

# CALGARY'S PLAY CHARTER

Collective Impact Report 2018



# CALGARY'S PLAY CHARTER

Calgary is committed to promoting play, providing play opportunities, and educating all Calgarians on the importance of play to our community. As signatories to this charter, organizations concerned with positive childhood development, it is our responsibility to promote, enable, and work towards comprehensive play opportunities for all.

## PLAY LOOKS LIKE

Children of all abilities, alone or in groups, engaged, focused, solving problems, having fun. It can look physical, imaginary, creative, dramatic or social, energetic or lethargic.

## PLAY SOUNDS LIKE

Laughter, conflict, imaginative stories. It can be boisterous or silent.

## PLAY FEELS LIKE

Excitement and challenge. It can be scary, wondrous, doubtful, hesitant, thrilling and magnificent.

## WE BELIEVE

Play develops a core set of skills for healthy well-being.

That play is a vital component of childhood; it is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated.

Play is fun, uncertain, challenging and flexible.

When children have opportunities to play they use creativity, innovation, and reflection to learn, experiment, solve problems, create new worlds, test boundaries, assess risk, and meet challenges.

Play is a natural state for a child.

## WE WILL

Support play that encourages physical, emotional and social development.

Understand and communicate that risk is a valuable component to play, and we will encourage, support and enable play that allows children to develop risk-taking skills.

Create environments that children can control – providing flexibility in materials and spaces that promote inquiry and evoke curiosity.

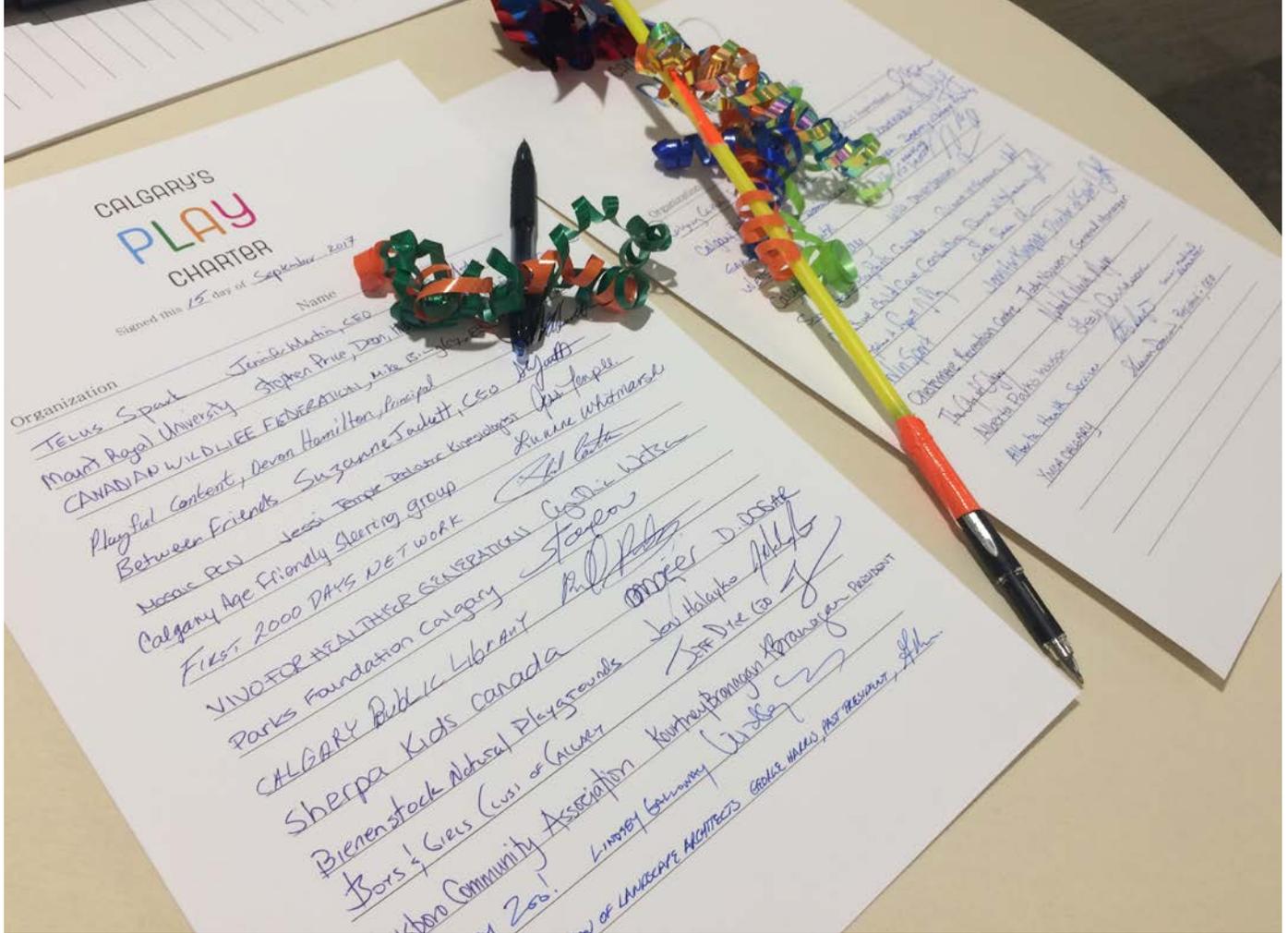
Embrace the geography and climate of Calgary and support children to play outdoors all year-round.

