



Reconnecting Children Through Outdoor Education: A Research Summary

I think you did a grand job on the Research Summary. It is slick, coherent, and summarizes the findings clearly – important for non-OEE policy makers! The summary is also a part of what, in my opinion, is a new era of outdoor education. As a sector, we have now amassed enough evidence and rationale for higher-ups to take notice and take action. By this, I mean integrating OE into the school curriculum at all ages and specialized teacher training – two of your recommendations. This is exactly what we're pushing for in Scotland.

Simon Beames, PhD, Moray School of Education, University of Edinburgh, U.K.

Reconnecting Children Through Outdoor Education is a timely and indispensable how-to-manual for anyone who cares about the wellbeing of our children and the environment. It contains up-to-date national and international research that unequivocally demonstrates the crucial role that Outdoor Education can have in ensuring that our children become environmentally responsible, physically fit and engaged citizens. It explains how Outdoor Education can motivate learners, provide opportunities for personal and interpersonal growth and assist children to develop a personal relationship with the natural world on which all life depends. It also contains a series of practical, sensible evidence-based recommendations that - if implemented - would move the research into action. I urge you to obtain your own copy of this landmark study as well as another copy for your favourite decision-maker. Our children will thank you.

Diane Beckett, Coordinator, Outdoor Education Council of Ottawa, Ontario

Reconnecting Children through Outdoor Education has been enthusiastically received by outdoor educators in Australia. COEO is to be congratulated on publishing a concise, engaging and thorough summary of research into the benefits of outdoor and experiential education. Australian outdoor educators have found *Reconnecting Children* to be a valuable tool for program development and advocacy.

Well done and thank you to all those involved.

**Mark Dingle, Executive Officer,
Victorian Outdoor Education Association, Australia**

Project C.A.N.O.E. has found the COEO Research Summary to be a very valuable tool in the development of funding and communication materials about the benefits of outdoor experiential education for youth at risk. We applaud the work that has gone into the development of the summary and are happy to help spread the word about the fine calibre of this document.

Pegi Dover, Executive Director, Project C.A.N.O.E., Toronto

Concise, direct and timely: *Reconnecting Children Through Outdoor Education* is a bold affirmation of education for the whole child in the outdoors at a time when this is needed more than ever before. With the wise use of well-chosen pull quotes, effective themes, compelling visuals and a text that summarizes a wealth of international literature, one becomes well armed with the conceptual tools to re-energize a commitment to the vital work of outdoor education. The relevance and succinct nature of this research summary will both surprise and satisfy administrators, parents, practitioners and researchers all.

Bob Henderson, Ph.D., Department of Kinesiology, McMaster University

Long time Editor – *Pathways: The Ontario Journal of Outdoor Education* (COEO)

COEO has produced a visually forceful and intellectually and emotionally compelling document that summarizes the best research on the benefits to children of outdoor and experiential education. Whatever connection you may have to children and the outdoor experiences, there is something in this report for you. It covers an impressively comprehensive range of approaches to outdoor experiences. It begins, as one might expect outdoor educators to do, with curriculum and community, place-based learning, and the many benefits of formalized outdoor education in established centres. But from there, it moves to a fascinating and informative description of the many additional benefits of outdoor education that may be less top-of-mind ... Education for wellbeing, education for character, and education for environment are the headers under which unfurls a marvellous array of outdoor experience's contributions ...

Elise Houghton, Environmental Education Ontario (EEON)

Reconnecting Children Through Outdoor Education provides a clear and compelling call to action for educators, administrators, parents and youth leaders – get kids outdoors! Like most outdoor educators and environmental scientists, my commitment to the natural world began through childhood experiences in nature. The research reviewed in this document shows how humans need this contact with nature for proper brain development, but today's children don't have the outdoor opportunities that many of us took for granted. This research summary documents a myriad of reasons why outdoor education needs to be a fundamental part of our schools, for the future of our society and our planet.

Barb McKean, Head of Education, Royal Botanical Gardens, Burlington, Ontario

Reconnecting Children Through Outdoor Education deserves a spot on every outdoor educator's bookshelf! This is a great synopsis of the state of current research in outdoor education, and will prove invaluable as a tool for anyone who is an advocate for outdoor education. The recommendations are very timely – contemporary research from a variety of disciplines suggests that we need to dramatically change how we educate students today. As demonstrated by the research highlighted in this report, outdoor education is particularly well suited to address many of the problems in our existing education system. Governments, school boards, and parent organizations must act upon these recommendations if they wish to secure a healthy and sustainable future for our kids.

Tim O'Connell, Ph.D., Associate Professor

Department of Recreation & Leisure Studies, Brock University, Ontario

Co-Editor, *Journal of Experiential Education* (Association for Experiential Education)

Thanks so much for sending me the research summary. It looks great and supports many of my own findings. The objectives laid out also align very closely with those of our school. I think this is an important piece and should prove instrumental for individuals and groups attempting to increase credibility to build programs and secure funding. Your recommendations for the Ministry are particularly timely. Well done to all concerned.

Neil Piller, Head of Outdoor Education, St. George's School, Vancouver

It has proved a valuable resource and has attracted a lot of interest from Yukon teachers, curriculum consultants and school administrators. The outdoor and experiential education program is quite well developed here in the territory. COEO's Research Summary assists us in justifying and expanding these programs.

**Remy Rodden, Conservation Education Coordinator,
Yukon Department of Education**

I just wanted to pass along the appreciation of my colleagues and myself for this valuable resource. *Reconnecting Children* has provided a great summary of much of the important research that is out there relating to outdoor and experiential education. It has also dealt with the diverse values that our instincts tell us exist in OEE but which we all know are challenging to credibly evaluate and validate with some of the audiences that we deal with. The accompanying endnotes and research references are very helpful in providing us with access to some of the primary research that has been conducted in these fields, allowing us to go into greater depth independent of your report. I am sure it will be an oft-cited document as we try to promote the need and value of providing outdoor and experiential education learning opportunities for all our children. Thank you for your hard work and to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for its support of this important work.

Merebeth Switzer, National Education Coordinator, Ducks Unlimited Canada