

Canadian
Centre for
Outdoor Play



Centre
canadien du
jeu à l'extérieur



June 2025 - May 2026 Annual Report

The Canadian Centre
for Outdoor Play

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Land Acknowledgement

The Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play is based in Ottawa, on unceded and un-surrendered Anishinabe Algonquin territory.

The work we support and lead is at its core about repairing our relationship with the Land, and with each other as caretakers and stewards of the Land. We acknowledge the traditional Land defenders who have been here for millennia, and who are still here. When we look around us, breathe the fresh air and admire the rich biodiversity, this is an opportunity to thank the ancestors who sustained these Lands so that we can benefit from them today. In our work, we strive to consider how future generations will benefit from the time, energy, and intention we put into it. We have a responsibility to carry forward these teachings.

We commit to promoting, supporting, and applying an equity, diversity, inclusion, and Indigeneity (EDI) lens and a continuous improvement approach to our work.

Terms

CCOP - Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play

ECE - Early Childhood Educator

OPC - Outdoor Play Canada

HALO - Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group

CHEO - Childrens Hospital of Eastern Ontario

AC - Algonquin College

AFCS - Andrew Fleck Children's Services

U of T - The University of Toronto

The SPROUT Study - [The SPROUT \(Sending PReschoolers OUTside\) Study](#) is a three-year research initiative launched by the HALO Research Group in partnership with Dr. Maeghan James, an assistant professor at the University of Ottawa.

SPROUT-able Project - [The SPROUT-able Project](#) is a four-year project led by the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play (CCOP). It builds off the SPROUT study

The Canadian Centre For Outdoor Play

The Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play (CCOP) is a centre of excellence where practice, policy and research come together to inspire commitment to advancing outdoor play and learning for the overall health and well-being of children in Canada.

Mission & Vision

The CCOP aims to inspire commitment to advancing outdoor play and learning for the overall health and well-being of children in Canada. The CCOP leads outdoor play and learning demonstration projects, informs policy and practice, provides professional development opportunities, conducts applied research, and leads national knowledge translation and mobilization efforts. Through this intersectoral work, we aim to promote and support outdoor play and learning opportunities for children, their care providers, and their families, in the environments in which they play, learn and live. Forest Explorers outdoor and nature based early childhood education (ECE) program serves as the demonstration site for the CCOP, located on 500 acres of National Capital Commission land in the west end of Ottawa, Ontario.

Brief History

The CCOP was launched through a collaboration between Outdoor Play Canada (OPC), the Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group at the Childrens Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO)



Research Institute (HALO), the University of Ottawa, Algonquin College (AC), and Andrew Fleck Children's Services (AFCS).

In June 2024, after much anticipation, the Forest Explorers building, within which the CCOP resides, opened its doors! The opening was celebrated by the CCOP team, alongside colleagues, families, friends, plenty of children, government representatives, and even a few folks who were simply curious (it was an open event, after all!). We used a large burlap ribbon for the official ribbon cutting, where the resulting pieces were then re-used in the childcare program. One small piece of that ribbon has been kept for our time capsule, to be opened in 20 years (2044).

While the concept of the CCOP emerged circa 2018, the CCOP collaborative team began work with vigour in January 2023, laying the foundation for the launch of the Forest Explorers building, childcare program, research program, and outdoor play and learning early childhood education (ECE) certificate program.

This annual report serves to highlight the work we have done over the past year, from June 2025 to May 2026.

The CCOP Leadership Team



Kelly Arbour-Nicitopoulos, Ph.D.

Professor within the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education, U of T, CDPP2.0



Lisa Belton

Licensed Child Care Programs and Forest and Nature School Director



Louise de Lannoy, Ph.D.

Executive Director, Outdoor Play Canada



Kim Hiscott, RECE

CEO, Andrew Fleck Children's Services (AFCS)



Maeghan James, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, School of Epidemiology and Public Health, University of Ottawa.



Lisa Lalonde, MA, RECE

Program Coordinator, School of Health & Community Studies, Algonquin College



Tammy Potter, RECE

Supervisor, Forest Explorers and Ottawa Forest and Nature School, AFCS



Mark Tremblay, Ph.D.

