2017 International Play Association Conference
Calgary, Sept 2017

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Position

Access to active play in nature and outdoors—with its risks—is essential for healthy child development. We recommend increasing children’s opportunities for self-directed play outdoors in all settings—at home, at school, in child care, the community and nature.
Components of the Strategy – more than $
Desired long-term results

- Learning from the Strategy (e.g., training, resources and implementation models) is used in the communities of funded projects and elsewhere to increase opportunities for children’s self-directed play outdoors in all settings.
- A strong, coordinated, multi-sectoral national coalition exists of sector leaders, funders, and policy makers supporting children’s outdoor play at multiple levels
- OP is accepted, normalized, and broadly supported
Multi-sector and diverse approaches
Timelines of Strategy projects

2015
- CAMH
- City of Calgary
- CNAC – Phase 1
- Dalhousie University
- Earth Day
- Ecosource
- Glenora
- KidActive – Phase 1
- Okanagan
- Okanagan Research Program (RCPEM)
- Vivo
- YMCA

2016
- CAMH
- City of Calgary
- CNAC – Phase 2
- CPHA
- Dalhousie University
- Earth Day
- Ecosource
- Glenora
- KidActive – Phase 1
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2018
- CAMH
- City of Calgary
- CNAC – Phase 2
- CPHA
- Dalhousie University
- Earth Day
- Ecosource
- Glenora
- KidActive – Phase 1
- Okanagan
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IPA conference
The Strategy has achieved its short-term outcomes

**Learning** – increased knowledge about other projects and how to overcome implementation challenges

**Networking** – meeting to exchange information, ideas, knowledge

**Collaboration** - development of partnerships or joint work

**A sense of community** among grantees

**Increased awareness** of the importance of supporting outdoor play among leaders, funders, and policy makers across multiple sectors
Progress towards all five medium-term goals

- Grantees’ increased capacity to deliver on project-level goals and for project evaluation
- Enhanced learning/understanding of how to support Canadian communities to foster children’s opportunities for outdoor play among project stakeholders
- An effective community of practice established among grantees
- Empowerment and influence of all stakeholders such as parents, educators, funders, and policy makers engaged in the sector to advocate for OP
- Interest from others outside the sector in supporting outdoor play (e.g., media, education and health sectors)
Working towards long-term outcomes

Learning from the Strategy (including training, resources, research and implementation models) is used in the communities of funded projects and elsewhere to create enabling environments for Canadian children’s self-directed play outdoors in all settings.

A strong, coordinated, multi-sectoral national coalition exists of sector leaders, funders, and policy makers supporting children’s outdoor play at multiple levels.

OP is accepted, normalized, and broadly supported.
Concrete resources and models for the emerging field in Canada...

Municipal Play Charter – City of Calgary

Implementation model for municipal mobile adventure playgrounds – City of Calgary

7 policy briefs and a policy framework in development to support outdoor play in child care, schools & municipalities - CPHA

Website for shifting risky play perceptions for parents (& other adults) – UBC outsideplay.ca

Recreation pilot of community Play Ambassadors – Vivo

Integration of loose parts play in community gardens – Ecosource

Free online training for early learning and child care professionals – Okanagan College - available at outdoorplaytraining.com

Risky outdoor play training to enhance the YMCA Playing to Learn ECE curriculum – YMCA
Scaling Forest and Nature School training for educators – CNAC

Transformation of early learning & child care programs to include quality outdoor play (RCPEM, YMCA) and particularly winter play (Glenora CC Society)

Evaluation of physical literacy outcomes following loose parts intervention - Dalhousie

Adaptation of the OPAL model for schools in Canada

Adaptation of POEMS tool for infants and toddlers – RCPEM

Research into barriers and determinants of outdoor play for middle schoolers – CAMH

Articulation of national multisector leadership organization, Outdoor Play Canada – KidActive

Glossary of outdoor play terminology by Outdoor Play Canada (to establish shared language across sectors, soon to be published)
Cohort’s learning on outdoor play

Re: building the capacity of adults to support children’s outdoor play:

- **Intentionality is key** in fostering OP for children– OP doesn’t simply happen with the introduction of loose parts
- Shifting attitudes and practices of adults working with children requires more than training. Grantees report that **additional support, mentoring/coaching** appear to be successful approaches, consistent with good training practices
- Seeing and doing is believing; relatively quick transformations through **experiential learning**
- Parents value outdoor play but **perceived pressure from other parents and society can be a powerful barrier** to their engagement and participation.
Cohort’s learning on outdoor play

In terms of community implementation models:

- Reaching diverse, marginalized and unconverted populations has been a challenge for some projects; ways of reaching beyond the converted requires further thoughts and effort
- Some projects are discovering synergies between outdoor play and Indigenous practices and ways
- A challenge is to view weather as a facilitator of play, not simply a barrier
- There is a lot of interest about outdoor play from communities – there has not been as much pushback as expected but it might be more prevalent in policy work.
Cohort’s learning on outdoor play

On moving the needle on policy:

- Still in the early days... building from the local level

- Open conversations and relationships with stakeholders are building blocks in moving the outdoor play agenda forward and breaking down policy barriers

- Need to work within systems despite the challenges
Supporting this work by convening and connecting...

**Convening**
- Adds huge value
- Need a mix of structured and unstructured activities
- Project updates are essential
- Appreciation for new/different perspectives
- Preparation is key
- An appetite for collective problem-solving

**Connecting**
- Requires lots of work behind the scenes:
  - Intentionality is key and appreciated
Communicating and Evaluating

**Communicating**
- All grantees connect but degree and mode vary
- Webinars work well for sharing information
- Facilitated communication needs time and resources
- Challenge: how to balance grantees’ needs and preferences

**Evaluating**
- Helps develop learning and evidence
- Technical support helps build capacity - challenge providing and resourcing the ‘right’ level of support
- Third-party evaluations can be a mixed blessing
- OP sector needs a mix of evaluation evidence
Progress on building an outdoor play agenda in Canada

- Increasing awareness (Outdoor Play Strategy, media attention)
- Projects are being implemented successfully in pilot communities
- Community demand to scale and share knowledge about “how-to” is strong
- Continuing to find and connect with practice across Canada
- Outdoor Play Canada is emerging! www.outdoorplaycanada.ca
- Working with Ontario Trillium Foundation to explore a funders’ affinity group
- Lawson Foundation committed to a 10 year horizon for the OPS
Thank you!

For more information visit

www.lawson.ca

Or contact

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