Educate and inform adults, using common language across all organizations, on the importance of play.

Involve children in the decisions that affect their lives.

Report on our organization's experience with play.

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Calgary's Play Charter signing, September 15, 2017

The City of Calgary is pleased and honored to provide leadership for this collective work. We recognize and value that child led play crosses many sectors, jurisdictions and focus areas. As demonstrated in this report, the impact is greater when work is shared, leveraged and collaborative. We are better together and thrilled about this first report of our collective work on children's play.

## INTRODUCTION

We all have an important role in promoting and protecting a child's right to play.

Play is fundamental to all aspects of child development and is a key component in preserving community and culture. Children's play presents rich opportunities for their social, physical, moral and emotional development and as such, must be preserved and protected. (Based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, article 31).

### Background

In 2013, The City of Calgary was selected to host the 2017 International Play Association Triennial World Conference (IPA 2017). As part of a legacy component to the Conference, a group of organizations under the banner of YYC Plays started meeting to discover what play means in Calgary and to develop Calgary's Play Charter. The Lawson Foundation awarded The City of Calgary a grant to develop some innovative play opportunities and support the development of a community play charter.

Calgary's Play Charter is intended to be a unifying document outlining why we believe play is important and how, in working together, we can create a community that supports and encourages comprehensive play opportunities for all Calgary children. With the re-signing of Calgary's Play Charter in September 2018, YYC Plays is thrilled to welcome more organizations to this exciting work.

# CALGARY'S PLAY CHARTER

At IPA 2017, Calgary's Play Charter was signed by 36 organizations.

YYC Plays, using a collective impact approach, identified seven high leverage activities. As a charter signatory, each organization was asked to commit to undertaking "Three Big Things for Play" throughout the year that contributed to one of more the following high leverage activities. Here's how Calgary benefitted from this collective work on play:

## Advocacy & Promotion:

Work that increases public awareness, skills and knowledge that can lead to action or change in public perceptions or behaviours.

### YYC Plays Accomplishments

11 organizations initiated 53 public awareness and education projects resulting in over 10,000 people knowing more about play.

## Communication & Marketing:

Specific tactics to provide information on play opportunities to the public and YYC Plays organizations.

### YYC Plays Accomplishments

8 organizations initiated marketing and communication projects reaching over 48,715 people who are now more aware about play and play opportunities in Calgary.

## Partnerships:

Efforts by more than one person or group working together to advance a common interest in supporting/enhancing play.

### YYC Plays Accomplishments

11 organizations formed 51 new partnerships specifically focused on play initiatives.

## Play Spaces:

Provision of physical spaces where play happens.

### YYC Plays Accomplishments

8 organizations opened 27 new spaces that incorporated features inviting people to play more creatively.

## Policy & Practice:

Principles that guide decision-making in an organization.

### YYC Plays Accomplishments

6 organizations created 10 new policies to facilitate play.

## Programs:

Events, activities, presentations, resource development, courses, and research that have a specific beginning and end undertaken to support/enhance play.

### YYC Plays Accomplishments

12 organizations integrated play into 200 programs that impacted over 230,600 participants.

## Training:

Formal and informal training, tools, and resources for staff and volunteers that enable them to support and enhance play.

### YYC Plays Accomplishments

8 organizations trained over 1,400 staff and volunteers on ways to facilitate play.

# CALGARY'S PLAY CHARTER SIGNATORIES 2017

Alberta Association of Landscape Architects	Calgary Police Service	Parks Foundation Calgary
Alberta Council for Environmental Education	Calgary Public Library	Physicians in Support of Play - Collective
Alberta Health Services	Calgary Zoo	Playful Content
Alberta Parks Inclusion	Canadian Wildlife Federation	ScrapStore Play Pods Canada
Between Friends	CCES Nature Kindergarten	Sherpa Kids Canada
Bienenstock Natural Playgrounds	Chestermere Recreation Centre	Telus Spark
Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary	Common Digs	The City of Calgary
Calgary Age Friendly Steering Committee	Creative Child Care Consulting	University of Calgary
Calgary Be Fit for Life Centre	First 2000 Days Network	Vivo for Healthier Generations
Calgary Board of Education	Haysboro Community Association	Westside Recreation Centre
Calgary Catholic School District	Mosaic Primary Care Network	WinSport
Calgary Child's Play	Mount Royal University	YMCA Calgary

## OUTCOMES

This is why we are working together....

### Medium Term Outcomes

- Calgarians are aware of the importance and value of play.
- Parental attitudes shift to understand and value play.
- A wide variety of play opportunities and play spaces are available in Calgary.
- More resources (funding, expertise and collaboration) are available in Calgary to deliver play initiatives.
- A strong, coordinated multi-sectoral coalition exists to support play in Calgary.

### Long Term Outcomes

- Our community values play.
- All Calgarians have an opportunity to play.

