

# Ecological encounters in outdoor early childhood education programs: Pedagogies for childhood, nature and place <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Rafferty, Sinéad

**Source:** York University. Faculty of Environmental Studies

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 29 Nov 2013

## AVAILABILITY

Full paper in pdf (scroll down for title) <sup>[2]</sup>

## Abstract

This paper explores how nature, place, and pedagogical practice are perceived by educators in three Canadian outdoor early childhood education programs. Intersections between ideologies in early childhood education and interests in environmental education are introduced to highlight possibilities for collaboration in education for social transformation and ecological justice. Thematic issues and philosophical undercurrents of modern culture are explored and how they shape human and nature relations in educational settings. This research is situated in the movement to reconnect children to nature, whose goals include more outdoor play, enhancing children's well-being and fostering environmental concern. Elements of critical theory, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, and documents analysis were crafted to inform questions and code for themes that emerged from interviews with educators from the outdoor early childhood programs. Findings revealed that what the educators perceived from outdoor play was that children were more experientially engaged with movement, the land, and the local flora and fauna they encountered outside. The combination of democratic, child-led, and emergent pedagogical approaches with the educator's conceptualizations of ecological literacy allowed children to construct reciprocal and affective ways of knowing and meaning making in the outdoors. This alternative form of pedagogical praxis, revealed from the educators' experiences and the immersion of learning and play in the outdoors, demonstrates tangible possibilities for transformative education that honours embodied ways of knowing and reconfigures human and nature relations towards sustaining life and an ethics of co-existence.

**Region:** Canada <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** curricula and pedagogy <sup>[4]</sup>

---

**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/14/06/ecological-encounters-outdoor-early-childhood-education>

## Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/14/06/ecological-encounters-outdoor-early-childhood-education> [2]

<https://fes.yorku.ca/research/student-research-titles/outstanding-grad-papers/> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [4]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/curricula-and-pedagogy>