Senior Scientist, HALO Research Group, CHEO Research Institute

The CCOP Staff



Alessia Capone
PhD Student, SPROUT-able project within the CCOP and U of T



Darcie Clement, RECE
2026-2027 Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play Fellow



Maia Collins
Research Assistant for the SPROUT Study, HALO, CHEO



Ryan Fahey
Communications Specialist, CCOP and OPC



Bayan Kaid, RECE
Sustainability Coordinator, CCOP



Hannah Raudssus, RECE
Project Assistant, SPROUT-able Project within the CCOP



Amy-Jo Smith, RECE
Resource Consultant with the SPROUT-able project within the CCOP and Children's Inclusion Support Services



Emily Stone
Research Coordinator for the SPROUT Study, HALO, CHEO



Cécile Tang
Project Coordinator, SPROUT-able Project within the CCOP



Paula ter Huurne, RECE
Community of Practice Lead, SPROUT-able Project within the CCOP

Alumni



Neeka Barnes, RECE
Special Projects Director, AFCS



Mallory Donaldson, RECE
2023-2024 CCOP Fellow



Ipek Epikmen, M.Sc.A.
2025-2026 CCOP Fellow

Partners

Outdoor Play Canada (OPC)



Introduction

OPC is a national organization that brings together advocates, practitioners, researchers and partner organizations to promote, protect, and preserve access to play in nature and the outdoors for all people living in Canada. OPC provides leadership to galvanize the outdoor play movement across Canada to promote the health and wellness of Canadians and the environments in which we live.

Roles and Responsibilities

OPC leads the CCOP providing oversight of and coordination for all aspects of the project. The roles and responsibilities of OPC include:

- Leading bilingual knowledge translation and mobilization products of key findings and resources developed by the CCOP
- Leading the National Panel on Regulating Outdoor and Land-Based ECE
- Developing a national CCOP champions program to celebrate those championing the sector.
- Supporting the development of the Educators Teaching Educators: Canada's Outdoor Early Childhood Education Continuous Professional Learning Framework ('Outdoor ECE Framework').
- Mentoring students through the Bachelors of Early Learning and Child Development program at AC, as well as HALO undergraduate and graduate students at Carleton University and the University of Ottawa in collaboration with the SPROUT (Sending PReschoolers OUTside) Study and SPROUT-Able projects.
- Supporting CCOP partner projects including the national outdoor ECE community of practice
- Fostering and maintaining relationships with aligned partner organizations outside of the immediate CCOP collaborative

See OPC's Annual Report [here](#)!

Partners

Andrew Fleck Children's Services (AFCS)



Introduction

AFCS provides licensed early learning and group childcare across the City of Ottawa, in addition to licensed home childcare, EarlyON programming, inclusion support for children with special needs, and services for marginalized families. AFCS supports over 4,600 children annually. As part of the CCOP Partnership, AFCS operates the Forest Explorers program, providing outdoor-based childcare for 73 children up to 5 years of age.

Roles and Responsibilities

AFCS leads the Forest Explorers Outdoor Early Learning Centre for children 0-5 years. The roles and responsibilities of AFCS include:

- Managing the establishment and delivery of the Forest Explorers outdoor and nature based ECE program.
- Contributing to the development and celebration of Canada-wide CCOP champions program.
- Mentoring students completing the Bachelors of Early Learning and Child Development program at AC.
- Supporting CCOP partner projects, including the National Panel on Regulating Outdoor and Land-Based ECE, and the 'Educators Teaching Educators: Canada's Outdoor ECE Continuous Professional Learning Framework'.

Discover more about AFCS [here](#)!

Partners

Algonquin College



Introduction

- The Algonquin College (AC) ECE program guides students through a play and inquiry-based curricula with hands-on learning opportunities, including a third-year nature-based early learning course rooted in evidence-based theory and integrated with high-quality professional practice.
- Their ECE program graduates a total of 440 students each year: their 2-year ECE Diploma program graduates 200 students (with two intakes) per year, their ECE Intensive program graduates 20 students, their Bachelor of Early Learning and Community Development (BELCD) program graduates 40 students, and their ECE Online program graduates 180 students per year.
- AC led the development of the PLaTO (Play, Learn, and Teach Outdoors) certificate. This initiative is grounded in the 'Educators Teaching Educators: Canada's Outdoor ECE Continuous Professional Learning Framework'.
- AC also supports the integration of its ECE students into the CCOP model through placements and summer internships.

