

outdoor play

strategy

An exploration of children's unstructured outdoor play in Canada

In 2013, the Lawson Foundation started rethinking how we could help shift kids' behaviours towards healthier lifestyles. We decided to explore outdoor play as a lever to reverse the inactivity crisis and as an essential element to support *healthy child development*, the Foundation's ultimate goal.

We started by co-funding three academic papers (*risky play*, *outdoor time*, *active outdoor play*) and supported the convening of a working group to develop the *Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play* under the leadership of *Dr. Mark Tremblay*. The Position Statement was released to resounding positive media attention in June 2015 by ParticipACTION via the *Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth*. This was followed by our funding call to identify projects that collectively would help inform how communities can increase children's opportunities for unstructured outdoor play.

For the next few years we will be working with organizations across Canada and ranging across physical activity, recreation, injury prevention, public health, early childhood education, environment, education, mental health, but all focused on children's outdoor play. Collectively the projects will produce tools, resources and training to build practitioner and decision maker capacity to support outdoor play, test delivery models for community implementation, and use research and evaluation to measure the effectiveness of various approaches.

We are using a cohort approach where the projects will convene periodically to network, share and learn together. We'll be learning throughout this process, meeting new stakeholders, discovering more about what's already underway across Canada and abroad, and engaging in a developmental evaluation to understand how the learning from the projects could collectively make a difference for Canadian kids.

To stay connected to the Lawson Foundation's Outdoor Play Strategy, sign up [here](#) or follow us on social media.



2013-2018
timeline

\$2,700,000
investment to date

18
projects across
Canada



THE
LAWSON
FOUNDATION

outdoor play strategy

Community action model

Practitioner capacity building

Public policy





Topic: **transforming schools**

Organization: ***Earth Day Canada***

Sectors: **education, environment**

Target population: **school communities, school board decision makers**

Reach: **local - Toronto, ON**

Grant: **\$210,000**

Summary:

Recess is a systemic asset in schools, yet it has been compromised by risk-aversion, and other institutional and teaching priorities. It is often the only time in a child's day when children are free to initiate and define their play. Given that schools are the only regulated places where children ages 5-12 years old consistently go for 6-10 hours a day, schools are uniquely positioned to protect and enrich children's right to play. *OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning)* was developed in the United Kingdom to transform schools to protect and enrich the play opportunities of recess. OPAL is now receiving international attention as a best practice and is being implemented in Australia and New Zealand. It has been refined over 20 years and has been shown repeatedly to vastly improve recess, inclusion and school-ground play for children – restoring some of the direct experiential and social learning that children can only get from each other through play.

This project will deliver OPAL training and coaching to six diverse school communities working with a lead team of adults in each school including teachers, administrators, child care staff, caretakers, and parents to develop a play implementation plan for outdoor recess including kindergarten play-time, recess, lunch, before and after-school. OPAL transforms attitudes to risk, supervision and play provision within school communities. The children will experience enriched play through loose parts, a cultural shift that supports their agency and a more inclusive and reciprocal social environment. Graduated change through OPAL coaching allows staff to adjust their risk perception and relax into child-directed play supervision as they observe the children's developing responsibility. OPAL results in improved quality of life in school communities for children and greater job satisfaction for school staff.

Project reach



Keywords

risk perception published research
COMMUNITY IMPLEMENTATION
OUTDOOR PLAY ENVIRONMENTS
LOOSE PARTS recess
VULNERABLE POPULATIONS
right to play whole school approach
low cost schools liability



Topic: **playworkers**

Organization: ***Vivo for Healthier Generations***

Sector: **recreation**

Target population: **children and youth 6-15 years old, families, practitioners**

Reach: **local - Calgary, AB**

Grant: **\$152,000**

Summary:

In 2013 Vivo launched its Play Ambassadors, a model for increasing unstructured play both inside and beyond the walls of its community recreation facility. Inspired by other successful models, like the Play Rangers in Scotland, Vivo's Play Ambassadors are a team of *playworkers* who strive to increase knowledge, understanding, value and participation in play in north-central Calgary. Play Ambassadors create an enriching environment to engage children and their families in play by facilitating opportunities for free play in Vivo's open spaces, gymnasiums and at community events. These opportunities include a Play Ambassador who facilitates and role models play using simple activities and materials increasing the likelihood of families participating in unstructured play.