### Population Outcomes

- Increase in percentage of children and youth who engage in unstructured/unorganized active play for several hours a day.
- Increase in percentage of children and youth who report being outdoors for several hours a day<sup>1</sup>.
- Increase in percentage of Calgarians that feel comfortable incorporating play in their lives.

<sup>1</sup> from the ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth

# ADVOCACY & PROMOTION

11 organizations initiated 53 public awareness and education projects resulting in over 10,000 people knowing more about play.

Here are some highlights of that advocacy and promotion.

The **Alberta Council for Environmental Education (ACEE)** has been instrumental in seeding the Get Outside and Play Early Childhood Network in Alberta and hosts Get Outside and Play Week. In 2018, 51 events happened in 21 communities across Alberta. The event received media coverage in Calgary on CBC Radio, Global and CTV. It was an opportunity to promote the value of outdoor play in the early years.

ACEE is connected to educators across Alberta and integrates the promotion and advocacy of play in their training opportunities.

In September 2017, The City of Calgary hosted **Age Friendly Calgary** engagement sessions with older adults to increase public awareness and promote the value of intergenerational play. The key message was, "When we play together across generations we

pass on games - so they won't be left behind, we try new things, we make friends and we have fun." Through the collection of games played by older adults when they were children, it was discovered by a group of newly immigrated older adults that games they played transcended ethnicity and cultural backgrounds. Games are universal and cross cultural boundaries. Participants felt valued and proud. The working group will continue to involve the community in identifying ways to share their collection of games. The goal is to promote and support play opportunities by passing their games on to the younger generations.

**Creative Childcare Consulting** intentionally promoted the importance of play, outdoor year-round play, and the value of risk taking through their workshops, leadership mentoring and on-site coaching to front line childcare educators. Creative Childcare consulting role modelled how to play and how to change up different environments to accommodate different play offerings. Videos on



Calgary's First Play Day, August 1, 2018 hosted by The City of Calgary

# ADVOCACY & PROMOTION

risky outdoor play have been shared with several Out of School Care programs across the province.

**Calgary Police Service** included information about play in their Power Play program, Junior Police Academy, Cadet Program and Positive Ticketing program.

**Vivo for Healthier Generations** (Vivo) included principles of play in their online advertising and implemented a publicly accessible play lab.

**The First 2000 Days Network** offered several workshops and presentations on various aspects of play for audiences of parents and educators.

The leadership of **Calgary Child's Play**, **Sherpa Kids Canada** and **Scrapstore PlayPods Canada** have spoken on benefits of loose parts play to educators and at a recreation conference. They also have posters on the benefits of play for their parent audiences at their program sites.

The **Alberta Association of Landscape Architects** was intentional in having Adam Bienenstock of **Bienenstock Natural Playgrounds** be the keynote speaker at their 2018 Annual General Meeting that 115 landscape architects attended. Adam spoke on the importance of unstructured play environments and spaces that served to increase awareness on the importance of play and natural playgrounds.

Adam Bienenstock also had the opportunity to present his keynote "Why Natural Playgrounds?" at Ever Active Schools' Shaping the Future: Pan-Canadian School Health Summit in Lake Louise.

Adam delivered an informative talk that explores why contact with nature is so important for children, how play has changed over time, and how natural playgrounds can engage children on a whole other level. Fortified with peer-reviewed research and real life examples from his own projects, Adam's keynote makes a compelling and entertaining case for why nature play is essential for healthy child development.



*Mobile Adventure Playground, The City of Calgary*

# COMMUNICATION & MARKETING

8 organizations initiated marketing and communication projects reaching over 48,715 people who are now more aware about play and play opportunities in Calgary.

Here are some highlights of play marketing and communications initiatives.

**Calgary Police Service** used social media and television to highlight their Junior Police Academy and Positive Ticket program that included integrated elements of play.

**The City of Calgary** developed **Age Friendly Calgary** flyers and templates for the public to submit games and play activities with a plan to compile these and share the results by the end of 2018.

**Parks Foundation Calgary** increased communication on free unstructured play and added the Calgary Play Charter on their website. Look for the Calgary Play Charter being highlighted in this winter's newsletter and social media.

**Alberta Parks Inclusion** started to incorporate accessible trails and facilities so that people of all abilities know how to get to places for play!

**Between Friends** published 12 monthly newsletters. Each highlighted 2-5 free play opportunities in Calgary.

"I know where to go for information about play and now I will share this information with others!"

-Between Friends client



*Mobile Adventure Playground, The City of Calgary*



*Mobile Adventure Playground, The City of Calgary*

The **First 2000 Days Network** published several newsletter articles that provided education about play, promoted play opportunities and advertised play workshops – all offered by several of the Calgary Play Charter signatories. Articles were published on social media, e-newsletters, and printed newsletters and were distributed to parents, early childhood educators, and communities.

**Creative Childcare Consulting** used the common key messages developed by the YYC Plays collective to communicate the importance of risk-taking during play to 180 of their clients. This included workshop attendees, Board of Directors in childcare programs, and childcare leadership teams. Leadership teams were provided coaching on how to best support their team of childcare educators with engaging environments and a variety of material choices that provide the opportunity for children to engage in freely chosen play opportunities.

