

Final report

Our outdoor learning component aimed to provide our Kindergarten children with an opportunity to engage in outdoor activities that promote physical, emotional, and cognitive development. One of our goals was to provide opportunity for our children to connect with nature, and to honour the connections between Indigenous peoples and the land. We hoped it would deepen our children's understanding of the relationship between land, culture, and identity. This initiative was implemented cycle-wide starting last September. During that period, various activities were organized and conducted to enhance the learning experience of the children. This report discusses the results of the initiative and our experience in implementing it.

The outdoor learning component was successful in promoting physical activity among children. The children participated in various outdoor activities, such as running, jumping, and climbing, which helped them to develop their motor skills. Additionally, the project helped to improve the children's emotional well-being. The children appeared to be more engaged and enthusiastic during outdoor activities, which resulted in improved self-esteem and confidence.

Furthermore, the outdoor learning project also had a positive impact on the children's cognitive development. We noticed that the children were often more focused and attentive even during our indoor activities. This helped to improve their concentration and memory skills. Additionally, the project provided children with opportunities to explore the natural environment, which enhanced their understanding of the world around them. We always took the Indigenous perspective into consideration when planning our activities.

Overall, it can be said that the outdoor learning project was successful in promoting physical, emotional, and cognitive development among our Kindergarten children. Even the parents were fond of the experience, as was indicated to us via a survey we sent out asking for feedback. See the following link for a summary of the survey's results:

[Outdoor Learning in Kindergarten at St. Will Survey](#)

However, implementing the outdoor learning initiative did have its challenges. It required careful planning and coordination between the Kindergarten teachers, staff and other school personnel. The school administration was supportive of the initiative and provided necessary resources as much as possible, such as outdoor equipment and materials, to facilitate the implementation.

The Kindergarten teachers also had to prepare activities that aligned with the curriculum and were appropriate for outdoor learning. The teachers had to consider various factors such as weather conditions, safety, and the needs of the children when planning outdoor activities.

Despite these challenges, like “extreme” weather, teachers found the experience of implementing the outdoor learning initiative to be very rewarding. They saw firsthand the positive impact it had on the children's physical, emotional, and cognitive development. Teachers also noted that the children were more engaged and enthusiastic during outdoor activities, as well as during indoor activities, which made teaching and learning more enjoyable for all.

It wasn't easy all the time! For some staff, shifting from our traditional classroom teaching methods was challenging. Letting go of the idea that we need paper, pencil and four walls to teach effectively was difficult for some at first. We've come a long way since the start of the project to embrace the intangible ways children learn. When in doubt, trust the process! No need to overcomplicate anything; just stepping outside is taking the first stride towards decolonizing the curriculum.

Another simple step we took towards decolonizing our curriculum was to invite our families to join us in our outdoor activities on the first Wednesday of every month. We called this event Welcome Wednesdays. Grown-ups and other family members were able to learn about the many facets of the program, but most importantly, they were given the opportunity to spend time with their children in a school setting. Families developed a better understanding of our outdoor learning program as a result. By involving families, it helped us to create a more culturally responsive and inclusive learning environment, to promote reconciliation, and to support the educational and cultural goals of our Indigenous children – in fact, the same is true for all our children.

Part of our mission was to develop a reference manual to guide others who wish to recreate the project in their own schools. We hope this manual will make our intentions clear and sustainable for others. The manual explains: how to organize outdoor spaces; our role as educators; best practices for observation; invitations to play; the importance of parental involvement; how to incorporate an Indigenous lens; resources; feedback from parents. We plan on presenting this manual at our end of year staff meeting and on sharing it with other schools.

[Outdoor Learning at St. Will – A Reference Manual](#)

In conclusion, the outdoor learning project was successful in promoting physical, emotional, and cognitive development among our Kindergarten children. Implementing the initiative required careful planning, coordination, and collaboration, but the rewards of seeing the positive impact it had on the children made it a very positive experience. The initiative provided children with opportunities to explore the natural environment and engage in outdoor activities, which enhanced their learning experience and overall well-being.

Plans are already underway for the continuation of this project for the upcoming school year.