Roles and Responsibilities

AC serves as the lead professional development arm of the CCOP, by spearheading the creation and delivery of the PLaTO certificate program. Their roles and responsibilities include:

- Contributing to the development and celebration of the Canada-wide CCOP champions program.
- Leading the development of the 'Educators Teaching Educators: Canada's Outdoor ECE Continuous Professional Learning Framework'.
- Leading the development and launch of the PLaTO certificate.
- Co-leading the National Panel on Regulating Outdoor and Land-Based ECE
- Supporting CCOP partner projects, including evaluation of the national outdoor ECE Community of Practice.

Learn more about the Algonquin College's PLaTO program [here](#)!

Partners

The University of Ottawa



Introduction

The University of Ottawa alongside the CHEO Research Institute, serves as the principal research partner of the CCOP, in additional partnership with the University of Toronto. **Dr. Maeghan James'** lab leads several CCOP initiatives, including the SPROUT and SPROUT-able studies, which explore the developmental impacts of outdoor play and learning environments on children and barriers and facilitators to high-quality outdoor experiences for children of all abilities. The University also supports student learning and opportunities that strengthen future leadership in outdoor and nature-based research and practice.

Healthy Active Living and Obesity (HALO) Research Group



Introduction

The HALO Research Group at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute was established in 2007 in response to the escalating obesity crisis and the increasing complexity of related co-morbidities. HALO provides international leadership and research excellence in healthy active living for the promotion of health and wellness in children and youth, including the prevention, management of obesity and the promotion of active outdoor play.

Roles and Responsibilities

HALO alongside the University of Ottawa serves as the principal research partner of the CCOP. The roles and responsibilities of HALO and the University of Ottawa include:

- Leading the development, execution, publication, and dissemination of the SPROUT and SPROUT-able research programs conducted at the CCOP living lab.
- Contributing to the development and celebration of Canada-wide CCOP champions.
- Mentoring undergraduate and graduate students completing research work at the CCOP.
- Supporting CCOP partner projects, including evaluation of children and educators' time spent outdoors across all seasons and the development of the 'Educators Teaching Educators: Canada's Outdoor ECE Continuous Professional Learning Framework'.

Take a closer look at HALO [here](#)!

CCOP Projects



About the Forest Explorers Program

Forest Explorers is a licensed outdoor and nature-based early learning program operated by AFCS in Ottawa, situated on the unceded territory of the Anishnaabe Algonquin Nation, and serves as the demonstration site for the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play (CCOP). The program provides child-led learning experiences in natural outdoor environments, helping children develop curiosity, confidence, well-being, and a connection to the natural world. [Learn more about Forest Explorers here!](#)

2026 Updates

Two Year Anniversary

On June 6, Forest Explorers proudly welcomed community members to explore their space as part of Doors Open Ottawa, offering visitors an opportunity to learn more about this unique nature-based approach to early childhood education. The event coincided with the celebration of the second anniversary of Forest Explorers' opening. It was a wonderful opportunity to reflect on our journey, share our program with the wider community, and recognize the relationships that have helped Forest Explorers thrive.

Nature Nurturers

[Exploring Outdoor Learning Through Research, Reflection, and Practice](#)

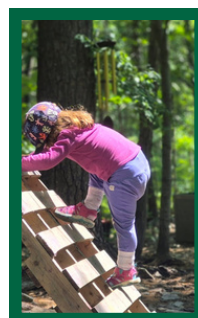
In 2025, Andrew Fleck Children's Services, thanks to Lawson Foundation funding, partnered with Algonquin College on a year-long research project exploring the evolution of outdoor play and learning at our Forest and Nature School. Nature Nurturers documented the implementation of a licensed outdoor program for infants and toddlers at the Forest Explorers Outdoor Early Learning Centre in Wesley Clover Park. The project placed educators at the centre of the research, examining their learning, experiences, and evolving practices as they navigated the opportunities and challenges of providing high-quality early learning in an outdoor environment.

