



Wonder

NEWSLETTER OF THE NATURE ACTION COLLABORATIVE FOR CHILDREN

JULY/AUGUST 2014

Global Connections for Children and Nature

Nearly 850 people from 81 countries came together at the recent World Forum on Early Care and Education in San Juan, Puerto Rico. As part of that gathering, the Leadership Team of the World Forum Foundation's Nature Action Collaborative for Children (NACC) met for two days to dream together and make plans for how to help those dreams become reality. People from all parts of the world talked candidly with each other about the struggles they are facing as they work to create spaces and programs that support children's joyful, daily connections with nature.

Many commented that alone our efforts can seem small and overwhelming. Together, as we support each other and share ideas and inspiration, we can find more powerful and impactful ways to improve the lives of children, families, and educators. Read below to learn more about the work of this group.

You are invited to dream with us.

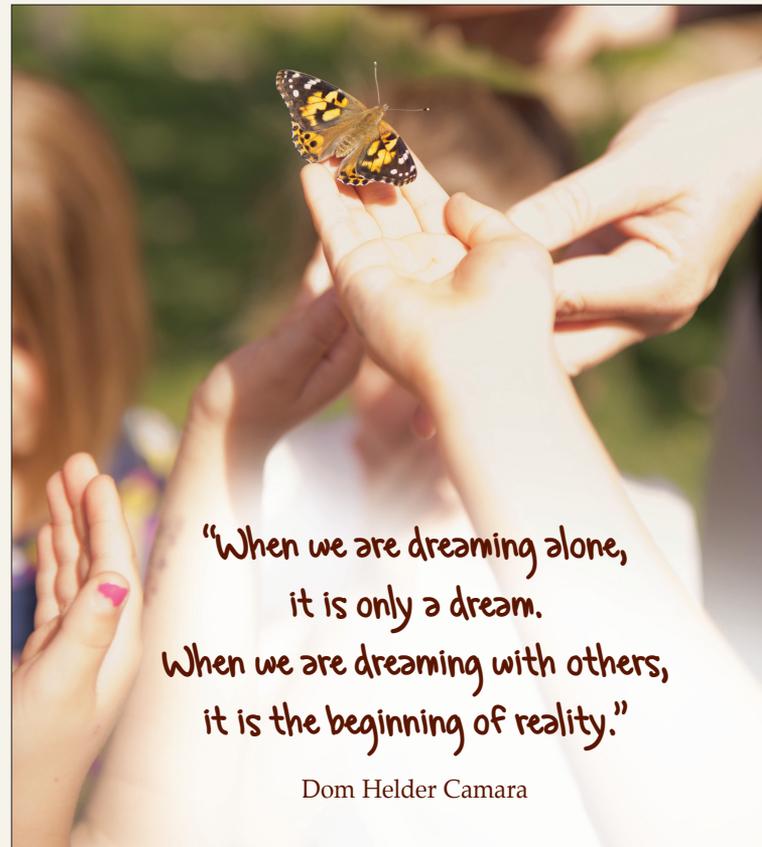
The mission of NACC is to reconnect children with the natural world by making developmentally appropriate nature education a sustaining and enriching part of the daily lives of the world's children. The Nature Action Collaborative for Children welcomes involvement from anyone who shares this common goal. The Collaborative works worldwide on efforts to:

- 1) Offer opportunities to collect and disseminate information (including research).
- 2) Provide professional growth and mentoring opportunities.
- 3) Become a strong voice for advocacy.
- 4) Present opportunities for early educators, environmentalists, and landscape architects/community planners (as well as others such as architects, health care professionals, parents, and elected officials) to meet together on a regular basis.

You can learn more about our group and join NACC through WoFo Net (www.worldforumfoundation.org/wofonet/).

Collectively, NACC members are a group of committed educators, environmental advocates, and designers. Their dedication, passion, and ongoing work as it relates to issues relevant to children and nature was evident in the

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*"When we are dreaming alone,
it is only a dream.
When we are dreaming with others,
it is the beginning of reality."*

Dom Helder Camara

breadth and depth of the well-attended sessions developed for the recent World Forum. Many NACC members came together to share their stories and perspectives and to invite others to join them in conversations that inspired participants to consider new possibilities and to think deeply to find solutions to challenging situations.

■ **Empowering Children Through Nature: Supporting All Areas of Development** with Wil Maheia

(Belize), Kalifia Constantine (Trinidad and Tobago), Gera Jacobs (United States), Julie Rose (United States), and Irma Allen (Swaziland) focused on discovering and sharing ways that regular connections with nature support and inspire children's healthy, holistic development.