**Vivo** included communication about the importance of play through their marketing programs such as 'Little Kids Active Preschool', and through their Play Ambassadors program.

# PARTNERSHIPS

11 organizations formed 51 new partnerships specifically focused on play initiatives.

Here are some highlights of those partnerships.

**The City of Calgary** provided leadership to our YYC Plays sector team that saw up to 46 organizations represented at various times throughout 2018. In fall 2018, the focus was on hosting Calgary's Inaugural Play Summit.

The **Calgary Public Library** formed a collaborative partnership with **Mount Royal University** - Capstone students worked at the Library over the 2017-18 school year. Students participated in project-based work with the intention of enhancing informal programming and play-based learning opportunities in our Early Learning Centres (indoor and outdoor).

The **Calgary Catholic School District** worked alongside external agencies to provide students with opportunities to experience play in a way that they might not experience at home. These partnerships have served to increase and expand students' play experiences!

In partnership with Vivo, the **Calgary Public Library** conducted an evaluation of Library Early Learning Centres (ELCs).

The objective of this research project was to evaluate ELCs in libraries with parents, caregivers, families and children aged 0-5 years. A further aim of this project was to identify gaps and creative solutions to optimize Calgary's ELCs, to promote early learning in young children.

Results included providing opportunities for children to socialize with other children, read and learn through play!

**6 Calgary Early Childhood Development Coalitions (The First 2000 Days Network)**, various **Calgary Public Library** locations, 5 Community Associations and 8 other organizations partnered to bring 22 play opportunities to families. Over 400 families attended these events.

**Parks Foundation Calgary** created an Advisory Committee for their Building Communities grant program. This program focuses on supporting and evaluating funding requests from communities on their goals for new playful park spaces. The committee provides a wide perspectives on projects they support across the city.



*Mobile Adventure Playground, The City of Calgary*



*Mobile Adventure Playground,  
The City of Calgary*



*Outdoor play spaces,  
Calgary Public Library*



*Mobile Adventure Playground,  
The City of Calgary*

**Parks Foundation Calgary** continues to grow their network of partnerships in Calgary. They've worked closely with organizations like **The City of Calgary**, **Vivo**, and the **Calgary Public Library**. These partnerships allow for a bigger impact in Calgary's parks and play spaces. **Parks Foundation Calgary** works at the grassroots level with 20-40 new schools or community association partnerships, each year and on an on-going basis.

**Boys & Girls Club of Canada** partnered with organizations like **Two Wheel View** and **Camp Alexo** to offer new adventure play options within their own Camp Adventure.

**Alberta Parks** worked towards improving access to play spaces by using an Activate YYC grant to provide clear signage for visitors with vision loss using **Calgary Access Transit** in Fish Creek Provincial Park and additionally geo-located Calgary Access Transit stops for inclusion on disabled access features on the AlbertaParks.ca website.

**Multi Agency School Support Team (MASST)** is a partnership between **Calgary Police Service**, **Alberta Health Services** (clinicians), **Calgary Neighborhoods** (social workers), and **both Calgary school boards**.

MASST promotes play by financing opportunities for their clients to participate in sports, bring their clients to the gym, playground, and spaces for unstructured play to promote healthy lifestyles for the client's whole family.

**6 Calgary Early Childhood Development (ECD) Coalitions, The First 2000 Days Network, Fish Creek Public Library, Huntington Hills Community Association and Alberta Council for Environmental Education** came together to offer education to ECD educators and parents on various aspects of play. 112 people attended these sessions.

At **Vivo**, Creating Coventry is a community driven plan to improve and connect neighbourhood parks and create a long-term plan for playgrounds and green spaces in Coventry Hills. A series of engagement sessions with the communities revealed residents' dreams for their green spaces that highlighted the need to better accommodate play and social connection.

**Vivo** and **Brookfield Residential** are working with Livingston residents to co-create their future Home Owners Association (HOA) community spaces and are actively supporting designs to include more play and social connection.

# PLAY SPACES

8 organizations opened 27 new spaces that incorporated features inviting people to play more creatively.

Here are some highlights of new play spaces.

“Enhancing the environment to create a fun interactive obstacle course is what our Instructors (did). All day, laughter and screams of joy were heard throughout the aquatics center. To make it even better, our instructors and lifeguards were joining in the fun. Creating opportunities for spontaneous play is not always easy in water, but our dedication to connecting and making our programs fun is a passion we are growing in our team and it’s contagious!!!”