This project will demonstrate the Play Ambassador model for programming and training in an outdoor environment. There will be three components of the strategy: 1) Increase unstructured, outdoor play through the creation of enriching environments for play; 2) Increase the quality of unstructured, outdoor play by training community members as Play Ambassadors in an evidence-based curriculum for play facilitation; and 3) Evaluate the effectiveness of the above. The project will complete its Play Ambassador toolkit, already in development, and train adults as well as youth 12-15 years old to facilitate play for groups of children 6-8 and 9-11 years old. A variety of community-driven Play Ambassador opportunities will be offered in all seasons for a total of approx. 15 hours per week.

Project reach



Keywords

youth engagement
CHILDREN'S VOICES
community implementation
PLAYWORKERS
ENRICHING ENVIRONMENTS
community collaboration
SIMPLE ACTIVITIES
families shareable resources
low cost loose parts
fun
children's programs



Topic: **loose parts, nature play and community gardens**

Organization: ***Ecosource***

Sectors: **community gardens, recreation**

Target population: **children 0-12 years old, families**

Reach: **local - Mississauga, ON**

Grant: **\$85,000**

Summary:

Changing, increasingly urbanized areas require opportunities for nature-based active outdoor play. An innovative community-based approach can be used to diversify the recreational opportunities offered within public parks. This innovative recreation project re-imagines community gardens as play spaces by drawing on evidence that children's gardens encourage more natural and dynamic play than traditional playgrounds with manufactured equipment.

This project increases opportunities for children 0-12 years old to re-discover outdoor, unstructured play in six community gardens across the City of Mississauga (three in central Mississauga, one in Clarkson, one in Malton, and one in Dixie/Bloor). The pilot explores a neighbourhood-level model for fostering active outdoor play that respects and works with diverse cultural perspectives and socioeconomic status including low income and newcomer families. Evidence-based garden design strategies from established children's gardens will be used, such as incorporating features that appeal to all five senses, providing a range of natural materials for loose parts play, and creating mini-ecosystems to encourage a rich variety of plant and animal life. Children from the community will be invited to play in the gardens through a series of pilot workshops based on community collaboration to assess the effectiveness of chosen loose parts and garden design principles in fostering diverse play experiences. The program will be available free of charge to participants.

An advisory committee comprised of community experts from local early learning centres and York University will support the project and participate in the pilots. The project will result in a model and set of best practices for how to utilize the community assets of gardens to establish habits of active living among children through play.

Project reach



Keywords

nature play **shareable resources**
CHILDREN'S PROGRAM
LOOSE PARTS **LOW COST**
DIVERSE CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES
community collaboration
VULNERABLE POPULATIONS
children's voices
community gardens
multi-sectoral collaboration
recreation



Topic: **barriers and determinants**

Organization: ***Centre for Addiction and Mental Health***

Sectors: **mental health, education, public health**

Target population: **children 10-12 years old, parents**

Reach: **local - London, ON**

Grant: **\$120,000**

Summary:

Canada and other western nations have experienced a steady decline in children’s outdoor play. This decline has been attributed to broad societal changes including fewer pedestrian-friendly urban environments supporting children’s outdoor activities (e.g., green spaces), technological advancements (e.g., computers) encouraging greater indoor sedentary activity, growing concerns over children’s safety, and a shift toward increased participation in structured adult-supervised activities. Scientists are discovering that children who engage in outdoor play are more physically active, have fewer physical health problems (e.g., obesity), and enjoy better mental health. However, evidence to support effective interventions may be incomplete due to a failure to examine multiple determinants of children’s outdoor play, over- reliance on adult opinion to define outdoor play and the factors that shape it, an absence of research clarifying how outdoor play leads to better health, and lack of knowledge of the factors influencing outdoor play for ethnic minority children whose access to play may be most restricted. In addition, outdoor play decreases with age and older children’s motives for play may be uniquely different from those of younger children.

