



Partnering for Outdoor Play

A case study of forest and nature school programming
in the context of licensed childcare in Ottawa, Ontario

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Literature

- **Inconsistent implementation of rich outdoor, free-play opportunities in licensed childcare** (Tanden, Saelens, & Christakis, 2015; Truelove, Vanderloo, & Tucker, 2017)
- **Inconsistent practitioner knowledge of play-based approaches** (Rengel, 2013)
- **Missed opportunity for enhanced learning and well-being** (Massey, 2005; Malone, 2012)
- **Many cultural factors underlie these inconsistencies** (Gull Laird, et al., 2016)



Methodology



- **Collaborative Action Research** (Jacobs, 2017)
- **Appreciative Inquiry** (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2005; Stavros & Torres, 2006), and Collaborative Communication (CCP, n.d.)
- **Interpretive case study** (Stake, 1995)

The Partnership

Child & Nature Alliance of Canada



Andrew Fleck Children's Services



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"We believe that all children and youth should have the opportunity to play and learn in forests, parks, meadows, and mud puddles."

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"We support children and their families through high quality, inclusive services that meet their diverse developmental, early learning and child care needs"

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The Vision

- **5 days/week**
- **Full-day**
- **Licensed child care program**
- **Operating as an immersive forest-based early years program.**



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The Challenge

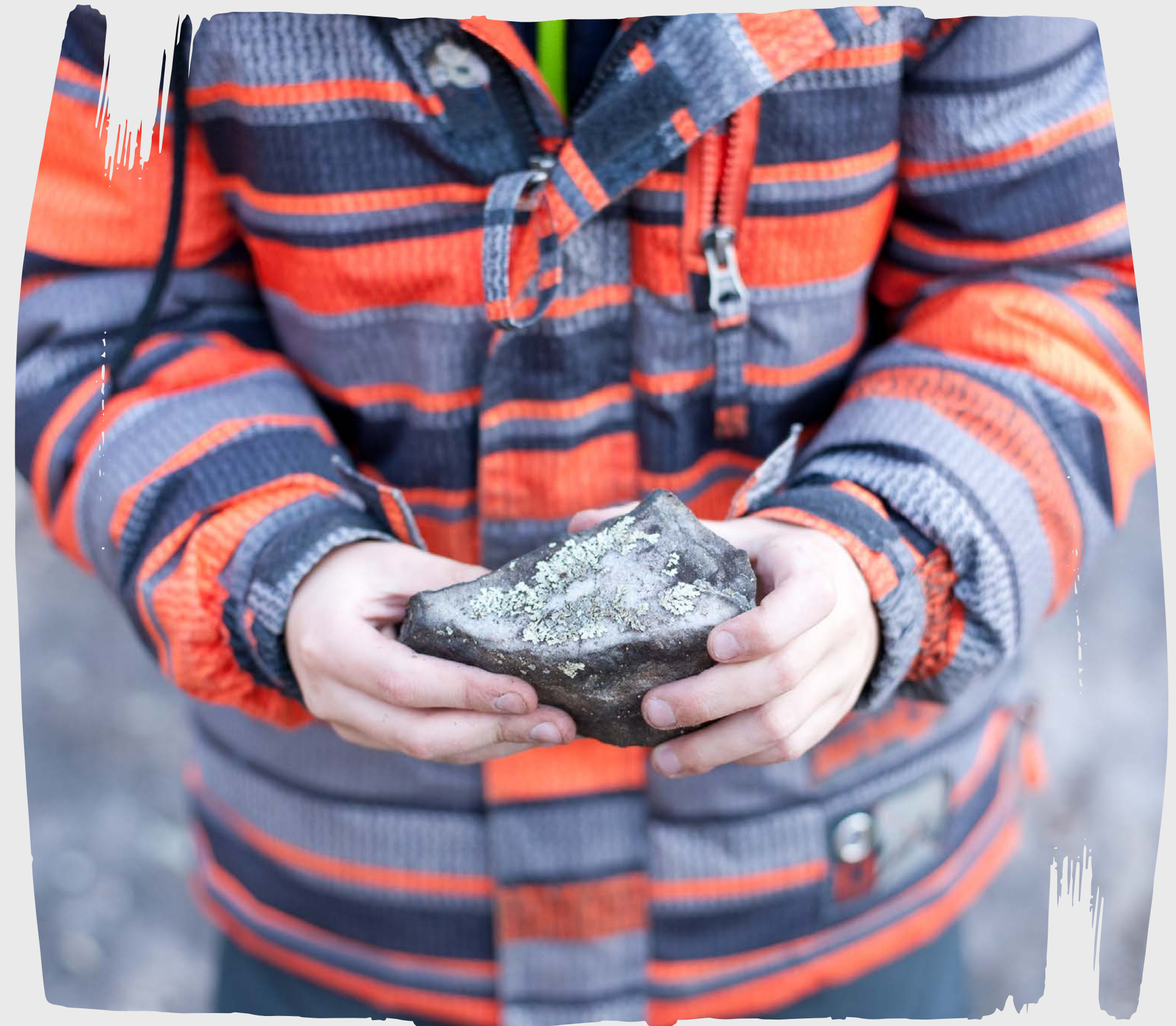
- **Operating a licensed child-care program in Ontario requires adherence to regulations under the Early Years Act.**
- **Implications for staffing, indoor facility design, outdoor play space.**