– Vivo aquatics staff

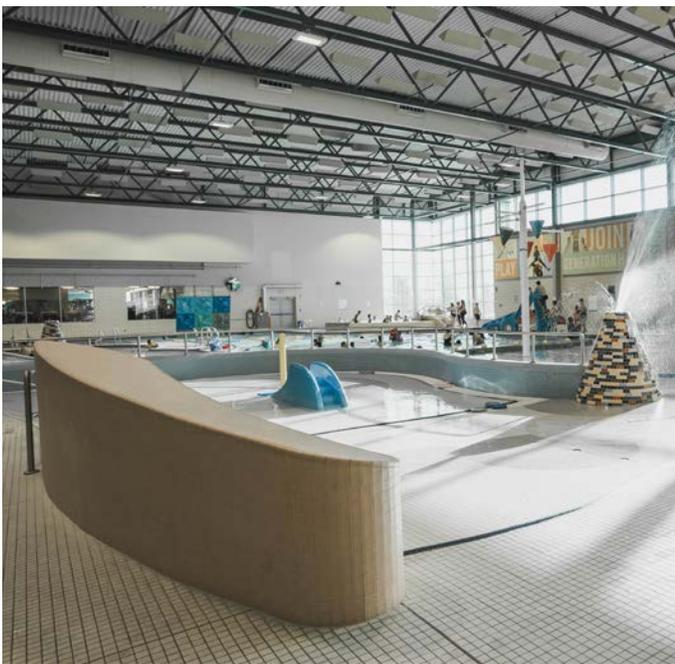
The **Calgary Zoo** created more natural play zones, including work on the new Canadian Wilds play zone to be completed in 2019!

**Mosaic Primary Care Network** started an Active Toddlers program in 2018 with 74 participating families. This program included the development of a free play space for children aged five and under. The space supported parents with play education and linked them to health professional information in a new way.

The Little Kids Active Learners Preschool at **Vivo** used their facility spaces in more creative ways and opened class times to allow for unstructured free play. They received positive feedback from parents and received monthly communication highlighting the benefits of play to their children.

**Parks Foundation Calgary** supported the development of 15 new play spaces in Calgary! And implemented two advisory committees to filter their projects partly with a lens to ensure play was being considered.

People of all ages can play. The outcomes that have been achieved at **Alberta Parks** are to better connect all people to provincial parks, especially provincial parks that share urban boundaries with Calgary and Edmonton, such as Fish Creek Provincial Park and Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park. Both parks are currently active in nature-based education for children.



Vivo aquatic facility



New play spaces by Bienenstock Natural Playgrounds

**The City of Calgary** is developing three new public play spaces that intentionally include natural elements such as logs and woodchip surfaces. Ralph Klein Park (RKP) Natural Playground opened July 21st, Shouldice Park Inclusive Playground is opening in 2019, and Jack Long playground project is starting soon in Inglewood. The RKP natural playground has brought more people to RKP. Most days there are over 100 people there!

Under the Healthy Living School program, **Vivo** partnered with 12 schools that included 473 students, 163 volunteers and 21 teachers. In their partnership with Tuscan School, a group of grade three students took on a playful space redesign project at their school in order to capitalize and build on their learning from the program. Now called “The Gathering Space”, a large, once empty area at Tuscan School has been totally transformed by students to allow for more social, active, object, creative and imaginative play.

“It’s pretty powerful that the kids had the chance to see that their starting of this whole process has created a really welcoming, special space in our school. To me, it just speaks to the kids about how they have voice, and how they can make a difference in what they’re doing...they are so excited and it has been amazing for them. This has been a whole-year journey about how a space can bring people together.”

– Grade 3 teacher

Vivo’s Play Lab is a space that replaced 50 per cent of its plastic play toys with ‘loose parts’ to promote more creative and unstructured play. This is a space where rough and tumble play is accepted and communicated to families as opportunities to advance on children’s communication and problem-solving skills.

Five years after a flood destroyed the Cochrane Girl Guides’ playground, the team at **Bienenstock Natural Playgrounds** partnered with the organization to design a natural playscape for Camp Jubilee.

The natural playground, amphitheater, and ‘team adventure park’ were designed to cater to every age group of the 6,000 plus annual users. Collectively, the three spaces offer a unique blend of settings that cater to users of every age and ability, both physically and cognitively.

The design breaks away from prescriptive play to provide open-ended opportunities that girls ages 5-17 would find engaging. As a result, the natural playground provides great opportunities for full sensory engagement and different types of play.

The **Calgary Catholic School District** used spaces other than their gymnasiums to create more opportunities for play and provided schools with painted games on the outdoor tarmac surfaces to accommodate more play opportunities.

After expanding throughout 2017-2019, The **Calgary Public Library** now has 10 Early Learning Centres that provide places for children’s freely chosen play. Plans to open three additional locations are in the works for fall 2018!



New accessible dock and accessible pathways, Alberta Parks



Making creative play spaces, Little Kids Active Learners Preschool, Vivo

# POLICY & PRACTICE

6 organizations created 10 new policies to facilitate play.

Here are some highlights of new play policies to facilitate play.

**Vivo** used the Calgary Play Charter to review and govern their practices throughout their work with school partners, summer camp programs, their Gen H instructor training and Little Kids Active Learner (LKAL) preschool. This ensured that program plans intentionally included elements of free play. As a result, LKAL reported a 29 per cent increase of engagement in free play within the walls of their classrooms!

“While at Vivo, our students were constantly encouraged to add their input and feedback and come up with ways to make things better. I believe that one of the activities that really helped to foster that engagement was all the time spent in the gym doing free play, allowing students’ imaginations to run free. . . what a fantastic experience!”

– Grade 6 teacher

**Parks Foundation Calgary** implemented two advisory committees to filter their projects partly with a lens to ensure play was being considered.

