More Than a New Course:

A Framework for Embedding Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies in Post-Secondary ECE Programs

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Cover photo: ECE students gather on the banks of Gaabekanang Ziibi/Humber River at Humber College. Photo by Bora Kim

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The Lawson Foundation, with support from an anonymous funder, convened a working group of eight non-Indigenous and Indigenous colleagues from across Canada who collectively brought experience as early childhood education (ECE) post-secondary faculty, administrators, practitioners, and researchers of Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies, while also representing a national association for the college system and the philanthropic sector. The group worked with the principle of *ethical engagement*, where Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews co-exist in a mutually respectful and creative space.[1] However, we acknowledge that this was challenging work and only the beginning of relationships and a process of learning together. The working group offers this framework as a living document which is subject to change as new ways of teaching and learning emerge.

The working group included:

- Christine Alden, Lawson Foundation
- Danielle Alphonse (Qwul'stun'a'wat), Cowichan, Vancouver Island University
- Beverlie Dietze, B. Dietze Consulting Incorporated
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- Ness Kenalty, Waltons Trust
- Florence Touré, Colleges and Institutes Canada
- Noella Wells (Ootaihkimmiaki), Elder and Advisor, Piikani Nation, Blackfoot Confederacy
- Louise Zimanyi, Humber College

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Land Acknowledgement

The Lawson Foundation's projects and activities encompass all traditional territories of the Indigenous Nations within the land we now call Canada.

Welcome

By Noella Wells (Ootaihkimmiaki), Elder and Advisor, Piikani Nation, Blackfoot Confederacy

"We are the Land, the Land is Us"

This understanding will sustain children's relationships with the Land for today and all the tomorrows to come.

— Noella Wells (Ootaihkimmiaki)

My Elder's journey has provided me with much gratitude about learning from Niitsitapi ways, a worldview grounded in my ancestors' place, the land that has taken care of our Niitsitapi. The Siksika (translates to Blackfoot People and is known as the Blackfoot Confederacy) is comprised of four Nations (Piikani, Kainai, Siksika, and the Blackfeet in Montana) and we call ourselves Niitsitapi (translates to the real People).

Our children are gifts from the Creator. Our childhood journey on Earth (Ksaahko) is nourishing. Our parents, our teachers, and our Elders are guiding and teaching us to be mindful; to walk carefully, for we are the caretakers of this Land and everything we do affects the next Seven Generations of children. The young children will have the beginning of these teachings as they go outside, play, laugh, drink the waters, and enjoy the foods from the Land.

In early childhood education, it is through going out on the Land that we are able to show children the nurturing and comfort of learning on the Land. We are giving voice to the Land through ourselves and our heart, mind, body, and spirit. To do this well, all educators need to learn about Indigenous values and worldviews; and to understand the history of the Land in order to learn the competencies to embrace the gifts of the Land.

This framework offers post-secondary leaders a vision to bring together diverse worldviews about learning on the Land and in nature. Further, the framework proposes concrete actions for you to transform the way post-secondary programs support early childhood education programs. I commend you all in nurturing the learning paths of loving the Land for all children.

My childhood summers with my cousin Gayle, who was like an older sister, brought us down to the river bottom far from our homes. We descended steep hillsides just to play, swim, and pick berries. We enjoyed picking saskatoons and bull berries; the river gave us water and the trees gave us fruits. And our fingertips would be very sore from picking the bull berries because of their thorn branches. Being in the sun made our skin dry from going back and forth into the river, but after picking we climbed up the hill with our berry pails. Cousin Myrna would make us berry soup, which we feasted on afterwards, as the sun went down. My cousins were like my own siblings; we had freedom exploring and playing together. Those days were full of teachings being with the Land. I had a treasured Piikani childhood.

Executive Summary

For too long, early childhood education (ECE) in Canada has favoured indoor learning environments over the outdoors and lacked recognition of Indigenous Land-based approaches alongside Euro-Western influences. Young children have consequently missed out on formative experiences. How might we revitalize ECE to reverse this trend in the face of the climate crisis, the continuing need for Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, and an increasing demand for qualified early childhood educators to support the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) plan?

We are a working group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous colleagues with collective experience across the ECE ecosystem, and we believe the answer lies in bringing together Euro-Western worldviews and paradigms of outdoor play and experiential learning with Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing and connecting on the Land and with all living things. We envision a future in which all early childhood educators in Canada are supported and empowered to use Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies to support young children's learning and well-being through respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility with the Land.

This vision requires more than a new course, a new hire, or a new policy; it demands systemic change in the post-secondary institutions that educate and train early childhood educators and in the broader ECE ecosystem. It requires decolonization, Indigenization, and the development of relationships with local Indigenous Nations and communities. It requires human resources, financial resources, and time. This document provides a framework for sparking and guiding that change.

If your institution offers certificate or diploma programs in ECE in Canada, your senior administrators and ECE departments are primary drivers of change, and thus the primary audience for this framework. All other individuals, teams, departments, and communities in the ECE ecosystem—from government policymakers to community Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) programs and Nations —must be partners in this process of change.

Why embed Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies in post-secondary ECE programs?

- To strengthen student success and post-secondary education
- To support healthy child development and high-quality ECE
- To enact Truth and Reconciliation
- To respond to climate change and the need for sustainability
- To implement CWELCC

Start here, start now, together.

1. Vision

In recent decades, most early childhood education (ECE) programs delivered in Canada have largely reflected a Euro-Western indoor learning paradigm influenced by colonization, industrialization, technology, disconnection from nature, societal risk aversion, and more. As a result, outdoor and Land-based teaching and learning approaches (i.e., pedagogies) have been overlooked or marginalized in early childhood educator practice, depriving young children of formative experiences critical to healthy development and sustainability. This deficit must be remedied for several geo-socio-political reasons:

- Child health in Canada is at risk due to unhealthy weight,[2] insufficient physical activity and excessive sedentarism, including in early learning and child care (ELCC) settings.[3]
- The climate crisis threatens the future of all living things.[4]
- Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples demands action from all members of society and benefits all people in Canada.[5]
- The Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) plan[6] is accelerating the demand for qualified early childhood educators as the system expands,[7] presenting the opportunity to strengthen high-quality ELCC programs for all children in Canada.

In response to these challenges, we envision a future in which **all early childhood educators use Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies to support young children's learning and well-being through respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility with the Land**.[8] This vision reflects children's rights to early childhood education and culturally appropriate programming, and their right to live in a healthy environment, as guaranteed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the United Nations General Assembly (2021) as well as United Nations General Comment No. 26 on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change (2023).[9]

Bringing this vision to fruition will require more than isolated actions, such as creating a new course for ECE students or sending faculty to a workshop; what is needed is systemic change in post-secondary institutions. This framework is a proposal for bringing about such change. Further, this vision necessitates recognition and acceptance of Indigenous knowledges as per the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)[10] and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action,[11] respectfully acknowledging that traditional knowledge comes from the ancestors, Nation, and community supporting early child development in developing wholistic* approaches inclusive of Indigenous knowledge connected to Land. This framework responds directly to Call to Action 12: "We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families."[12]

*The terms *wholistic* and *holistic* are used in this document. An Indigenous wholistic view "see[s] the whole person (physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual) as interconnected to Land and in relationship with others (family, communities, Nations)." Ian Cull et al., *Pulling Together: A Guide for Front-Line Staff, Students Services, and Advisors* (Victoria, BC: BCcampus, 2018), https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfrontlineworkers/chapter/indigenous-ways-of-knowing-and-being/. See also the definition of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and connecting on p. 4.

2. Purpose and Audience

In this framework, we suggest **how to transform people, practices, and philosophies so that Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies can become embedded in ECE programs through policy and standards, curricula, faculty development, and resources** (i.e., faculty, funding, and operations). We outline the context for this work and provide principles and high-level recommendations intended to be relevant nationally and then interpreted and applied locally by jurisdictions and individual post-secondary institutions and their communities.

Many aspects of this framework may be applied to other programs and institutions offering education and professional learning to people working in ECE (e.g., degree completion, Early Childhood Assistant, micro-credentials, in-service workshops, communities of practice), including Indigenous communities, Indigenous education institutions, and non-traditional pathways to credentials (e.g., In BC, school divisions which meet the provincial program standards may offer ECE education).