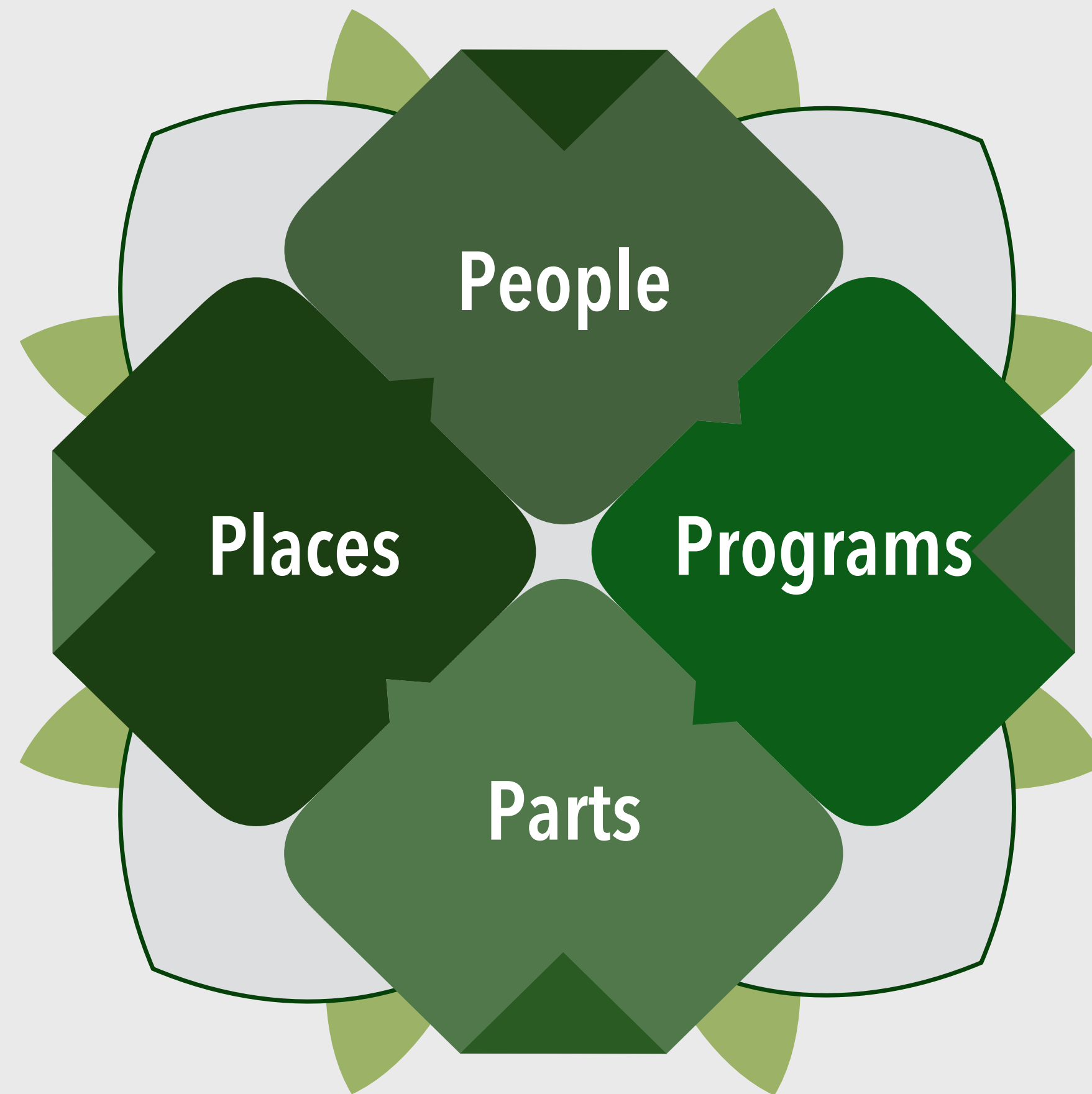
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The Reality

- **Regulatory challenges have led to program design compromises that allow for a pilot program to operate:**
 - **3 days/week at licensed facility with “nearby nature” access**
 - **2 days/week in immersive forest and nature school context**
- **With hopes to show “proof of concept” and inform policy development in support of outdoor play.**



A Policy Ecosystem



People



- **Individual actors as champions**
- **Collaborative hope & action**
- **Social & ecological justice values**
- **Alignment of values, funding, and capacity**
- **Strategic organizational (and individual) mindfulness**

Programs

- **FNS pedagogy/policy links**
- **Regulatory landscape: square peg, round hole**
- **The forest and nature continuum**
- **Training and professional development for quality practice**
- **Assessing and managing risks**
- **Indigenous underpinnings**



Places



- **Indoor spaces**
- **Outdoor spaces**
- **Natural environments**
- **Human-made environments**

Parts

- **Personal gear**
 - youth
 - adult
 - equity and access
- **"Loose Parts"**
 - provocations with natural objects
 - provocations with human-made objects



Next Steps

- **Additional rounds of coding existing data for deeper analysis and member checking of codes, categories and themes.**
- **Migration of data into qualitative data analysis software to facilitate complexity of analysis across mixed media (text, images, video)**
- **Further data collection (?) and potential (re)scoping of case study to determine if further cycles of research are warranted.**



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