**Creative Childcare Consulting** reviewed procedures and as a result the organization reviewed their current workshops to ensure they included the importance and value of play and how it supports

healthy child development. This resulted in the revision of a number of workshops, specifically in the Out of School Care division.

**Calgary Child’s Play, Sherpa Kids Canada and Scrapstore Play-Pods Canada** aimed to deepen their understanding of play theory to enhance daily play practices by aligning their organization’s philosophy and missions to reflect our commitment to play. Additionally, their play based planning model for staff is more flexible but is still compliant with licensing and accreditation requirements. Their model focusses on honouring the ‘child’s voice’ and child led play that governs how after school time is spent.



Mobile Adventure Playground, The City of Calgary



Play time in the gym, Vivo

# PROGRAMS

12 organizations integrated play into 200 programs that impacted over 230,600 participants.

Here are some highlights of play programs.

Because **Vivo** included free play in daily program lesson plans, kids were engaged in heart pumping activity for 58 per cent of the time! This was a vast improvement over the traditional program lesson plans where kids were seen to be sedentary for 61 per cent of the time.

In summer months, **Vivo** experienced an increase of 1,000 new people coming to climb by increasing the number of climbing attendants present during drop-in climbing times to help people who have never had a chance to climb before.

Active Kids Drop-in Play programs offered by **Vivo** is another opportunity for participants to just play. 140 kids participated in 14 of these programs.

“[At Vivo] one evening my daughter and a group of kids she had never met, convened together on one of the large mats during Tuesday evening play in the yellow gym. I watched them talk and what looked like them preparing a plan. Within moments they all burst into different directions and carried out their discussion. Another parent and I just looked at each other in amazement and had an excellent conversation about how beautiful and great it was to see the authentic, playful moment.”

- A parent sharing her experience with one of the Vivo Play Ambassadors

Play Ambassadors attend over 200 events annually to promote the importance of play!

**Calgary Child’s Play, Sherpa Kids Canada, and Scrapstore Play-Pods Canada** have held various loose parts play events, like participating in a school sports day with a loose parts play station as well as partnering to deliver loose parts adventure play to an outdoor Calgary location for 500 children and parents in May 2018.

**Chestermere Recreation Centre (CRC), The City of Chestermere,** with some of the city’s youth serving agencies partnered to initiate the Mobile Adventure Playground (MAP) that engaged 2,865 kids this summer. While The City led, the **CRC** supported the project by donating, storing loose parts, and hosting many MAP events on their site. MAPs were considered the highlight of many summer day camps and out of school programs! MAP was also featured as part of a free play event to coincide with the First National Play day in Canada held on August 1. **CRC, The City of Chestermere, Camp Chestermere** and the **Chestermere Public Library** and **Synergy** partnered to host this successful play event attended by approximately 200 kids!



Mobile Adventure Playground, The City of Calgary

# PROGRAMS

The **Calgary Public Library** (CPL) programs continue to expand to include play elements as part of formal and informal programming for children 0-18 years and families. Examples include:

The Words and Wiggles preschool program where participants are introduced to ideas for play and literacy at home for parents, caregivers and children 3-5 years. Literacy and play are experienced through hand-on activities where kids explore, develop new perspectives and ideas, and build new play skills (social, sensory, constructive, imaginative, and child-directed).

Reading with Royalty, a new program launched at CPL in early 2018, celebrates diversity and encourages children to look beyond gender stereotypes and embrace exploration of self. Children are provided the opportunity to engage with Royal Readers through play and dress-up, sparking creativity, imagination, and opportunities to explore self-expression.

New and innovative services related to music and play are offered at CPL. The new Sunlife Music Lending Library at Memorial Park Library is a great example of this!



*Play Day, Prairie Winds Park, The City of Calgary*

The Ultimate Summer Challenge (USC), new in 2018, is the CPL's largest program serving 20,000 kids, teens and families every July and August. Approximately 40 community partners offered over 150 programs, performances and demonstrations for children and families. We were excited to offer this new type of play programming over the summer.

CPL is currently exploring ways to incorporate Indigenous culture as part of play and learning opportunities for all Calgarians. They offered indigenous story times with opportunities for dress up and dance, which allowed families to experience Indigenous culture through playful experiences.

**Between Friends**' "Girl Power" program is a popular social and recreation-based program for girls 7-12 years that includes a weekly fun activity and time for free play. Activities range from swimming, to dance, to craft time, to building fairy gardens and more.

"I'm so thankful for these programs. Before this [my daughter] didn't really fit anywhere in various classes and social activities. She loves everything she's tried so far. I want these programs to continue and expand as much as possible".

– A mother describing her daughter's experience at a **Between Friends** program

Over 500 children and youth experienced elements of risky play because **WinSport**'s focus this year was to add elements of risk to their new early childhood programs and enhancing their summer camps to incorporate elements of risk.

