

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### 1. The Situation

In the past 20-30 years, without most of us realizing what was happening, lifestyle changes have accumulated with powerful, pervasive and sometimes detrimental effects on children<sup>1</sup>. Children are becoming less and less connected to the natural world with 80% of them being raised in urban settings and 90-95% of their time being spent indoors. The implication of this reality for their physical, mental and social health is immense.

Most everyone's outdoor experiences have changed dramatically over the past 50 years as we have moved indoors and screen spaces have replaced green places. Access to and use of television, computers, the Internet and hand held devices, increased parental fear and more highly structured play and supervision keeps children from playing outdoors.

The simple act of playing in nature results in healthier, happier and more aware children. Today's children will determine the future conservation of natural areas and the environment. We need to look at what we are doing to and with our children and families in terms of their ability and willingness to connect with and appreciate the benefits of nature and foster links for positive environmental choices.

To make a difference in British Columbia, we need to determine how to better facilitate opportunities for children and families to enjoy nature and to cultivate a care for community while nourishing a reconnection to the outdoors

Society needs to create the opportunities for children and families to get outside and play. Urban and provincial parks have an essential role in providing spaces for these experiences. To be successful we must be more purposeful about our intention at the community level and throughout various levels of government.

### 2. Background

In February 2007 a Dialogue was organized in Victoria with Richard Louv, the author of Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder<sup>2</sup>,

Following the dialogue, a small group of concerned individuals, both inside and outside government, have continued to meet with the assistance of ActNowBC, the Ministries of Environment and Healthy Living and Sport and Royal Roads University. Their goal has been to develop a provincial strategic approach to strengthen the connection between children, families and nature, leading to a province-wide 'child-nature connection' initiative. The vision is to have this strategy adopted by the provincial government as a framework for programming, policy reform and legislation.

This group sees the formation of an 'alliance' as essential in championing this important initiative. The alliance would work both within and outside governments to encourage various groupings of

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<sup>1</sup> Children can be described as 'learning to speak to puberty' and youth as 'puberty to early 20's'. For the purposes of this document we are using children generically to apply to both.

<sup>2</sup> For a summary report of this Dialogue refer to [www.naturechildreunion.ca](http://www.naturechildreunion.ca)

NGO's, government agencies, early childhood educators, academics, urban planners and K-12 teachers and outside educators to undertake activities to get children back outside.

### 3. Mandate<sup>3</sup>

As with any organization, it is essential to clearly define our 'niche' and then establish mechanisms that will enable success.

Vision: All children in the province are connected with nature and the outdoors.

Mission: To connect children and families with nature and the outdoors, in the settings where they live, play, learn and work.

Goals:

1. Children have outdoor playtime included in their school and out of school lives.
2. Neighbourhoods are designed and built to allow nature to be nearby, accessible and attractive to children and their families.
3. Outdoor environments are friendly, safe, joyful and beneficial.
4. Children are competent in handling and benefit from the challenges of being outdoors and/or in wild nature.
5. Children understand, respect and cherish nature.

There is a need to describe more specific targets and develop a set of operating principles by which the Alliance would be guided. It is important that these indicators highlight the importance of science and research.

### 4. Name

The proposed name is the Children and Nature Alliance.

(An alternative proposal is The Alliance for Children and Nature. The term 'BC' has been omitted to facilitate incorporation as a Society and because the goal is the Alliance will have a broader Canadian reach. Also some concern has been expressed that having 'nature' in the name is limiting.)

### 5. Terms of Reference

Scope: the Alliance is being brought together to serve as a coordinating link among the provincial and regional governments, the various groups/organizations/universities working on the children and nature connection throughout BC and other interested parties. The Alliance initially will be provincial in scale, with the potential long-term goal of becoming a national Alliance or being a fundamental component of the National Alliance. Alberta is a likely partner to assist with this broader conversation.