To address these shortfalls, this study will adopt a mixed methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative data from 60 community stakeholders and 700 6-8th grade children in 10 London, Ontario schools. Objectives will: 1) identify key determinants of outdoor play based on child, parent, and community expert reports and objective environmental indicators; 2) explore mechanisms linking increased outdoor play to children’s health; and 3) assess factors shaping outdoor play and its possible health benefits for ethnic minority children. The project integrates support from research officers associated with London’s English and Catholic school boards as well as the project manager for Healthy Eating/Healthy Physical Activity for London’s Child & Youth Network to establish stakeholder relationships, address challenges in data collection and create a community feedback loop for the results and their interpretation. Results will be shared with community stakeholders and scientists and ultimately guide the development of effective interventions.

Project reach



Keywords

diverse populations

children’s voices

BARRIERS

VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

PUBLISHED RESEARCH

shareable resources

holistic model



Topic: **multi-sectoral knowledge mobilization**

Organization: ***KidActive***

Sectors: **all sectors with the opportunity to influence children's outdoor play**

Target population: **leaders and practitioners of diverse organizations**

Reach: **national**

Grant: **\$75,000**

Summary:

Strong multi-sectoral collaboration led to the development of the Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play by diverse, pan-Canadian organizations. Following the release in June 2015 by ParticipACTION, stakeholders believed an ongoing knowledge mobilization strategy was required to further disseminate and deepen the impact of the Position Statement to achieve national, multi-sector impact for the benefit of Canadian children and youth.

This project provides strategic support through a collaborative leadership model to co-ordinate and gather existing and potential resources, social networks, data, opportunities and insights to further the reach and deepen the impact of the *Active Outdoor Play Position Statement* across Canada. The project extends and strengthens the work of the original group, now known as the Canadian Outdoor Play Working Group, and includes: an environmental scan; a network mapping initiative; the development of key messages, knowledge sharing and translation tools to support the creation of a toolkit/resource to promote key messages; and, a Speaker's Fund to continue public speaking about the Position Statement. This project sets the stage for long term impact through knowledge translation, community level and system wide change to support improved health and well-being for all children by addressing the social and physical environments where they play, learn and live.

Project reach



Keywords

barriers PUBLIC POLICY
multi-sectoral engagement
ACTIVE PLAY collaborative leadership
KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION
network mapping risky play
practitioner capacity building
key messages
POSITION STATEMENT
collective impact NATURE PLAY



Topic: **nurturing development of active play**

Organization: ***Regroupement des Centres de la Petite Enfance de la Montérégie***

Sector: **early childhood education**

Target population: **early childhood educators, health practitioners, parents, children 0-5 years old**

Reach: **provincial - Québec**

Grant: **\$210,000**

Summary:

Unlike in the rest of Canada, childcare services in Québec accommodate the majority of preschool children including infants. Time spent outside is often restricted to the daily regulatory requirement to go outside which is non-specific in duration and excludes inclement weather. When playing outside, educators' supervision of children, particularly children using play equipment, often prevents the child's ability to explore risk. For infants and toddlers, these periods are even more restricted and children are physically confined by being seated in a stroller while the educator takes a walk, or very young children are placed into confining baby swings at the park. Childcare programs generally set up their outdoor spaces based on these practices and often the only quality indicator is the installation of a play structure without considering how this equipment could meet the needs of motor development, fantasy play and risky play. In addition, parents have developed an attitude of zero risk tolerance creating additional pressure for educational staff who fear being blamed for any mishap.