FE Vegetable Garden

We are excited to celebrate the second successful year of the Forest Explorers Vegetable Garden! This season, BELCD Summer Intern Hope Burke worked alongside children and educators to facilitate the planting, care, and maintenance of a variety of vegetables and herbs including lettuce, kale, peas, basil and oregano, to name a few! The garden continues to serve as a meaningful outdoor learning space and source of daily nutrition.

Outdoor Gear Library

The CCOP Outdoor Gear Library continues to be a major success, helping ensure that all children participating in Forest Explorers have access to outdoor gear year-round. Thanks to support from the Waltons Trust, the Ottawa Community Foundation, Outdoor Prolink, and Patagonia Ottawa, the initiative has also expanded to support educators with affordable and donated adult outdoor gear.



SPROUT & SPROUT-able Studies

The SPROUT Study

The SPROUT (Sending PReschoolers OUTside) Study is a three-year research initiative led by the [Healthy Active Living and Obesity \(HALO\) Research Group](#) in partnership with [Dr. Maeghan James](#), Assistant Professor at the University of Ottawa. The study explores the health, wellbeing, and developmental impacts of [AFCS' Forest Explorers](#) program on participating children, families, and educators compared with those at conventional childcare settings across Ottawa. Findings will help build evidence on the benefits and challenges of nature-based early learning and inform policies and practices that support outdoor play for all children

2026 SPROUT Update

The SPROUT study is concluding its second year! This milestone marks another important step in advancing our understanding of how outdoor play and related environments support children's health, development, and well-being. The study team continues to work closely with participating sites and partners as data collection, analysis and knowledge-sharing activities move forward.

The SPROUT team has published their first paper out of this work - read the SPROUT study protocol paper [here](#)!



The SPROUT-able Project

The SPROUT-able Project is a four-year initiative led by the CCOP that builds on the SPROUT study, a three-year research project conducted by the HALO Research Group and the University of Ottawa. SPROUT-able explores the barriers and facilitators to how children with disabilities engage in outdoor play and learning, with the goal of enhancing inclusive outdoor childcare environments, supporting educator professional development, and developing evidence-based strategies for participation. The project integrates practice through the leadership of Cécile Tang and Hannah Raudssus (Outdoor Play Canada), with research through the leadership of Dr. Maeghan James (University of Ottawa/CHEO Research Institute) in collaboration with Dr. Kelly Arbour-Nicitopoulos and the ADAPT Lab at the University of Toronto.

2026 SPROUT-able Update

This year the SPROUT-able team continued to advance its mission of supporting inclusive outdoor play and learning for children with disabilities through a combination of research, practice, and knowledge mobilization. Key accomplishments included the development and dissemination of [modules and resources](#) such as the:

- Inclusive Outdoor Learning Kits
- Inclusive Outdoor Play video modules
- Inclusive Outdoor Play tip sheets, and
- A reflective companion guide designed to strengthen inclusive outdoor practice (coming soon!)

To learn more about SPROUT-able's work, access their quarterly newsletters [here](#)!

Educators Teaching Educators: Canada's Outdoor ECE Continuous Professional Learning Framework



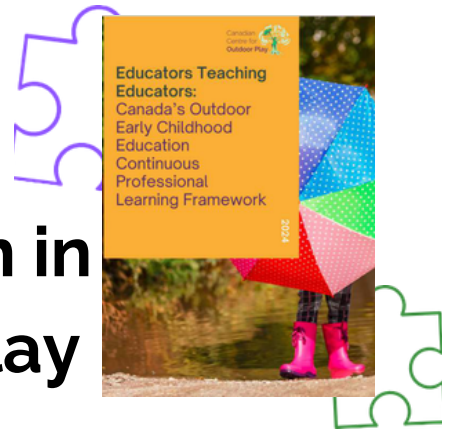
In September 2024, the CCOP released the [‘Educators Teaching Educators: Canada’s Outdoor ECE Continuous Professional Learning Framework’](#) (‘Outdoor ECE Framework’).

The purpose of this evidence-informed Framework was to achieve national consensus on key pedagogical practices in outdoor ECE and to serve as a pedagogical tool to promote consistency and uphold quality in training and support for outdoor ECE practitioners across Canada in their work.

