

Francophone organization gets \$506K from Ottawa to expand a nature-first approach to daycare ^[1]

Carrefour francophone among 16 early childhood education projects getting federal money

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EXCERPTS

A francophone cultural organization in Sudbury, Ont., has received \$506,339 in federal funding to expand an approach to daycares that has children play in nature.

Carrefour francophone operates 11 daycares, or childhood centres, throughout Greater Sudbury. Since 2019, its Forest Preschool project has carved out little sections of forests where children can play and explore.

It's one of the 16 early childhood education projects receiving federal funding announced this week.

"There's a lot you can do just playing with sticks and rocks," said Carrefour francophone's outdoor education co-ordinator, Céline Kerampran.

"It's really fun to see children really expressing themselves easily. They have room if they're upset or anything, they can go and hide behind a tree and have a quiet time for themselves."

At the Boréal des tout-petits early childhood centre, located at Sudbury's Collège Boréal, parents helped build some simple outdoor structures for children. There's even a hammock for nap time.

"Some families here, they don't always have the chance to bring their kids in the forest," said Émilie Castilloux, the early childhood centre supervisor at the Collège Boréal location.

"So I think it's really cool that they get a chance to do it in child care if they can't get what they need at home."

The federal funding will help researchers at Collège Boréal look at the benefits of outdoor education for young children. They will also see how Carrefour francophone's approach could be replicated elsewhere.

On Tuesday, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development Karina Gould announced a total of \$27.4 million for the 16 projects across Canada over three years.

"Early learning and child-care systems must meet the needs of increasingly complex and challenging environments," Gould said in a news release.

"Innovative practices can help develop solutions that better meet the complex needs of children and families, support an increased integration of services, and improve the quality of early learning and child care across the country."

The call for proposals focused on projects that addressed the needs of families during the pandemic.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

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