

# *the* NATURE PLAYBOOK

TAKE ACTION TO CONNECT  
A NEW GENERATION OF  
CANADIANS WITH NATURE



**Pick up the Playbook. Plan your play. Make a difference.**



*The Nature Playbook* was initiated and supported by the Canadian Parks Council, working together with a group of citizens from around the country. Everyone involved in this project is dedicated to connecting a new generation with Nature. This work results from commitments made at the 2014 meeting of Canada's ministers responsible for federal, provincial and territorial parks in Toronto, Ontario. It is the follow-up action piece to a previous publication: *Connecting Canadians with Nature—An Investment in the Well-Being of our Citizens*, published in 2014.

[http://www.parks-parcs.ca/english/ConnectingCanadians-English\\_web.pdf](http://www.parks-parcs.ca/english/ConnectingCanadians-English_web.pdf)

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# WE ARE NATURE.



**nce upon a time, in a land close by, there lived** a little girl and a little boy. They were the best of friends, and they played outside together every day. They built castles in the trees, and fairies flew down from tall branches to join courtly events. They found fortresses in rock caves, and animals gathered with them in these havens of safety. The creek nearby was an ocean. Sometimes, they had to sail for days to find dry land.

The little girl and the little boy dreamed so big and so wide that the rivers changed their course. The clouds heard these dreams too and gathered in shapes over their heads. The children felt alive with the sun on their faces and the wind in their hair. Though their bodies aged, their hearts never grew old. They believed deep inside that no matter how far they travelled, or how lost they felt, they could always return to their place in Nature where the grass would grow, and the birds would sing.





This is a story about our earth, water, sky, plants, animals, and people. It is a story about connection and love. It is a story about the one thing that unites us all, and the one thing that we can never lose.

We are Nature. We are the water; our bodies are ninety percent water. We are the sky; our bodies need oxygen to breathe. We are the earth; other animals and plants sustain our bodies, giving us strength. We are Nature, no matter where we come from, and no matter what else we are. To connect with Nature is to connect with ourselves.

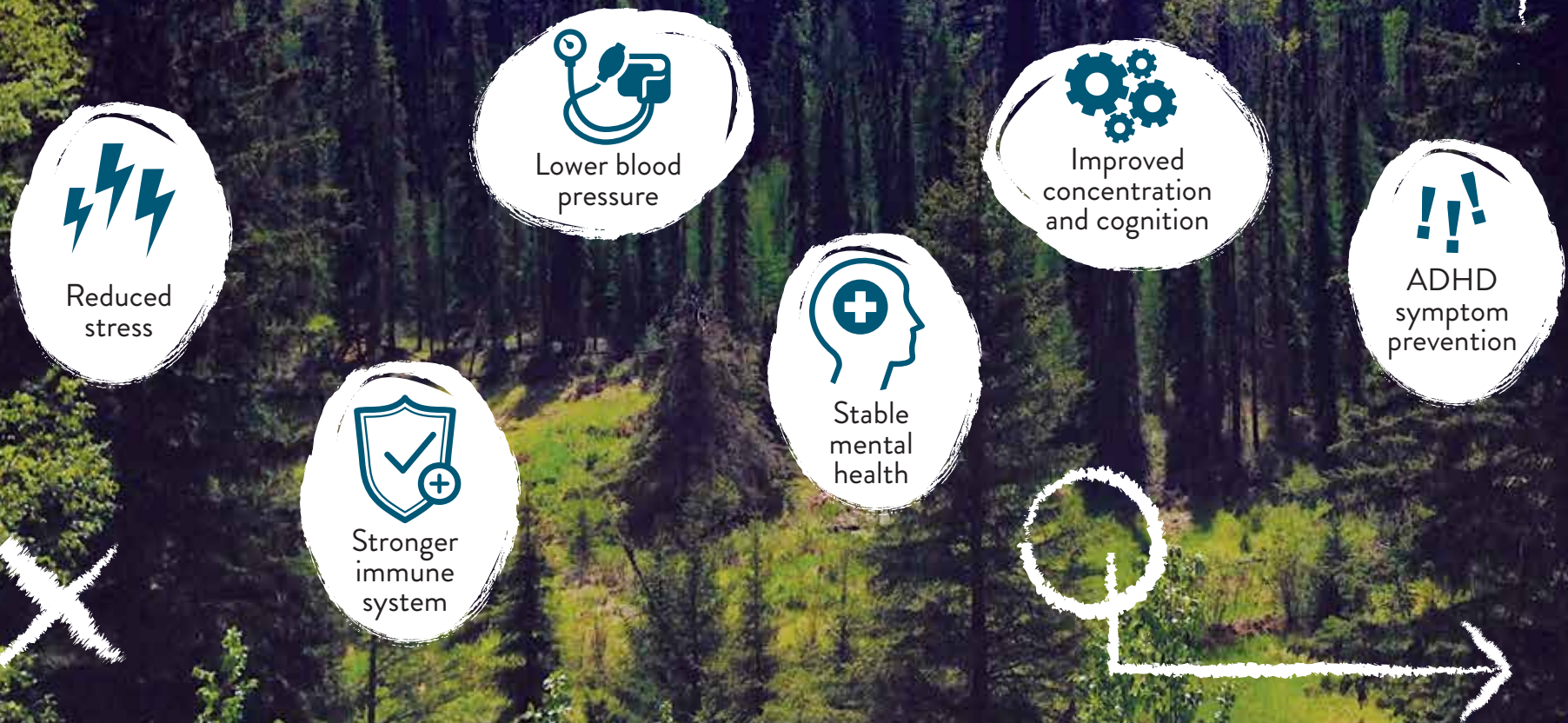
Whoever you are, and wherever you are in Canada, *The Nature Playbook* is an invitation to discover your unique way to connect with Nature, and help others do the same.





## HOW DOES NATURE AFFECT US?

Nature is good for Canadians, and research is proving it again and again. Time spent outdoors provides irreplaceable benefits in our lives. *The Nature Playbook's* sister publication *Connecting Canadians with Nature—An Investment in the Well-Being of our Citizens* (2014) outlines this research and is an excellent resource for questions about the benefits of time spent in Nature.








