

A Cradle in the Waves:
An Experiential and Restorative Approach to Playscape Design
Study Report



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in collaboration with CHANCES Inc.

-Introduction-

In 2017, CHANCES Family Center in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island collaborated with Jennifer Bradley, a Prince Edward Island native, and PhD Candidate at Duquesne university to facilitate a study of the backyard at Upper Prince with the aim of understanding and enhancing its restorative potential. The backyard at Upper Prince is a diverse landscape marked by shaded areas, old trees, and a sunny, wildly overgrown garden. CHANCES recognized that that with some tender love and care the backyard space could be transformed to be an inviting and restorative area for children and families to spend time. CHANCES values a strength-based approach to program development and always strives to meet the unique needs of children and families. It was therefore important to CHANCES to engage a design process in a way that upheld and honored their strength-based, community-led approach.

I. PRINCIPLES FOR RESTORATIVE DESIGN

The *Restorative Design Process: A Guide to Experiential-Based to Designing Outdoor Landscapes* was developed by Jennifer Bradley, M.A. as partial fulfilment of her doctoral thesis at Duquesne University. *Restorative Playscape design* is an experiential approach to designing children’s outdoor play places that involves utilizing local knowledge of children and educators lived and embodied relationship with their play landscape to guide the process of enhancing the emotional and restorative affordances inherent in natural landscapes.

Research has shown that experiences and time-spent outdoors in natural environments can contribute to increased attentional capacity, decrease in physiological and psychological stress, improved sense of self-esteem, afford opportunities for connection and empathetic development (Louv, 2008; McCormick, 2017). Additionally, when members of a community such as children and staff are invited into a decision-making process regarding their spaces (e.g. classrooms, schools, grounds, etc.) they develop greater self-esteem, feelings of self-worth, and develop a deeper sense of respect and responsibility the places they inhabit (Jacobs, 2016; Thomas, 2007).

Drawing from contemporary research on the psychological and emotional affordances of natural environments as well as the benefits of engaging children in the place design, I developed a novel approach to playscape that is deeply embedded within child-centered, phenomenological and eco psychological frameworks.

Key Principles of Restorative Playscape Design:

- Knowledge about place is best generated by those who engage with it locally. Thus, place-based decisions should be made collaboratively by those who engage with the place on a regular basis
- Children have the right to share their experience and perspective on matters that directly impact their lives and experience, including the design and development of their local places
- Educators have the right to collaboratively participate in decisions that directly impact their experience as educators and the design and development of their educational space
- The relationship between humans and nature is interdependent, which means that the places that we inhabit, and their distinctive features can influence and shape our mood and how we feel

II. FRAMEWORK

The pilot study for the Restorative Design Process for Outdoor Playscapes involved implementing three experiential and community-based methods that are appropriate for eliciting an understanding of the lived experience and emotional atmosphere of outdoor landscapes. early childhood context involves collecting and weaving together experiential data from three sources/methods:

1. CHILD-LED EMBODIED WALKS

Rusty Keeler, a North American playground designer coined the term “playscape” as he understood that children’s outdoor play spaces are and should be perceived as landscapes for play (Keeler, 2008). When we design and develop places intended for children, it is imperative that we develop some understanding of their experience in the playscape; to understand what they are attracted to, what they avoid, what they express liking and disliking, and how their body moves and gestures in response to the place. Making efforts to understand the child’s experience of their playscape gives us insight into its affordances, which are structural features of a place can *afford* or allow for certain types of experience. For example, a large rock can *afford* climbing, jumping, and potentially hiding for a child. Asking open-ended questions about their experience and watching how their bodies move and react to the different areas and features of place can also give us insight to how they *feel*; how the place shapes their mood and behavior.

Sugandh Dixit (2018) coined the term “embodied walk” to reflect her embodied approach to place-based research with children. Challenging traditional child-led methods that rely too heavily on verbal expression and/or naturalistic observation, Dixit reminds us that our approach to research with children should reflect our everyday, “typical” engagement with children. An embodied approach should involve some degree of walking and talking with the children about their places and experience, and to closely attend to what children *do* in their playscape rather than merely asking them to “*use their words*” to explain their activities. Dixit’s embodied approach holds that our experience of a place is co-constructed through our interactions and conversations with others, and so to walk alongside and to engage with children, rather than to merely follow and/or observe at a distance, more aptly reflects children’s lived, everyday engagement with their places.