Most early childhood educators in Canada are educated in publicly funded colleges and institutes.[13] The primary audience for this framework is thus **senior administrators** (e.g., vice-presidents, deans, associate deans) and **ECE department champions** (e.g., chairs, faculty) in institutions which offer certificates and diplomas in ECE. Senior administrators and ECE departments are well positioned to be central drivers of systemic change with support from many other partners (see p. 16).

This framework can inform **government policymakers** who

- develop and approve ECE and post-secondary education standards,
- maintain relationships with post-secondary institutions,
- direct post-secondary funding, and
- oversee the expansion of CWELCC.

Finally, this framework can inform other **partners who influence and support post-secondary institutions** (e.g., Program Advisory Committees; regional ECE articulation, accreditation, and professional association bodies; communities of practice; Nations).

"This is a vision for children and the Land, realized through the post-secondary education system. Although this framework is directed towards the post-secondary system, we are guided by the understanding that young children and families served by ELCC programs and the Land are the ultimate beneficiaries of post-secondary ECE work."

— Noella Wells (Ootaihkimmiaki), Elder and Advisor

3. Core Definitions

The terms defined below are used throughout this document and are essential to understanding this framework.

Systemic Change

Systemic change produces a positive shift in how a system operates by influencing many interrelated (but nonlinear) aspects of, and actors in, the system.[14]

Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies

This term inclusively encompasses the breadth of Euro-Western/non-Indigenous outdoor play–based and Indigenous Land-based approaches to teaching and learning, which may take place in a range of outdoor environments on the Land and across the nature continuum: from enclosed/fenced outdoor spaces, to nearby outdoor spaces and parks, to natural Land such as forests, mountains, and prairies; the scope for quality experiences is extensive. In each context, the Indigenous approaches will centre the local Lands and be guided by local Indigenous Knowledge Keepers to validate the Land teachers of that Indigenous People's geographic and cultural ancestries.[15]

Truth and Reconciliation, Decolonization, and Indigenization

These are separate but interrelated processes[16] for the complex, ongoing, and collaborative work of deconstructing colonial paradigms which have oppressed Indigeneity; recognizing and elevating Indigenous worldviews and their value; and catalyzing systemic action to rectify past harms to Indigenous Peoples and forge good relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples in Canada.[17]

These processes of resurgence through co-learning are necessary to realize the breadth and depth of Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies in post-secondary ECE programs. We have drawn on multiple sources to propose the following definitions which guide this framework while acknowledging that diverse definitions, understandings, and uses of these terms exist across Nations and institutions.

- **Truth and Reconciliation**, through the work of Indigenization, is everyone's responsibility and requires involvement, partnership, and collaboration with Indigenous Peoples. The ongoing processes involve constructively addressing truths, making amends to Indigenous Peoples, both individually and collectively, improving relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and co-creating a shared future for the benefit of all, including for the Lands we live, work, and play on.[18]
- **Decolonization**, led by Indigenous Peoples, is the process of deconstructing colonial (Euro-Western) paradigms and valuing and revitalizing Indigenous knowledges and worldviews.[19] This process involves working together to de-centre Euro-Western

approaches, policies and practices, embracing Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and connecting.[20]

- **Indigenization** is a complex process that requires institutions to actively build on Indigenous knowledge in spaces that are collaborative, co-learning, and relational. Indigenization requires *ethical engagement*, a collaborative approach in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews co-exist in mutually respectful ways and critically reflect decolonial ways to align to an Indigenous perspective.[21] Indigenous knowledge may be referred to locally as cultural teachings; examples include the Two-Row Wampum Belt, Walking in Two Worlds, Seven Generations, Q'ushin'tul/Walking Together, and *Etuaptmumk*/Two-Eyed Seeing.[22]
- ***Etuaptmumk*** (Eh-doo-ahp-duh-mumk) is "the gift of multiple perspectives" in the Mi'kmaw language, known as *Two-Eyed Seeing* in English, as brought forth by Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall. *Etuaptmumk*/Two-Eyed Seeing braids together the strengths of Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing for the benefit of all, including Mother Earth.[23] An important principle of *Etuaptmumk*/Two-Eyed Seeing is that it is action-oriented, intentionally and respectfully bringing together different ways of knowing and using our gifts to enact our responsibilities to the natural world.[24]

Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being, Doing, and Connecting

Indigenous ways of knowing vary from Nation to Nation. Central to Indigenous worldviews are ancestors, families, children, and community. Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing and connecting, affirmed in the UNDRIP, are embedded in respectful, reciprocal, and ethical relationships to and with the land, wholistic (engaging spirit, heart, mind, and body), relational (human and natural worlds are interconnected and interdependent) and intergenerational, sustained and expressed through culture, languages, stories, expressive/visual arts, community traditions, ceremony, protocols, and ancestral teachings.[25]

"Indigenization ensures that Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, being, and connecting are included, practiced, and validated in the post-secondary education institution."

— Noella Wells (Ootaihkimmiaki), Elder and Advisor

Waking up spring with song and drumming at Humber College. Photo by Louise Zimanyi

4. Context

The Evolution Towards Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies

As the ECE sector in Canada evolves within the context of Reconciliation and other pressing geo-socio-political issues, two fundamentally different worldviews must be acknowledged, honoured, and brought into dialogue. Broadly speaking, a dominant Euro-Western (non-Indigenous) paradigm exists alongside distinct and diverse Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and connecting, which have existed since time immemorial.

Refer to figure 1 (p. 6) for an overview of this evolution.

Nature art created by ECE students at Vancouver Island University. Photo by Sheila Grieve

Figure 1. The Evolution Towards Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies

Historically...

young children played and learned in nature with educators (but not necessarily as part of nature).

Euro-Western Worldviews and Early Childhood Education Outdoors

Indigenous Worldviews and Land-based Learning

children, extended family, clan, and community engaged in knowing, being, doing, and connecting on the Land (and all humans and nonhumans are interconnected and of the Land).

Interrupted and disrupted by...

industrialization, schoolification, technology, and risk aversion leading to an indoor learning paradigm.

colonization, oppression of culture, and imposition of a Euro-western indoor learning paradigm; however, Land-based upbringing and learning continued to flourish, guided by Indigenous cultures and languages.

Evolving to...

new outdoor pedagogies with multiple influences including climate change, environmental education, Forest School, and risky play.

ongoing flourishing and resurgence of traditional Indigenous Land-based ways of knowing, being, doing, and connecting.

Core constructs include...

- play and inquiry-based holistic learning;
- experiential and place-based learning in, about, and for nature; and
- support for risk.

- interconnectedness and interdependence with the Land based on the Four Rs of Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility;
- the significance of place;
- seasonality and time; and
- intergenerational knowledge transfer through oral traditions, language, cultural protocols and ceremonies.

Bringing worldviews together in early childhood education can

- elevate the ways we think about and engage outdoors with nature and the Land, and
- authentically integrate rich and diverse Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives,

thus benefitting all young children, families, communities, and the Land.

The overview of these worldviews in figure 1 belies deep, rich learning based on centuries of Euro-Western theoretical knowledge[26] and millennia of traditional Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and connecting.[27] **It is beyond the scope of this framework to delve deeply into this content, which is still evolving; however, it is critical that those who commit to the systemic change envisioned in this framework undertake a deep learning process, developing relationships with local Nations and communities and finding locally relevant resources to support their learning journey.** The Notes in this document provide a starting place for professional learning.

Braiding sweetgrass. Photo by Louise Zimanyi

Land-based Play and Co-Learning Through *Etuaptmumk*/Two-Eyed Seeing at Humber College

On the traditional and treaty Lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit in the Humber Arboretum, winter is melting into spring: the flowing sounds of Gaabekanang Ziibi— "the place of the flat rocks" in Anishinaabemowin (also known as the Humber River), the chickadee-dee-dee call of the Black-Capped Chickadee, the blue-gray skies above creaking sugar maple trees that will soon offer sap for birds, animals, and humans alike.

We honour All Our Relations: the plants and trees; the waters; the flyers, four-leggeds, crawlers, and swimmers; the sky; the energy and the spirit of this place. We acknowledge the original occupants of the Lands we are standing on and consider our role, relationship, and responsibilities to the Land and each other.