Improved eyesight



Emotional and physical well-being



Lasting love for Nature



Positive mindset



Healing




Healthy birth weights



More opportunities for physical activity



Disease prevention



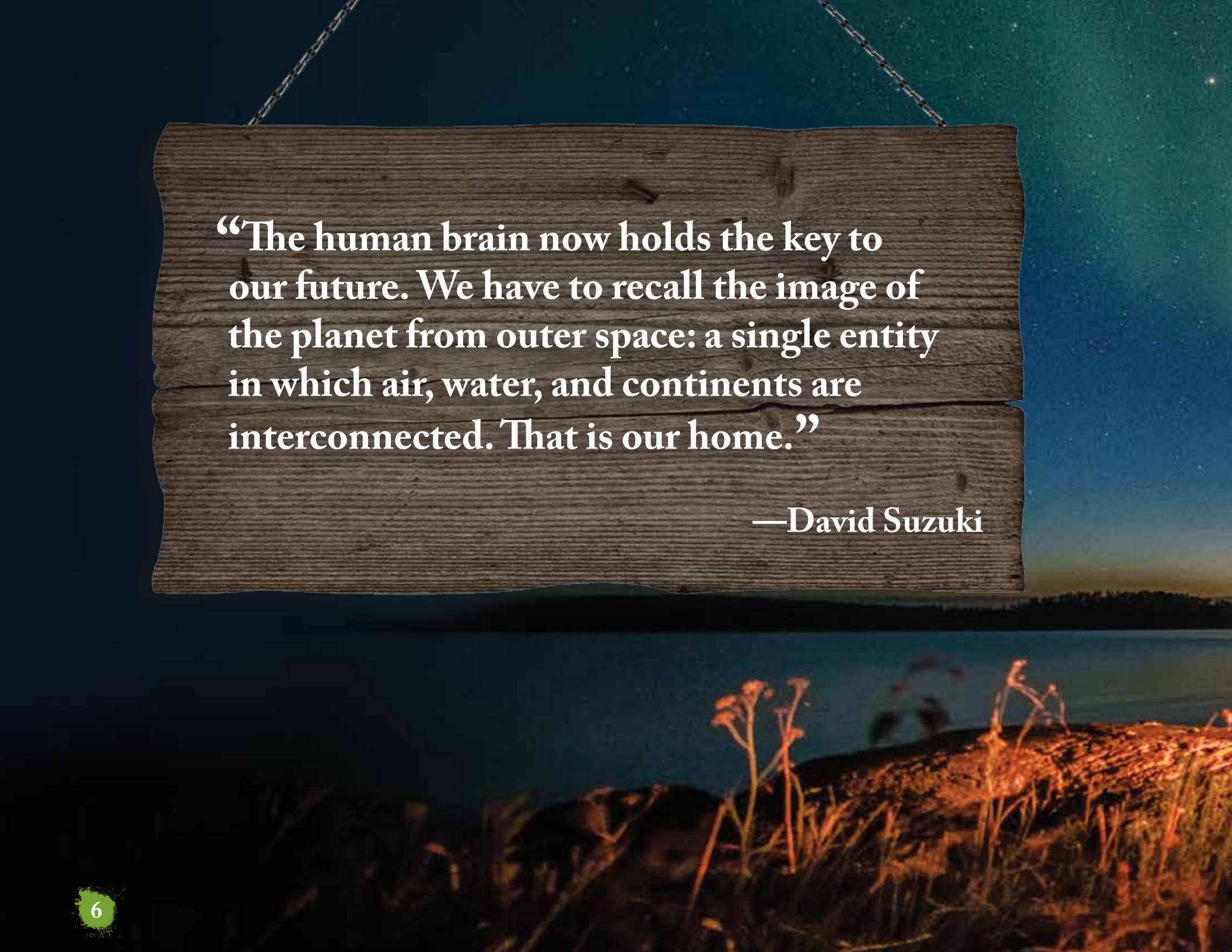
Reduced mortality



Calmness





A wooden sign with a quote by David Suzuki, set against a background of a sunset over a field. The sign is made of two horizontal wooden planks and is suspended by two thin metal chains. The background shows a sunset over a field with tall grasses in the foreground and a body of water in the distance. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue.

**“The human brain now holds the key to our future. We have to recall the image of the planet from outer space: a single entity in which air, water, and continents are interconnected. That is our home.”**

**—David Suzuki**







## HOW CAN YOU PLAY FOR NATURE?

Just as the plays in a coach's playbook spark movement and bring the team together, *The Nature Playbook* is designed to inspire action—bringing Canadians into the Nature game. Connecting a new generation with Nature is a complex challenge, so where do we start? Next steps can be found here in *The Nature Playbook*, itself the result of considerable work and years of research. Now that we have the knowledge, it's time to bring in more players, and you are Canada's starting line-up.

*The Nature Playbook* is organized into **STRATEGIES** and **PLAYS**:



### STRATEGIES TO CONNECT WITH NATURE

- #1 Bring children into Nature at an early age
- #2 Find and share the fun in Nature
- #3 Use the urban gateway to Nature
- #4 Embrace technology
- #5 Share cultural roots and ancestry in Nature
- #6 Seek out diverse partnerships
- #7 Empower a new generation of leaders

The seven strategies offer solutions to a worldwide problem of disconnection from Nature. They came from ground-breaking research and programs presented at the 2014 IUCN World Parks Congress held in Australia. They continue to grow around the world as part of the #NatureForAll initiative. In this book, these strategies guide Canadian actions or plays.

### WHAT IS A NATURE PLAY?

**Quick Play:** Simple, effective activities that individuals can do anywhere.

**Signature Play:** Organized initiatives chosen for their impact in Canada, their potential, and their ability to be adapted. They are models among many inspiring options.

**Play It Forward:** Bold ideas addressing the current Canadian situation. They set the stage for a bright future for our country, and are achievable with funding and dedication. They are open to everyone, so if you like one, run with it!





## CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE!

As you read, you will gain an understanding of the possibilities in Canada. Use these new insights to create your own play in the space provided in the **Plan your Play** section on page 40. You can do this on your own, with friends, with a parent, with colleagues, in a classroom... The opportunity—like this book—is in your hands.

The featured plays are among many bright options. They are here to guide you, not define you. It's up to you to find your own way and inspiration wherever you are, and with whatever skills and means you have. Your play can be ambitious or easy, big or small, time-tested or original. Through *The Nature Playbook*, discover how your actions can be part of a better future for Canada.

