



Inspiring Albertans one simple act at a time

July 2013

Children and Nature

What are some of your favourite childhood memories? If you're like other Canadians, most of those memories happened outdoors and included a lot of nature-based play. Did you dig a hole to China? Build forts or catch frogs?

Childhood has changed. What has happened to outdoor play? There have been some influences in the last decade that affect our children: we've become more urbanized; children's free time has dropped due to scheduled activities; parental fears; and the ever present plugged-in play (electronics).

Children now spend 27 percent of their time with electronic media: video games, television, computers and recorded music. On the average, one percent is spent outside. And that includes highly structured, adult-led activities like soccer and baseball leagues. Free play amounts to only about 30 minutes per week for children, barely four minutes per day.

Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*, and chairman of [Children & Nature Network](#) said, "For eons, human beings spent most of their formative years in nature. But within the space of a few decades, the way children understand and experience nature has changed radically. Healing the broken bond between our young and nature is in everyone's self-interest, not only because aesthetics or justice demand it, but also because our mental, physical and spiritual health depend upon it."

Getting children out into nature is a small but revolutionary step—one that can begin to reverse the current trend of disconnection from the natural world.

- ✓ Get kids out there. Give them unstructured, nature-based play opportunities. They have a natural talent for making up play.
- ✓ Kidscape your backyard. Give them a big pile of dirt, plant trees for climbing, plant for butterflies, let them play in the leaf pile, play in the rain, walk in the creek, have a backyard campout, whatever else you can dream up to allow them to explore nature in their own time. Play is the only time children can take control of their world.
- ✓ Inspire others and share your favourite childhood memory in nature. Post on our Facebook page: facebook.com/OneSimpleActAlberta

Get out and get dirty. "The world is mud-luscious and puddle-wonderful."
- ee cummings

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