2. PEDAGOGICAL REFLECTIONS

One of the key features of community engaged research is that it involves honoring the voices and expertise of *all* members of a given community. Educators have gained competency and expertise in child pedagogy and development. It is therefore important that their experience *as educators* is explored and recognized when developing outdoor playscapes for their young learners. This component of the design process requires educators to think about what types of developmental and learning experiences they believe young children should have in their outdoor playscapes.

3. PLACE STUDY

A fundamental tenant of this study and design approach is recognizing the interdependent relationship between humans and nature. Human beings and especially children have a strong, connection with nature: “nature carries, supports and nourishes us” and likewise, we can carry, support and nourish nature through our own activity and engagement to understand and honor the restorative potential of outdoor places, it is imperative that we work to understand the natural affordances of a place and how these affordances shape our feelings, moods and activities.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, a nineteenth century poet and naturalist, developed a detailed and close observational approach to studying colors and plants that has since been developed into a systematic experiential method, and applied to the study of places (Brook, 1998; Simms, 2017). Drawing from Goethe’s approach, Eva Simms (2014) developed a five-step, guided experiential process that invites participants to develop a deeper and more sense-oriented understanding of place. This process requires participants to engage in structured observations, assessment and imagination as an approach to discovering the natural affordances and potential of the place in question.

III. THE PILOT

A pilot study was conducted with the CHANCES community in the summer of 2019. The project was approved the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, U.S. All participants, and parents of the child participants, consented to participation in the study. Following the design process described above, the study consisted of three parts: embodied walks with children participating in the Smart Start Early Years program; completion of a pedogeological survey from the educators of the Smart Start Early Years program; and finally, a place study with adult members of the CHANCES community including educators and directors, as well as provincial coaches, and a student and faculty from the University of Prince Edward Island.

1. CHILD EMBODIED WALKS

Fourteen children between the ages of 2-5 participated in the child embodied walks portion of the study. Children were invited to give our trusted friend ‘Burghy the Pig (a pig puppet) and Dawn MacLeod, the CHANCES Coordinator a “tour” of the yard to show us what they liked and didn’t like; to share the activities they liked to engage in; and to get to know the areas of the yard they were most drawn/ averse to etc. The children were so excited to share their experiences with ‘Burghy and Dawn, often inviting them to join in on the fun! The information gathered from the embodied walks was organized into general themes. Significant places in the backyard were identified. The emotional atmosphere (i.e. how the children felt in each place), the activities afforded, and a description of the structural/natural features of each significant place were also documented. These findings were later used to guide the enhancements of the backyard.

2. PEDAGOGICAL REFLECTIONS

Three educators and staff were invited to complete a pedagogical survey. The brief survey required staff to reflect upon what types of outdoor experiences are necessary for young children to encourage and strengthen growth and development. All three educators completed this survey, and the results represented in the chart below.

3. PLACE STUDY

In July 2019, Dr. Eva Simms conducted a two-day place study workshop with ten CHANCES staff, two provincial coaches, and two members of the UPEI community. The adult participants engaged in a series of experiential and reflective exercises to deepen their understanding of the backyard place and its diverse affordances. Discussions from the workshop and other forms of documentation such as sticky notes, journal entries and drawings were collected and used as data to inform the backyard design at Upper Prince Street. Figure 2 illustrates the key themes and findings from this place study.

IV: THE DESIGN

Once all of the data was collected and organized from all three experientially based sources, we began the process of developing enhancements for the backyard. I examined the significant “places” and experience(s) that were shared among participants, and developed enhancements that would intensify the developmental, learning, and most importantly the emotional affordances of the place. If there were important experiential affordances that were missing or limited, then I designed or implemented an enhancement that would fill this gap while maintaining the overall integrity of the yard and its inherent affordances.

Many of the enhancements which are featured in the Upper Prince Backyard were designed and built in close collaboration with the children, staff, local carpenters and builders, including CHANCES parents, landscapers, and even my own parents! Our Island own: Sterling Construction, Harvey Construction, and the MacPhail Woods Nursery were key community partners throughout this project.