Building on the benefits of outdoor play for holistic child development, Land-based Play and Co-Learning through Etuaptmumk/Two-Eyed Seeing embraces the guiding principles and pedagogy of Etuaptmumk (see p. 4). Through (re)connecting to and with the Land, engaging spirit, heart, mind and body, co-teaching and co-learning with local and regional Elders, Knowledge Holders, and storytellers, we weave the strengths and best of Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing together, for the benefit of all including our eco-kin.[28]

ECE students gather on the banks of Gaabekanang Ziibi/Humber River at Humber College. Photo by Bora Kim

With this braided knowledge, we are enriched and transformed. We bear a responsibility to share what we learn and act for the benefit of all, now and for seven generations ahead.

Just as a natural ecosystem is interconnected and interdependent, so the co-creation and implementation of this course is supported by Humber's own ecosystem and nurtured by co-learning and engagement at all levels: program review/advisory, Indigenous Education and Engagement, senior leadership, facilities, human resources, sustainability, research, and community partnerships. This illustrates naawasidoong mino nawendiwin—'building good relationships" in Anishinaabemowin,—a key part of Humber's Indigenous Education Plan.

— Louise Zimanyi, Professor, Early Childhood Education,
Faculty of Health Sciences and Wellness, Humber College

Humber College Perspectives on Land-based Play and Co-Learning Through *Etuaptmumk*/Two-Eyed Seeing

"This [course] was different from the others, we were engaged on the land even when it was cold; I learned about different cultures, my responsibilities to the Earth, how I could use my gifts and be a good ancestor—wow, all that in one course!"

— ECE Student, Humber College

"Being on the land every week, I felt I experienced a sense of belonging to the Land and to our co-teaching team. I belong to a community of practice where I am a learner and a teacher."

— ECE Faculty, Humber College

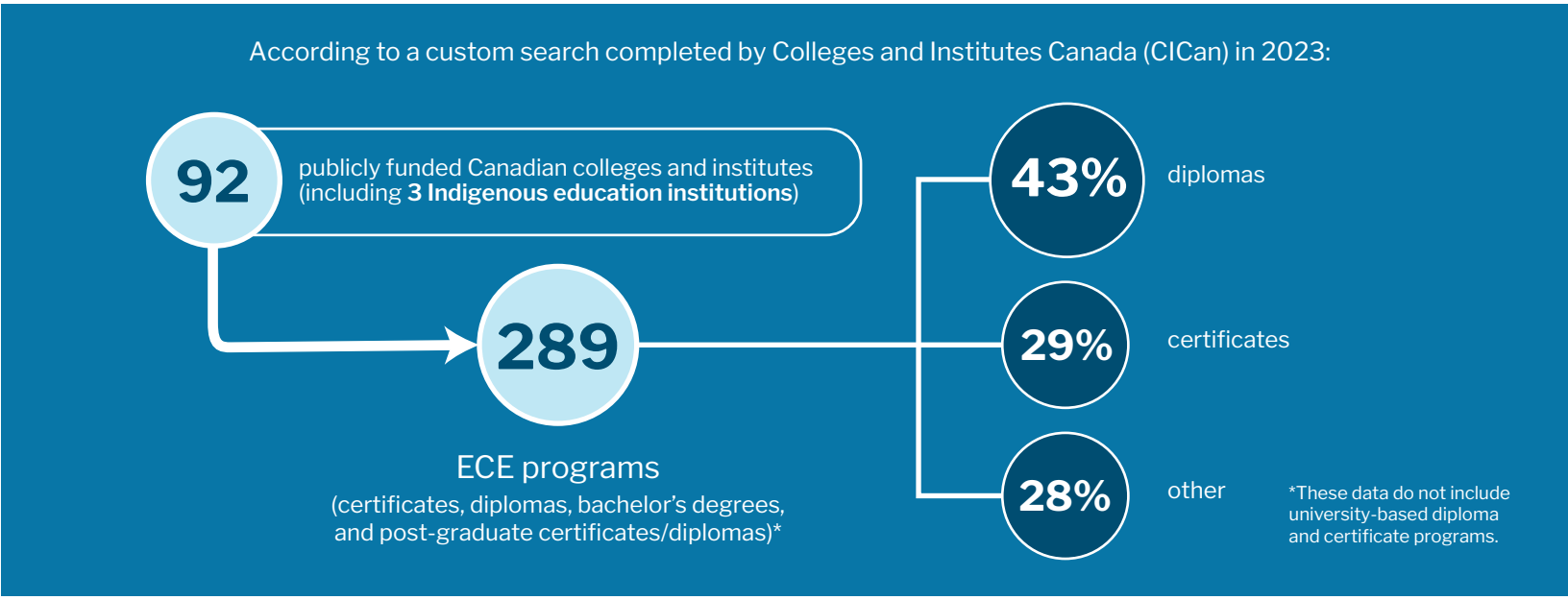
"[The approach we take in the course] transcends mere education, instilling in our learners a deep respect for the land and its inhabitants. By embracing diverse perspectives and ethical practices, we empower future generations to become stewards of the planet, safeguarding its beauty and diversity for years to come."

— Senior Administrator, Humber College

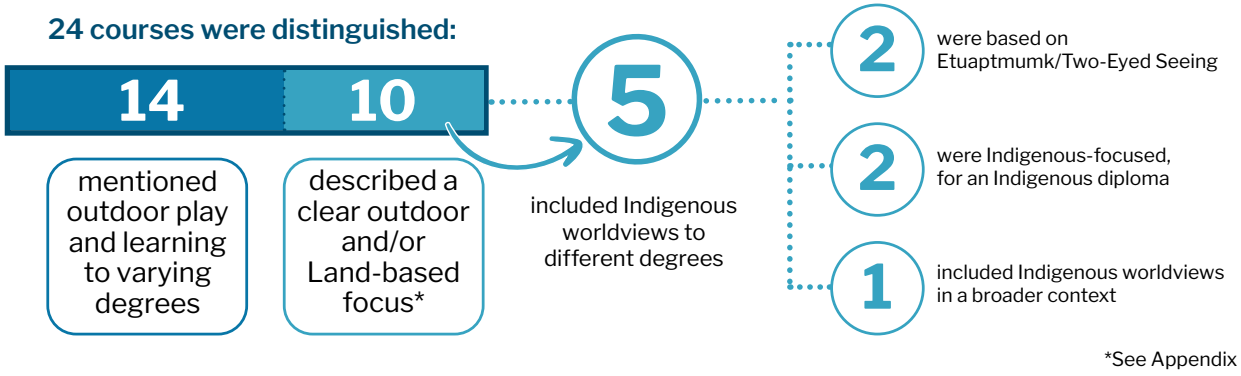
"[This course] plants seeds across the College. It's turning into a situation where almost every department could see itself having some intersection with this program. It transects goals of different divisions."

— Senior Administrator, Humber College

Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies in ECE Programs Today



Planning outdoor environments and experiences for outdoor time should be part of all ECE programs; however, an intentional pedagogical focus on outdoor and Land-based approaches appears relatively new for most institutions. A keyword search of the 2023 data from CICan, which was cross-checked against an environmental scan of online program and course descriptions, found that **just 7% of current ECE program descriptions explicitly describe some kind of module or course related to outdoor approaches and/or Indigenous worldviews** as part of the program curriculum.



While these data may underrepresent Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies, and while Indigenous worldviews may be introduced in other types of courses (e.g., Diversity, Ethics, Health and Wellness), additional research corroborates the finding that educators are not receiving professional learning in Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies.[29] Therefore, there appears to be an urgent need to increase these pedagogies in post-secondary ECE programs.

5. Why: The Rationale for Change

These are the most compelling reasons for post-secondary institutions to embed Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies in their ECE programs.

Strengthening Student Success and Post-Secondary Education

Students benefit:

- When ECE students are deeply engaged through experiential learning and the inclusion of their own personal and cultural worldviews in learning, they learn better, enjoy themselves more, complete their studies, and enter the workforce better prepared to deliver quality ECE.[30]
- Experiential and Land-based learning supports the translation of theory to practice,[31] enhancing the ability of post-secondary institutions to deliver applied learning and prepare students for the workforce.