"With each class our daughter's enthusiasm for learning in the outdoors grew. This program was perfect for our little outdoor adventurer and as I learned about it over the 4 weeks, I realized our educational values aligned more than I had initially thought. My heart smiled when I read the instructor's final letter to the parents. "When children are supported to take risks and turn ideas into reality they discover their capabilities. Empowering children to be active learners and creators supports them in a journey to discover themselves. The influence from this type of empowerment is unlimited. The path to being active, engaged, and empowered learners begins with valuing children's ideas. By taking the time to build and create our own tire swing we are also building our self-esteem and our potential to be

lifelong learners. I have to say that the program exceeded our expectations. I did not know that our daughter would have such a qualified early childhood outdoor educator.”

- Parent about her child's experience at a WinSport program

Between their participation in both programs offered by **Calgary Police Service**, like the Junior Police Academy, as well as partnered programs like the Integrated School Support Program (ISSP), police officers are demonstrating that play is part of a healthy lifestyle and impacting youth in powerful ways. This year, just over 5,000 youth, in approximately 16 programs, played alongside Calgary Police Service officers and staff.

The School Resource officers support play by coaching teams within the schools and participating in events at the schools. This promotes long term fitness (they see the 'old guys' keeping up because they have a healthy lifestyle).

The City Police Cadet Program in partnership with the Calgary Police Foundation offered a mentorship program for youth 12-17 years that taught children about fitness and used fun activities such as obstacle courses, the gym, and drill to promote play and movement.

ISSP is collaborative program involving CPS, Calgary Police Foundation and both Calgary school boards that provides support within two schools. The program provides psychologist, breakfast/lunch program, fitness support and after school programming that includes both structured and unstructured play opportunities every day that helps to show children how to stay moving.

CPS Round Dance in December 2017, in partnership with Calgary Recreation, hosted a space with big foam 'blue' blocks for kids to engage in free play opportunities in a separate gym.

“The Calgary Police Service prides itself on its community policing philosophy. As a result, CPS will continue to support Calgary's Play Charter and work in partnership with organizations on play related opportunities. CPS recognizes that when children have the opportunity to play, they are less likely to choose criminal activities and they have an outlet to promote resiliency. As police officers, we can help to promote play in our daily work, by showing our support and working together to show the community that we are part of this!”

- Calgary Police Officer



Musical play, Calgary Public Library

# PROGRAMS



*Mobile Adventure Playground, The City of Calgary*

**The City of Calgary** developed and implemented new play program streams in 2018. Community Adventure Playground, School Adventure Play Pilot, Play Integration and Calgary's National Play Day.

The Mobile Adventure Playground continues to expand through this fall, offering loose parts play in five more communities.

Additionally, 3,559 children participated in 124 summer day camps, such as Stay n' Play and the several camps based in Calgary Recreation facilities that integrated unstructured play and loose parts components, through the Play Integration program.

In total 10,583 children had the opportunity to experience play in **The City of Calgary** programs and events throughout the year.

The **Calgary Zoo** worked to better connect children to nature and building empathy for nature through encouraging play. This summer, their Conservation Action Station focused on a story time with loose parts play. Over 10,000 children take part in this activity through July and August.

**Boys & Girls Club** offered outdoor programs throughout 2017-18 that encouraged children and youth to get outside and connect with nature through their Nature Ninjas, Great Escapes, and Community Garden programs. These include PD Days programming at Camp Adventure in Kananaskis and additional outdoor programs.

"It was a chance for us kids to be ourselves".

- The City of Calgary's campers on free play

"It was amazing! The students were engaged the whole time and there were no issues of anyone getting hurt or even having to work out any issues verbally. It was hard to get the students off the playground."

- Teacher at The City of Calgary's Adventure Play School Pilot

"Playing together is a good way for kids to get to know each other in the community."

- Parent, The City of Calgary Community Adventure Playground

"We invented, pretended, got to try new things."

- The City of Calgary's campers on free play

"Playing with the sand and rocks is more fun! I can make mountains and roads for my cars. I can even use this rolling pin to flatten the ground like construction."

- Child, The City of Calgary's Stay n' Play Program

"I like how creative my kids can be with all this stuff. Letting them just play with random objects and be creative with all of the other kids makes me happy. They always love to show me the things they make."

- Parent, The City of Calgary's Stay n' Play Program



*Mobile Adventure Playground, The City of Calgary*

# TRAINING

## 8 organizations trained over 1,400 staff and volunteers on ways to facilitate play.

Here are some highlights of staff and volunteer training to facilitate play.

**The City of Calgary** visited four schools to provide in-service training to 10 teachers about play. The training included getting their classrooms outside to engage in Mobile Adventure Playground loose parts play.

“Watching the students was very helpful for the staff as it gives a whole different perspective to their thinking. It was good for our staff to see the level of engagement kids had in this type of play setting as opposed to more structured and adult guided play. It helped me let go a little of safety and see how students get engaged when there is a little bit of risk. Loved seeing the students exploring and being imaginative and sharing. Our students typically have trouble cooperating and sharing without an adult mediating so it was great to see them doing this on their own.”

- Teacher

**The City of Calgary** trained 444 program staff and volunteers in child-led play who were given an opportunity to plan for play and see the results.

“When day camp programs engage in loose parts play, participants get along better in camp during the week, which is an excellent indicator that even a minimal amount of cooperative unstructured play will increase the opportunity for participants to build constructive and healthy relationships with their peers without adult social intervention.”