V: CONCLUDING REMARKS

This project started with the recognition and appreciation that outdoor places have the potential to provide rich opportunities for play, while also restoring our mind, body, and soul. Using experiential methods, we were able to explore this phenomenon at a deeper level to discover what particular affordances exist in the Upper Prince Backyard Space that enhance learning, development and well-being, and then discover enhancements to intensify or evoke restorative experience. We discovered that outdoor play affords children open-ended opportunities for play,

movement, exploration, socialization, creativity, and rich, intensified engagement with the sensory world that can leave children and adults feeling restored mentally and physically. Particular features such as the tall structures that afford seeing across the whole yard, and familiar play equipment such as swings and slides further lend to feelings of safety and security. Outdoor play also provides opportunities for connectivity between children, educators and families, as well as non-human beings, which can promote healthy social emotional development, empathy and care. Since wrapping up the project, which happened to be during the COVID -19 pandemic, and implementing many of the core structures and enhancements, many children, families and educators/staff *across programs* have utilized this space regularly as a place of refuge and safety. While we do not yet have “hard” data (i.e. comparative data to examine its restorative effects), our qualitative data and informal feedback regarding children and families experience of the yard does support its positive impact on overall well-being.

References:

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Upper Prince Study: Responses from the Embodied Walks

Where the ‘Wormies’ Are	<p>The "rock area" or “the place where the wormies are” was identified by the children as beloved place. Located at the North East end of the backyard, the rock area is a small clearing surrounded by small trees, shrubs and weeds. Children entered the rock area via a short dirt path with a canopy of intersecting leaves overhead. At the clearing, red-clay rocks of all shapes and sizes were available for children to climb, pick up, move, and smash. Underneath the rocks, children discovered worms and other bugs that drew curiosity and fascination. Some were attracted to the strong scent of lilacs and the sound of buzzing bees. Despite the seemingly loud activity of smashing and moving rocks, many children insisted on speaking in a hushed tone as to not scare away the bees and other critters.</p>
The “Safe” Base	<p>The “safe base” refers to the large traditional playset located in the center of the backyard. The playset, particularly the swings, was the first place that children went during the embodied walks. The structure has two swings, a slide, a set of monkey bars, and two climbing apparatus’, and provides opportunities for climbing, swinging, sliding and social interaction. The children engaged the gross motor affordances of the structure in ways that were predictable and intended. Engaging in these predictable activities evoked feelings of joy, excitement, and pride. Children were excited to show off their ability to climb, swing and slide all on their own, often wanting adults to watch rather than assist them. The monkey bars presented a challenge to all of the children, but unlike other structures that afforded a challenge such as the swings and climbing wall, the monkey bars were too fear-inducing. The structure was the first place that children visited and would be a place that many would return again and again throughout their embodied walks. The consistent return to an area that is familiar and predictable reveals an affordance of the play structure as a safe place. It is a place where an adult presence is almost always guaranteed and affords activities that are familiar and accomplishable. Children feel confident, joyful and connected here.</p>

Upper Prince Study: Responses from the Embodied Walks

The Place Less Travelled	<p>The children's experience of the westside of the yard was marked by a sense of fear, uncertainty and unpredictability. The shady, mosquito ridden area covered with ferns and weeds was not particularly inviting to the children. The children who were interested in playing here tended to orient around the plastic houses and wooden teepee, which rested in this general area. These houses afforded imaginative and interactive play and climbing. A popular activity at one plastic house was "drive through". Several children invited Dawn and 'Burgy to be the "customers". The older children (age 4-5) also liked to climb trees, and some children expressed an interest in playing imaginative games at the north west end of the yard (the only place on the west side that had a patch of sun).</p> <p>When children were asked about what happened beyond the structures, they appeared uncertain and at times, fearful. Some children explicitly shared that the area was "scary", while others indicated this through shrieks, scrunched shoulders and a hesitancy to explore (unless an adult was in close proximity).</p> <p>One particularly appealing feature of the west side was a hole at the bottom of a large tree trunk. There were leaves, dirt and old twigs stuffed down the hole. Almost all of the children identified this as a place of interest and intrigue. Children engaged the hole with a sense of fear, anxiety and a wee bit of excitement. A few children were convinced that a "smelly skunk" lived in the hole, another child believed that <i>something</i> lived there that could grab you and pull you in! In any case, the presence of this hole and its mythology really animated the children's imagination.</p>
The Tunnel	<p>Children overwhelmingly identified the center east side of the yard as a favorite place. In particular, there was a small child-sized and child-made tunnel made of intertwining knotweed and grapevines that ran along the fence. Several children excitedly led Dawn and 'Burgy through the tall grass, knotweed and flowers to the "secret" tunnel. This wild unkept place evoked a sense of adventure and resilience, particularly for the male participants, who were observed stomping through the tall grass, tugging and breaking through the Japanese knotweed as they forged their own path. Several children were also attracted to the powerful smell of the flowers and herbs, as well as the presence of insects such as bees and butterflies. Several children expressed wanting more flowers and a garden here.</p>
High Places	<p>Children were drawn to places that afforded an experience of "being high up" such as "the good climbing trees", the play structure, and the swings. For some children, being high up was associated with feeling big and powerful. For example, there were a few boys who enjoyed climbing on top of the plastic houses so that they could be "taller" and "higher" than the teachers and other children. For other children, climbing</p>