> "We went outside, were close to nature, and experienced all the activities. It is an amazing experience for me. I am the [person] who did not like going outside. However, this experience changed my mind. I start to pay attention to all the beautiful moments in nature."
>
> — ECE Student, Bow Valley College

Institutions and their staff also benefit:

- Experiential learning outdoors and on the Land can stimulate faculty's own pedagogical practice through their own play and discovery,[32] increasing their skills, enjoyment, and passion for teaching while enhancing their own health and well-being.
- Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies[33] support institutional priorities and responsibilities for Truth and Reconciliation,[34] sustainability, and equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) by teaching Indigenous worldviews, addressing climate and environmental issues, and welcoming diverse worldviews in the delivery of post-secondary programs. These systemic policy priorities have been articulated by CICan through the Indigenous Education Protocol,[35] the SDG Accord,[36] and EDI priorities,[37] which are based on foundational national and international policies such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, the UNDRIP, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and human rights.

> "I was able to observe my students quite intently. I witnessed environment as the third teacher. I witnessed emerging curriculum opportunities. I witnessed new relationships. I witnessed softness, comfort, and ease. I witnessed delight, joy, curiosity, and laughter. It was a refreshing and rejuvenating experience that I will definitely carry forward in my future practice."
>
> — ECE Faculty, Saskatchewan Polytechnic

Supporting Healthy Child Development and High-Quality ECE

Quality ECE transpires when qualified educators and knowledgeable community members wholistically support children's play and exploration through culturally and developmentally responsive experiences and environments. Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies offer an optimal approach to support healthy child development and learning with the following benefits:[38]

- **Body/physical health:** Outdoors, children move more and sit less. They develop physical competencies and can take risks and explore their abilities. Children benefit from reduced exposure to illness and increased exposure to vitamin D.[39]
- **Heart and spirit/well-being:** Outdoor experiences promote children's happiness and well-being while supporting social interactions and opportunities to connect with nature and the Land.[40]
- **Mind/cognition and learning:** Outdoors, children can focus their attention better, self-regulate more naturally, and improve their executive functions.[41] Nature stimulates children's inherent curiosity about the world and supports creativity, collaboration, and authentic co-learning among children, peers, and adults.

A child experiences the joy and wonder of finding a worm during a workshop at New Brunswick Community College, Woodstock campus. Photo by Rebecca Derrah

Beyond developmental domains, these adult-supported, wholistically embodied experiences foster children's environmental awareness and connection to the Land, each other, and all living things.[42]

Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies have similar benefits for faculty, ECE students, and other community members who guide children. They foster wonder and joy and offer an optimal way of knowing, being, doing, and connecting for all.

"By learning outdoors, I experience that outdoor learning helps children explore their curiosity and understand the natural environment while developing physical, emotional, and social skills through play. It also helps them build a strong relationship with their friends and learn how to live harmoniously with nature. The children can engage more in hands-on learning experiences for both the educator and the children. Additionally, it helps educators create a healthy and active environment, making the learning process more enjoyable."

— ECE Student, New Brunswick Community College

Enacting Truth and Reconciliation

Truth and Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples requires the integration or braiding of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and connecting in post-secondary education methods and ECE.[43] This integration supports culturally responsive programming for Indigenous post-secondary ECE students and the Indigenous children and families ultimately served by ELCC community programs, while benefiting the education of non-Indigenous people in Canada.[44]

It is everyone's responsibility to learn about Indigenous worldviews and take action toward Reconciliation. The CICan Indigenous Education Protocol advances this goal.[45]

Storytelling about nature through Indigenous hoop dancing. Photo by Louise Zimanyi

"The Indigenous Student Success Coach has helped me reach out to Elders to support classes and workshops for our ECE students and also early childhood educators working in the community. The College allocates funding to Elders and Knowledge Keepers who are helping me to weave Indigenous culture and knowledges into my courses. Over time, I have been building my own reciprocal relationships with Elders and Knowledge Keepers on the local lands of Neqotkuk First Nation (Tobique) and Wotstak First Nation (Woodstock)."

— ECE Instructor, New Brunswick Community College

Responding to Climate Change and the Need for Sustainability

In the words of Elder Reg Crowshoe, "Reconciliation also requires reconciliation with the natural world."[46] Responding to the climate crisis and working towards sustainability is a global priority with roles and responsibilities for post-secondary institutions as championed by CICan to support the UN's SDGs.[47]

Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies respond to the urgency of climate change by providing opportunities for educators and children to learn in, about, and for the environment.[48] Children and educators develop a reciprocal relationship with the Land and understand the interconnectedness of all living things, which is fundamental to learning how to steward the Land and co-construct ways to live sustainably.[49]

Painted Turtle is a sign of ecological biodiversity. Photo by Louise Zimanyi

"Firsthand outdoor experience allows us to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of nature, which can then be passed on to young learners. By engaging in outdoor activities ourselves, we begin to instil a lasting appreciation for nature and foster a strong sense of care for our environment in the children we teach, nurturing lifelong connections to the world around us."

— ECE Student, Vancouver Island University

Implementing CWELCC

Implementing CWELCC places pressure on post-secondary institutions to train more educators—and to train them well—to fill new spaces while simultaneously enabling existing early learning professionals to upgrade their skills and qualifications.[50] It is estimated that approximately 6420 early childhood educators graduate annually from Canadian post-secondary institutions, primarily from publicly funded colleges and institutes; critically, the current supply of ECE graduates falls far short of the projected number required to staff CWELCC spaces as envisioned in a universal system.† Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies are key considerations in building a quality system that responds to the geo-socio-political realities described above.

ECE instructors, community educators, and young children play during a workshop at New Brunswick Community College. Photo by Rebecca Derrah

The grassroots movement of outdoor and Land-based learning is expanding rapidly with early adopters in many mainstream and alternative ELCC programs.[51] When ECE students have outdoor pedagogy practicum placements in ELCC centres, students influence the early childhood educators already in the workforce. Overall, ELCC will be better served by ensuring that all educators graduate and begin their careers with outdoor and Land-based knowledge and competencies.

As educators enjoy the wholistic benefits of Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies, they experience enhanced well-being and job satisfaction, supporting the recruitment and retention of early childhood educators, which is a pressing systemic challenge.

† Based on data available from the 10 provinces only. Brad Seward, Elizabeth Dhuey, and Annie Pan, "The Big Short: Expansion of Early Childhood Education in Post-Pandemic Canada," *Canadian Public Policy* 49, no. 3 (2023), http:/doi.org/10.3138/cpp.2022-059.

