

## CHAPTER 1

# Introduction to Outdoor Play and Nature

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

*...should be a garden attached where they  
could have their eyes on trees, flowers, and  
other things. Where they always hope to hear and  
see something new.*

—Comenius, *The Great Didactic*, 1632

After exploring this chapter, you will be able to:

- Discuss key reasons why outdoor play and nature is important in the lives of young children.
- Explain what is meant by children having the right to experience outdoors and how this influences the role of early learning teachers.
- Describe Banning and Sullivan's (2011) standards for outdoor play and how they are visible in early learning programs.
- Outline what is meant by rights-based principles of practice?
- Discuss ways in which early learning teachers may program for outdoor play that considers the children, families and program pedagogy.
- Explain how and why accessibility and design are integral to children's right to play and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.



## CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

*I live in a big neighbourhood with lots of houses. I have two younger brothers and we love to play street hockey outside. I am in grade four now. The school that I go to is only five minutes from my house. I like going to school so that I can see my friends but I wish we could play outside more. In the summer when I was five, I went to a camp and we spent every day outside in a forest. It was only one week but I remember it so well! I loved exploring outdoors. We found so many interesting bugs and once a chickadee landed on my hand! One day we arrived in the morning and it had rained the night before. Everything was so muddy! I thought we were going to have to stay inside all day but we didn't. We played in the mud! Now when I go to school, sometimes we don't even get to go outside for recess. The teacher says that we have to study more especially when we don't do well on our spelling tests. I miss playing outside.*

## CHAPTER PREVIEW

Imagine a day of not being outdoors – perhaps missing the opportunities to hear the sound of the snow crunching under our feet or the raindrops softly falling on our heads? Or seeing a fabulous puddle and deciding, should I or should I not make a big splash? Imagine not getting to observe the beauty of the birds that come to the feeders? What are you missing in your life without such experiences? Now think about the lives of children in Canada. How accessible is the outdoors and what opportunities are available to children? What types of outdoor play experiences are children exposed to? What level of freedom are children having to explore their environments, look at, observe, do, experiment, discover and wonder about why, what, when and how all the things in their environment? Examine Photos 1.1 through 1.3 of children playing in puddles. Think about what children learn from these sensory experiences and how such experiences in the early years influence their later learning.



Dana Barratt

**Photo 1.1** Splashing in a puddle.



Gill Robertson

**Photo 1.2** Playing in a puddle.

Now think about the learning possibilities that evolve when children are given the freedom to splash in the puddle. Reflect on your ideas and think about the questions posed in Figure 1.1. Can children experience these same types of learning indoors? Why or why not? If so, how? If not, why not? What can children learn from a puddle?

While a puddle might seem to you as commonplace and mundane, it is a reflection of the world of possibilities for children. Vecchi (2010) described puddles as “an upside



Gill Robertson

**Photo 1.3** More puddle play.



## POSITIONING OUTDOOR PLAY IN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN

Children's play experiences in outdoor environments are becoming increasingly recognized as setting the foundation for their healthy development (Berg, 2015; Dietze and Kashin, 2017). Over the past decade, there have been a number of research studies connecting the benefits of outdoor play to children's social, emotional, physical, spiritual and cognitive development (Berg, 2015; Li et al., 2014). Research is now connecting the relationship of children's outdoor play experiences during the early years to later academic performance (Pacini-Ketchabaw and Nxumalo, 2015; Shanker, 2016) and the future of our planet.

If we agree that children's play experiences with and in nature are so important, then why are more and more children having less and less contact with the natural world (Louv, 2008)? Compared to the 1970s, children are spending 50% less time playing outdoors engaged in unstructured activities (Chiao et al., 2016). In some jurisdictions in Canada, outdoor play is not required in early learning programs, and as children enter grade school, there is even less unstructured outdoor play opportunities due in part to recess times declining. Many school settings are choosing to offer children structured outdoor experiences such as sports in place of unstructured play, but this is not the same as play. "Children age 10–16 years now spend, on average, only 12.6 minutes per day" playing outside (Chiao et al., 2016, p. 62). Do you think children should be outside more? Do you think children want to play more outside? What do you think will be the positive and negative implications for children if they had more access to outdoor play? Children's disconnect with nature has serious implications for their health and wellness that will be explored in future chapters. In this chapter, we ask you to consider outdoor and nature play from a rights perspective.