■ **World-Wide Projects Connecting Children, Nature, and Communities** included Cheryl Charles (United States), John Rosenow (United States), Daniela Benavides (Peru), Caroline Hudicourt (Haiti), and Linna Irizarry-Mayoral (Puerto Rico). Participants learned exciting ideas and strategies for connecting children to the joys of nature by engaging communities in their efforts. This session was developed collaboratively with the Children and Nature Network.

■ **Designing for Children's Indoor-Outdoor Connections: Transitional Spaces** was a session developed jointly with the OnDesign Working Group in which participants saw examples of design ideas that facilitate children's peaceful, engaging transitions from indoors to outdoors. The panel included Robin

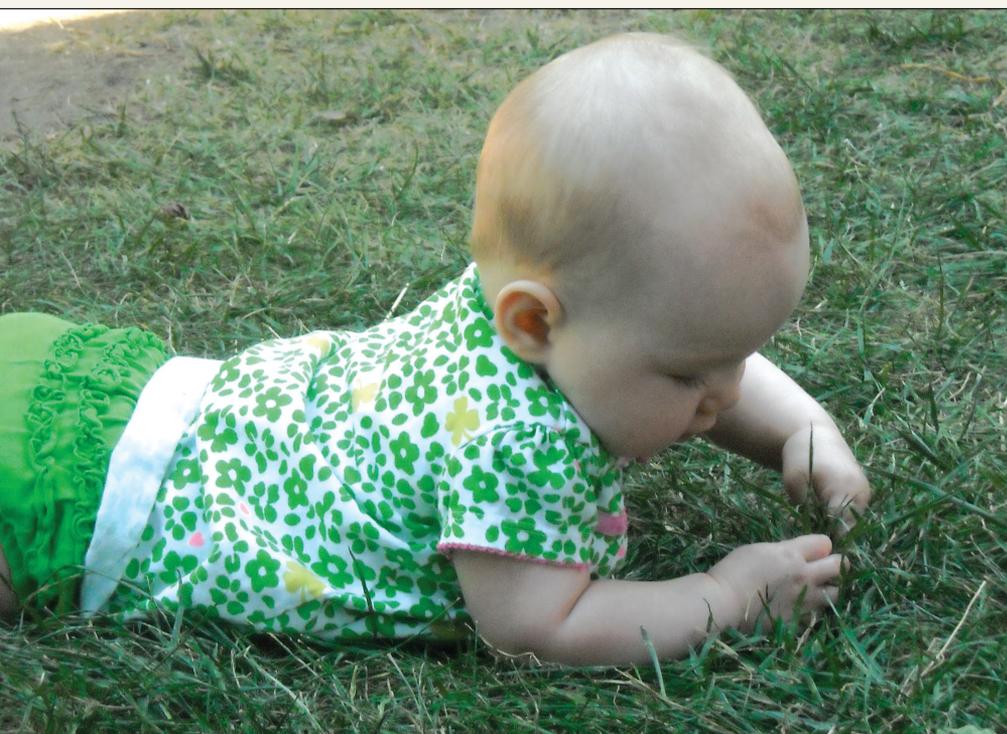
Christie (New Zealand), Jim Wike (United States), Mike Lindstrom (United States), and Jan White (United Kingdom).

■ **Innovative Ways of Engaging Children with Nature** included Ron Blatz (Canada), Bishnu Bhatta (Nepal), Gillian McAuliff (Australia), Michelle Beakley (Australia), and Christy Merrick (United States). Presenters shared unique ideas for International Mud Day, an outdoor challenge adventure week, and ways of more fully engaging children's senses.

Consider this:

- How do these session topics relate to your work? Perhaps you can find an opportunity to connect with some of these presenters. You can access some of their presentations on WoFoNet.
- The *Universal Principles for Connecting the World's Children with Nature* is part of the Environmental Action Kit accessed at www.worldforumfoundation.org/nature. Visit this site to view a video presentation of the *Universal Principles* and refer to it to enhance the opportunities you provide to the children and families with whom you work.

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Mark Your Calendar Now!

The OnDesign and NACC working groups are busy planning the *Working Forum on Design and Nature*, our next opportunity to work together in person. Stay tuned to *Exchange* and the World Forum Foundation website for more details about this exciting collaboration that will take place in New Zealand on March 11-15, 2015.

Meet NACC Leadership

A regional representative structure supports the global scope of NACC. Up to three regional leaders for each of the six regions of the world are selected to provide as much representation as possible for each of the three disciplines mentioned above. Here are a few members of the NACC leadership team and their commitments after meeting at the 2014 World Forum on Early Care and Education in Puerto Rico.