6. Who, How, When: Sparking Systemic Change

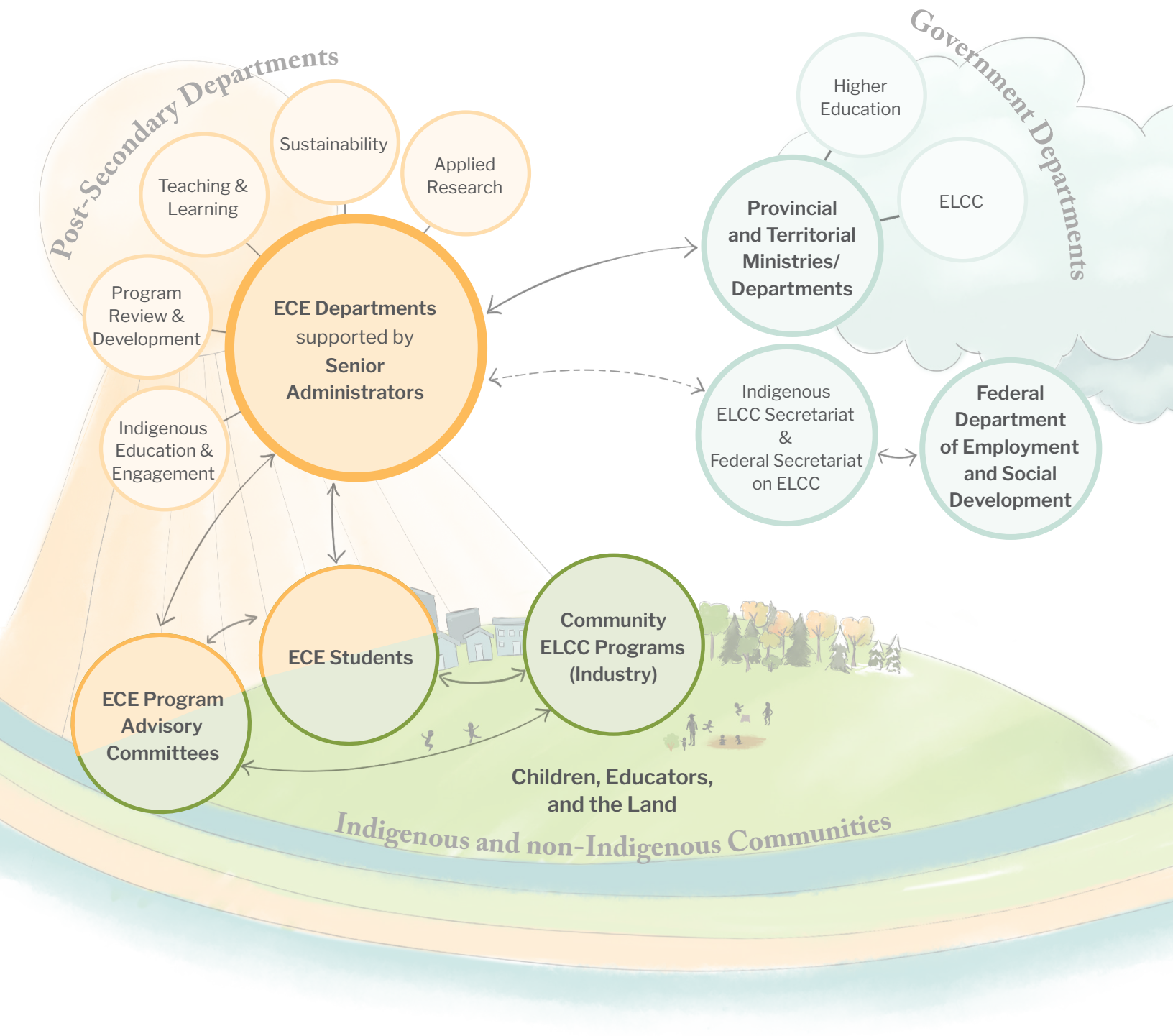
The Post-Secondary Ecosystem for ECE Programs

The main components of the post-secondary ecosystem for ECE programs (figure 2 on p.17) encompass the following roles and activities:

- Senior administrators lead ECE programs (e.g., vice-president, dean, associate dean).
- ECE departments (chair, full- and part-time faculty) develop and implement policies and practices, including:
    - hiring,
    - professional learning and support, and
    - developing and implementing curricula, which requires access to outdoor teaching and learning spaces and relationships with local Indigenous communities.
- ECE students learn outside and inside the classroom, including during practicum placement opportunities and assessment.
- Community ELCC programs (i.e., industry) host ECE student practicum placements.
- Other post-secondary departments, such as Teaching and Learning, Program Review and Development, Indigenous Education and Engagement/Services, Sustainability, and Applied Research, support the work of ECE departments.
- ECE Program Advisory Committees comprised of members from industry provide guidance and input to support relevance and quality of the educational program.
- Provincial/territorial government departments, including Ministries/Departments of Higher Education and ELCC, set funding and policy for ECE program standards and related supports.
- The Federal Department of Employment and Social Development hosts the Federal Secretariat on ELCC and the Indigenous ELCC Secretariat responsible for the CWELCC initiative.

All components of the ecosystem can and must contribute to realizing the vision behind this framework. Also helpful will be the support and cooperation of these members of the broader landscape for ELCC: federal/provincial/territorial associations for ELCC advocacy, provincial/territorial accreditation bodies for early childhood educators, and all those who provide professional learning and can support the advancement of Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies.

Figure 2. Components of the Post-Secondary Ecosystem for ECE Programs



Goals, Outcomes, and Indicators

This framework proposes goals and outcomes for each component of the ecosystem that are linked (see Table 1 on p.19-29). The individuals, teams, departments, committees, and communities listed above do not function in isolation. Changes and new initiatives in one area invariably affect others. Adding a new course to an ECE program may well become an outcome for your institution, but that new course will require support from professional learning for faculty, relationships with Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, changes to class timetables and schedules, an outdoor teaching and learning space, incorporation of new requirements into practicum placements, and more. Only by working together, over time and through diverse pathways, can all those involved in ECE bring about systemic change.

This work requires that **everyone** in the ecosystem:

- increase their awareness and knowledge of Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies;
- collaborate with diverse partners within and outside their institution;
- become an advocate for the desired change; and
- make changes in practice and policy.

These themes are interwoven throughout each of the outcomes.

In addition to human and financial resources, this work requires time. We anticipate that it will take two years to get started, up to five years to see meaningful changes, and five or more years for systemic changes to take root. Hence the inclusion of short-, medium-, and long-term indicators for each outcome.

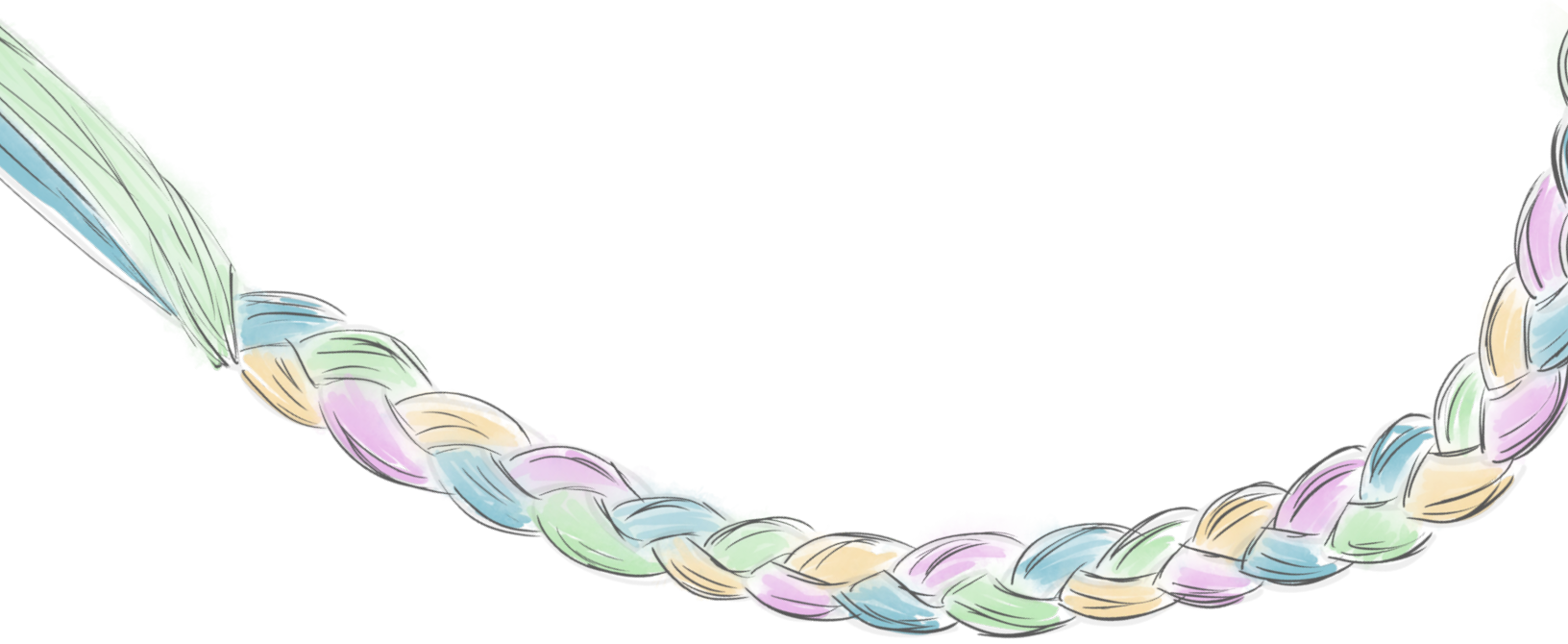


Table 1

Senior Administrators (e.g., Vice-Presidents, Deans, Associate Deans)

Goals, Outcomes, and Indicators

Goal

To recognize and champion the importance of OLP in ECE for the well being of post-secondary communities; then to work with fellow senior administrators and faculty to determine how to implement this framework in the ECE program.