Purpose:

Short Term Implementation

- Finalize mandate, terms of reference and governance related issues - Summer 09.
- Develop and confirm a strategic plan and business model - Summer 09.
- Finalize Board of Director appointments that confirm the Alliance's key partners as soon as is reasonable.
- Develop and implement an action plan that sets priorities over the next 12 months.
- Follow-up as necessary to the March 09 Forum.

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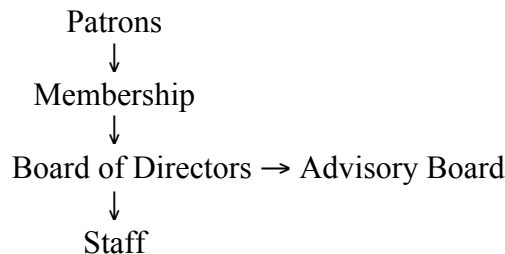
<sup>3</sup> The following is taken directly from the Logic Model.

- Develop funding options, locate seed money, and apply for grants, etc in an effort to establish a sound financial base within 12 months.
- Establish a website URL base for communication by May 2009.
- Promote and encourage communication throughout the province, led by the key groups/organizations.

#### Longer Term

- Develop mechanisms to support organizations/people who are working to achieve our mandate - financial and otherwise.
- Facilitate a conversation with interested parties focusing on urban areas to ensure they are more children-friendly and have a stronger element of nature/environment within their design.
- Support and enable a system that evaluates the overall approach and key elements of the Alliance.
- Formulate a BC Children and Nature Summit.
- Facilitate, likely with Alberta, the cross Canada conversation -- with the goal of being national within 3 years.

### 6. Governance<sup>4</sup>



Patrons: 3-5 people selected for their influence, caring for the cause and ability to assist with fundraising. Example: Robert Bateman, Iona Campagnola, Peter Robinson/David Suzuki, Silken Laumann.

Membership: The voting members of the society are the 5 original applicants and those persons that subsequently become members, in accordance with the bylaws. Only individuals are eligible to be a voting member, not organizations. An organization will put forward the name of an individual to the Board for membership and on acceptance by the directors will become a voting member. Each organization will have one vote. Only individuals who support and believe in the mandate are eligible to become voting members. A membership fee (\$100?) would be established. A sector is not limited to one vote.

A non-voting membership would be established for any person or organization that is supportive of the mandate. A non-voting members fee (\$40?) would be established.

A membership policy that clearly defines these points will need to be described and approved by the Board as a priority.

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<sup>4</sup> The information in this section is fundamental to the organization. It cannot all be resolved prior to March 8. We need to determine our 'level of comfort' for moving forward with the trust that the certain details/concerns will be noted for discussion and agreement in the future. The important task now is to move forward.

Board of Directors: the 5 first Directors would govern The Alliance initially. Board size would be limited (8-10) and would consist only of those individuals and organizations (through their voting members) directly involved with delivering/supporting the Alliance's goals and have made a commitment to assist with achieving the Alliance's mandate. As soon as possible a full slate of Directors needs to be elected, in accordance with the bylaws. Sectors would be represented on the Board through organizations and/or individuals. Government involvement is ex-officio. The Board will elect a Chair and will likely want to appoint a smaller 'operations committee' to conduct business between Board meetings. Working Groups (consisting of Directors, members and interested parties) will be necessary to guide defined tasks/projects. The following organizations/sectors have been suggested and/or have expressed interest in being on the Board: (other suggestions, what is missing?)

- BC Healthy Communities
- BC Healthy Living Alliance
- BC Recreation and Parks Association
- Early Childhood Education
- The Kesho Trust
- Youth
- A Land Trust group (The Nature Trust or The Land Conservancy)
- Universities (RRU, UVIC)
- Scouting
- UBCM
- Cities Fit for Children Conference representative

Advisory Board: Individuals appointed by the Board to provide advice on a variety of topics as and when required. A key focus here needs to be promoting research. Members would need to be from a broad range of backgrounds to be effective: academics, practioners, government employees, architects, planners, etc -- most should already be familiar with this conversation.