Did you notice the uppercase “N”?  
Spelling Nature with a capital  
reminds us of its importance as the  
one thing that connects us all. When  
you see this capital letter, remember  
that you too are Nature.



# STRATEGY 1

## BRING CHILDREN *into* NATURE AT AN EARLY AGE



**In a land we know, the little girl and little boy were new to the world.**

They could barely walk, yet they could smell the damp spring earth. There was a gigantic tree in their yard, but they were not afraid, and they wanted to see what was at the top.

They loved the way the rough bark felt against their tiny hands, and they dreamed of climbing the tree's mighty trunk. Each season, the children grew—and so did the tree—inch by inch. They played for hours under its branches, and they were happy.



*Story continued on page 14*

*Where is/was your favourite childhood place to play?*



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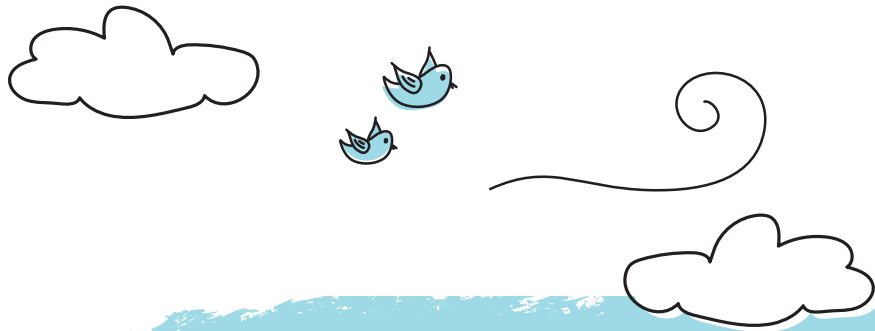
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## Quick Play: No Rain, No Gain

When the rain comes, transform puddles into explosive bursts of water by challenging someone younger than you to a puddle jump competition. If you stayed dry, you didn't try! Feel the water on your skin, and know you are made of water too.

**Bonus points** if your young friend takes over and shows you how to play in the rain child style. Let them teach you.



Free play close to home is one of the best ways for young children to connect with Nature, whether in nearby parks or backyard sandboxes. It isn't what you say; it's what you do! How do you model outdoor time for children in your life? Do they ever see you having fun outside?





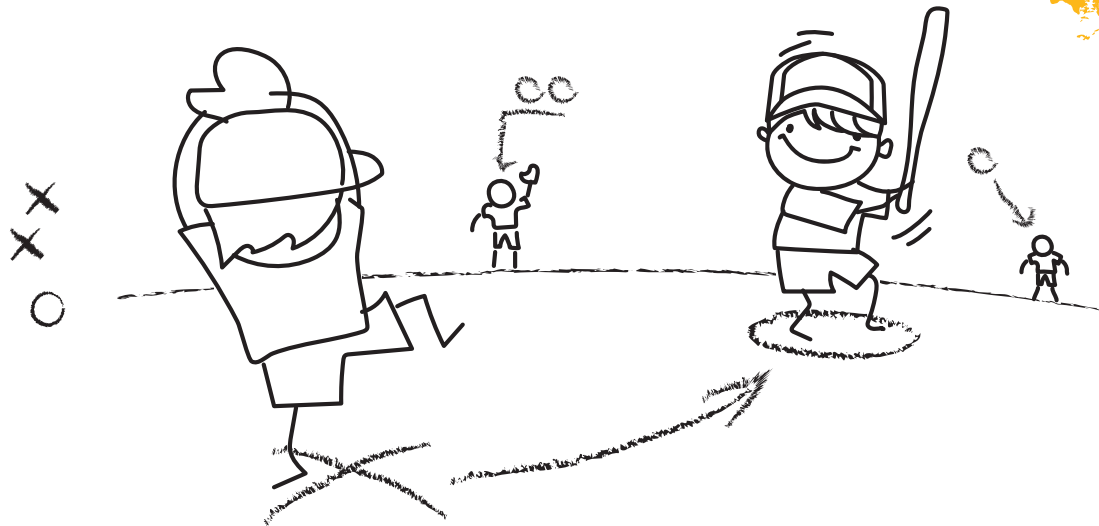
## Signature Play: Forest and Nature Schools

“Forest and Nature School is an education model for early and primary years. Although the term ‘Forest School’ came from Denmark in the 1950s and moved to Canada in 2008, the concept has been around for much longer—Indigenous peoples have been leaders in land-based learning for thousands of years.

At Forest School, children can be found telling stories, building fires, making instruments, building shelters, using tools, roaming and exploring, creating maps, and much more. The educators are ‘co-conspirators’ in play, immersing themselves in children’s play worlds, deepening learning through a process of inquiry. Educators work on building trusted relationships, supporting open communication, and providing lots of opportunities for peer-to-peer learning.

The joy and transformative learning I see in young children when playing in forests, creeks, and mud puddles inspires me to work towards a vision where ALL Canadian children can have this opportunity to find their place in Nature. For further information, we invite you to email us at [admin@childnature.ca](mailto:admin@childnature.ca) or visit our website at [www.childnature.ca](http://www.childnature.ca).”

—Marlene Power, Founder of Forest School Canada



### INTERESTED IN MORE WAYS TO CONNECT CHILDREN WITH NATURE?

**Parent-toddler groups:** At Evergreen Brick Works’ *Sprouts Parent and Tot Play* in Toronto, young children explore the outdoors with their guardians.

**Family clubs:** The Canadian Wildlife Federation’s *WILD Family and Nature Club* guides family experiences all over the country.

**Mentorship programs:** *Take a Kid Trapping* in the Northwest Territories recruits mentors to share Nature-based traditional skills with children.





## Play It Forward: Bus(t) Outside

The bus pulls up in front of the school and excitement fills the air; it's electric! Your friends poke their heads over windowsills just to catch a glimpse, and the educators can't help but smile. Everyone loves this day! The cheerful bus driver welcomes you aboard. The bus rushes by dense, snow-covered forests as the sun peeks through branches. You reach your final destination—a beautiful and undiscovered forest park. The best part of the day begins. Together with your classmates, you learn, play, and explore. You follow trails made by rabbits in the snow, and play hide-and-seek amongst the trees.

### THE VISION:


In addition to regular daily class time outdoors, get every elementary class in a public school district outside to new natural environments at least once every season (four times a year). Using the concept of field trips, and inspired by the Back to Nature Network in Ontario, these outdoor excursions are built into every school experience. Educators and students alike enjoy a full day playing freely and learning in Nature.