Outcome	Indicators of Success		
	Short-term (within 2 years)	**Medium-term (within 3–5 years)**	**Long-term (5+ years)**
Senior administrators understand and value the importance of OLP and prioritize appropriate financial and human resources.	■ Increased awareness/education around the importance of OLP. ■ Resources are allocated to support professional learning (e.g., workshops, community of practice) for all faculty. ■ Senior administrators collaborate and champion OLP with Ministries/ Departments of Higher Education and Early Learning and Child Care to influence ECE Program Standards, funding, etc. ■ OLP in the ECE program is articulated as contributing to the institution's action plan for Reconciliation. ■ Senior administrators engage Indigenous staff, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers within their institutions and from local communities and Nations.	■ Support for OLP is incorporated within institutional planning documents including the strategic plan, budget planning process, etc. ■ Senior administrators advocate for more inclusion of OLP. ■ Collective agreements support implementation of OLP. ■ Resources (budget, coordination, professional learning, etc.) are allocated for a community of practice to support faculty in deep learning.	■ Senior administrators consistently include resources for OLP professional learning in annual budgets. ■ All ECE faculty have received support to deliver OLP. ■ Senior administrators are accountable for implementation of OLP.

Note: The abbreviation OLP refers to Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies.

Table 1, continued.

Senior Administrators (e.g., Vice-Presidents, Deans, Associate Deans)

Goals, Outcomes, and Indicators

Goal

To recognize and champion the importance of OLP in ECE for the well being of post-secondary communities; then to work with fellow senior administrators and faculty to determine how to implement this framework in the ECE program.

Outcome	Indicators of Success		
	Short-term (within 2 years)	**Medium-term (within 3–5 years)**	**Long-term (5+ years)**
Senior administrators schedule OLP courses to support meaningful experiential learning and reasonable faculty workload.	■ Dedicated staff is assigned to organize and implement OLP courses. ■ Faculty assigned to teach OLP courses have the knowledge and competencies to deliver the curriculum outdoors.	■ Class sizes meet students' learning needs and support student safety. ■ Outdoor courses are substantial in length to access the outdoors and support meaningful learning. ■ Scheduling allows multiple sections to benefit from visiting guest speakers and educators including Knowledge Keepers and Elders. ■ Scheduling and resources support co-teaching (where appropriate) with sufficient planning and assessment time.	■ Outdoor space is dedicated and can be requested. Additional space is provided when and where needed.
Senior administrators hire faculty with diverse knowledge, skills and experience in OLP including Indigenous faculty and knowledge holders to support the curriculum.	■ Senior administrators have a clear strategy for hiring faculty with diverse knowledges, connections, and lived experiences with the land. ■ Indigenous People's cultural qualifications (e.g., Knowledge Keeper/Elder/ Ceremonialist) are determined by each Nation within its community and are recognized as equivalencies by Human Resources and paid accordingly.	■ Additional diverse faculty have been hired.	■ There is an appropriate number of diverse faculty and Elders in residence to support OLP.

Note: The abbreviation OLP refers to Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies.

Goals, Outcomes, and Indicators

Goal

To be equipped to teach OLP and to champion its inclusion in the curriculum.

Outcome	Indicators of Success		
	Short-term (within 2 years)	**Medium-term (within 3–5 years)**	**Long-term (5+ years)**
All faculty (full- and part-time) have dedicated professional learning time and resources to increase their knowledge of OLP. Learning includes Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing and connecting and is facilitated through recommended local resources, Indigenous faculty, and Knowledge Keepers.	■ Faculty gain increased awareness and knowledge of OLP through professional learning workshops.	■ Faculty deepen their knowledge of OLP and participate in a community of practice.	■ Faculty include OLP in all of their teaching. ■ Faculty listen deeply to Indigenous Knowledge Keepers.

> *We established a virtual community of practice (CoP) with post-secondary faculty that centered around creating a safe and dynamic space to foster collaboration, innovation, and shared expertise. It was a way to offer new knowledge opportunities to faculty on outdoor pedagogy. The weekly meetings, initially led by myself and then by other faculty, provided a platform to examine research, share insights, resources, and best practices derived from both academic research and practical experiences.*
>
> *Through discussions, the CoP members identified key challenges and opportunities in promoting outdoor pedagogy in ECE college curriculum, and in gaining skills to teach curriculum in an outdoor setting. Over a short period of time, additional faculty from other institutions asked to join the CoP because of their interest in professional learning about the subject. Colleagues working on related outdoor play initiatives and members of various government departments also participated.*
>
> *The CoP cultivated a culture of continuous learning and collective problem-solving that empowered the participants to take risks, embrace outdoor pedagogy as an integral component of their practice and to advocate for post-secondary programs to include outdoor pedagogy in their curriculum and practicum placements. The CoP enriched the learning experiences and well-being of post-secondary faculty, ECE students and children across diverse programs.*
>
> *— Dr. Beverlie Dietze, former Director of Learning and Applied Research, Okanagan College*

Note: The abbreviation OLP refers to Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies.

Goals, Outcomes, and Indicators

Goal

To be equipped to teach OLP and to champion its inclusion in the curriculum.

Outcome	Indicators of Success		
	Short-term (within 2 years)	**Medium-term (within 3–5 years)**	**Long-term (5+ years)**
Professional learning for faculty includes field experiences outdoors with children in community ELCC programs, for faculty's benefit and to model engaging in OLP for ECE students and ELCC staff.	■ Faculty report increased knowledge of new/relevant teaching and learning methods and greater confidence in their ability to meet learning outcomes through engagement in OLP.	■ Faculty support ECE programs in revisiting their philosophies and incorporating OLP in their programs. ■ Through partnership with practicum placement sites, faculty demonstrate strategies and outcomes that a student could achieve.	■ Practicum placements integrate OLP in practice.
Faculty support community ELCC programs to understand and include OLP in practicum placement experiences and to evaluate ECE students for OLP learning outcomes.	■ Faculty provide resources and mentorship to ELCC leaders to increase their knowledge of OLP. ■ Faculty work with ELCC leaders to include OLP opportunities as part of practicum placement opportunities. ■ Faculty draft OLP learning outcomes for practicum placements.	■ Faculty make OLP a requirement of practicum placements. ■ Faculty refine OLP learning outcomes for practicum placements.	■ Faculty and ELCC programs have reciprocal relationships. ■ OLP are a significant component of practicum placements and ELCC programming.

Note: The abbreviation OLP refers to Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies.

Goals, Outcomes, and Indicators

Goal

To be equipped to teach OLP and to champion its inclusion in the curriculum.

Outcome	Indicators of Success		
	Short-term (within 2 years)	**Medium-term (within 3–5 years)**	**Long-term (5+ years)**
Faculty teach outdoors in all seasons - moving from theoretical constructs to experiential learning.	■ Faculty experiment taking classes outdoors. ■ Faculty support students from diverse backgrounds to become comfortable outdoors as needed. ■ Clothing libraries are created to help all faculty and students dress for the weather. ■ Guided by cultural protocol, faculty coordinate field trips with Indigenous Knowledge Keepers to experience local Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and connecting.	■ Faculty spend increasing amounts of time teaching outdoors.	■ Faculty regularly teach outdoors.

> *As a Cowichan faculty member teaching early childhood education, I think about developing curriculum, lectures, and experiences with the Land by being on the Land, not in the classroom, and finding natural landscapes on or off campus to explore and align educator practice with the Land. An example was taking my communications class to the waterfront and having them practice helping skills in listening, paraphrasing, and reflecting on feelings; the ocean is a healing place offering calm and insights for reflection.*
>
> *Another example is having students walk and talk when thinking about child development, curriculum and guidance. This helps them get fresh air, connect to the seasons, and be able to ground themselves fully by walking on the Land. The more experiences aligned to Indigenous worldviews in how we connect in relationship with the Land provides a new lens of consideration when considering programs and offering children ways to be with the land ethically, sustainably, and relationally.*
>
> *— Danielle Alphonse (Qwul'stun'a'wat), BC Regional Innovation Chair in Aboriginal Early Childhood Development, Vancouver Island University*

Note: The abbreviation OLP refers to Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies.

Goals, Outcomes, and Indicators

Goal

To share knowledge and experience with Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and connecting to support seamless integration into ECE curriculum design and programming.