Time and space to play outdoors is now being recognized both as a need and a right of children and central to their well-being and development. Across the globe, children's need to play is recognized as a basic childhood right (Brussoni et al., 2012; Mardell et al., 2016; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). Focusing this beginning chapter on the rights of children to spend time in nature is purposeful. Every child has the right to experience the joys and wonderment of the outdoors. Such experiences have incredible benefits to children (Smirnova and Riabkova, 2016).

Those who are studying early childhood education and those who work as early learning teachers are in a unique position to support children's right to outdoor play. Think about children in early years programs that would rather be outdoors than indoors. Then think about what happens to them when their outdoor play time is cancelled due to many factors including when adults view it as less important than the indoor time that has a major focus on cognitively based experiences, including academic work. What happens to children's sense of spirit and curiosity when they are required to remain indoors when they really want to be outdoors?

### THINK ABOUT IT! READ ABOUT IT! WRITE ABOUT IT!

What does a rights perspective mean to you? When you search this on the Internet, what occurs for you? Write out a rights statement about children and outdoor play. Start your statement with these words: Children have a right to...

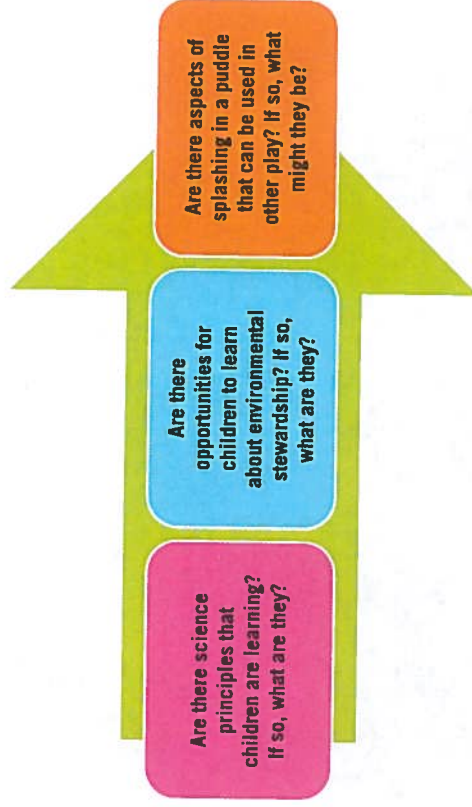


Figure 1.1 What Children Learn from a Puddle

fragment of the world" (p. 121). Vecchi challenges adults to think what children can observe when they move closer to the puddle and the image appears to become larger. Children can reflect upon why when they move away from the puddle that the order is reversed. Children can also observe the changes in the puddle and their reflections as the weather changes. This supports their development of scientific knowledge. By becoming connected to a puddle, children can experience environmental stewardship as they care for the puddle similar to how they would care for other parts of the environment. In this chapter, we will introduce you to the wondrous world of outdoor play and nature pedagogy. You will be introduced to the benefits and importance of these types of experiences for children. You will begin to see how outdoor play in and with nature leads to learning. You will consider what the role of the early learning teacher is to make outdoor play accessible to all children as they have a right to play outside!

### THINK ABOUT IT! READ ABOUT IT! WRITE ABOUT IT!

What does environmental stewardship mean to you? Search for a definition and write out your own personal views about environmental stewardship.

### CURIOUS?

What do you think is the connection of outdoor play to later academic performance? How is children's outdoor play related to the future of the planet? Satisfy your curiosity by searching the Internet for answers.