To pilot the utility of the Framework as a pedagogical tool, the Framework was used to develop the Play, Learn and Teach Outdoors (PLaTO) Certificate, led by Algonquin College (to learn more about the PLaTO certificate, continue reading below).

Access the Framework [here](#)! Available in English and French!

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



Coming Soon!

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"). The Decolonization & JEDI Guide includes both practical and informational resources and documents from Outdoor Play Canada and other organizations to help support educators in reflecting on and advancing decolonization, justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in outdoor early learning and play.

The Guide is intended to complement ongoing professional learning by offering resources that can help educators deepen their understanding of Decolonization and JEDI outdoors, critically reflect on their practices, and take meaningful action toward creating more inclusive, equitable, and culturally responsive outdoor learning environments.

Play, Learn and Teach Outdoors (PLaTO) Certificate

Grounded in the Outdoor ECE Framework, this innovative program provides early learning professionals with in-depth training in outdoor pedagogy emphasizing the importance of active, nature-based engagement in ECE.

The certificate is divided into three courses (Active Engagement, Holistic Development, and Meaningful Connections) followed by a capstone action-research project. Throughout these courses, participants explore topics such as risky play-based, inclusive, and place-based learning practices. Graduates are equipped to advocate for and implement meaningful outdoor play experiences in diverse settings, including early learning programs, schools, community agencies, and organizations that support children and families.

Access more information about the Certificate [here](#)!



**PLAY, LEARN AND
TEACH OUTDOORS
IN THE EARLY YEARS**

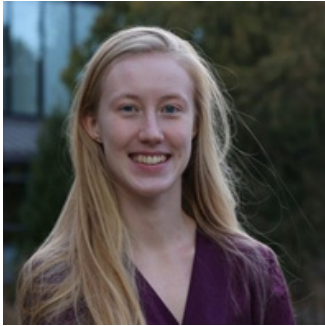
Algonquin College's PLaTO certificate immerses Early Learning Professionals in a program based on the national framework by the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play.



Projects

Student Mentorship

The CCOP partnership provides mentorship for students working on projects focusing on advancing outdoor play and learning through partnership with Algonquin College, the University of Ottawa, and Carleton University.



Sabrina Buchanan

Sabrina Buchanan is a PhD student at Carleton University and is affiliated with the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) Research Institute and the Healthy Active Living and Obesity (HALO) Research Group. Throughout her time with the SPROUT study, she contributed to data collection and testing activities, with a primary focus on assessments shared with the [SUNRISE study](#).



Hope Burke

Hope Burke completed her summer 2026 internship as the student project assistant with the CCOP as part of the BELCD degree program. Her work focused on creating and maintaining the Forest Explorers herb and vegetable garden, supporting Forest Explorers children in-program, and collaborating on various knowledge mobilization projects, including the creation of the [Regional Map of Efforts Supporting Outdoor and Land-based ECE](#).



Julie Campbell

Julie Campbell, PhD is a postdoctoral fellow in the School of Kinesiology at Acadia University under the supervision of Dr. Emily Bremer in the Inclusive Movement and Health Lab. Her work is focused on providing equitable access to physically active and outdoor learning in the school setting. She recently completed her PhD in the Faculty of Health at Dalhousie University under the supervision of Drs. Michelle Stone and Sarah Moore. During the last year of her PhD, she spent a couple of months working with the CCOP and SPROUT study, participating in assessments and analyses.



Alessia Capone

Alessia Capone is completing her PhD thesis through the University of Toronto, working under the supervision of Dr. Kelly Arbour-Nicitopoulos in the ADAPT Lab at the University of Toronto. Her thesis is focused on exploring ways to support outdoor play and learning in natural spaces among children living with a disability, as part of the SPROUT-able project.

Student Mentorship

The CCOP partnership provides mentorship for students working on projects focusing on advancing outdoor play and learning through partnership with Algonquin College, the University of Ottawa, and Carleton University.



Darcie Clement

Darcie Clement completed a summer 2025 placement with the CCOP as the SPROUT-able project assistant. Her work included launching the SPROUT-able library at Forest Explorers and contributing to the development and roll out of [Supporting Inclusion Through Puppets](#), a toolkit for educators to facilitate inclusion and support for children's varying needs through the use of puppets.