### THE PLAYERS:

- ✕ School boards
- ✕ Outdoor education champions
- ✕ Parent volunteers
- ✕ Transportation companies
- ✕ Sponsors and partners
- ✕ Children, of course!

### WHY IT JUST MIGHT WORK:

Taking any and every lesson outdoors provides opportunities for rich learning. Working Nature time into public schools ensures a large reach across the country!



“In the end we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught.”

—Baba Dioum



# STRATEGY 2

## FIND AND SHARE *the* FUN IN NATURE

**I**n a land not so far away, the little girl and the little boy grew big enough to venture from home. The little girl was exploring a forest near her house when she found a large boulder. She climbed up on its strangely mossy surface to get a better view of her surroundings. Suddenly the stone jumped up and spoke to her!

“Don’t think I am just a boulder,” it said, “I am really a moose. Now that you know, why don’t you climb on, and we can go explore somewhere new?” Delighted, she called out to the little boy who came running. The three of them lumbered away for days—or at least until dinnertime.

*Story continued on page 18*



*What is something you have always wanted to try?*



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## Quick Play: Inside Out

What do you like to do indoors? Think of something... take your time. Got it? Now go try it outside. It may involve a little planning. If this sounds wild to you, that's a pretty good reason to give it a try! Looking for ideas? Listen to your favourite music, drink your morning beverage, play a board game, have a snack.

**Bonus points** if you share this time outside with a friend. Double your fun—guaranteed!



So, where IS the fun? Enjoyment is different for everyone, of course. Fun can be found anywhere, given the freedom to search and explore. How can you help shape a future of fun and sharing outdoors? Does it mean stretching your boundaries or maybe trying something new?



## LOOKING FOR MORE NATURE FUN?

**Arts:** *Nos forêts chantées* in Quebec pairs school children with musicians to share a love of Nature through song.

**Adventure activities:** Outdoor foot racing is popular in Canada. *Mudd, Sweat & Tears* is a company that takes teams of adventurers out to get dirty.

**Self-guided experiences:** The *Adventure Earth Centre* in Halifax has designed wonderful self-guided tours that visitors follow with their own social groups and on their own schedules.

## Signature Play: “Learn to” Programs

“Learn to’ programs are introducing Canadians to new activities in federal, provincial, and territorial parks. Parks Canada’s Learn to Camp Program is one example offered through a partnership with MEC. It began in 2011 with the goal of reducing barriers to the outdoors for young people, young families, and new Canadians. As with other ‘learn to’ programs, we provide the basics (transportation and all supplies), and our learners bring a sense of adventure!

At our event in Prince Edward Island National Park, most of the participants had never camped before. Learn to Camp is the highlight of my year! It is so great to see reluctant campers embrace the outdoors and make the experience their own. A campfire sing-along turns into an operatic aria and lute solo. An evening meal turns into barbecued lobster and Persian tea. Sandcastle building on the beach features Afghanistan’s Minaret of Jam.

By teaching our participants basic outdoor skills, they gain the experience and confidence to make new memories when they return on their own. Camping is not the only activity that can be shared this way—think fly fishing, rock climbing, hiking, fire building, or anything else outdoors. If you would like to learn more, email [activities.activites@pc.gc.ca](mailto:activities.activites@pc.gc.ca).”

—Janette Gallant, Public Outreach Education Officer,  
Parks Canada, Prince Edward Island





## Play It Forward: Be Game for Nature

The teams are set, and the flags have been stuck in the ground. The sun begins to sink and the field is bathed in golden light. Game on! You race across the dry and dusty land, leaping over a small creek. You dash into the surrounding woods to find cover. Which team will spot the flag and claim victory when the dust settles? Flash forward to next week and you find yourself seated comfortably beside a pile of colourful autumn leaves, ready for tonight's open mic event at the city park. Everyone loves this new group of friends, and they cherish the unique ways in which they can enjoy Nature together. There, truly, is a game for everyone.

### THE VISION:


Using Newmindspace and events like Run or Dye as models, develop a following of participants across Canada who are looking for unique outdoor experiences like capture the flag, predator-prey games, scavenger hunts, music events, poetry slams, and book clubs. Hold events regularly and often.

### THE PLAYERS:

- ✗ Social clubs or youth organizations
- ✗ Tour operators
- ✗ High school, post-secondary school clubs
- ✗ Sponsors and partners (professional sports teams?)
- ✗ Parks staff
- ✗ Canadians wanting to join in the fun

### WHY IT JUST MIGHT WORK:

These activities could provide a unique way to connect with others in your city or town, while reflecting on the surroundings and the benefits of time outdoors—wherever you are. The variety of choice would enable everyone to find their own personal fun.



“We don’t stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.”

—George Bernard Shaw



# STRATEGY 3

## USE THE URBAN GATEWAY *to* NATURE

**In a land we share, the little girl and the little boy** continued to grow bigger, and so did their world. It was filled with buses, cars, schools, shopping malls, recreation centres and office buildings. They discovered magic where they found Nature in this buzzy world of big busy things.

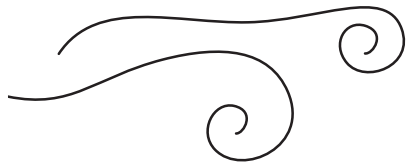
They found caterpillars crawling on railings and blades of grass coming up through sidewalk cracks. The time they spent with Nature gave them strength to face all new challenges, big or small, with curiosity and confidence.

*Story continued on page 22*

*In the city, where do you like to relax?*







## Quick Play: The Wind Walk

Set out on a walkabout. If you can't decide which way to go, just follow the wind. Keep going until you find a natural area. Spend at least five minutes (300 seconds) in that place. What do you smell? What can you touch? What sounds do you hear?

**Bonus points** if you spend time observing something in the miniature world (like a snowflake or a pattern on a tree) enough to make you forget about the bigger things around you.



Eight in ten Canadians now live, work, and play in cities. Do you live in a city, or do you visit friends or family in a city? Are you aware of all the natural spaces near you? How might you share some of them with others?



## WHERE ELSE DO CANADIANS FIND NATURE IN URBAN AREAS?

**Public waterfront access:** Each day, thousands of Canadians enjoy the 28-km-long *Vancouver Seawall* along Burrard Inlet.