## THINK ABOUT IT! READ ABOUT IT! WRITE ABOUT IT!

What are some of the challenges that children have when they are required to stay indoors for a day, two days or several days? Ask this question in a search engine: What are the negative effects of children spending too much time indoors?

Why might this child's teacher feel that being outside is not as important as indoors? Write down your ideas.

There is so much learning to be gained from outdoor play experiences in nature. Think about what would happen if the teacher described in the childhood memory that leads into this chapter, combined learning to spell and outdoor experiences? Perhaps the children could do a scavenger hunt to find discoveries in nature? Look at Photo 1.4. These children have just found a cicada. Would learning to spell something that is real to the children be more meaningful to them than being exposed to words they may not have connections with for the sake of language and literacy goals?



Diane Kashin

**Photo 1.4** Children discover cicadas during their outdoor explorations.

Children have a right to experience the joys and wonders that outdoor play can bring. There is a whole exciting world to discover and we owe it to children to share it with them. We also owe it to the environment. Children who grow up engaged in nature and having an affinity for it will become stewards of the environment. They will learn to care for the environment, rather than destroy it. Children can make an emotional connection to a place within nature. This supports them in developing an **ecological identity**. Early learning teachers support children in developing ecological identities by providing them with a place to observe and opportunities to experience the gifts of nature. This place can be in their outdoor play spaces in their early years programs; it can occur on walks in their neighbourhoods or in a forest, a meadow, a hillside, ravine, creek or even just by a small enclave of trees. Children require the time, opportunities, and adults who support their explorations and inquiries so that they can develop their ecological identities.

Many environmentalists today are concerned with the types of life experiences that children are exposed to, particularly when access to the outdoors is minimal. According to David Suzuki (2014) computers, video games and increased access to the Internet offers entertainment in a virtual world without “all the joys that the real world has to offer” (p. 194). Suzuki suggested, “unless we are willing to encourage our children to reconnect with and appreciate the nature world, we can’t expect them to help protect and care for it” (p. 2014). Latimore and Sobel (2016) indicated that children require time to connect to nature so that they can learn to love the Earth before being asked to save the Earth. There is a movement to reconnect children to nature (Sobel, 2015). Early learning teachers are central to this movement because they provide access to and opportunities for children to be outdoors, to play and to embrace their natural world.



Ruth Houston

**Photo 1.5** Enjoying outdoor play.

**Ecological identity** refers to the ecological self, which can be described as an individual's connection to and attitudes toward the natural environment (Wilson, 2011).



## SETTING THE STAGE FOR OUTDOOR PLAY

Children's social, emotional, cognitive and physical development is influenced by their connections to nature. Children are hardwired to need nature and to be part of natural environments (Smimova and Riabkova, 2016). In nature, children can build significant relationships with each other, their animal friends and with the adults who care enough to make sure that they spend time outside. Imagine this – a group of children are playing outdoors in a large meadow, surrounded by trees. Look at Photo 1.6. What do you see? How might the actions of the child in the photo influence other children? Now read more to see what happened.

Tessa carried sticks that she had collected to the opening where the other children were sketching their surroundings. As she arrives with the sticks, they look up and Mario asks, "Where did you find those sticks?" Tessa points to the woods and all the children jump up and run to find more sticks. All of the sudden, the children decide to create a fort. They discuss their plans with their early learning teacher and together consider which branches would be best for the fort. After discussing their plans, the children determined that the best branches to use would be those as long as their bodies. Children took turns measuring the branches by having each child lie down beside it. Then, they determined whether the branch would be used or discarded. Think about this experience. How did it support children's learning?

In this example, children are building relationships with each other, and their early learning teacher. As well, they are making connections to nature. They are practising math skills and engineering processes. They are connecting words with math principles such as length, width, thick and thin. Their early learning teacher takes photos while some of the children retrieve their sketchbooks to draw their creation. This experience



Photo 1.6 Outdoor playing with branches.

Gill Robertson



Photo 1.7 Building a fort.

