

Connecting to Nature through Education



'Learning
Outside'
Initiative



What are your memories of childhood?

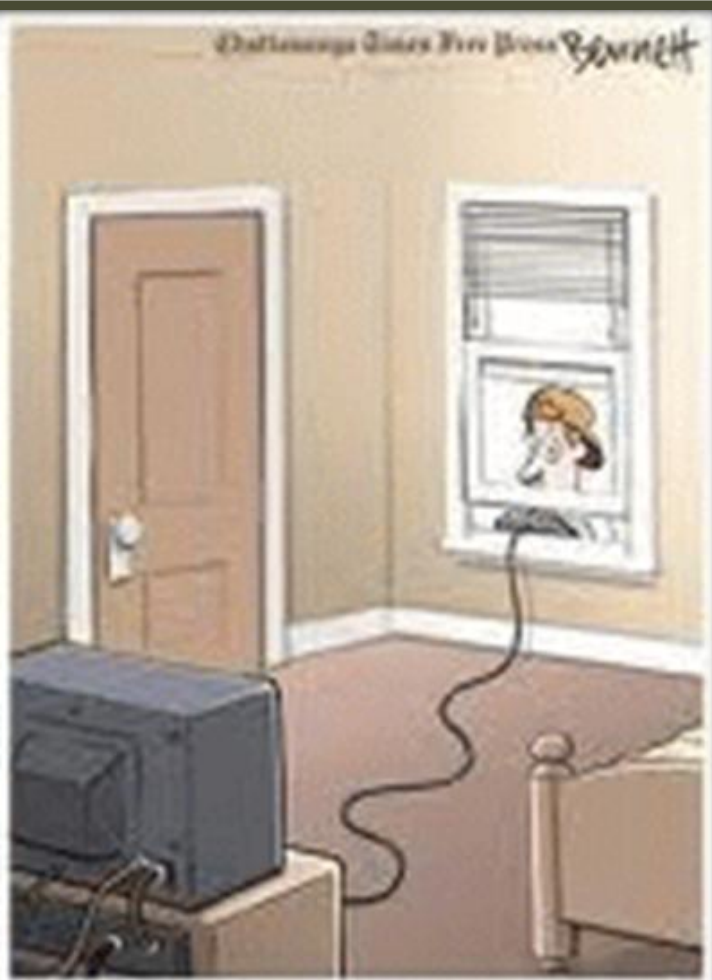


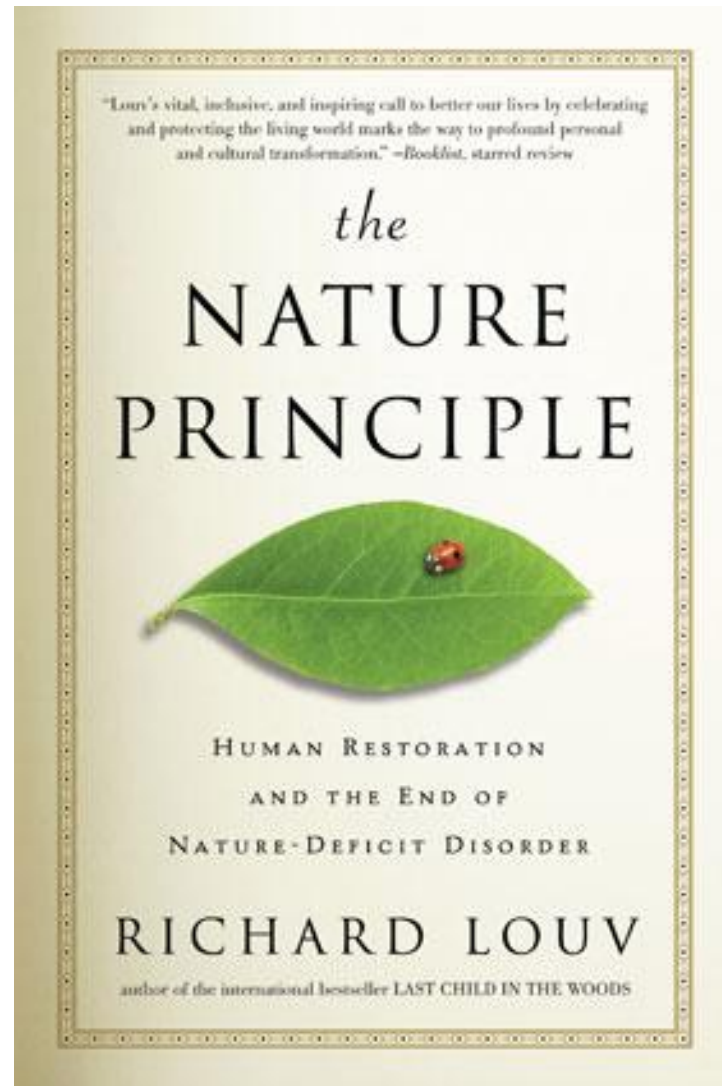
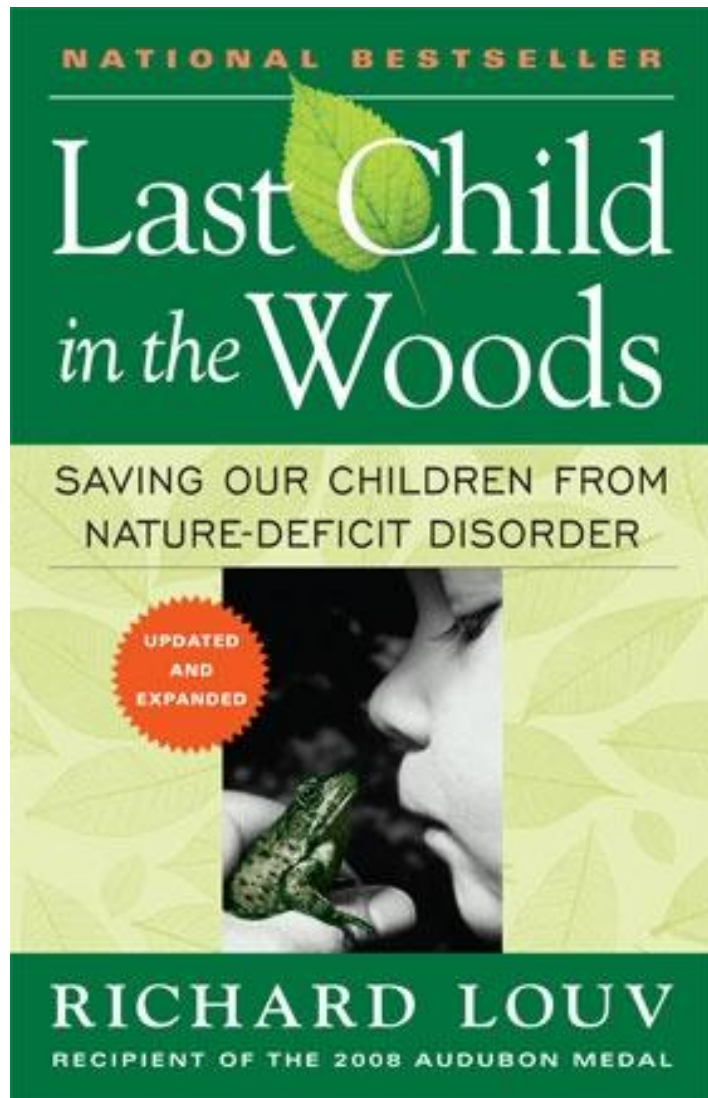
- Outdoor play
- Unstructured time
- Hands on exploration



Today's children

- have less free time
- have adopted a sedentary lifestyle set in the realms of technology and cyberspace
- fewer opportunities for activities that bond them to nature





What is Nature Deficit Disorder?

“Nature deficit disorder describes the human costs of alienation from nature, among them: **diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illness.** This disorder can be detected in individuals, families, and communities ... This term is by no means a medical diagnosis, but it does offer a way to think about the problem and possibilities - for children, and the rest of us as well.”

- Richard Louv

Free Play or Structured Play?

“A Swedish study found that children on asphalt playgrounds had play that was much more interrupted; they played in short segments. But in more natural playgrounds, children invented whole sagas that they carried out from day to day – making and collecting meaning”

- Richard Louv

Why Does This Matter?

Young people are suffering from a **loss of primary experience**.

“**Dual sensory**” or **secondary experiences** are how youth experience our world today.

- **Primary Experiences** can be seen, felt, tasted, heard or smelled.
- **Secondary Experiences** are only two dimensional (vision and sound).

Benefits of Reconnecting Children to Nature

- Education
- General Health
- Mental Health
- Concentration and Impulse Control
- More Creative Play
- Motor Coordination
- Self Esteem

Benefits: Education

“...outdoor investigations of nature (rather than indoor study) are the most **effective** and most **popular** approach to increase children's knowledge of biodiversity...”¹

1. Louise Chawla and Debra Flanders at the Children, Youth and Environments Center for Research and Design.



Benefits: General Health

"there is a significant improvement in both *physical* and *mental* health when *children* and teenagers obtain their required 60 minutes of *physical* activity per day" ¹



Benefits: Mental Health

"A study with Finnish adolescents found that they often went to natural areas after upsetting events. They said they could relax there, clear their minds, gain perspective..."¹

"A study in metropolitan Chicago found that children exhibited fewer ADD & ADHD symptoms after they played outdoors in green settings..."¹

