

# Sessions 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)

## **Intrinsic Connections: Nature and Ecological Literacy in Early Childhood**

Children are often the first to notice a worm crawling on a sidewalk, a puddle to jump in, or a ladybug resting on a slide. They are also notorious for pocket-filled collections of rocks, sticks or leaves. If children come into the world intrinsically connected to “nature” and biologically designed to form attachments with the world, then what are we doing as educators, and more broadly as a culture, to nurture such connections? This interactive workshop explores modern trends in thinking about “nature” and how this influences practice in early childhood education. The current movement to connect children and nature is an important one, but seems to be moving forward without deeper and more critical considerations of what “nature” is. Through hands-on, collaborative, and reflective experiences, we will explore meanings of “nature” and ecological literacy as it relates to our life and early childhood practice. Further, we will investigate meanings of “nature-deficit disorder” in the lives of children and ourselves. This workshop aims to help deepen our understanding and perception of “nature” so that educators may more genuinely tune into children’s emerging relations with the world.

**Saturday June 11, 2016** • Amici’s Conference Centre, 2740 Merrittville Hwy, Thorold

## **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

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“ We cannot win this battle to save species and environments without forging an emotional bond between ourselves and nature as well – for we will not fight to save what we do not love. ”  
(Gould, 1994)

### Sessions' Details

- 8:30 am to 4:00 pm
- \$75 includes workshop materials, breakfast and lunch
- Note - some components of the workshops will be held outside and participants are asked to bring a device to document their workshop experiences

### Sessions' Agenda

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

### Facilitator Bio



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.