Liliana Fage

Liliana Fage completed her third-year community-based practicum placement with the SPROUT-able Project as part of the BELCD program at Algonquin College. During her placement, she contributed to the development of accessible educational resources in multiple languages and supported the creation of the Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization (JEDI) Companion Guide to the Outdoor ECE Framework (coming soon!).



Nils Jakubzig

Nils Jakubzig was a visiting PhD student from Germany. He is pursuing his PhD at the University of Konstanz, Germany, in the Department of Social and Health Sciences, focusing on Education for Sustainable Development and Outdoor Play within families. His research centres on investigating how active outdoor play can be used as a tool for education within families. He spent the summer working with the CCOP in Ottawa to learn more about our research methods, our integrated partnership, and how he might use his academic training to inform practice and policy.



Olivia Lopes

Olivia Lopes recently completed her MD at the University of Ottawa. As part of a fourth-year research elective, she supported the SPROUT study by assisting with data collection and analysis. This experience provided her with the opportunity to practice a new form of research and has inspired how she approaches research and clinical practice as a physician. She tries to encourage patients to be active outside, especially children. This experience has also inspired her to explore new research areas surrounding nature/outdoor play prescriptions in clinical settings.

Student Mentorship

The CCOP partnership provides mentorship for students working on projects focusing on advancing outdoor play and learning through partnership with Algonquin College, the University of Ottawa, and Carleton University.



Maryn Macleod

Maryn Macleod is completing her Masters of Public Health at the University of Ottawa. She joined the CCOP as a practicum student in the summer of 2026, where she assisted in data collection for the SPROUT research project, and assisted in the creation of a CCOP Theory of Change and logic model, along other knowledge translation materials. She will continue her work with the CCOP team into the fall!



Brianna Nasrallah

Brianna Nasrallah, MSc completed her MSc at Carleton University (April 2026) in partnership with the CHEO Research Institute. She completed an independent study course in collaboration with the SPROUT study, evaluating the effect of parental support and attitudes on outdoor activity. Additionally, she supported the SPROUT study by assisting with data collection and administering assessments biannually.



Devon Robertson

Devon Robertson, RECE completed his summer work term with the CCOP as a SPROUT-able Project Assistant. Through his work, Devon contributed to resource development and dissemination efforts by creating tip sheets, social media cards, and a reflective guide for existing materials. Devon also created an evaluative report on the outdoor play spaces at AFCS' Forest Explorers program and supported various events at the CCOP, including the Playful Bites & Insights workshop sessions and the CCOP's Open House event.



Bisera Tripunovski

Bisera Tripunovski completed a summer 2025 placement with the CCOP. Her work focused on creating a vegetable and herb garden to be used for meals in the Forest Explorers program and to serve as an educational tool with the children. She also completed a project exploring the evolution of the Forest Explorers outdoor learning and play spaces across the first four seasons of the program.

Student Mentorship

The CCOP partnership provides mentorship for students working on projects focusing on advancing outdoor play and learning through partnership with Algonquin College, the University of Ottawa, and Carleton University.



Rachael Young

Rachael Young is an undergraduate student at Carleton University pursuing a degree in Biology with a concentration in Health Science. She joined OPC as a co-op student in the summer of 2025, assisting with data collection for the SPROUT-able study and supporting knowledge translation for the [2025 Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play](#). Rachel is very excited to be continuing part-time with the organization during the academic year.



Nathan Zhang

Nathan Zhang, BSc was a research assistant with the Healthy Active Living and Obesity (HALO) Research Group. He joined HALO in the summer of 2024 as a summer student, working on a variety of research projects under Dr. Tremblay's supervision, and returned in the winter of 2025 to support data collection for the SPROUT study. He recently completed his Honours Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology at the University of Waterloo and has begun the Masters of Science in Physical Therapy program at the University of Toronto this fall.

The CCOP Community of Practice

The CCOP's national Community of Practice continues to bring together early childhood educators from across Canada who are passionate about outdoor play and learning. Through quarterly online and hybrid gatherings, the Community of Practice provides opportunities for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and professional learning, while supporting the development of place-based and culturally responsive outdoor ECE practices. The community has become a valuable hub for educators to connect, exchange resources, and help shape the ongoing development of outdoor ECE tools and best practices across Canada.