- Recreation Programmer, The City of Calgary

**Creative Childcare Consulting** continually brings new information about play to their network of childcare programs. We use key messages from the Calgary Play Charter, the Childcare Curriculum Framework, the International Play Association website and current research on the developmental benefits of intrinsically motivated play during on site coaching and during workshops. We have added new workshop topics that include Risky Play, Outdoor Play, Loose Parts, and Providing Play Opportunities for all age groups and Play Leadership (this will be listed on our new website the end of October).



Recreation leaders setting up the Community Adventure Playground, The City of Calgary



Leaders playing on the Playground, The City of Calgary



Setting up for National Play Day, The City of Calgary

# TRAINING

From the **Calgary Board of Education**, 250 students and 20 staff members had access to loose parts throughout the month of May resulting in a commitment to integrate outdoor loose parts into school plans for the 2018-19 school year.

Three professional development sessions focusing on play in the classroom, on the playground that covered the topic of risky play and the beneficial outcomes of loose parts play trial. This project is being shared at Calgary's 2018 Play Summit.

85 teachers attended "Weaving Art Experiences into Playful Exploration" that incorporated drama, art, music, and dance. Learning was then expanded into four sessions that focused on integrating play into several learning activities:

- How storybooks can provoke conversations that lead to inquiry and play
- How to bring play into the outdoor classroom
- How co-constructing the learning environment with the children inspired children to play
- How opportunities for outdoor play and learning from the land inspired extensions of classroom learning



*Mobile Adventure Playground, The City of Calgary*

**Alberta Parks** facilitated training on the importance of inclusion to seasonal interpreters and programmers.

**Calgary Police Service** supported 20 of their frontline police personnel to participate in Calgary Recreation's High Five training that, in part, introduces principles of play.

**Between Friends** facilitated inclusion training sessions for several community and recreation service providers. The training focused on inclusion, adapting games/activities, communication and fostering social and relationship building skills. It helps to build the capacity of these groups to foster an inclusive environment and even change their own practices and programs. Ninety per cent of participants who attend these sessions have reported an increased knowledge/skillset to make their practices more inclusive.

After attending the 2017 International Play Association Triennial World Conference the **Boys & Girls Club** designed a risky play presentation to share with their staff in order to begin integrating elements of risk into their programming. They also applied principles of play to their newly purchased Social and Emotional Learning curriculum to promote fair, cooperative play with a focus on self-regulation in all of our programs.



*Recreation leaders setting up the Community Adventure Playground, The City of Calgary*



Loose parts play space, Calgary Zoo



Mobile Adventure Playground, The City of Calgary



Mobile Adventure Playground, The City of Calgary

The **Calgary Zoo** committed to share things they've learned about nature play with staff and volunteers. In July and August, their loose parts play at their Conservation Action Station was hosted by Junior Zoo Guide volunteers. It was thrilling to see more than 30 of them taking part in facilitating play!

In the process of renewing their out of school care's accreditation, The **Chestermere Recreation Centre** focused on training that included information on play and how to guide children towards self-directed play. As a result, summer day camp and out of school care staff integrated free play into their program plans.

Since 2011, the leadership of **Calgary Child's Play**, **Sherpa Kids Canada** and **Scrapstore PlayPods Canada** have been play advocates that have participated in play work training and have delivered professional development opportunities to several external out of school care groups. As a result, groups were supported to develop their own play practices.

Internally, staff have received several professional development opportunities that deepen their play practices throughout 2017-18.

In addition, being active internationally with a play education network allows them to stay informed as well as support the local play community in Calgary.

“YYC Plays helped provide our organization and individual staff working in play a broader understanding of the importance of play and of play work that is happening in Calgary.”

“(YYC Plays) raises awareness of importance of play across Calgary within organizations, individuals, decision makers, etc.”

“YYC Plays afforded us the opportunity to connect with people from different organizations and parts of the city that we would otherwise not have the chance to learn from and work with.”

## YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN YYC PLAYS AND STAY CONNECTED!

YYC Plays is a collective of organizations working collaboratively on play to make an impact. Its vision is: Calgary – leading the ways to play. Its mission is to increase understanding, value, importance and participation in, for, and about play.

The City of Calgary has been its backbone organization from its beginnings in 2015, and has taken the lead in hosting monthly meetings where the collaborative work of identifying and coordinating play priorities, partnerships, opportunities, and resources is accomplished. It’s about sharing research, learning and sharing play successes and overcoming challenges together. Collectively, YYC Plays works at the policy, system, programs and services level.

Members believe in and are committed to play, represent organizations that can make a difference and that have an understanding that together, we are better. They are active contributors, knowledge gatherers, connectors and enablers of the YYC Plays vision and mission.

Visit [www.calgary.ca/play](http://www.calgary.ca/play) to be a part of it!

### THANK YOU AND KEEP PLAYING!

“YYC Plays is an opportunity to be inspired by and learn from one another’s work.”

“YYC Plays has created a like-minded environment and consistent space to work together on an important issue like play.”

“YYC Plays makes us stronger, more efficient and accessible to put on activities like National Play Day.”