Diane Kashin

### THINK ABOUT IT! READ ABOUT IT! WRITE ABOUT IT!

What learning do you envision happened from this experience with the sticks? Read this article to think deeply about sticks: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/friendship-20/201405/why-sticks-are-good-kids>.

Write out a creative follow up experience that you could provide these children if you were their teacher.

is captured in the images and documented by the teacher. More significantly, children will have those memories for life. Can you remember a time from your childhood that you had an experience that lives on in your memory? As a point of reflection shown in Box 1.1, think back to that time.

#### BOX 1.1 Shedding Light on Outdoor Play – Points of Reflection

Visualize in your mind's eye a time from your childhood that you remember fondly and that took place outside.

What do you remember specifically about that time? The people? The place and space? What were you doing?

What were you feeling? Try to remember the sights, sounds, smells, textures and colours of that time.

Write out your memories into visualization and share it with others. How similar or different are they?



## THINK ABOUT IT! READ ABOUT IT! WRITE ABOUT IT!

Do a search online by putting the words utopian thinking in early childhood education. Read the results. Now think about it. What does utopian thinking mean to you? Write a paragraph about your utopian vision for children.

In each chapter, we include vision statements for outdoor play. Vision statements are related to utopian thinking in early learning (Dietze and Kashin, 2016). When we put forth these statements, it is to articulate what we imagine outdoor play and early learning would be like in a perfect world. As outlined in Photo 1.8 we outline our utopia.

When ideals are envisioned, efforts can be made to work toward their realization. Since outdoor play is not part of every child's or adult life, in order to have pendulum swing to bring outdoor play into the lives of children, we need to:

- Change adult and children's attitudes about outdoor play;
- View all outdoor play spaces and places as possibilities for play; and
- Offer children access to outdoor spaces and places that will support their sense of curiosity and related experiences outside.

As we work toward this vision, early learning teacher and student teachers can make a difference by embracing outdoors as the preferred place for play and learning to occur on a daily basis.

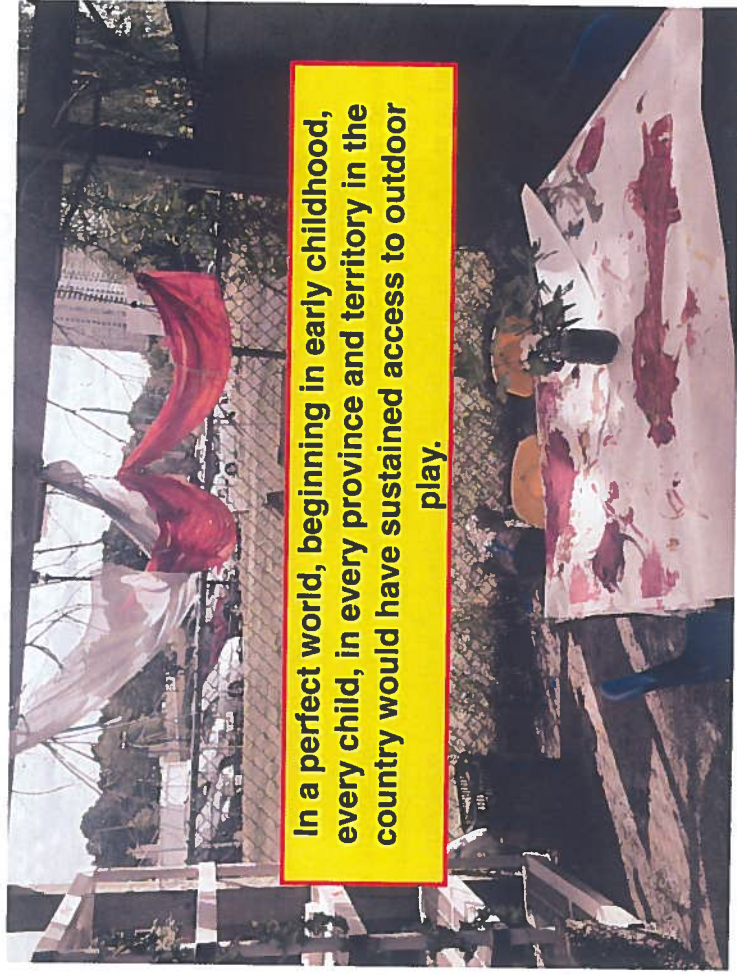


Photo 1.8 In a perfect world.