Staff: The Board appoints staff. At this point there is no agreement on the permanent staff complement, although 1-1.5 FTE's has been discussed. The Alliance must remain small and flexible, with the goal to create as little bureaucracy as possible. Permanent staff may very well not be full-time. In addition to the permanent staff there would be 'project staff' to undertake various initiatives as directed by the Board. It has been recommended, on an interim/transition basis, that The Kesho Trust (Bob Peart) undertake the lead staff role. This transition role would be for 3-6 months until there is better clarity regarding staff needs and funding. The Kesho Trust has expressed interest in serving a longer-term permanent role as the 'staffing organization' --- this option has not been discussed thoroughly nor has its efficacy been analyzed.

Decision-making: Once appointed the Board will need to confirm their decision-making process. A consensus decision-making model has been suggested, except on those matters (such as financial or staffing) where a vote may be required.

Conflict of Interest: Conflict of interest guidelines will need to be established.

## 7. Finances

A realistic core annual budget needs to be established considering such factors as salaries, board costs, operations, office requirements, travel, etc. A range of \$50-125,000 has been discussed. Potential sources of funding are the provincial and federal governments, foundations, program grants, individuals, corporations and membership. The Alliance could also attract in-kind support. Specific funding would be applied for particular programs/projects above the core budget. The Alliance would apply for federal charity status --- in the interim it has been suggested that either

The Kesho Trust or the BC Conservation Foundation serve as the fiscal agent. The Alliance would require various bank accounts with appropriate signing authorities. During transition The Kesho Trust or BC Conservation Foundation could serve as the organization that receives/holds the money through accounts specifically set up for that purpose. As soon as possible a formal accounting/banking mechanism needs to be established.

#### 8. Administration

It has been suggested that the Capital Region serve as the office base. A small space with the necessary office equipment would be required --- Royal Roads University has generously offered. Other options in the Victoria region, perhaps more central, have not been explored. In-kind donations for 'setting the office up to be functional' would be most helpful.

A website system will need to be established to enable communication, etc.

### TRANSITION

The goal is that by Sunday March 8 the Alliance will be registered as a Society. At that meeting this draft Framing Document would be available for discussion and approved in principle by those in attendance (with appropriate changes), along with a short-term action plan. An interim Board of Directors would be confirmed to guide implementation. The documents needed for the Sunday meeting are: registration material, draft framing document, agenda and proposed action plan.

Following is a tentative list of sectors that are potentially directly involved with this mandate: education (early childhood to early university), health/social/environmental NGO's, government (federal, provincial, regional, municipal), government arms-length agencies, recreation, youth, sport, naturalists, academia, philanthropy, community groups, scouting planners/architects/developers --- and of course the children, parents and the families themselves.

Important points:

- The name Children and Nature Alliance has been searched in the on-line registry and there is no conflict.
- For the purposes of registering 5 names are required to serve as the Alliance's first Directors. The following 5 names are proposed.
  - Bob Peart
  - Jodi Mucha
  - Nevin Harper
  - Kara Leier
  - Hilary Leighton
- The bylaws state that upon incorporation we will need to elect a President, vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer.
- The following Constitution and Bylaws is proposed:

There are advantages in the interim of adopting Schedule B even though it may not fit our governance needs, as it simplifies the registration process. Conflict/concerns/corrections can be addressed at the initial and subsequent Annual General Meetings.

#### CONSTITUTION

1. *The name of the society is The Children and Nature Alliance.*
2. *The purpose of the society is to connect children and families with nature and the outdoors, in the settings where they live, play, learn and work. Our goals are that:*

- *Children have outdoor playtime included in their school and out of school lives.*
- *Neighbourhoods are designed and built to allow nature to be nearby, accessible and attractive to children and their families.*
- *Outdoor environments are friendly, safe, joyful and beneficial.*
- *Children are competent in handling and benefit from the challenges of being outdoors and/or in wild nature.*
- *Children understand, respect and cherish nature.*

#### **BYLAWS**

*The bylaws of the society are those set out in Schedule B to the Society Act.*

## **APPENDIX**

- Draft Children Nature Connection Logic Model.