

DEOF/OCC Summer 2022 Completion Report

This summer's program was different than previous years, as the age range was much younger, between the ages of 6 and 13 (majority age 8 years old). The program was still based in Northeast Calgary where there is the lowest outdoor literacy and access to outdoor activities. We felt strongly that we continue to stick to this neighborhood to provide kids with new experiences that they may not have received otherwise. Also different to previous years, this year's program was fully based in urban green spaces. Although it would have been great to leave the city with the kids, exploring urban wilderness has its own benefits such as connecting kids to areas that they have access to on a regular basis.

For this summer 2022 children's program, we planned experiential outdoor learning events with children at the Dover Community Centre. These events were structured around hands-on learning. Each of the 5 workshops incorporated outdoor safety into its programming and focused on a specific outdoor skill that gave the kids the opportunity to learn outdoor skills in a safe, supported and supervised environment. Navigation was the cornerstone skill utilized throughout the workshops, making it fun to locate the next activity.

The various 5 workshops included learning outdoor skills such as navigation, knot tying, leave no trace, the 10 essentials, forest forensics, and packing for trips. Each workshop was designed to teach the kids outdoor skills while also incorporating fun and engaging games. Teaching these outdoor skills through playing games allows our kids participants to have loads of fun in an exploratory way while also connecting to important outdoor skills.

Assessing and managing risk is the foundation from which our program planning is designed and delivered in the children's program. We integrate risk management into the delivery of our program and model that behaviour throughout our workshop delivery. We teach that safety is the responsibility of everyone in the group and encourage all kids to share when they feel like something may be unsafe. This helps build efficacy in our kids participants and encourages them to take an active leadership role where they have the opportunity to explore risk assessment and management in a safe setting. Creating this culture of safety as a group responsibility is foundational for both the kids program, as well as the leaders. For example, workshop #3 was a leave no trace workshop where children were tasked with a "toxic waste" game. This workshop station was designed to have children understand, assess and manage risk through learning the leave no trace principles.

As previously mentioned, a key component of experiential learning in the children's program is mobilizing kids to feel inspired in their community, in whatever ways that resonates with them. We accomplish this by empowering kids to get involved through hands-on learning. This builds a sense of community amongst everyone in the program. In doing so, we build a physical and psychologically safe environment where kids feel supported and engaged while building positive, respectful relationships with the other kids and adults in the program. We accomplished this by beginning the program playing multiple "ice breaker" games as a group. These games help the kids feel more comfortable with the other kids in the program as well as the adults

facilitating. Additionally, these games orient them to what the children's program is and help them feel at ease in an unfamiliar environment. Furthermore, we created teams, where kids used their newly learned compass skills to navigate to different locations. Once at the workshop, kids were tasked to work together in their team to learn the outdoor skill at each workshop. This helped to build a culture of community and provided the opportunity to feel a sense of responsibility and belonging while being supported in their peer environment.

This children's program was unique in that all the kids learned compass skills and then worked with their teams to navigate to various workshops where they learned a variety of outdoor skills. This program gave kids autonomy in their skills while also building self-efficacy through navigating the new and unusual activities that each workshop presented. For example, workshop 5 was an experiential and exploratory 10-essentials station where kids were presented with a variety of items and asked to problem solve what items were best suited for an outdoor adventure. This station challenged the kids to work together and problem-solve through a 10-essentials games that focused on skills development, problem-solving, quick thinking, communication and utilizing team work. The children's program helped the kids develop self-efficacy by providing opportunities to learn and practice a variety of skills in a real-life setting, therefore fostering resilience and encouraging engagement. These new outdoor activities and experiences helped empower and assist kids in realizing their strengths and reaching their highest potential.

One of the main goals of the children's program is to ensure that the kids have fun. We want them to have the opportunity to get outdoors and have an enjoyable and memorable experience. Our program promotes healthy messaging about the benefits of getting outdoors through the facilitation of a fun, supportive, and safe day spent in nature.

The children's program taught kids a few of the key skills that can help them feel more confident, curious and inspired to learn more about getting outdoors. Our experiential workshops provided the foundation for kids to explore their outdoor skills and build their outdoor literacy.

As previously mentioned, promoting and enabling outdoor education through experiential and exploratory activities is a key tenet of the children's program. This allows kids to build the skills and knowledge it takes to feel more competent and confident to go outside safely while being able to practice in a safe and supportive environment. Through our activities, the kids had the opportunity to have important outdoor skills modeled for them while also learning how to use these skills for themselves in a safe, peer supported environment. Experiential learning, group and self-reflection allowed the kids to make sense of what they were learning which instilled competence and confidence throughout the program.

In addition to everything listed above, one of the reasons why this program has such a positive impact is because of the full circle learning environment where the OCC young adult leaders learn, and then pass on their findings by designing and facilitating this program to the kids in the

program. The idea of “pay it forward” truly adds a richness that other outdoor programs do not have.

This program was a great success, met with positive feedback from the Dover Community Centre staff, the OCC young adult leaders, and the kids who participated in the program. Moving forward, we are planning another winter program for February and March 2023. We will be again switching who will receive this program, and we are in talks with CIWA (Calgary Immigrants Women’s Association) youth group. We will keep everyone apprised as to what materializes here.

Addendum to report

OCC report by Kate Hamilton Sept 2022 additions

There were:

20 kids

4 Dover community staff

5 OCC young adult leaders

3 OCC staff (including me)

We were a very large crew!