Benefits: Concentration and Impulse Control

"In a Swedish study comparing preschool children using a traditional playground with others whose play area contained a field and orchard, the children with the field and orchard showed significantly greater powers of concentration..." ¹



1. Louise Chawla and Debra Flanders at the Children, Youth and Environments Center for Research and Design

Benefits: Enhanced Creativity

"In a Chicago study, children observed in green outdoor spaces engaged in more play and more creative forms of play than children in barren spaces." ¹



“Natural spaces and materials stimulate children’s limitless imaginations and serve as the medium of inventiveness and creativity observable in almost any group of children playing in a natural setting” - Richard Louv

1. Louise Chawla and Debra Flanders at the Children, Youth and Environments Center for Research and Design.

Benefits: Motor Coordination

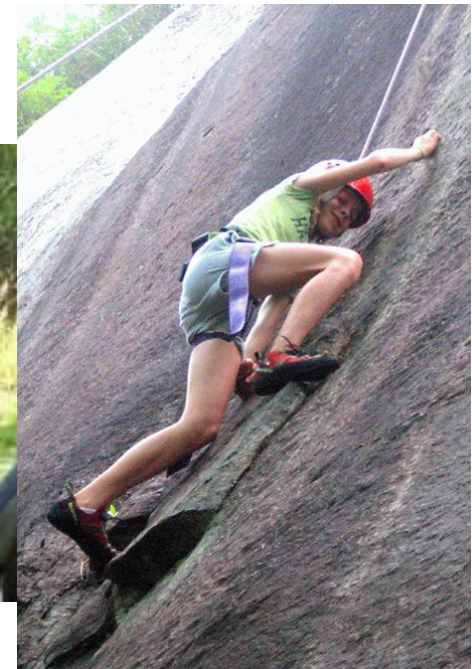


"On tests of motor fitness, children with opportunities for nature play at school showed greater gains over the course of the year, especially in balance and agility." 1

1. Louise Chawla and Debra Flanders at the Children, Youth and Environments Center for Research and Design.

Benefits: Healthy Self Esteem

“Studies over the past decade have shown that participants in adventure- therapy programs made gains in *self esteem, leadership, academics, personality, and interpersonal relations.*”¹



1. Louise Chawla and Debra Flanders at the Children, Youth and Environments Center for Research and Design.



The Conservation Council of New Brunswick believes that New Brunswick schools should offer an environment where nature is used as an educational resource: a pathway to learning for children.

The Role of Our Education System

- Foster an understanding and appreciation of nature in children for the future of our planet.
- Make school grounds green by including more natural materials, such as: grass, dirt, flowers, ponds, native trees and shrubs, bird feeders, etc.
- To make accessible training programs for teachers that showcase various outdoor teaching methods and ideas for the integration of nature into curriculum.

Learning Outside

- seeks to reconnect New Brunswick's children and youth with the natural heritage of the places they inhabit.
- encourages and supports the integration of teaching outdoors using nature as a resource.
 - finding creative ways of teaching existing curriculum in natural spaces on school grounds or nearby.
 - helping schools develop outdoor spaces and natural areas

Pilot Project: Keswick Ridge School

- Partnership with the school principal & former District 18 community school coordinator
- Other groups and community members



Keswick Ridge School - 2012

- Raised vegetable beds & pumpkins



- Pollinator and bird gardens



- Native trees and shrubs



- Tula woods – trails and pond



To come – learning stations
(installed in 2013-2014)

Teacher training: EarthWalk with Dr. Alan Warner

- All KRS teachers



Building momentum ...

- Connecting with educators and schools
- Developing an inventory of what's going on in New Brunswick – outdoor classrooms, nature trails, gardens, other spaces
- Developing a network of interested educators and community partners
 - Share information and success stories
 - Newsletter & website
 - Develop connections with districts and Dept. of Education
 - Bridge with facilities development and management

Thank you!

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Learning Outside



TD Friends of the Environment Foundation



Photo credits & Resources:

- http://www.naturearteducation.org/News_archive_2010.htm
 - <http://clegko.com/07/playing-outside/>
 - <http://ectc.education.ne.gov/nature/nature.htm>
 - <http://blog.standupandeat.org/?tag=/children>
 - http://boingboing.net/2007/03/04/no_child_left_inside.html
 - http://www.childrensadventurecompany.org/outdoor_trekking.html
 - <http://www.squidoo.com/horseback-riding-for-kids-keeping-them-safe>
 - <http://www.rockbrookcamp.com/blog/kids-summer-activities-climbing.html>
 - <http://www.environmentpoint.com/environment-kids/>
- School Bibliography:
- <http://belgravia.epsb.ca/olc.html>
 - <http://grandview.vsb.bc.ca/Garden.htm>