This project will help caregivers understand and support the developing child's need to move. Six pilot communities (child care centres, parent community, and local stakeholders in health and child development) in different regions of Québec will receive information and training about the innate capabilities of children and their inherent needs to be active and take risks in outdoor environments in order to transform play spaces and teaching practice. The communities will be involved in the re-design of the outdoor play environment. The quality of those environments and impact on children's physical activity levels will be assessed using two validated tools: CARS – Children's Activity Ratings Scale that measures children's physical activity levels at play; and, POEMS - the Preschool Outdoor Environment Measurement Scale which looks at physical environment, interactions, play and learning settings, and teacher/ caregiver roles. The project will also adapt POEMS for children under 2 years of age.

Project reach



Keywords

practitioner capacity building
SHAREABLE RESOURCES
PUBLISHED RESEARCH
physical literacy
INFANT DEVELOPMENT
early childhood education
RISKY PLAY
outdoor play environments
evaluation tools
COMMUNITY IMPLEMENTATION



Topic: **winter play**

Organization: ***Glenora Child Care Society***

Sectors: **early childhood education**

Target population: **early childhood educators, children 1-5 years old**

Reach: **local - Edmonton, AB**

Grant: **\$110,000**

Summary:

Winter is often seen as something to get through - to put up with - to survive. In Edmonton, while it is usually sunny during the day in winter, the sun rises after most children arrive at child care in the morning and has set by the time parents have picked them up after work. Enhancing and extending outdoor play during the day, while they are at the child care centre, ensures they have physical activity, a connection with nature and daylight, and unstructured time to explore and develop.

This project seeks to instill a great love for new types of play in a crisp, bright world, and to normalize outdoor play as an experience of childhood by engaging preschool children in amazing outdoor winter play opportunities. The project will engage part-time specialized staff over three winter time contracts to provide new knowledge and work with staff to support training and capacity to facilitate high quality outdoor free play in winter months in almost any weather. The scope of winter play activities will be expanded by developing a more creative outdoor space with child friendly loose parts and special areas (wind shelters, infant snow play, sculpting, bird feeding, warming area, etc.) and by taking regular winter field trips to local outdoor natural spaces and nature reserves. The window for outdoor play will be extended by creating an environment conducive to longer periods of time outdoors with little ones, and modeling weekend winter play for parents through community winter carnivals and in alignment with the City of Edmonton's "For the Love of Winter" strategy.

Project reach



Keywords

winter play
PRACTITIONER CAPACITY BUILDING
PHYSICAL LITERACY
risky play
OUTDOOR PLAY ENVIRONMENTS
infant development
MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP
loose parts
community implementation



Topic: **reframing risk**

Organization: ***BC Injury Research & Prevention Unit, University of British Columbia***

Sectors: **injury prevention, health promotion, education**

Target population: **parents, decision makers, children 6-12 years old**

Reach: **national (with activities in BC & ON)**

Grant: **\$170,000**

Summary:

Outdoor risky play, including unsupervised play, play at speed, at height, with tools, with elements such as water or fire, and rough-and-tumble play, is important for children's development, including social and physical development, emotional wellbeing, self-confidence, risk management and physical activity. Despite the benefits, opportunities for risky play have been decreasing across generations due to perceptions that it is dangerous and superfluous. Reversing this trend requires a societal shift. The goal of this project is to stimulate this change by focusing on changing parents' mindset about the importance of outdoor risky play.

An effective, evidence-based Risk Reframing (RR) tool exists, but it is designed for in-person delivery. There is currently no tool that is amenable to large-scale application. This project will develop an online RR tool that is versatile (combining an interactive website with activities and videos) and broadly applicable (thanks to a discussion guide that can be tailored to the target population). Through focus groups and interviews, the resonance of the RR tool will be assessed with Canadian parents of children aged 6 to 12 years and elementary school educators. A randomized controlled trial of 500 parents will be conducted in Vancouver, Toronto and Ottawa to evaluate effectiveness. Through extensive partnerships with national and local organizations undertaking work in children's play, the RR tool will be broadly disseminated. Its online format will help ensure equitable access for parents, educators, and other stakeholders throughout Canada.