**Pop-up greenery:** All across Canada, cities have made room for *Parklets*—turning parking spaces into tiny public parks.

**Public transit:** In Ontario, *Parkbus* transports urbanites of all ages out to parks outside the city.

## Signature Play: Natural Playgrounds

“Canadian cities have made great strides towards creating natural spaces that provide habitat for wildlife, absorb carbon, minimize heat, and increase water quality. Children also benefit from natural spaces in the city... So why not create naturalized play spaces as habitats for children as well?”

Outdoor play in natural spaces increases children’s fitness and awakens their curiosity and creativity. Studies comparing groups of children with access to natural play spaces versus traditional playgrounds found that children playing in the natural play spaces showed more improvement in motor abilities and co-operation. In my own work in Vancouver, we found children playing in traditional playgrounds used the expensive equipment only 13 percent of the time and as intended only 3 percent of the time.

More engaging habitats for children are made of plants, terrain, rocks for climbing, and include elements that children can play with (water, sand, gravel, mud, and loose parts). These materials are relatively inexpensive—or free if they already exist in your area—and the benefits they provide for children are priceless! If you are interested, there are landscape architects who design natural playgrounds in Canada, or you can seek out wild places to play near cities.”

—Susan Herrington, Professor, School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, University of British Columbia



## Play It Forward: Wait for Wellness

Imagine your next appointment. Pulling into the parking lot you can see it is a busy day with many people waiting in line. “Perfect,” you think to yourself, “the longer the wait, the better.” This is no ordinary waiting room; it is a beautiful park with lush green grass and tall, leafy trees. You check in, and your wait begins. What will you do first? Perhaps walk barefoot across the soft grass, or maybe find some shade beneath the whispering aspen. It will be some time before your turn comes, but you don’t mind when your waiting room looks and feels like this.

### THE VISION:

Across Canada, let urban parks grow and flourish near service facilities. Encourage clients to spend their time waiting in these natural spaces and create a system to signal when to return for the appointment.

### THE PLAYERS:

- ✕ Healthcare providers
- ✕ Banking and financial institutions
- ✕ Insurance and automotive companies
- ✕ Laundromats
- ✕ Family hair dressers
- ✕ Public relations and marketing support agencies
- ✕ Local sponsors
- ✕ Canadians in the city with a particular purpose

### WHY IT JUST MIGHT WORK:

Contact with Nature reduces the stress of everyday living. Attending to our needs and responsibilities can mean long waits—not just for individuals, but for families. With waiting areas such as these, unfilled time could become Nature time.

“People say to me so often, ‘Jane how can you be so peaceful when everywhere around you people want books signed, people are asking these questions and yet you seem peaceful,’ and I always answer that it is the peace of the forest that I carry inside.”

—Jane Goodall





# STRATEGY 4

## EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY

**I**n a land down the road, the little girl and the little boy, growing older still, discovered even more new worlds inside of their computers. They learned about lush rain forests and vast deserts. All these foreign places were fascinating to them. They even discovered a beach near their house. White sand, blue water, and many walking trails appeared on their screens.

Together, the little girl and the little boy pedaled their bikes down to the sand. It was even more magical in real life. They shared their new discovery with the children around the world who were also connected through their computers.

*Story continued on page 26*

*If you could get your technology to do anything for you, what would it be?*



## Quick Play: The iDentifier

Use any device to find a nearby park or natural space. Get up and go there. Pick something like a tree, a bug, a bird, or maybe even a bird song, and see if you can identify it on the Internet or using an app (try PlantNet, iBird, iNaturalist, MyNature Animal Tracks, and Google Sky Map).

**Bonus points** if you share your outing with others using pictures and videos. #LookAtMeInNature



“Technology can neither save nor destroy us. Technology can only aid the will, thus it is the will and our choices which determine everything.”

—Bryant H. McGill

We know that future generations will continue to embrace technology as it evolves, so why wait? We use technology to connect with each other every day. How can we also put it to work to connect with Nature?



## Signature Play: Geocaching

“As an avid geocacher, I have built caching into my daily life, work, and travels. Geocaching is an outdoor treasure hunt (using GPS technology) that began in May 2000 when governments made satellite data officially available to the public. Shortly afterwards, the first container with a logbook was placed in the Oregon woods, with coordinates of its location shared online. Now there are millions of caches all over the world!

I have found geocaches in the populated downtown streets of Toronto and have also found them hiking up mountains in remote areas in the Yukon. No matter where you are, there are likely multiple geocaches around you to choose from. While GPS technology is key for navigation, there are many apps for your phone and other devices that can also help you get to the cache.

Geocaching is fun for children, they often like finding the trinkets and replacing them. Teenagers and young adults get the opportunity to learn about navigation and share experiences with friends. There is also a competitive online caching community that is fun to be part of. To learn more about geocaching or how to use GPS, check out [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com).”

—Shailyn Drukis, Canadian geocaching enthusiast



OK →

## HOW ELSE HAS CANADA ADAPTED WITH TECHNOLOGY?

**Wi-Fi in parks:** Many parks in Canada—national, provincial, territorial, and municipal—now offer *Wi-Fi services*.

**Citizen science:** At some Ontario Parks sites, *wireless tablets* make it easy for visitors to report wildlife sightings.

**Online platforms:** The young-adult-led magazine *The Starfish Canada* is a national environmental platform that helps young environmentalists connect with each other.





## Play It Forward: (App)reciate Green Space

You are on a road trip across Canada. The legendary Canadian highways are longer than you could ever have imagined! In every new place, you stretch your legs after hours cooped up in a car. Back home you have your favourite spots, but out here, you don't know the lay of the land very well. Luckily, there's an app for that! You pull out your phone, which uses its mapping capabilities to determine your location, and then suggests the nearest urban parks, provincial parks, national parks and natural spaces. Today, you pick a perfect lunch spot—with car access and a stunning ocean view. Your phone shows you the quickest route there.



### THE VISION:

Inspired by existing apps like Google Maps and Yelp, produce a Canadian app that shows every natural space available to the public. Include information like directions, descriptions of the areas, and supported activities. To satisfy the curious wanderer, program the app to double as an interpretation tool for history and identification. Users can upload pictures of local plants and animals, types of rock, land formations, and more—to a shared interactive database that is filled in by other users and connected to a search engine.