The next community of practice meeting will take place online on October 1, 2026 from 6:30-8:00pm (EDT) [Sign up here!](#)

The CCOP Champions Program

The CCOP launched the national CCOP Champions Program to recognize and celebrate educators who are leading the way in outdoor play and learning across Canada. Guided by the principles of [the Outdoor Early Childhood Education Framework](#), the program highlights exemplary practices and amplifies educator leadership while inspiring others to embed outdoor play and learning into their programs. Through this initiative, the CCOP continues to raise awareness of outdoor ECE practices and build a growing network of champions committed to supporting children's holistic development through meaningful outdoor experiences.

Through the CCOP Champions Program, we aim to:

- Identify and recognize outstanding educators whose work demonstrates a commitment to outdoor play and learning and exemplifies three core elements of quality outdoor play and learning, as identified in the Outdoor ECE Framework: active engagement, holistic development, and meaningful connections.
- Provide resources to support these champions in continuing their work, sharing their learnings, and supporting others in becoming champions.
- Create a national network of CCOP Champions to share best practices, foster innovation, and inspire others to embed outdoor play and learning in their work.

Champions are selected through a nominations process that opens in January of each year and closes at the end of February. The next call for submissions will be posted on the OPC News page. Follow OPC on socials, subscribe to our newsletter, and/or join our National Community of Practice for all the latest OPC and CCOP news and initiatives!

In early 2026, we named our first 8 CCOP Champions, demonstrating exemplary outdoor play and learning leadership in Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia, spanning early childhood education to elementary school. These champions will share their practices and insights at upcoming Community of Practice online meetings - one more reason to sign up for the Community of Practice and join the conversation!

To learn more about our inaugural group of CCOP Champions, click [here!](#)

The National Panel on Regulating Outdoor and Land-based ECE

The National Panel on Regulating Outdoor and Land-based ECE ('The National Panel') aims to advance efforts towards changing ECE licensing regulations across provinces in Canada. The ultimate goal is to achieve – in part through policy, system, and sector advocacy by the National Panel – a commitment by provincial governments to support equitable access to outdoor and Land-based ECE for all children living in Canada by making these programs eligible for fee subsidy through local municipalities. These efforts can help normalize outdoor play and learning at a societal level.

The National Panel works together to identify what is being done in the outdoor and Land-based ECE sector and leverage those efforts in addressing ongoing and new licensing issues and constraints across provinces.

The National Panel aims to bring together outdoor ECE advocates to celebrate successes, use progress and achievements to leverage regulatory change, and work through barriers in doing so together. Below are a few resources developed by the National Panel that serve to advance this aim.

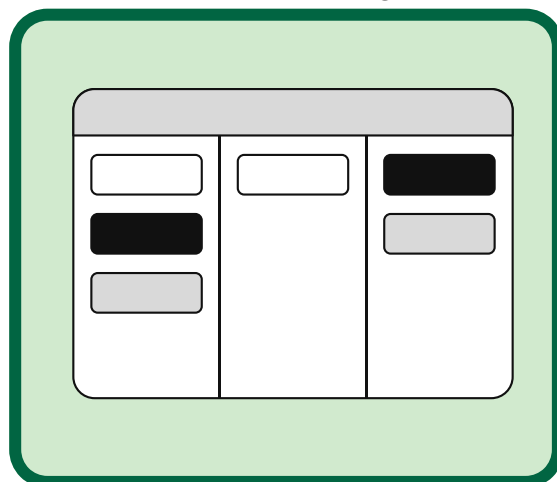
Click [here](#) to get to know our National Panel members!

New Resources from the National Panel

Check out the *Regional Map of Efforts Supporting Outdoor and Land-based ECE* here:



Click [below](#) to see *A Compilation Table of Resources on Quality in Outdoor and Land-based Early Childhood Education Programs*:



CCOP Resource Library

The CCOP hosts an online resource library dedicated to outdoor ECE, featuring materials created by practitioners, researchers, and organizations from across the sector. Designed as a living and evolving platform, the library continues to grow as new resources are identified and added.