## THINK ABOUT IT! READ ABOUT IT! WRITE ABOUT IT!

Use a search engine of your choice to find out more about outdoor play in Norway and Denmark. What three aspects about outdoor play and culture are prominent in the literature? Does the literature differ from the perspective found in the literature from another country such as Scotland?

What are the similarities and differences? Begin compiling international perspectives on outdoor play.

## OUR VISION FOR OUTDOOR PLAY

Play is in peril, especially outdoor play. Children's indoor environments offer them so much entertainment coming through screens. The outdoor environment offers children such real-life world experiences that include different sounds, smells, ideas, thoughts and ways of knowing that can't be emulated indoors and especially not through their screen experiences. Latimore and Sobel (2016) suggested that play is being shunted aside in early learning programs in favour of more teacher-directed instruction in order for children to meet standards. Do they know their colours? Can they count to ten? Can they spell their name? Meeting academic standards according to Latimore and Sobel (2016) is becoming the focus of many teachers, which leads them to regard play, especially outdoor play as less important than academic work. At home and at school, children spend more time indoors than outdoors (Gundersen et al., 2016). At home and at school children are staying indoors for too long.

Across Canada, early learning program policies are under the direction of provincial and territorial governments. If there are outdoor play standards that identify the amount of time children are required to be outdoors, they may or may not be adhered to due to such things as interpretation of what the standard means. In school, children might, in many circumstances, spend much of their time indoors being instructed. Some children are missing out on recess. This is occurring in spite of children's right to play outdoors. At this pivotal time in history, governments across Canada, and a society can either remain silent on outdoor play or chart a new direction. Charting a new direction may require Canada to examine how other nations of the world have put

## THINK ABOUT IT! READ ABOUT IT! WRITE ABOUT IT!

What will your role be to reverse the trend of children's childhoods being indoors rather than outdoors? Check out the resources on this page: <https://www.participation.com/en-ca/thought-leadership/report-card/2016>. Write out an advocacy statement that begins with these words: I pledge to ...



policies and practices in place to protect children's rights to play and to more specifically, play outdoors.

All children have a right to outdoor play. They have a right to the benefits and the joy that playing outside brings. Learning about how other countries view outdoor play is foundational as we advocate for bringing outdoor play back in the lives of children in Canada. Broadening our perspectives on outdoor play by examining how it is embedded in other cultures provides early learning teachers and students with ways in which they can make difference to the children in this country (Chawla et al., 2014; Gundersen et al., 2016). For example, in some countries such as those in Scandinavia, playing outdoors is an important part of childhood. In some areas of North America, outdoor play is less important than time devoted on academic learning (Latimer and Sobel, 2016). Such trends add to the significant erosion (Prince et al., 2013) of outdoor play.

You can play a role in shaping the course of history in your own community. Yes, you can contribute to saving outdoor play from extinction. No matter how much the indoor learning environment is set up with open-ended and naturalistic materials in aesthetically pleasing ways, it is not a substitute for playing, discovering and wondering outdoors. Throughout this textbook, you will be introduced to the history, theories and research connected to outdoor play. You will also be presented with practical suggestions to help you program for outdoor play. Early learning teachers and students who examine outdoor play in and with nature will develop knowledge and a positive lens that will influence their ways of supporting children and families in outdoor play. Families want what is best for the children (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014). When families understand the importance of outdoor play to children's development and feel supported and engaged in their children's learning, they too will honour the rights of children to be outdoors.