Outcome	Indicators of Success		
	Short-term (within 2 years)	**Medium-term (within 3–5 years)**	**Long-term (5+ years)**
Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and connecting, based on the local Indigenous People's lands where the institution is located, are seamlessly integrated into curriculum design and programming.	■ Department/office helps raise awareness about the importance of incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and connecting and making connections to OLP curriculum and program design.	■ Department/office works with ECE faculty as an advisor in curriculum design and relationship building with Indigenous Peoples including Elders/Knowledge Keepers/ Cultural Experts.	■ Senior administrators and faculty have formed relationships and regularly engage with department/ office to support ECE program quality. ■ Institutional staff work in partnership with the local Indigenous community, respecting ceremony and cultural protocols.

Healing medicine, sage plant. Photo by Danielle Alphonse (Qwul'stun'a'wat)

> *As a Métis (Cree, French, Scottish) faculty member, I often visit with the Elders in Residence, so I can learn from them and reflect on my practice as an educator. Elders have also guided faculty when creating courses, taught language, and shared protocols and history of using sacred plant medicines such as smudging and cedar brushing.*
>
> *— Sheila Grieve, Professor, ECE, Vancouver Island University*

Note: The abbreviation OLP refers to Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies.

Table 1, continued.

Related Departments
(e.g., Applied Research, Sustainability, Teaching and Learning)

Goals, Outcomes, and Indicators

Goal

To engage the expertise of related departments in supporting the ECE program to strengthen OLP and to benefit the institution's community.

Outcome	Indicators of Success		
	Short-term (within 2 years)	**Medium-term (within 3–5 years)**	**Long-term (5+ years)**
Related departments enhance OLP in ECE by collaborating and contributing their expertise.	■ Applied research resources support the implementation of this framework. ■ OLP curriculum is enhanced through related departments **(e.g., Sustainability department helps embed the SDGs in ECE curriculum)** and aligns with the institution's strategic priorities.	■ Related departments benefit from the implementation of OLP.	■ Interdepartmental collaboration is regular. Success is celebrated through annual reports.

Students from ECE, Carpentry, Skilled Trades Techniques, and Plumbing work together to build the outdoor classroom at New Brunswick Community College, Woodstock Campus. Photo by Tammie Hachey-Bell

> *The active participation, partnership, and involvement of both the Skilled Trade Technique students and myself in the construction of the outdoor play area [for the ECE department] at NBCC Woodstock has significantly contributed to the evolution and enhancement of outdoor play experiences. Through hands-on engagement in the planning, design, and construction processes, students have developed a profound sense of ownership and investment in the outdoor space. This collaborative effort has not only fostered a deeper connection to the environment but has also promoted teamwork, problem-solving skills, and creativity among the students.*
>
> *— Instructor, Skilled Trades Techniques,*
> *New Brunswick Community College, Woodstock Campus*

Note: The abbreviation OLP refers to Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies.

Goals, Outcomes, and Indicators

Goal

To support OLP experiences during practicum placements with clear learning outcomes for students to achieve outdoors.

Outcome	Indicators of Success		
	Short-term (within 2 years)	**Medium-term (within 3–5 years)**	**Long-term (5+ years)**
Student practicum placements include outdoor experiences to practice implementing OLP.	■ ELCC leaders collaborate with college faculty to ensure OLP is part of student practicum placements. ■ ECE students implement OLP regularly during each practicum placement.	■ ELCC leaders work with ECE college faculty to identify a diverse range of OLP experiences in student practicum placements. ■ ECE students transfer their OLP knowledge to ELCC staff during practicum placements.	■ Practicum placement experiences beyond mainstream ELCC programs are available for every student, including opportunities to experience diverse Indigenous community programs and Forest School-type programs.
ELCC leaders evaluate OLP in student practicum placements.	■ ELCC leaders use clear learning outcomes defined by ECE faculty that are possible for ECE students to achieve.	■ ELCC staff are trained on identified outcomes.	■ ELCC staff possess the knowledge to mentor and assess ECE students based on these outcomes.

> *[Our ELCC staff] had the opportunity to collaborate and learn through the [New Brunswick Community College] outdoor environment about ways to enhance our outdoor practices at our facilities. Moving forward, we will feel more confident in our outdoor environment as we have learned new ways to set up the classroom in all seasons!*
>
> *— Director of a community ELCC program, Miramichi, New Brunswick*

Note: The abbreviation OLP refers to Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies.

Table 1, continued.

ECE Students

Goals, Outcomes, and Indicators

Goal

To cultivate interest, knowledge and competencies to practice OLP.

Outcome	Indicators of Success		
	Short-term (within 2 years)	**Medium-term (within 3–5 years)**	**Long-term (5+ years)**
ECE students graduate with explicit knowledge, competencies and attitudes to practice OLP.	■ ECE students experience some ECE program curriculum delivered outdoors and have some practicum placement experiences with OLP. ■ ECE students develop a connection to the Land based on Indigenous teachings.	■ ECE student course evaluations demonstrate appreciation for OLP and report student learning.	■ ECE students experience at least one practicum placement with an outdoor or land-based focus (e.g., Indigenous community program, Forest School).

> *I was lucky enough to take part in a Forest Program for one of my practicum placements. One day, I sat quietly in the tall grass with a few children who told me, 'this is where fairies live". I watched their eyes look up, filled with wonder, and I felt as if I witnessed a core memory take place. These first-hand experiences allowed me to realize the importance of educators spending time with children outdoors, as so much can be nurtured through these moments of wonder and discovery.*
>
> *— ECE Student (Second Year), Vancouver Island University*

ECE Program Advisory Committees

Goal

To cultivate a balance of diverse perspectives among members to advocate for OLP.

Committee members understand, value, and are committed to OLP.	■ Increased awareness/ education among Program Advisory Committee members around importance of OLP. ■ ELCC programs with a strong OLP focus are represented on Program Advisory Committees.	■ Program Advisory Committees regularly discuss OLP status within curriculum and practicum placements.	■ Members require relevant curriculum on OLP and outdoor practicum placement experiences for children.

Note: The abbreviation OLP refers to Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies.

Table 1, continued.

Goals, Outcomes, and Indicators

Goal

To have strong program standards and policies created in collaboration and coordination among relevant Ministries/Departments.

Outcome	Indicators of Success		
	Short-term (within 2 years)	**Medium-term (within 3–5 years)**	**Long-term (5+ years)**
Ministries/ departments have reciprocal relationships with one another, post-secondary institutions, and industry to inform policy development to support OLP through policy, curriculum, ELCC licensing, etc.	■ Staff in relevant Ministries/ departments meet and develop relationships. ■ ECE faculty can participate on federal, provincial and territorial committees. ■ Provincial/ territorial government departments advocate for the inclusion of OLP in CWELCC.	■ Staff in relevant Ministries/ departments collaborate on policy development. ■ Evolution of ELCC legislation supports OLP.	■ ECE policy among departments is mutually informed and aligned based on meaningful engagement with post-secondary institutions and industry.
Post-secondary program standards include: program characteristics, learning outcomes, competencies, practicum placement requirements and instructor competencies that enable successful implementation of OLP from Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews or perspectives.	■ Senior post-secondary administrators and Program Advisory Committees advocate for integrating OLP in ECE curricula and provincial/territorial program standards.	■ Mandate letters to P/T government departments outline an expectation for the inclusion of OLP.	■ All Provinces and Territories have ECE program standards which reflect OLP.
Professional learning requirements exist for early childhood educators and include OLP.	■ OLP professional learning is recommended and available.	■ OLP professional learning is mandatory and data is collected to reflect provision.	■ All early childhood educators benefit annually from OLP professional learning.

Note: The abbreviation OLP refers to Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies.

Goals, Outcomes, and Indicators

Goal

To promote and support OLP in the development of CWELCC.

Outcome	Indicators of Success		
	Short-term (within 2 years)	**Medium-term (within 3–5 years)**	**Long-term (5+ years)**
The federal Secretariats on ELCC promote OLP in the development of CWELCC.	■ Secretariats have increased awareness of OLP as part of CWELCC expansion. ■ Post-secondary faculty are represented at the Secretariats and participate in F/P/T committees. ■ Innovation funding is allocated to advance OLP and build evidence.	■ Support for ELCC program expansion includes OLP environments, programs, and training. ■ Operational funding to community ELCC programs includes OLP.	■ CWELCC guarantees high-quality OLP in all post-secondary ECE programs.