Project reach



Keywords

risk perception **PARENTS**
COMMUNITY IMPLEMENTATION
educators **decision makers**
MULTI-SECTORAL ENGAGEMENT
risky play
practitioner capacity building
shareable resources **BARRIERS**
PUBLISHED RESEARCH
HEALTH BEHAVIOUR CHANGE



Topic: **forest and nature school**

Organization: ***Child and Nature Alliance of Canada***

Sectors: **forest and nature school, education, early childhood education**

Target population: **educators, children 2-10 years old, education policy makers**

Reach: **national**

Grant: **\$225,000**

Summary:

An emerging body of research is providing a strong and direct correlation between childhood health, development, well-being and access to nature and supportive built environments. Research also indicates positive impacts to learning and educational outcomes when children are provided opportunities to learn outdoors, in nature. Despite this, we know that children spend 90% of their time inside, and that more than 90% of children are not active enough for healthy development. Additionally, lower income neighbourhoods, most often in urban centres, tend to have less access to nature and supportive built environments and are linked to poorer health outcomes for children.

Forest and Nature School is one exciting answer to this growing epidemic in Canada, providing tangible opportunities for children to grow in their knowledge and love for the environment, and to learn through active play in nearby nature. Since the first Forest School in Canada was founded in 2008, a grassroots movement has been sweeping the country in communities from coast to coast. Many Forest and Nature School approaches are getting underway within the public education system, and this growth is now impacting decisions at a policy level for school boards and ministries (as well as early learning & care programs) that are trying to gauge appropriate supports and policy to properly support what is unfolding on the ground. The Child & Nature Alliance of Canada is uniquely poised to provide leadership, support and training on Forest and Nature School.

This project focuses on strategic, organizational support to expand Forest School Canada training and programs to ensure that children across Canada will have the opportunity to play and learn in nature on a regular and repeated basis, with a knowledgeable and skilled educator who supports a pedagogical framework of place-based, play-based, emergent, inquiry-based, and experiential learning. The vision of promoting children's connection to nature is to make this a mainstream issue that reaches all children.

Project reach



Keywords

PRACTITIONER CAPACITY BUILDING
public education
EMERGENT CURRICULUM
place-based education
FOREST AND NATURE SCHOOL
risky play
CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS
COMMUNITY IMPLEMENTATION
nature play public policy



Topic: **benefits of loose parts**

Organization: ***Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre,
Dalhousie University***

Sectors: **early childhood education, physical literacy, public health**

Target population: **children 3-5 years old, early childhood educators**

Reach: **provincial - Nova Scotia**

Grant: **\$210,000**

Summary:

Active play in nature and outdoors is critical to healthy childhood development, and particularly for the development of physical literacy, which in turn is needed for lifelong physical activity. Engaging children in self-directed active outdoor play has been identified as a public health priority. This requires a change in how early childhood educators are trained and how play areas are constructed to stimulate interest and activity among children, e.g., through the use of “loose parts” to promote quality outdoor play. “Loose parts” refers to the use of natural materials, such as logs, sticks or leaves. In Nova Scotia, work has begun to test a loose parts intervention that incorporates resources for educators and parents, a professional learning module for early childhood educators, and the use of pedagogical documentation to support outdoor play.