### THE PLAYERS:

- ✗ App developers/technology start-ups
- ✗ Canadian database contributors
- ✗ Sponsors and partners
- ✗ Technologically savvy Nature explorers

### WHY IT JUST MIGHT WORK:

Connecting with Nature using smartphone apps has huge potential—more than two out of three Canadians own a smartphone! This kind of app would make it easy for anyone to create their ultimate experience outdoors, using a familiar tool.



# STRATEGY 5

## SHARE CULTURAL ROOTS *and* ANCESTRY IN NATURE



**In a land across the field, the little girl and the little boy** used the forest they loved for more than just games. One day, they met a grandmother who taught them about the plants and animals that also needed the woods. She told them stories from not so long ago, when people lived in forest homes, not houses.

They heard about magical lights twirling across night skies in the North, and great celebrations with singing and dancing in the South. The grandmother taught the children how to respect their forest and watch out for it. She showed them the berries they could eat, and the branches and stones they could use to build a warm fire, even in winter.

*Story continued on page 30*



*Do you know where your ancestors came from  
and how they were connected with Nature?* ✕

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## Quick Play: Place your Base

Taking time to understand the history in your area can deepen connections with Nature. Do you know the name of the Indigenous nation whose traditional territory you live in? Discover one detail about how the original inhabitants lived with the land in the past, and one about how they do today. If you are living in your traditional territory, ask a knowledge keeper for a story about the area.

**Bonus points** if you share that information with a young person within 24 hours.

**By learning about Indigenous philosophy and traditional ways of life, Canadians from every background can gain a deeply rooted sense of where we fit on this land. How can you encourage these teachings for a new generation?**

## WHY SHARE CULTURAL ROOTS AND ANCESTRY IN NATURE?

The worldview of Indigenous peoples is based on harmony with the environment that sustains them—spiritually, physically, socially and culturally. At first contact in the 1500s, relationships between Indigenous Canadians and European settlers were based on Nature. The settlers saw the beauty of the Canadian wilderness through the eyes and skills of the original inhabitants as they ventured ever further and learned to survive on the land. Relationships did not remain that way through history, but today, we can work towards them again.

What if we used natural spaces for cultural exchange and understanding? Across Canada, we are witnessing renewed awareness of Indigenous peoples as caretakers of land. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has paved the way for solutions and it is clear that all our efforts are needed to renew relationships between Indigenous nations and Canadian society—it is very important to understand a fractured past before we can all move forward. By taking time to understand the history and worldview of Indigenous Canadians, we can deepen our understanding of natural spaces. Any conversation about the culture of Canada will always include Nature. In the twenty-first century, let us talk and walk together into a world where connections with Nature and each other are valued.



## INTERESTED IN MORE WAYS TO EXPAND YOUR CONNECTION TO THE OUTDOORS THROUGH CULTURE?

**Knowledge/culture camps:** *Katannilik Territorial Park Knowledge Camps* in Nunavut provide opportunities for students to interact with elders and knowledge keepers outdoors.

**Cultural tourism:** The Alberta Parks *First Nations Internship Program* hires Indigenous young adults who share cultural knowledge with a wide audience.

**Interchange programs:** *Canadian Roots Exchange* is a national program that builds connections between Indigenous and other young people of every culture.



“In Cree, we don’t have animate-inanimate comparisons between things. Animals have souls that are equal to ours. Rocks have souls, trees have souls. Trees are ‘who,’ not ‘what.’”

—Tomson Highway

## Signature Play: Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning

“Welcome to Denendeh (The Land of the People), Northwest Territories. Here, the land is our honoured and most effective professor. At Dechinta, we have been offering Nature-based, credited university programming at an off-grid lodge for six years now, through partnerships with other universities.

Each semester we spend eight weeks on the land, learning from Indigenous peoples, northern elders and professors. We hunt, harvest, chop wood, haul water, read books, write papers and even make movies. Dechinta is family friendly, and kids are invited along to participate at ‘KidU’ for full semesters. Out there, everyone connects with the land and each other. There is a lot of hard work, a lot of learning, and a lot of laughter.

Personally, I see the transformation that happens when people come to our program and I know how much it impacts them in the years that follow. That is why I love my job! We welcome you to contact us with any questions. Call 1-877-388-2874, email [mandee@dechinta.ca](mailto:mandee@dechinta.ca), or visit our website at [www.dechinta.ca](http://www.dechinta.ca).”

—Dr. Erin Freeland, Dean of Land-Based Academics, Research and Innovation at Dechinta

## Play It Forward: The Range Reps

Bundled up with your hat and mittens, you are ready to brave the winter chill. You meet your tour group and prepare to head to the park. You are on your way to meet the rangers, a local unit that knows more about this new area than you could ever imagine (or find on the Internet!). Today you will experience the animals that live here, and learn about their long-held bonds with the First peoples. The rangers share in a way you have never experienced before; their words and teachings hold many lessons about the environment. As you create your own tracks in the fresh snow, you feel a sense of belonging here with all other creatures.

### THE VISION:

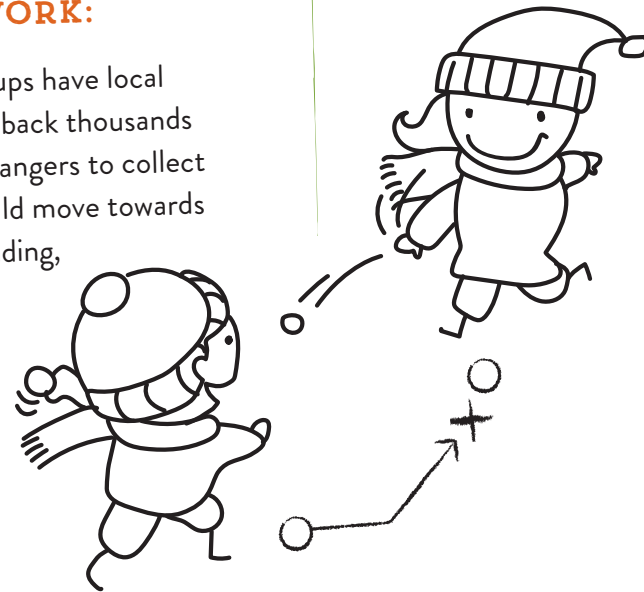
Inspired by the Coastal Guardian Watchmen Network in British Columbia, train young rangers to work as guides, monitors, and stewards of the land all across the country. Recruit young Canadians of all backgrounds but aim to target Indigenous young people from the area. Through these ambassadors, Indigenous governments and managers of parks and natural spaces partner to offer unique cultural experiences, exchanges, and educational opportunities for everyone.

### THE PLAYERS:

- ✕ Indigenous leaders and governments
- ✕ Young rangers (~15–30)
- ✕ Nature organizations at every level—national, provincial, territorial, municipal
- ✕ Sponsors and partners
- ✕ Locals or visitors interested in culture and Nature

### WHY IT JUST MIGHT WORK:

Many Indigenous people and groups have local knowledge of the land that dates back thousands of years. By empowering young rangers to collect and share this knowledge, we could move towards a future of acceptance, understanding, and stewardship in Canada.





# STRATEGY 6

## SEEK OUT DIVERSE PARTNERSHIPS



**In a land nearby, the little girl and the little boy** had many friends. Putting their heads together, they built the biggest, best tree fort in the woods. The girl from down the road added rocks for support, and the new boy in town thought to make a crawl-in entrance.

The foxes cleverly disguised the outside with fallen branches, and the birds travelled far and wide to pick up tricks from tree fort builders all around the world. It was even better than the fort of their dreams!

*Story continued on page 34*

*Do you have a friend who thinks very differently than you? How do you connect?*





## Quick Play: Learn Laterally

Is there a problem challenging you? Think of something... take your time. Got it? Okay, now get ready for the fun part: go to someone for advice and be open to their perspective, even if they present a solution that you wouldn't have normally considered.

**Bonus points** if it is with someone new or unexpected.

“We must stop looking at contact with Nature as a problem to fix and start looking at contact with Nature as a solution to the problems that we must solve.”

—Adam Bienenstock



We know that partnerships expand our abilities by leaps and bounds. Whom can you work with to help connect a new generation with Nature? How far can you reach out? Can you call on a friend or a large company, or maybe even your own competition?





## Signature Play: Mood Walks for Youth in Transition (Mental Health and Wellness)

“Nature is good for the body and mind! Mood Walks for Youth in Transition supports facilitated hiking programs across Ontario, run by the Canadian Mental Health Association in partnership with Hike Ontario and Conservation Ontario.

Participating in Mood Walks includes connecting with peers, learning new skills, and exploring nearby trails and natural spaces. Time spent walking in Nature with others can improve symptoms of existing disorders by reducing anxiety or depression, as well as preventing mental illness. Through Mood Walks, young people get to discover the benefits of Nature on their mental and physical health for themselves.

The best part about the program is that it can be run wherever there is access to the outdoors. Hiking is free and always geared towards your skill level. If you want more information about participating in or starting a Mood Walks program in your community, visit [www.moodwalks.ca](http://www.moodwalks.ca) to access resources and download a free Mood Walks manual.”

—Jasmine Ferreira, Mood Walks Project Manager

### WHERE ELSE DO WE PARTNER FOR NATURE IN CANADA?

**Tourism industry:** *BC Ferries* partners with Parks Canada in British Columbia to share ecology and biology information with passengers.

**Corporations:** TD Bank’s *Friends of the Environment Foundation* uses a national platform to create urban green spaces and fund environmental education.

**Non profits:** On Lake Erie, *Solitude Nature Reserve: A Place to Connect with Nature* was created by a single private landowner.



## Play It Forward: The Great Canadian Nature Break

Imagine—your favourite day of the year has arrived and you can't wait for the hour to finally strike. All morning you have found yourself daydreaming about the blissful afternoon that awaits you. You think back to last year on this very same day, and the memories fill you with joy. Today is the Great Canadian Nature Break, and you have big plans. Maybe a walk in the park, or a trip to the lake. Whatever it is, you just know it will be fantastic. As the hour draws near you can already feel your stress melting away, knowing you have been given an incredible gift: one afternoon, all to yourself, to enjoy Nature in any way you choose.

### THE VISION:

Create a national event inspired by Earth Hour and Body Break called The Great Canadian Nature Break. Participating schools, businesses, and organizations take time off to enjoy Nature and its benefits on an individual or collective level. Corporate, celebrity and media partners provide outlets for participants to learn more about the advantages of spending time in Nature while experiencing these positive effects for themselves.

### THE PLAYERS:

- ✗ National health or wellness organizations
- ✗ Schools, universities, workplaces
- ✗ Government partners (federal, provincial, territorial, municipal, Indigenous)
- ✗ Corporate partners
- ✗ Celebrity partners
- ✗ Canadians of all ages!

### WHY IT JUST MIGHT WORK:

Everyone in Canadian society has a part to play in connecting a new generation with Nature. Organizations could show leadership by making Nature a priority. A far-reaching event could provide opportunities to anyone, in any line of work, to take some time to enjoy Nature—and consider how time spent outdoors benefits all.





# STRATEGY 7

## EMPOWER A NEW GENERATION OF LEADERS

**I**n a land outside our front doors, the little girl and the little boy stood beside the tree in their yard; it was winter and so its branches were bare. A lone bulrush stood steadfast, rooted in the frozen ground. It seemed nothing could be alive in such frigid air, yet sap still flowed, nourishing the tree.

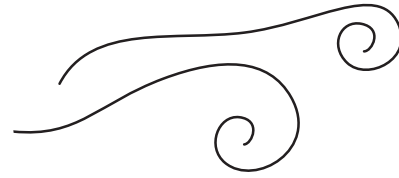
The rabbits, the birds, and the boulder-moose were as lively as ever. The bears couldn't be seen; however, they were simply slumbering underneath the snow. Foxes peeked out from behind snow banks. The fairies were sometimes around, but everyone knows that fairies come and go from this world.

All the beings were there, and they supported one another. The little girl and the little boy found strength and guidance in the forest, even on the coldest of days.

*Story continued on page 38*

*Is there someone who has helped you succeed in your life?  
How did they make a difference?*





## Quick Play: The Standpoint Swap

Make a list of five things that matter to you in your work or study. Invite someone from a different generation to prepare a similar list, and get together for a cup of tea or a walk. Discuss your lists. If you feel vulnerable, this play may well hold power for you to harness.

**Bonus points** if you arrange to meet a second time, or ask the person to bring a friend.



With the proper support, young leaders will create a world where the environment is cared for and loved by all for generations to come. So, think long term. Prepare to take risks. You can empower young Nature leaders whatever your field of work or age may be.