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Researchers and theorists have long supported the importance of play and specifically children's outdoor play (Kemple et al., 2016; White, 2012; Whitebread, 2012). Given the benefits of outdoor play, consider what the consequences are for children's playfulness both inside and outside? When children play, they exercise their rights to play for play's sake – to play for the pleasure and joy of being able to play. Play is not mere indulgence; it is essential for children's health and well-being (Kellert, 2012; Lester and Russell, 2010; Palmer, 2015). With a growing body of literature outlining the benefits for children and adults have from real contact with nature for their health and well-being, it is essential that children in the early years have connections to nature (Dennis et al., 2014; Dowdell et al., 2011; Kellert, 2012; Gill, 2014; Latimer and Sobel, 2016).

All children have a right to outdoor play. If you asked children about this right, what do you think their answer would be? Would they agree? When we take a **rights-integrative approach** to early learning (Di Santo and Keanelly, 2014) we stand up for every child, whatever gender, whatever background, whether rich or poor. Margaret McMillan (1919) understood this concept and made it her life's work. Almost 100 years ago she worked with her sister, Rachel in promoting outdoor play because they believed that the health benefits should apply to all children.

There are many theorists over the centuries who have influenced why and how children benefit from outdoor play. We begin by introducing you to the great Margaret

### BOX 1.2 Featured Theorist: Margaret McMillan (1860–1931)

Margaret McMillan was a pioneer in early childhood education. She spent time as a governess and as an activist wanting every child to have a right to the conditions that she saw that were available for children from wealthy families (Ouvry, 2003). McMillan's "Open Air Movement" was influenced by Fredrick Froebel and was concerned with children's development, hygiene and nutrition. She started an open-air school in London, England in slum gardens in Bow (1908) then Deptford (1910). Even though she faced public challenges McMillan's school gained acclaim and is she is considered a key influencer in early childhood education and the outdoor play movement (McCree and McCree, 2012).

McMillan. She is often quoted as saying that the best classroom and the richest cupboard are roofed only by the sky (McMillan, as cited in Davison, 2015, p. 15). She declared "that the sky really is a canopy, that whispering trees are often a good substitute for walls" (McMillan, 1919, p. 325).

For McMillan (1919) the problem was that those who lived in crowded, impoverished neighbourhoods were cut off from the "all that is most healing and uplifting in nature" (p. 325). Why would McMillan, who started one of the first open air nursery school programs in the world, proclaim the outdoors to be the ultimate classroom? Is it because relationships seem to be intensified outdoors and children feel stronger connections to the adults in their world when they experience outdoor learning together as



Diane Kashin

Photo 1.9 The sky as a canopy.

**Rights-integrative approach** refers to "a teaching and learning practice that acknowledges the CRC Convention on the Rights of the Child explicitly and puts it into action, regardless of the philosophical framework that guides the program" (Di Santo and Kenneally, 2014, p. 396).





Diane Kashin

**Photo 1.10** Relationships are intensified outdoor.

depicted in Photo 1.10? Is it because playing with the elements of nature is an exhilarating experience as you can see in Photo 1.11 as Zoe feels the mud? Might it be the ultimate classroom because it provides children with the opportunity to interact with animals that they meet during the course of their day? How important is it for children



Tanya Murray

**Photo 1.11** Zoe experiences mud.



Diane Kashin

**Photo 1.12** The frog is released to go back home.

to realize that they share this world with nonhuman species (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2016)? Look at Photo 1.12 as Alexis found a frog and after interacting gently with it, returned it to its home in the tree.

Re-examine the photos of the children in the chapter. Now think about the types of learning that children may have acquired from each experience. For example, when you look at Zoe, she may have experienced new sensory experiences such as how mud feels when it is harder, gooey, drippy or cold. She may have examined different consistencies in the mud such as thick, dry and runny. She may have discovered what happens to mud when water is added to it. And, she may have learned new language, such as gooey or slimy. When adults carefully examine how outdoor play experiences contribute to children's development, they gain a better appreciation of its importance and how it sets the foundation for lifelong learning.