This project builds on this innovative work to evaluate the efficacy of a loose parts intervention versus standard early years settings’ practice to: 1) improve children’s knowledge, understanding, practice, and pleasure in knowing how and when to move effectively with and without equipment (physical literacy); 2) increase time in active outdoor play; 3) improve educators’ attitudes, beliefs, perceived competency, and intentions towards incorporating the intervention into practice; and 4) increase educators’ understanding of active play in child health and development. The study includes 10 participating early learning centres in the intervention and 10 matched control sites (random assignment) in urban and rural settings with an anticipated participation of 180 children from 3-5 years old. Using an internationally recognized socio-ecological framework (RE-AIM: Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, Maintenance) outcomes will be measured across multiple levels (child, parent, educator, environment, policy). Changes to the physical environment to incorporate loose parts for unstructured, self-directed, outdoor play will be evaluated. A process evaluation will examine fidelity, dose, quality of delivery, responsiveness of participants and adaptations during implementation. Evidence generated will inform the delivery and promotion of active outdoor play for improved physical literacy and physical activity in Canada and internationally.

Project reach



Keywords

PHYSICAL LITERACY
loose parts
PRACTITIONER CAPACITY BUILDING
movement for health
public health
risky play
PUBLIC POLICY
community implementation
PUBLISHED RESEARCH



Topic: **online training resource**

Organization: ***Okanagan College***

Sector: **early childhood education**

Target population: **early childhood educators, supervisors/managers, instructors and students**

Reach: **national (with activities in BC, AB, ON)**

Grant: **\$195,000**

Summary:

There is a clear lack of accessible and affordable professional development opportunities and courses for early childhood educators (ECEs) that provide specialized training in outdoor play in urban and rural settings. Little academic research from a Canadian perspective has been done to investigate if and how specialized training in outdoor play changes the practice of early learning professionals. To address this gap, a specialized outdoor play curriculum will be developed for face-to-face and open access, web-based delivery for early childhood educators, early childhood education instructors and students, and then the effectiveness in changing practice will be assessed.

The training resource will be comprised of 12 three-hour modules including topics such as: open space, loose parts, intelligent materials, physical literacy, risk-taking, natural ways and modes of learning for young children, accessibility, diversity in children’s outdoor play needs and options, play space designs and children’s use of space, environmental attributes, and roles and options of early learning professionals in supporting and encouraging outdoor play. The Canadian Child Care Federation will “host” the web site and the training modules. An evaluation targets 400 ECEs and supervisors/managers working in childcare centres located in rural and urban settings in AB, BC and ON.

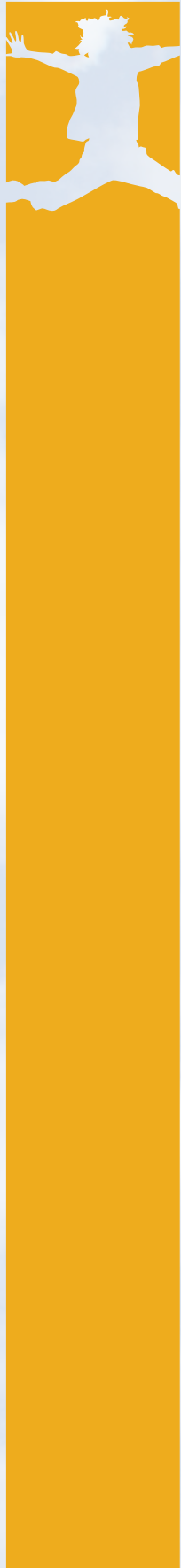
This project will allow the ECE community of practice to acquire new knowledge and skills to support children in using outdoor environments that focus on play, discovery and learning, while building the human resource capacity of the ECE community in Canada. The project will also provide new curricula for ECE programs in post-secondary institutions across Canada and include a variety of strategies needed to support ECEs and faculty to integrate outdoor play programming into their practice. The ultimate benefit will be to improve the wellbeing of children.