Upper Prince Study: Responses from the Embodied Walks

	<p>trees presented a challenge that required a great deal of attention, focus and coordination. Whereas climbing the houses was extrinsically motivated, drawing attention from others, particularly adults, climbing trees appeared to be a more intrinsically motivating and satisfying activity for children. Being up high as a consequence of climbing tree appeared to be associated with a feeling of pride, relief and satisfaction. Structures that afforded “being up high” also provided a sense of safety and security. Children relied on the play structure as a place where they could see the whole yard and over the fence into the neighboring yards. Located in an urban neighborhood, loud sounds coming from outside the confines of the yard often startled and frightened the children. Having a place to climb and assess the potential situation, provided a sense of orientation and comfort.</p>
The “Driving” Deck	<p>The deck is the threshold between the gated entrance and the backyard. After entering the gate, children ran across the deck, launching themselves into the grass. Toddlers had a more challenging time with this, often needing to wait for adult support to step down into the yard. Aside from being a transitional space, the deck also was a place for riding small plastic cars and bikes, an activity that had to be closely monitored as children could easily drive off the deck. The deck was also the only place where children had access to water. During one of the walks, a child showed Dawn and ‘Burghy a leaf that was collecting water at the end of a drainpipe. They were so excited to see that the leaf was filling up with rainwater. When asked what the backyard needed, many of the children mentioned water or water-related activities.</p>
The places where the toys are not accessible	<p>Throughout the embodied walks, children were drawn to areas where toys were located, but could not be accessed. For example, several children led Dawn and ‘Burghy to a shed that has “all the toys”. Because of this, a few children identified the shed as a “favorite” place. One child made a request for a “gold” door because it was just “so exciting”. Some children expressed disappointment and frustration that there were toys that they could not access. Another place of interest was the “old shed”. The “old shed”, located in the north east corner of the yard was worn and tattered and no longer accessible. Plastic sandboxes and baby gates connected the barn to the fence so that children could not access the narrow space behind the barn. Here, there were balls and broken toys that the children could see but could not reach. Unlike the “golden” barn, this area did not evoke disappointment or frustration, but rather a sense of apathy and indifference. It was as if they had already given up hope of every playing with those things again.</p>
The places with the broken things	<p>Scattered throughout the yard were some toys or play materials that were broken, empty or missing pieces. Children would often approach the broken toy with a sense of excitement only to be disappointed when they encountered a damaged toy, or a structure that was missing pieces. For example, a young girl shrieked with excitement when she saw a bottle of bubbles from afar. However, when she was closer her expression turned to disappointment after realizing that the bubbles were empty. It is important to consider what impact this has on a child when they consistently encounter damaged things or uncared for environments.</p>

Upper Prince Study: Responses from the Embodied Walks

	How might this impact their sense of self-esteem? Self-worth? Or their motivation to help care for their environments?
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Responses from the Place Study