**Caribbean/
Central America:**
Caroline Hudicourt
carolinehudicourt@yahoo.fr

For this next year, I plan to start the construction of my future school building, which will be constructed on a very green property where we plan to preserve most of the trees. A fundamental point of its design and conception is to make it a living tribute to how important it is to keep children close to nature and influence others through it.



North America:
Christy Merrick
christymerrick@gmail.com

I was so inspired by the World Forum and the amazing stories people told about the work they're doing where they live. Over the next year, I plan to focus my attention on:

- 1) supporting next year's Working Forum on Design and Nature.

- 2) promoting International Mud Day.
- 3) collaborating with regional NACC groups and other organizations in North America, and particularly in the United States, who are also working to connect children to nature.



Western Europe:
Claire Warden
Claire@claire-warden.com

I am taking away from San Juan the inspiration and enthusiasm of educators towards the value of nature in the lives of children. The vision I have is to continue to create a global network of education institutions and settings offering training in Nature Pedagogy. The adults who work with children (birth to 11 years) should have the opportunity to specialise in *learning with nature*. The dream is that their skills and knowledge developed through the courses can then

be used in advocacy work around the globe to protect children's right to nature throughout their education.



North America:
Jim Wike
jimw@natureexplore.org

It is always fun to hear and exchange stories about what we do. The unique perspective from a worldwide gathering is informative and inspiring. I admire and am humbled by my colleagues' great work. I would like to refocus on the basics by revisiting how I craft spaces and use materials while looking for ways to more powerfully communicate my design intent.



West Asia:
Bishnu Bhatta
bbishnu@gmail.com

I was inspired by all my fellow participants whom I met during the conference. The time to share our stories with each other and learn from each other refuels our energies. My focus in coming days will be building more child-friendly classrooms in all facilities, teacher training, and carrying out research in the Early Childhood field. Of course I will be promoting International Mud Day in June, as well as collaborating with regional NACC groups.



North America:
Ron Blatz
rblatz@discoverycc.com

I want to continue the work of our local NACC group (Manitoba Nature Action Collaborative for Children) and work on a specific emphasis of helping 'core area' urban centres find ways to connect children to nature. They are staying out of

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the conversations and thus their children are missing out on too much. All this because the barriers for these centres in the middle of our cities are very significant, and oftentimes feel insurmountable.

I'm also very motivated to see a team of architects, landscape architects, educators, policymakers, and funders go to the OnDesign/NACC working group gathering in New Zealand next March. Our province has committed millions to open up new centres to serve an additional 5,000 children (over the next five years), and I'd love for these programs to be world class, rather than just basic shelters.



Sub-Saharan Africa:
Hadijah Nandyose
hadyug@yahoo.com

I have been part of an ongoing initiative in 50 communities in the northern and western part of Uganda entailing set-up of 'Model ECCD playgrounds.' My input has been greatly inspired by various ideas in relation to using naturally-existing elements to enhance outdoor play. At the recent meetings during the World Forum, the reminder for us to think about 'the intention of the space' and the perspectives of the child as a primary user were re-echoed more loudly. Within my parent organization, we are refining basic guidance for setting up low-cost playgrounds in resource-constrained communities. This work is also informed by the NACC principles and I will need to see it disseminated and promoted in the five countries I support.

I found that having images and video clips were great aids in speaking about the work we do. I intend to prepare a visual album of our work this coming period. (Thanks also to the pop-up workshop on photography presented by Tori Hogan at the 2014 World Forum on Early Care and Education.)

Consider this:

- Perhaps you would like to get involved and share your stories about your work in connecting children and nature. Please join us and let us know about your work. Contact Tarah@dimensionsfoundation.org to submit ideas for the Wonder newsletter.
- Contact the NACC leader for your region to find out about regional NACC affiliates in your part of the world.



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Have an Adventure!

If you are experiencing warm weather, seeds and plants can be great hands-on materials for children to explore and learn with. Use the "Super Seeds" Activities in the Environmental Action Kit (Toolkit for Early Childhood Programs, pp. 9-11) to practice close observation and help the 'seeds' of environmental stewardship 'take root' in your children. We would love to hear from you, too. Tell us about other ways that you use seeds and plants as part of your curriculum experiences to help your students connect to nature!



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Future Issues of *Wonder*

We invite you to email your personal reflections and ideas related to the following *Universal Principle for Connecting Children with Nature* to Tara (tarah@natureexplore.org):

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