Project reach



Keywords

loose parts shareable resources
COMMUNITY IMPLEMENTATION
LOOSE PARTS published research
POST-SECONDARY TRAINING
physical literacy
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
professional development
risky play



**YMCA of
Western Ontario**

Topic: **national curriculum**

Organization: ***YMCA of Western Ontario***

Sector: **early childhood education**

Target population: **early childhood educators, children 0-5 years old**

Reach: **local - London, ON**

Grant: **\$160,000**

Summary:

While the emerging research on risky outdoor play shows benefits for health, creativity, social skills and resilience, there is currently no guidance on how early learning professionals become educated, trained and confident in supporting and understanding these research findings. New practices and research in the early learning field do not generally filter down to educators in an effective way of learning and implementation. Staff generally hold on to old practices in the field, because of what they feel or their comfort level. The YMCA is committed to providing high quality early learning and care and continually invests in professional development support for its staff and the ongoing development of its national early learning curriculum, YMCA Playing to Learn.

This project will fill the gap between research and practice by expanding the YMCA *Playing to Learn* curriculum to include a focus on self-directed and unstructured “risky play” for children. There will be three pilot YMCA child care sites that include 70 early learning professionals serving approx. 350 children and their families in London, Ontario. Training will be designed by a YMCA Playing to Learn team of professionals (from Toronto and London offices) and facilitated by the Outdoor Classroom Specialist hired to support the project. Professional behaviours such as supervision and program planning will be enhanced through training sessions and mentorship by the Outdoor Classroom Specialist, pilot project leadership, and director support at each location. The process will include meaningful documentation of practices for professional reflection and sharing with families and professional networks. Evaluation services will be provided by the YMCA national office and supported by YMCA of Western Ontario.

Project reach



Keywords

shareable resources

COMMUNITY IMPLEMENTATION

risky play

practitioner capacity building

NATURE PLAY

national curriculum

scaling

OUTDOOR PLAY ENVIRONMENTS



Topic: **risk mitigation policy toolkit**

Organization: ***Canadian Public Health Association***

Sectors: **public health, injury prevention, legal, education, municipalities**

Target population: **municipal and school board decision makers**

Reach: **national (with activities in ON & SK)**

Grant: **\$210,000**

Summary:

Canadians are increasingly concerned about managing the risks their children assume, and often limit their access to the benefits of risky, self-directed play. Risky play provides children the opportunity to explore their personal limits, and learn to manage risk and work with other people. Meanwhile the concerns of city and school board officials are focused on increased insurance liability costs and the likelihood of tort law suits that might result from accidents in play areas and school grounds. This short-term approach plays against the longer term benefits of providing children the opportunity to play in areas that manage risk *to the degree necessary*. The requirement for safety needs to be balanced against the benefits of risky play.

This project investigates the causes of risk aversion from a social and liability perspective, and develops policy options to address those concerns that are applicable to large and small urban communities, as well as rural areas. The target audience is elected officials and senior managers in municipalities and local school boards who make decisions that affect the opportunities for children and youth to experience risk and adventure.

A risk mitigation policy toolkit will be developed in collaboration with a range of partners and stakeholders to support public policy that could guide access to and the development of risky play opportunities and adventure play areas on municipal lands and school yards. The process and product will also respond to parental perceptions concerning free play in these settings. The tool kit will be tested with interested organizations including public health practitioners. The resulting tool box will provide direction for communities across Canada that should increase their children's access to risky play and its benefits.

Project reach



Keywords

INSURANCE LIABILITY
risk perception
community implementation
RISKY PLAY
TORT LAW **public policy**
community collaboration
OUTDOOR PLAY ENVIRONMENTS
shareable resources
barriers
multi-sectoral engagement

Calgary



Topic: **municipal leadership**

Organization: ***The City of Calgary***

Sectors: **municipalities, recreation, parks**

Target population: **parents, children, municipal policy makers**

Reach: **local - Calgary, AB**

Grant: **\$160,000**

Summary:

The evidence continues to grow regarding the many positive impacts of unstructured risky play as well as children's declining engagement in play. Decision makers often overvalue the easily measured costs of risky play and undervalue the difficult-to-measure benefits, and this phenomenon stifles the growth of risky play. Research suggests that pilot and demonstration projects might be an effective catalyst for change. The City believes that this work must be shared as a ground-level approach to systemic change in play. Play is not one organization's responsibility - it is a shared community responsibility.