Note: The abbreviation OLP refers to Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies.

7. From Framework to Action

The following steps support the implementation of this framework.

1. Form a working group of passionate champions through a process of ethical engagement, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous senior administrators, faculty, local community members, and other members of your ecosystem (e.g., students, ELCC professionals). Obtain guidance and follow local Indigenous cultural protocols for approaching Knowledge Keepers and cultural experts in a good way.
2. Identify funding sources (e.g., applied research) to support this work.
3. Assess the status of your ECE program and your vision/philosophy for the program within the context of your institutional strategic priorities and CICan support and resources.
4. Using this framework as a guide, develop a strategic plan and work plan to adapt and promote the desired outcomes for systemic change in your context.
5. Develop an evaluation plan, including metrics, to measure progress. Monitor implementation of the work plan and cultivate learning from the process.
6. Use research and other local resources to support learning.
7. Connect with a community of practice to support the process. Share your journey, including any publications, to build the evidence base.
8. Join education and advocacy initiatives to advance this work beyond your institution (e.g., regional ELCC associations, revision of provincial/territorial ECE program standards). Communities of practice across multiple institutions, made up of diverse community members, can help nurture different stages of learning and advance broader changes across the system.

8. Conclusion: Not If, but When

This framework for systemic change in post-secondary institutions has proposed the rationale and the ways to transform people, practices, and philosophies so that Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies can become embedded in ECE programs. The framework has articulated, in detail, desired outcomes and indicators of systemic change.

If implemented, this framework can profoundly shift post-secondary ECE programs so that early childhood educators graduate with the knowledge, skills, and competencies to effectively implement outdoor play and work alongside/with Indigenous communities to weave Land-based pedagogies into their practice, meeting the present and future needs of people, the Land, and all living things. Post-secondary institutions that use this framework to revise their ECE program approach and curriculum, and then apply learning to implement it, will be better positioned to meet their mandates and the evolving needs of the ELCC industry they serve.

Given the potential of Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies to make early learning richer, healthier, more authentic, more sustainable, and more stimulating—for *all* involved—surely the question is not if this framework is implemented, but when. Where and how can you begin?

ECE faculty and students at Humber College connect to Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies. Photo by Jason Seright

9. Appendix: Existing Courses that Incorporate Outdoor and Land-based Pedagogies

Humber College Institute Technology & Advanced Learning

Province: Ontario

Program Name: Early Childhood Education

Course Name: Land-Based Play and Co-Learning through Etuaptmumk/Two-Eyed Seeing

Course Description: Building on the importance and benefits of outdoor play for wholistic child development, this course uses the guiding principles and pedagogy of Etuaptmumk, the gift of multiple perspectives in the Mi'kmaw language. Also known as Two-Eyed Seeing, through (re) connecting Land and co-learning, the course embraces the strengths of Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of being, relating, knowing and doing together for the benefit of all.

This course takes place in the Humber Arboretum on the traditional and treaty Lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit. Co-learning engages Indigenous and non-Indigenous faculty, Elders, Knowledge Holders and students in the learning process. In connecting spirit, heart, mind and body through Land-based experiences, stories and sharing circles, learners will gain an applied understanding on how to regularly and intentionally engage children, families and other professionals in respectful, reciprocal and responsible relationships with All Our Relations (place, plant-life, animals and other-than-human being in various ecosystems).

Lakeland College

Province: Alberta

Program Name: Early Childhood Education

Course Name: Outdoor & Nature Play

Course Description: This course explores outdoor and nature play in a variety of early learning environments. This involves examining the views of learning in and with nature, the benefits of outdoor play, and the role of the educator in a nature-based curriculum. Approaches include Reggio-inspired programs, forest and nature schools and indigenous and land-based education.

Lethbridge College

Province: Alberta

Program Name: Early Childhood Education

Course Name: Children's Outdoor Play

Course Description: A critical analysis of social, familial, historical, political, and cultural worldviews of children's right to play. The role of educators in the design and sustainability of outdoor play spaces that use local natural materials is examined.

New Brunswick Community College

Province: New Brunswick

Program Name: Early Childhood Education

Course Name: Outdoor Play and Nature

Course Description: When children play outdoors in nature, it's been shown to positively impact their overall development and well-being. Indoor play cannot accurately replicate outdoor play as a person has to actually experience and connect with the outside world. For instance, watching a video about snow does not provide the same experience as standing outside catching a snowflake on one's tongue during a snowfall.

Outdoor Play and Nature focuses on outdoor play opportunities in the natural world and constructed play spaces, including how to consistently incorporate them into early learning and childcare centres/homes. Students reflect on their own outdoor play experiences to gain insight into their personal feelings and see how their personal feelings can affect their own practices.

Within this course, the selection of outdoor environments is examined to ensure equitable access and opportunities are present for all children (without the need for adult intervention). Also, Canadian children experience four seasons, so students learn to create programming for outdoor play in all seasons. Other topics include environmental responsibility, Indigenous values and the natural world, healthy risk-taking and curiosity, and documentation of outdoor experiences.

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

Province: British Columbia

Program Name: Aboriginal Early Childhood Education

Course Name: Natural Environments in Child Care

Course Description: Students will study the natural outdoor environment as a learning center for curriculum and programming. Teachers' roles, responsibilities, and polices regarding outdoor play will be a key component. Connecting Aboriginal values, and traditions with the outdoor curriculum will also be addressed. Topics will include culture and the environment, value of outdoor play, and sustainable materials and equipment.

Northern College

Province: Ontario

Program Name: Early Childhood Education

Course Name: Outdoor & Nature Play

Course Description: For children, play is learning. There is no better space for kids to learn than the outdoors, and there is no better play resource than nature. Children can be taught in their early years to play outdoors. Children reap great benefits as they grow a connection and appreciation of the natural environment. In the structured, busy and technologically-advanced world they live in, the role of outdoor play that is experienced as children is being forgotten.

This course will nurture the educators awareness for the importance of nature play as any activity that gets children active or thinking actively outdoors, with the end goal of building skills and ability to play without the need for parental or adult control. This can be in any setting, so long as it's outdoors. It supports children being left to their own devices while caregivers supervise from a distance. Adults can also actively participate in nature play, however, through child-led play activities. Nature play significantly improves all aspects of child development – physical, cognitive, social and emotional. Playing outdoors grows resilience, self-confidence, initiative, creativity and more. It encourages the joy of movement; it nurtures wild imaginations, experimentation, friendships, social connections and behaviour.

Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC)

Province: Nova Scotia

Program Name: Early Childhood Education

Course Name: Land Based Curriculum for the Outdoor Learning Environment

Course Description: This course examines land based curriculum in the context of the Mi'kmaw culture to help you understand the importance and benefits of outdoor play for holistic child development. You will explore land-based play and co-learning through both Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of being, seeing, knowing, and doing. In learning our connection to land as teacher, this course takes place on the lands of the regional landscapes in Mi'kma'ki. Co-learning engages Indigenous and non-Indigenous faculty, Elders, Knowledge Holders and students in the learning process.

Saskatchewan Polytechnic

Province: Saskatchewan

Program Name: Aboriginal Early Childhood Education

Course Name: Outdoor & Nature Play

Course Description: You will develop knowledge and skills to provide rich opportunities for children to explore and develop holistically through play and learning outdoors. You will examine current research and theories, and practice planning provocations that trigger children's curiosity and wonderment in four-seasons. You will examine naturalized and urban outdoor places and spaces with consideration to equality, diversity, and inclusion.

St. Clair College

Province: Ontario

Program Name: Native Early Childhood Education

Course Name: Indigenous Outdoor Education

Course Description: An examination of Indigenous land-based knowledge, skills, and values necessary to develop and implement a culturally relevant learning experience in the early childhood years. Through a variety of culturally specific activities within and beyond the boundaries of the classroom, students will develop an awareness of the potential of the natural environment and Indigenous values of land-based and lifelong learning.

St. Clair College

Province: Ontario

Program Name: Early Childhood Education

Course Name: Outdoor Education

Course Description: This course examines the knowledge, skills and values necessary to develop and implement an outdoor learning experience or environment in the early years. Through a variety of activities within and beyond the classroom boundaries, students will develop an awareness of the potential of the natural environment for lifelong learning.

10. Notes

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