Threshold(s)	The entrance to the yard (the deck) was identified as a problematic place for a number of reasons. For one participant, the threshold or transition from the deck gate to the grassy part of the yard felt too abrupt. Seeing the yard in full upon entering was almost experienced as a shock to the senses. A desire for a more “prolonged” experience was identified. Another participant, who is a mother of a child who uses a wheelchair, experienced the deck (and consequently, the yard) as unwelcoming because it was not wheelchair accessible. The lack of accessibility was experienced as restricting and rejecting. Finally, many participants identified the safety concerns with the deck. With the steep drop off, children often required assistance from educators to transition from the deck to the grass and vice versa, which took time away from engaging with the children.
The North Side	This place emerged as a calm place, sense stimulating area that invited exploration. The presence of bees buzzing, the smell of lilacs and mint, and the diverse flowers and weeds that were interwoven together heightened the aesthetic appeal of this area. Participants imagined great potential for this area, which included creating a garden and bringing in tools for investigating (e.g. magnifying glasses, shovels, etc.)
The South Side	Several participants identified the southside as a favorite area of the yard. Unlike the child participants, the adults found that this area was inviting and restorative. It was experienced as peaceful, relaxing and protective. Participants also felt invited to explore and engage their imaginations here. Affordances such as the canopy of leaves, the large boulders, and trees invited participants to move their bodies in a variety of ways (e.g. jumping, crawling, ducking, climbing, etc.).
The Playset	The playset was identified as a focal point of the yard. For one participant who closely explored the structure, the playset evoked a sense of excitement. She felt herself wanting to move in novel ways, however her excitement was not sustained. She quickly felt bored. Similar to the children’s findings, she enjoyed climbing and being able to “be above higher ground” and to see out across the yard. It afforded a new perspective of the yard. Several participants also noted that the play structure was not developmentally appropriate for the age group who used it most.
The Whole Place: Beauty and Unbeauty	Generally, participants identified the yard as a whole an aesthetically appealing place, noting the beauty inherent in the natural features of the yard such as the flowers, the vibrant trees, the contrast between the shady and sunny areas, etc. However, several participants expressed feeling as though the beauty was overshadowed or hidden by other, less appealing features of the yard such as the clutter of plastic toys, many of which were broken and/or uncared for, the old shed, and the general lack of maintenance. There was a strong desire from virtually all participants to eliminate the plastic materials in the yard (e.g. old plastic houses and slide

Responses from the Place Study

	structures, an old art table, etc.) and replace them with natural structures and features. For one participant who close examined the old shed at the north-west end of the yard, the poor state of the shed interfered with his ability to imagine the potential and growth of that area. He associated the old shed with feelings of neglect, rejection, a sense of loss.
The Whole Place: Sensory Experiences	The yard as a whole was identified as a sensory haven. Participants were attracted to the diverse sensory experiences that were afforded in the yard, namely ones that were associated with feeling calm and relaxed such as the sound of leaves blowing in the wind, the sound of insects and creatures, the strong smell of mint and lilac, smell of “freshness” that was present. However, there was an overwhelming consensus that more sensory invitations were needed. Several participants noted the need for more tactile experiences (e.g. sand and water), as well as diverse sounds (i.e. chimes, birds chirping), and smells (e.g. more flowers, herbs, and “smelly things”

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The following enhancements were identified and developed based on an integration of the data sets. All enhancements aimed to honor and enhance core experiences identified by participants such as: emotionally and physically safe experiences, imaginative experiences, enhancing learning and development opportunities, sensory experience, beauty and aesthetics, empowering places, and to ensure accessibility to the yard and its affordances for all children.

Place	Recommendations	Enhancement
North Side (Rock Area, Wild Place and Old Shed)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preserve and enhance the structure of the child-made tunnel 2. Make a garden and have access to water 3. Replace the “wild” (Japanese knotweed, weeds and uncontrolled grapevine) with native PEI shrubs and wildflowers to diversify the sensory experience 4. Create paths that can still be accessed when the area becomes overgrown 5. Allow children to pull and break the knotweed (“bamboo”). This experience posed a challenge for children, it contributed to their sense of “adventure” and imagination and it allowed them to engage their emotional experience and regulation. 6. Remove old shed, add new shed, paint a gold door! 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A long pergola was designed to go underneath the grapevine (Figure 1. This structure will be completed in Fall 2020) <i>Future considerations:</i> stone path under pergola 2. An 8 x 8 garden box was constructed in the center of the North Side. In July 2020, children planted beans, lettuce, carrots, squash, cucumber and tomatoes. Surrounding the garden is naturally growing mint, clematis and a service berry plant (See Figure 9). A rain barrel was placed on the deck, as well as watering cans and other canisters to collect water and take it to other parts of the yard (e.g. to water flowers, to make mud for the mud kitchen or to construct a water wall). 3. MacPhail Woods Homestead landscaped a the large “wild area” with native PEI shrubs and wildflowers that will attract different types of birds, bees, afford new and inviting scents and colors to this area (See Figure 2) <i>Future considerations:</i> annual landscaping maintenance 4. Several paths (linear and meandering) were created throughout the wild area, the rock area and behind

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		<p>the lilac tree. Some paths were dirt, some had stones, and small bridge was added as a part of a path to the tunnel to enhance the sense of adventure and imagination.</p> <p>5. A patch of knotweed near the north east end of the yard was preserved for the children (see Figure 3)</p> <p>6. The old shed was removed and replaced with a new shed. With a gold door! The gold door enhances the excitement and imaginative quality of the shed, and what is in it, which are toys—this was also a strong request from a child participant because the toys are just “so exciting” (see figure 4).</p> <p><i>Future considerations:</i> It is strongly recommended (and has been proposed) that fences be put up between the shed and the surrounding fence (one should be a gate). Additionally, to enhance the imaginative, playful quality of this place, I suggest creating a fairy garden or placing some pretend animals back there with peek holes in the fence so that children who are interested in what is behind the shed are not faced with old, broken toys, but rather something that enhances their imagination and interest. We also need to find some better gold paint!</p>
Playset	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adapt the play structure so that it is developmentally appropriate 2. Make the playset accessible to <i>all</i> children, including children who might use a wheelchair or have mobility issues. 3. Revitalize the playset and its appeal 4. Implement a shade structure (the playset gets too sunny and hot during the summer months) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A local carpenter (Sterling Woodworking) was contracted to make adaptation to the play structure. He did the following: replaced monkey bars with a second slide; closed one of the entrances to enhance safety; extended the climbing wall and added bars so that younger children could climb safely and independently; and he created a music wall (see Figure 10,11 & 12). 2. Establishing accessibility in the backyard will be an ongoing project for CHANCES. At present, the playset is not accessible, but it is my strong recommendation to develop ways to access to the playset and its

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		<p>affordances (e.g. an accessible path that leads directly into the music wall, an accessible swing, and a ramp to the slides).</p> <p>3. We re-stained the playset, added new swings and new slides, a music wall and added some new gravel.</p> <p>4. We planted a white ash tree (in honor of the Mi'Qmaq peoples of Prince Edward Island). This tree will eventually provide shelter and shade to this area (see Figure 23).</p>
South Side	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make this area more inviting and welcoming to the children while preserving the imaginative and mythical qualities of the place 2. Create more opportunities for socio-dramatic/imaginative play (e.g. preserve the children's interest in playing "drive through") <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Clean up all garbage and broken toys in the South East end of the yard 4. Enhance the quiet, peaceful play affordances of the South West corner of the yard 5. Create paths to invite children to explore this area in a way that feels familiar and safe (this was an explicit recommendation from a child who expressed that he experienced the area as scary. When asked what would make him feel safer, he said: "a path because then he would know where he was going") 6. Have loose parts available to enhance the imaginative and curious affordances already made available here 7. Create peek holes in the fence so that children can safely see what is happening around them while in this anxiety-provoking area of the yard 8. Protect the holes! 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All enhancements to follow fulfill this first recommendation. 2. Sterling Woodworking created two A-frame structures to replace the plastic houses. We also collaboratively designed a wooden mud kitchen that functions like a drive through (see Figure 16 and 17). 3. All garbage was removed by staff. MacPhail Woods landscaping pruned the trees and removed a dead tree and shrubs. <i>Future considerations:</i> annual landscaping maintenance 4. A large tree-house-like structure was designed in collaboration with Steph Construction (see Figure 13). This enhancement was intended to be a wheel-chair accessible structure that could afford <i>any</i> child the experience of being "high up" and seeing across the whole yard. The ramp led up to a small tree house, and underneath there is a space that will be a sandbox in summer 2021 (see Figure 14). Surrounding the sandbox are ferns and witch hazel that will enhance the sensory affordances of the yard. The structure affords quiet engagement with the outdoor space, and the restorative activity of sand play. <i>Future considerations:</i> Plant more herbs to enhance the calming qualities of this area.

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		<p>5. A colorful linear path was placed along the fence and stopped at the tree with “the hole” from there I created a hop-scotch path to the tree house a.k.a “the leaf ramp”. The hopscotch path is an important feature here because similar to the playset, it affords a familiar activity in a place that is experienced as somewhat foreign, scary, and uncertain (see Figure 18). <i>Future considerations:</i> wheelchair accessible paths</p> <p>6. A loose parts area was created at the south east end of the yard. A 3-tire path was installed, and pieces of wood, plastic piping, and other loose materials were placed in this area to promote construction, creativity and imagination (see Figure 15).</p> <p>7. This recommendation that has not yet been implemented.</p> <p>8. The holes were left alone, but I encouraged educators to not dissuade the children from exploring them and investigating, but rather engage them in their story telling about what happens in the holes, who lives in there, and their feelings (e.g. fears, anxieties).</p>
Deck (Threshold)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use structural enhancements to prolong the experience of entering the yard (via the deck or another entrance) 2. Enhance accessibility 3. Make it more inviting for staff and parents 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A. We designed a beautiful pergola entrance from the parking lot into the yard (South East). When children and educators enter the pergola, they are met with a long colorful path along the edge of the fence; to the right is the loose part area with a space where children and adults can walk through to the main part of the yard (See Figure 19). B. On the deck, we created a ramp that extends from the center of the deck to the ground. On the edge of the deck Sterling Construction built flowerbox benches to discourage climbing on and jumping off the deck. Thus, when entering via the deck gate,