The City of Calgary will provide leadership and work across multiple departments and with a city-wide Play Sector Development Team to address collectively the barriers parents and children face regarding unstructured risky play whereby participation in risky play becomes the cultural norm. Specifically, this project will:

1. Research barriers with Calgary parents with a focus on hard to reach populations, low income families, and those "unconverted" to risky play.
2. Pilot evidence-based programs (encouraging unstructured play throughout existing programs, community events, camps, etc.) and play infrastructure on a continuum from existing open fields/parks and traditional playgrounds to natural playgrounds to adventure playgrounds. (The project includes a City of Calgary capital infrastructure funding commitment that includes an outdoor adventure playground).
3. Work with the city-wide Play Sector Development Team to create a municipal Play Charter, a collective commitment pledge to take action, as a signatory public declaration on unstructured risky play.

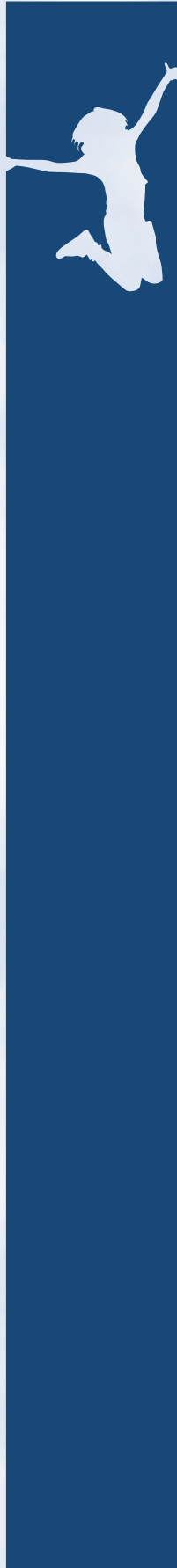
Evaluation of the effectiveness of the new infrastructure and programs will inform future capital investments, program design and communication plans. The project will share learning through the Play Sector Development Team and the *International Play Association Conference* to be hosted by the City of Calgary in 2017.

Project reach



Keywords

COMMUNITY IMPLEMENTATION
VULNERABLE POPULATIONS
risky play
MULTI-SECTORAL ENGAGEMENT
shareable resources
ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND
parents **barriers**
children's programs
built environment
public policy



Topic: **evaluation of the Outdoor Play Strategy**

Organization: ***Social Research and Demonstration Corporation***

Sectors: **all**

Target population: **Lawson Foundation, funded projects, outdoor play stakeholders**

Reach: **national**

Grant: **\$230,000**

Summary:

The aim of the Lawson Foundation’s Outdoor Play Strategy is to better understand how to support Canadian communities to foster children’s opportunities for outdoor play; in other words, how to create environments that enable – rather than hinder – such play. The Strategy is designed to support the development and implementation of a variety of creative ideas across sectors and a range of contexts, including community programs, services, and supports as well as policy and research initiatives. Further, a cohort model has been adopted with plans to convene the projects periodically to share and learn from one another. In keeping with this exploratory approach, an evaluation of the Strategy is needed to develop understanding about how and why funded initiatives experience success, and to what degree. The Foundation also wishes to understand the strategic impact of its investment in outdoor play and to what extent and how support from the Lawson Foundation adds value in terms of individual projects and areas of work, as well as the emerging movement on outdoor play in Canada.

The evaluation will include information about both implementation and early impacts of the Outdoor Play Strategy, at three levels: individual projects/grantees; the collective cohort of grantees; and, the broader landscape of stakeholders involved in outdoor play. In addition to examining multiple levels of operation and impact, the project will take a developmental evaluation approach - one that is flexible, future-oriented, and focused more on learning and performance improvement than on narrow definitions of merit and accountability.

Project reach



Keywords

IMPACT lessons learned
MULTI-SECTORAL
cohort model
barriers
ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS
scaling
shareable resources
DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION