

Session to Support Your Nature Education Exploration and Forest School Inquiry



“ No degree of finely executed fabricated or artificial product can fully replicate the vital, ambient qualities of living nature. ”
(Kellert, 2005)

Ecologies of Childhood: Linking Place, Play and Pedagogy

The tides are shifting in early childhood education towards recognizing the value of outdoor play-based experiences and supporting children’s relationship with “nature”. Yet, most of our background and training in early childhood settings and child development research is focused on indoor and human-made elements of the environment (Davis, 1998; Davis, 2009; Fisher, 2013). This hands-on, experiential workshop aims to widen our consideration of early childhood communities to include the local land, flora, and fauna that exist in our surroundings – which are inextricably part of the fabric of children’s encounters with the world. Outdoor Preschools, Nature Kindergartens, and Forest Schools are leading the way in creating places where children play – and make meaning – with a wild array of ecological encounters. This session will also highlight pedagogical approaches drawn from place-based learning; environmental education, and principles of Forest School, in relation to familiar early learning frameworks, such as *How Does Learning Happen?* and how educators and children engage wonder and curiosity, while fostering care and concern for “nature”, will also be considered.

Saturday October 1, 2016 • St. Catharines Museum (Lockwood Rm), 1932 Welland Canals Parkway, St. Catharines • 8:30 am to 4:00 pm • \$75 includes workshop materials, breakfast and lunch • 8:30 am Registration and Breakfast; 9:00 am Workshop Opening; 12:00 to 1:00 pm Lunch and Networking; 3:30 pm Questions and Workshop Closing • Note - some components of the workshops will be held outside and participants are asked to bring a device to document their workshop experiences



Sinéad Rafferty, RECE, MES is a Registered Early Childhood Educator, with a Masters of Environmental Studies (MES), and a Graduate Diploma in Environmental and Sustainability Education. Her graduate research focused on pedagogies for childhood, nature and place in early childhood education, which was selected for the *Outstanding Graduate Student Paper Series* for the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University. As a Forest School Practitioner in-training, the principles of Forest School are embedded in her work with preschool children. She is passionate about creating places of play and learning, which nurture young children’s active participation in the world and relationship with ecological life. Some of her recent contributions include Forest School Canada; the Back to Nature Network’s, *Ready, Set...Wonder!* Resource guide; Forest School Leader with *Rhythms of Learning in Nature Forest School* session with the York Region Nature Collaborative, the *Transnational Dialogues in Early Childhood Education for Sustainability* and supporting the development of a Forest School Program with the *Kortright Centre for Conservation*.