For reasons that will be explored in the upcoming chapters, early learning teachers can contribute significantly to reversing the trend toward an indoor childhood to one that will be rich in outdoor play experiences and environments. Advocates for outdoor play are calling for a movement to reconnect children with nature (Frost, 2009; Louv, 2005; Sobel, 2016). More than ten years ago, Richard Louv wrote "The Last Child in the Woods" (2005) where he made popular the term "nature deficit disorder." Children with a nature deficit disorder, as outlined in Figure 1.2 would experience an absence of core experiences and values necessary for lifelong learning. These types of experiences are not attainable indoors.

**Nature deficit disorder** refers to a term coined by Richard Louv (2005) that relates to human costs of alienation from nature.



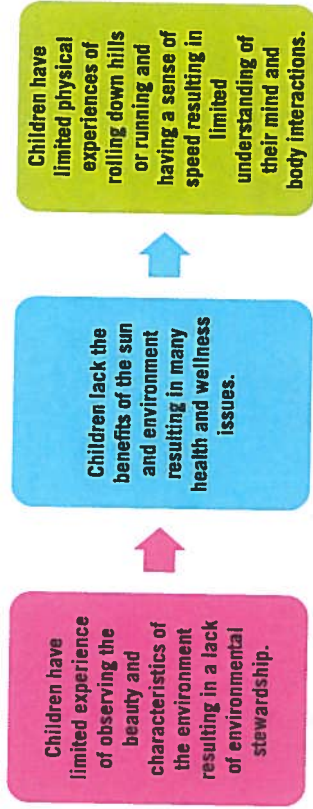


Figure 1.2 Children with Nature Deficit Disorder

If adults do not develop an understanding of the importance of outdoor play, similar to past generations, then as a society we are contradicting our genetic predisposition to be outdoor players and learners. Children come to this world with instincts to observe, explore, play and converse with others.

These instincts were shaped by natural selection during the hundreds of thousands of years in which our ancestors survived as hunter-gatherers (Gray, 2008). This suggests that it is not children's natural instinct to be indoors where they primarily are engaged in sedentary activities (Gray, 2008). When children's play takes place outdoors, it becomes the ultimate environment for learning, play, building relationships and contributing to health and wellness (Chawla, 2015).

Across Canada, many levels of government, health care providers and education and early childhood experts are expressing concerns about children's lack of outdoor play and the increase in childhood obesity and related diseases (Tremblay et al., 2015). Providing children with a healthy start during their early years is essential for the current and future



Photo 1.13 Children observing with a magnifying glass.

Diane Kashin



Diane Kashin

Figure 1.3 The Benefits of Outdoor Play

social, environmental, and economic health of Canada. Early learning teachers have important roles in supporting children in having experiences that contribute to establishing healthy living practices during the early years. Health Canada describes "healthy living" as making choices that enhance physical, mental, social and spiritual health. There are many researchers (Burdette and Whitaker, 2005; Dietze and Kashin, 2016; Fjørtoft, 2004) that have outlined the scope of health benefits to children gained from outdoor play. As indicated in Figure 1.3, these researchers and others indicate that children who play outdoors regularly benefit in many ways.

Numerous studies point to the growing concern and trend to institutionalize children's time and space, where they do not have the opportunity to roam around and play freely (Lester and Russell, 2010; Murray et al., 2013; ParticipACTION, 2015). This concern has led research groups in Canada to come together to develop a position statement on outdoor play, which will be reviewed in chapter three. The statement illustrates how researchers, medical experts and advocates are worried about the future of childhood (Gray et al., 2015). While this textbook focuses on outdoor play from a Canadian context, we also examine theorists, research and perspectives from other nations in the world. By the end of the text, it is our intent that you will have a deeper knowledge and perspective on the importance of outdoor play. This will help to inform your practice.

## PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Play is the primary vehicle that children use to explore and make sense of the natural world. Margaret McMillan understood this at the turn of the 20th century (Davison, 2015). It is now the 21st century and we are still learning about play and what it means. It takes a knowledgeable adult to be able to interpret the importance of play in the lives of children and all of its sophistication. Children's play is not simple; rather it is complex and sophisticated (Holmes et al., 2015).





Photo 1.14 Children test their ideas.

When children play outside they will test out ideas, theories, refine their understanding and develop skills. “Nature provides ongoing teachable moments, endless opportunities to make discoveries and limitless reasons for critical thinking” (Banning and Sullivan, 2011, p. 9). As outlined in Table 1.1, Banning and Sullivan (2011) identified a series of standards for outdoor play. They designed them to help improve the quality of education for young children and to support the identification of benchmarks for children’s growth and development. These learning standards are not meant to be static but dynamic “qualities, attitudes and habits” that early learning teachers “can promote and extend in children by planning environments that purposefully focus on them” (Banning and Sullivan, 2011, p. 10). Each of these seven standards listed in Table 1.1, will be featured in subsequent chapters.

Table 1.1 Standards for Outdoor Play and Learning from Banning and Sullivan (2011)

|                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Curiosity and Initiative Standard                   |
| 2. Engagement and Persistence Standard                 |
| 3. Imagination, Invention and Creativity Standard      |
| 4. Reasoning and Problem-Solving Standard              |
| 5. Risk-Taking, Responsibility and Confidence Standard |
| 6. Reflection, Interpretation and Application Standard |
| 7. Flexibility and Resilience Standard                 |

Table 1.2 Reflecting on Different Views

| Column One<br><i>Do you want children to experience this?</i>                  | OR | Column Two<br><i>Do you want children to experience this?</i>            | Column Three<br><i>Why?</i> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Do you want children to be confident and active?                               |    | Do you want children to be passive, doubtful, insecure and timid?        | <i>Why?</i>                 |
| Do you want children to problem solve and take risks?                          |    | Do you want children to depend on adults to guide their decision making? | <i>Why?</i>                 |
| Do you want children to participate in environmental sustainability practices? |    | Do you want children to take the environment for granted?                | <i>Why?</i>                 |

As you think about each of these standards, which are new to you? What do each of them mean to you? What core questions arise for you? Early learning teachers examine the standards to guide and inform their practice with children. For example, they think about why is it important for children to be curious and to take initiative. Why is it important for children to engage and persist? Think about what happens to children when they use their imagination, invent and create. The outdoor play environment provides many opportunities for children to reason and problem-solve. How are these standards related to and helpful for children’s development? Examine the options in Table 1.2. What are your views for children? Column one and column two feature two different views of children. We ask you to consider each column and decide what you wish children to experience and why? The final column is left empty for you to consider the reasons for your choice.

When children take risks and responsibility for their own actions, their problem solving skills and confidence increase. In your studies, you are asked to reflect, interpret and apply theory to practice. Why are actions, problem solving and confidence important to your learning and development? Now, consider how they would be important to children too. Think about children who are inflexible and lack **resiliency**. What behaviours do they exhibit? Reflect upon what it means to be resilient. Why is this important for all children to achieve? When children have exposure to rich outdoor play environments, they can meet these standards. This reinforces why all children living in Canada deserve the right and access to play in nature.

**Resiliency** means that children are quick to recover from difficulties and exhibit strength and toughness.

## PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE: RIGHTS BASED

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was officially approved by the United Nations in 1989. In 1991, Canada ratified it (United Nations Treaty Collection, 2014). The ratification signified a commitment by the Government of Canada and subsequently Canadian provinces and territories to agree to bring laws, policies and practices in line with the standards of the Convention (Di Santo and Kenneally, 2014). By ratifying the Convention, which was officially approved by the United Nations in 1989, Canada made a commitment to protect and enhance the rights of children. The treaty is made up of articles and while all are important, we list Articles 3, 12, 19, 23, 30 and 31 below in Table 1.3, as they are particularly important to outdoor play and learning.