## IN WHAT OTHER WAYS DO WE EMPOWER NATURE LEADERS?

**Mentorship programs:** *Get Outside!* New Brunswick offers work experiences that build leadership skills at Parks New Brunswick through a partnership with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Nature NB, and others.

**Social programs:** *Vallée Bras du Nord Coop de solidarité* in Quebec supports young people struggling with different life issues by leveraging forestry work (or conservation) and therapeutic adventure as intervention tools.

**Education-work experiences:** The Parks Canada *Students on Ice* program combines educational visits to the Arctic and the Antarctic with practical job opportunities.

## Signature Play: Yukon Youth Conservation Corps (Y2C2)

We are a project initiated and run continuously and successfully by the Yukon Territorial Government since 1981. We connect young people from 16 to 29 years of age with their passions—training them, equipping them, and guiding them in small crews to perform all kinds of community and First Nation-initiated, conservation-oriented, relationship-building, life-changing summer work.

Y2C2 changes with the personality of every summer student we hire, with every project we take on, and with every moment of magic while working together outdoors.

We invest in meaningful experiences to empower environmental leaders. Want to know how we do it? We love to talk. Contact us at [Y2C2@gov.yk.ca](mailto:Y2C2@gov.yk.ca) or call me (Morris Lamrock) at 867-667-3041.

—Morris Lamrock, Youth Programs Coordinator,  
Environment Yukon





## Play It Forward: Listen to Learn

Imagine you are in a room full of inspired and engaged young Canadians. You see tasty food and steaming drinks in big mugs on the table. The conversations are open and honest; stories are shared freely. Imagine a dedicated group of leaders facilitating these interactions. Passionate and creative, they know exactly how to open the door for discussion without imposing any of their views. The topic is straightforward: Nature. The question is simple: What does Nature mean to you? The answers are broad and far-reaching. Your thoughts today matter for Canada tomorrow.

### THE VISION:

Hold regular public listening tours around Canada, inspired by the Otesha Project and MEC Outdoor Nation, where all young people are engaged and empowered to share their thoughts. The goal is to understand the reasons why our new generation chooses to get out into Nature, or why they don't, and what can change locally to make a difference for them.

### THE PLAYERS:

- ✕ Passionate leaders
- ✕ Nature organizations
- ✕ Community groups
- ✕ Sponsors and partners
- ✕ Young people (children to young adults)

### WHY IT JUST MIGHT WORK:

Everyone has a unique idea of success, and there is no one way to achieve it. So to find the ingredients of success, we must go to many sources. Elders and experienced professionals could be included to encourage sharing and learning across the generations.

“We must open the doors, and we must see to it that they remain open, so that others can pass through.”

—Rosemary Brown

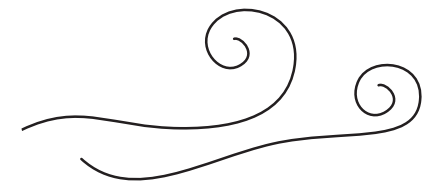


# WE ARE NATURE.



**I**n a land that we come from, the little girl and the little boy were no longer little. They had grown to be young adults. They no longer played in tree forts, but the forest would always hold magic for them. The wind still blew through their hair and the sun still beat down on their faces.

They promised to do what they could so the people of the world would see this magic. Most of all, they wanted every child to experience the joy of playing outside for a day.





They wanted everyone to feel a sense of belonging when they breathed the air from a forest, built a crisp round snowball, or heard their toes crunch over lichens. They knew they had a long journey ahead of them, but there would be many helping hands along the way. “We are all Nature,” they said, as they exchanged smiles with the soil, the grass, the trees, the prairies, the rivers, the oceans, the mountains, and the sky.





# PLAN YOUR PLAY



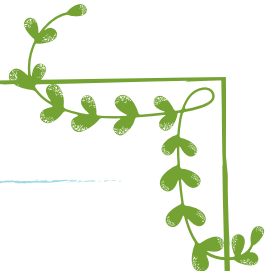
You can make our country a better place to live. The purpose of the *The Nature Playbook* is to help young Canadians—from children to young adults—to get up and out into Nature. Through all our actions, a new generation will be more connected with the environment than ever.

Are you a young person, young at heart, or do you know any young people? If so, you can have an impact. To plan your own play, build on one you have learned about in this book or come up with something new. Whatever you choose, let it fit you—any size or style will do! Let it reflect your personality and your strengths.

Involve just yourself, your family, your community, or all of Canada. It's up to YOU! Go play!

The seven strategies in this book are concepts that can guide your actions. In many cases, the strategies feed into one another. Focus on just one or choose several to plan your own play (or plays).

- #1 Bring children into Nature at an early age
- #2 Find and share the fun in Nature
- #3 Use the urban gateway to Nature
- #4 Embrace technology
- #5 Share cultural roots and ancestry in Nature
- #6 Seek out diverse partnerships
- #7 Empower a new generation of leaders



NAME YOUR PLAY:

DESCRIBE YOUR PLAY—  
A REALISTIC ACTION FOR YOU:

SKETCH OUT YOUR PLAY.  
SERIOUSLY, SKETCH IT OUT!

WHO ARE THE PLAYERS?

- ×
- ×
- ×
- ×

GAME PLAN: WHAT IS  
THE FIRST STEP TO PUT  
YOUR PLAY IN MOTION?

- 
- 
- 
- 





## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

*The Nature Playbook* working group met in Spring 2015. They are a diverse, multi-generational crew of Canadians, who believe in Nature for everyone. They want to live in a world where children and grandchildren can enjoy Nature around them, as they all did. They would like to thank the many other extraordinary Canadians who provided feedback and suggestions throughout the making of this book.

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Christian Bagg **(Alberta)**. Gen X. Canadian-Thinker.

Bill Kilburn **(Ontario)**. Gen X. Ontario-Kid-Nature-Explorer-People-Explorer-Builder.

Be'sha Blondin **(Northwest Territories)**. Baby Boomer. Traditional-Knowledge-Keeper.

Robin Friesen **(British Columbia)**. Millennial. Teacher-Explorer-Singer-Observer-Action-Taker

*You too are an author of our collective future for Canada. How do you define yourself?*



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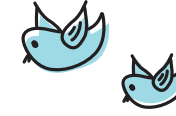
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