Upper Prince Study- Place Enhancements

		<p>children must meander around the deck to reach the ramp rather than feeling compelled to run and jump (see Figure 20).</p> <p>2. The height and width of the pergola meets the requirements for accessible entrances. A ramp that extends from the deck to the ground makes the deck accessible from the yard. <i>Future considerations:</i> create an accessible path from the pergola to other parts of the yard, and create an accessible ramp that leads from the parking lot onto the deck.</p> <p>3. Flower boxes and benches were built along the edge of the deck to invite people to sit, relax and enjoy the flowers and the view of the yard. We also put a rain barrel on the deck for children to have access to water so that they can water their garden or use it for water play (see Figure 20). <i>Future considerations:</i> a picnic table or eating area and more flowerpots.</p>
The Whole Place	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish flow. Each place in the backyard has distinctive features and affordances, and participants (adults expressed this verbally and the children did so through movement and activities) expressed a lack of interconnectivity between the places in the yard. 2. Enhance and preserve the natural beauty and aesthetic of the whole place 3. Provide ongoing maintenance and care—when we learn to care for a place, we learn to care for each other. 	<p>1. Stone paths were implemented in a number of areas to enhance the connectivity between places (e.g south east to south west). Landscapers also planted trees and shrubs in areas that were more open (westside, north east, and east) to lessen the contrast between the diverse, full plant life on the north and south sides and the otherwise barren center part of the yard. <i>Future considerations:</i> A meandering wheelchair/bike path that goes around the playset (around the whole yard). Or if this is not possible, accessible paths from the deck/pergola into other areas of the yard.</p> <p>2. In collaboration with MacPhail Woods Homestead, we created and implemented a landscape design. We planted native trees, shrubs and wildflowers that would provide color and diverse sensory experiences to the</p>

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		<p>yard all year round, and that would attract different bird species. All play structures that were added are natural wood.</p> <p><i>Future considerations:</i> Continue maintenance and care, which includes annual pruning. And please, reduce plastics if at all possible.</p> <p>4. See Above</p>
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NORTH SIDE



Figure 1. Pathway to the tunnel



Figure 2. "Wild Area" (Landscaped with native shrubs and wildflowers that will grow big over the next couple of years)



Figure 3. Japanese Knotweed



Figure 4. New Barn



Figure 5. Path to Quiet Place



Figure 6A. The original plastic art table



Figure 6 B. Art table that looks out to the garden and wild area



Figure 7. Entrance to the “Rock Area”



Figure 8 “Rock Area”

Figure 9. Olga's Garden



THE PLAYSET



Figure 10. Playset before adaptations



Figure 11A. Playset with Adaptations



Figure 11B. Playset with Adaptations



Figure 12. Music Wall

THE SOUTH SIDE



Figure 13. Leaf Ramp



Figure 14. Future Sandbox



Figure 15. Loose Part Area



Figure 16. House structures and mud kitchen



Figure 17. Mud Kitchen/ Drive Through



Figure 18. Colorful Path

THRESHOLDS



Figure 19. Pergola Entrance



Figure 20. Deck with accessible ramp

FINAL TOUCHES: Other additions



Figure 21. A Service Berry Bush, that will continue to grow and eventually provide shade to the deck



Figure 22. A wrap around bench that overlooks the entire yard. This location was identified by one of the educators who uses the space regularly. Also, you can see here the spruce trees against the fence that will add color to the backyard during the winter months and will help enhance the flow by filling out this space.



Figure 23. Last but certainly not least, this is a white ash tree that is dedicated to the Mi'kmaq community on Prince Edward Island. This tree will eventually provide shade and shelter for the children and staff when they use the playset. Symbolically, this tree has been associated with transformation, healing and creative expression.

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