This initiative supports our role as a national hub by centralizing knowledge, reducing duplication of efforts, and helping to connect individuals and groups with shared interests. We continue to invite contributions from the community to ensure the library remains current and representative of the diverse work happening across Canada to promote outdoor play and learning in the early years.

This resource library is intended to support you in your **outdoor play** efforts, whether that be for policy, practice, research, knowledge mobilization... or simply for the sake of play!

Category

- ☒ CCOP
- ☒ Organizations
- ☒ Outdoor ECE
- ☒ Parents
- ☒ Policy
- ☒ Practice
- ☒ Research
- ☒ The Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play

Topic

- ☐ Environments
- ☐ Loose Parts Play
- ☐ Physical Activity
- ☐ Risky Play
- ☐ Seasons

Genre

- ☐ Conference
- ☐ Fact Sheet
- ☐ Guided Experience
- ☐ Guest Post

You are viewing **265** resources.



The 2015 Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play

June 16, 2015 @ 09:00:33

Download and use the Position Statement as an knowledge sharing, advocacy tool to support outdoor play in your community. Print on 8.5 x 11 paper with a 4/4 score and fold.



Outdoor Play Glossary of Terms

January 29, 2019 @ 01:00:08

The Outdoor Play Glossary provides a compilation of terminology & concepts integral to outdoor play. The purpose is to be consistent in the use of terms & build a shared understanding of language used in dialogue on outdoor play across Canada. These are working definitions.

Grants Recieved

The Waltons Trust (2022-2027)

Funding from the Waltons Trust was foundational in launching the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play collaboration.

Ottawa Community Foundation Grant (2024)

This funding supported the expansion of the Forest Explorers Outdoor Gear Library and helped ensure every child at the program has access to outdoor gear for each season.

Public Health Agency of Canada Grant (2024-2027)

Funding secured through the Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund serves to expand upon the CCOP efforts to explore the barriers and facilitators to inclusion of children with disabilities in outdoor play and learning in natural spaces.

ParticipACTION Community Challenge Grant (2024, 2025, 2026)

Funding was provided to support the celebration of the launch of the Forest Explorers building, home of the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play (2024) and to celebrate the 1 and 2-year anniversaries of the launch (2025, 2026).

Endeavour Grant (May 2024)

Endeavour Consulting provided pro-bono consultation to OPC on streamlining operations and organizational structure, including with the CCOP.

Intact Insurance Grant (Sep 2024)

Funding was provided to support environmental efforts in early learning and childcare spaces. This funding was used to create a vegetable garden at Forest Explorers, which the children and educators care for, and the cook of Forest Explorers uses in their meals!

1% for the Planet (2024 - present)

Through the 1% for the Planet partnership, we have partnered with Patagonia Ottawa to expand our outdoor gear library to include adult rain gear for educators at Forest Explorers.

CCOP Engagement

Social Media Impact



LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/canadian-centre-for-outdoor-play/>

- 238 Followers
- 3,548 impressions
- 1,282 members reached
- 105 new followers (this year)



Facebook

96 Followers

[Facebook.com/Canadiancentre foroutdoorplay](https://www.facebook.com/Canadiancentreforoutdoorplay)

- 5,201 views
- 421 content interactions
- 39 new followers (this year)

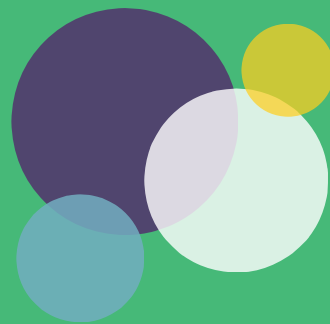


Instagram

[@canadiancentreoutdoorplay](https://www.instagram.com/canadiancentreoutdoorplay)

- 7,268 views
- 193 interactions
- 162 new followers

Thank you



The CCOP's mission to inspire commitment to advancing outdoor play and learning for the overall health and well-being of children in Canada started in Ottawa, **but we aim to expand our efforts to have others across Canada identify themselves as part of this work. If you are interested in collaborating with us, please reach out!**

Contact Us

Email: Info@outdoorplaycanada.ca

Instagram: [@canadiancentreforoutdoorplay](https://www.instagram.com/canadiancentreforoutdoorplay)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100092713672878>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/canadian-centre-for-outdoor-play/>

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