

## WHY SHOULD THIS BE IMPORTANT TO ME?

- Average unsupervised daily roam rates for children have shrunk from 10km radius in 1920 to 300m today.<sup>1</sup>
- Despite being less likely per capita to be abducted today versus 30 years ago, fear of abduction is most cited as the rationale for reducing children's freedom to roam unsupervised.<sup>2</sup>
- 'Time in Nature' is now a key health indicator on the Active Healthy Kids Canada report card.<sup>3</sup>
- This is the first time in history where our children will have shorter life spans than their parents due to the drastic increase in sedentary lifestyles, and lack of nutritional food in childhood diets.<sup>4</sup>
- Average 'screen time' for children 8 to 18 is now over 52.5hrs per week in North America.<sup>5</sup>
- With less and less children connected to nature, the average age of a Parks Canada visitor is now 52yrs+.<sup>6</sup>
- These problems have occurred while we have sterilized playgrounds, purchased play through catalogues, with short term risk assessments taking precedence over risk/benefit analysis.<sup>7</sup>
- The simplest way to address these frightening stats is to introduce nature when and where our children play.<sup>8</sup>
- Children's behaviour and school work improve if their playground has grassy areas, ponds and trees.<sup>9</sup>

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO THE TEACHERS?

- It takes a public school teacher an average of 7 to 8 hrs of paperwork to take their class off of school property for a one hour walk in the woods.<sup>10</sup>
- Math and language scores increase directly in proportion to contact with nature.<sup>11</sup>
- The NSTA recently published a doctrine that time in a nature is an important building block for any advancement of STEM scores (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math).<sup>12</sup>
- On a traditional play structure, 80% of the physical engagement for large muscle play and fitness is performed by 40% of children (the most agile and physically fit), while 60% of the children (the obese, disabled, unfit, or socially phobic) are almost completely sedentary.<sup>13</sup>
- Natural Playgrounds provide engagement for all 5 senses, as well as kinaesthetic sense, sense of place, and sense of wonder and include outdoor classrooms, spaces for quiet contemplation, creative and dramatic play, fine motor engagement, balance, agility, gross motor, and cognitive engagement.<sup>14</sup>
- Dirt is good! It has been proven to increase healthy immune response, decrease irritable bowel and gut based chronic disease while reducing stress and increasing focus and attention spans.<sup>15</sup>
- Average time that a child is engaged in spontaneous play on a traditional post and platform play structure is 19 to 22 mins. The average time is as much as 3 times higher in a natural playground (<1hr).<sup>16</sup>
- Natural Playgrounds provide a place of mastery for every child of every ability.<sup>17</sup>

## WHAT WILL THIS COST?

- Natural playgrounds cost the same or less than traditional playgrounds to purchase, install, and maintain.
- Funding for natural playgrounds is accessible through green funds, in-kind, and community support.<sup>18</sup>
- Over a 20 year timeframe, natural playgrounds are significantly less expensive to maintain and replace as they do not require complete demolition and replacement every 12 to 15 years.<sup>19</sup>

## ARE NATURAL PLAYGROUNDS SAFE?

- Catastrophic injuries are lower on natural features compared to plastic post and platform playgrounds.<sup>20</sup>
- Natural playgrounds provide challenging environments for children of all ages and sizes, where they learn important risk evaluation skills more effectively (and safely) than on traditional playgrounds.<sup>21</sup>
- Vandalism, aggressive behaviour, and bullying rates are all reduced in direct proportion to the amount of tree canopy and contact with nature in a play space. The more contact, the greater the benefit.<sup>22</sup>

## CONCLUSION

- Natural Playgrounds are better for optimal child development in almost every conceivable way.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Natural England and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds:  
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-462091/How-children-lost-right-roam-generations.html#ixzz2sxVGRRYh>

<sup>2</sup> Read more: <http://www.freerangekids.com/crime-statistics/>

<sup>3</sup> Active Healthy Kids Canada: <http://www.activehealthykids.ca/>

<sup>4</sup> The National Post and CHEO: <http://www.nationalpost.com/news/story.html?id=416959bd-a112-4fe7-95cd-1216edec2d63> Read more: <http://www.ijbnpa.org/content/8/1/98>

<sup>5</sup> The Kaiser Family Foundation: <http://kff.org/other/event/generation-m2-media-in-the-lives-of/>

<sup>6</sup> Parks Canada: <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/docs/pc/trm-mrt/2012/index.aspx>

- 7 Claire Warden: <http://www.claire-warden.com/index.cfm>
- 8 David Suzuki, Robert Bateman, Scott Sampson, Richard Louv and many others!
- 9 Natural England and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds  
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-462091/How-children-lost-right-roam-generations.html#ixzz2sxVGRRYh>
- 10 Dr. Sarah Croke, Hamilton Wentworth District School Board
- 11 Nancy Wells: <http://eab.sagepub.com/content/32/6/775.short>
- 12 Nat'l Science Teachers Assoc.: <http://www.nsta.org/about/positions/natureofscience.aspx>
- 13 Franz Danner: <http://rethinkingchildhood.com/2012/03/07/playground-safety/>
- 14 Adam Bienenstock [www.adambienenstock.com](http://www.adambienenstock.com), Rusty Keeler, Author - *Natural Playscapes*,  
Robin Christie *Childspace Inc.* NZ.
- 15 Mary Ruebusch, *Dirt is Good*: [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/27/health/27brod.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/27/health/27brod.html?_r=0)
- 16 Henderson Playgrounds, Bienenstock Playgrounds
- 17 R. King. Read more: [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/environment/2010-04-22-EARTH\\_GreenPlaygrounds22\\_ST\\_N.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/environment/2010-04-22-EARTH_GreenPlaygrounds22_ST_N.htm)
- 18 Read more: TD Friends of the Environment: <https://fef.td.com/>
- 19 Bob Spencer, partner KPMG
- 20 Canadian Pediatric Society: <http://www.cps.ca/documents/position/playground-injuries>
- 21 Ellen Sandseter: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/parenting/how-kids-can-reconnect-with-nature-on-the-playground/article5617282/>
- 22 Frances Kuo, read more: <http://www.news.illinois.edu/news/09/0213nature.html>
- 23 Dawn Coe, University of Tennessee, read more: <http://tntoday.utk.edu/2012/10/11/study-natural-playgrounds-beneficial-children/>
- Ellen Sandseter: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/parenting/how-kids-can-reconnect-with-nature-on-the-playground/article5617282/>