more detail.**

Eurocentric: A worldview that places European history, values, and perspectives at the centre of understanding the world, often presenting them as the norm or superior to non-European cultures. For example, in ECE, Eurocentrism focuses on how psychology and developmentalism take priority over Indigenous ways of knowing.

Historically / Structurally / Systemically Excluded Individuals and Groups: Those that face discrimination or barriers to equal access, opportunities and resources and actively seek social justice and reparation.

Inclusion: The action of protecting, accepting, and embracing all people.

Inclusive Curriculum: A curriculum that succeeds in providing students with accessible resources and a sense of belonging. Inclusive curriculums focus on equity and ensure all students are treated with fairness.

Indigenous Knowledge (Ways of Being, Knowing, Doing): The diverse, deeply rooted understandings and practices developed by Indigenous Peoples through lived experience and relationships with all parts of the world around them — including Land, plants, animals, community, language, and spirit. It encompasses ways of knowing (how knowledge is learned and shared), ways of being (how individuals relate to each other and the world), and ways of doing (practices, ceremonies, and responsibilities), grounded in respect, reciprocity, and ecological connection

Indigenous Pedagogies: Indigenous pedagogies involve incorporating Indigenous worldviews into the process of learning. Indigenous pedagogies recognize the importance of respect, that both students and educators learn together, and that everyone has had different past experiences that contribute to their learning.

Indigenous Worldviews: Incorporating Indigenous worldviews into education means cultivating holistic understanding of knowledge, the Land, communities and all relations. It connects to how Indigenous knowledge provides a foundation for learning.

Indigenization: The intentional inclusion and adoption of Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and practices into institutions to balance power and respect for Indigenous ways of knowing. In ECE, Indigenization means adopting Indigenous learning approaches.

Inequity: Unjust, avoidable unfairness in how resources, opportunities, and treatment are distributed, often due to systemic bias and injustice.

Intergenerational Trauma: Oppression passed down through generations. Residential schools and the impact on Indigenous communities is an example of Intergenerational trauma.

Justice: The idea that every person is treated respectfully and fairly in any given situation.

Kinship: A worldview that recognizes the deep interrelationship of all beings, positioning humans as part of the living world, as opposed to separate from it.

Land Acknowledgement: A formal statement that recognizes the unique and enduring relationship between Indigenous People and their traditional territories.

Land-Based Learning: A process that centres respect, reciprocity, reverence, humility and responsibility as values connected to the Land through Indigenous Knowledge.

Liberatory Pedagogy: Liberation Pedagogy is an educational approach grounded in the pursuit of justice, aiming to disrupt and transform oppressive systems. It supports learners in developing critical awareness, questioning dominant narratives, examining power structures, and taking action to create more equitable and transformative social conditions.

Multi-Lens Approach: Using Decolonization and JEDI lenses to critically reflect on and strengthen relationships, environments, policies, and practices by centring Indigenous perspectives, addressing systemic barriers, and promoting equity, inclusion, and belonging.

Power: Power is the ability to influence and make decisions that impact others.

Prejudice: An unfair or unreasonable opinion or feeling, often formed without sufficient thought, knowledge, or understanding.

Privilege: Privilege refers to the unearned advantages individuals receive based on the social groups they are perceived to belong to. It is sustained by systemic inequities that benefit some groups while marginalizing others.

Racism: A system of advantage and oppression based on race. It is when a more powerful or privileged group directs their racial prejudice towards a less powerful or privileged group. This can lead to instances of exclusion, limitation, oppression, or discrimination.

Representation: The description of an individual or group of people or who they are portrayed as in society.

Risky Play: A form of play that is thrilling and exciting, which involves uncertainty, unpredictability, and varying degrees of risk-taking.

Settler Colonialism: An oppression system where Indigenous People's Lands are inhabited by a new population of settlers.

Trauma-informed Practice: A framework focused on being informed and responsive to people's traumas and how this has affected them.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): A framework that aims to support all learners and creates environments where materials and content are made accessible to everyone regardless of differences in learning abilities.

Whiteness: A term referring to the socially constructed systems of power and privilege often associated with those perceived as White, and not subjected to the systemic racism experienced by many Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities. It is important to distinguish between being "White" — a racial category with no biological or scientific foundation — and "whiteness" — a powerful social construct with real, tangible, and often harmful effects.

White Privilege: The social advantages and privileges that exist on a daily basis for people who are White.

White Supremacy: White supremacy stems from the belief, conscious or unconscious, that White people are superior and should therefore dominate all other racialized groups. It is an ideology that assumes the inherent importance of White people, realities and knowledge. **Click term for more detail.**

For more terms and definitions, visit York University's Decolonization, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (DEDI) Glossary: https://www.yorku.ca/dedi-strategy/glossary/

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