

How Can I Get Involved?

There are many things you can do to support the Ontario Children's Outdoor Charter, starting with a commitment to be active outdoors. You could also:



ask

your local municipal council, schools or community organizations to endorse the Charter



share

the Charter with your friends



promote

the Charter in your community: download and print a poster from the website to put up at your school, community centre or library



connect

the Charter through social media (Facebook, Twitter, the Charter website)



print

an Outdoor Passport where you can record your achievements



visit

the Charter website to find information that will help you and your family discover the wonders of nature

www.childrensoutdoorcharter.ca

What do you like to do outdoors?

Kids: I like to...



Play with my friends outside – Sydney, 9

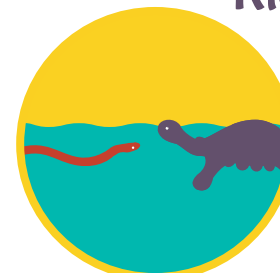
Find a garter snake – Zheng, 10
Ramble, hike, and get away from people and noise – Meghan, 12

Feed chickadees out of my hand – Eli, 7

Act like an animal – William, 8

Climb a tree – Kaitlin, 8

Ride my bike down a long hill – Zachery, 9



Kids: I would really like to try...

Playing in the pond – Ryan, 8

Learning archery – Christian, 8

Water skiing – Alain, 9

Whitewater rafting – Lauren, 8

Finding turtles and snakes – David, 10

Exploring outside everyday – Eva, 8

Building a tree house – Ying, 8

Youth: I like to...



Go hunting with my Dad – Josef, 13

Go horseback riding – Nathan, 14

Go sledding – Xavi, 11

Climb a tree – Keiko, 11

Rock climb – Erika, 12



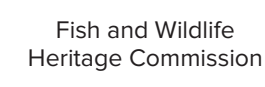
Youth: I would really like to try...

High ropes in trees – Nadir, 14

Windsurfing and scuba diving – Janelle, 12

Hunting and going on a boat – Lionel, 11

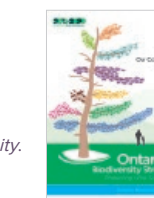
Going on a long bike ride on a trail, living outside for more than two weeks, learning how to identify birds and types of trees – Carmelina, 18



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Discovering the wonders of nature!

Children have the right to explore and play in the outdoors. Research shows that kids who spend regular time in nature are happier and healthier. In Ontario, every child should have the opportunity to:

Follow a trail
Explore a park
Harvest something to eat
Swim in a lake
Paddle a canoe
Play in the snow
Build an outdoor fort
Visit a farm
Camp under the stars
Go fishing
Observe plants and wildlife

...Or create an outdoor adventure



The **Ontario Children's Outdoor Charter** aims to get children outside to discover the wonders of nature. Spending time outdoors is essential to every child's development, health and well-being. It builds a connection to our rich natural and cultural heritage. Kids connected to nature grow up caring for the Earth and helping to conserve biodiversity. People, organizations, governments and communities that support the Charter recognize that time outdoors is important for children's health and wellness. Supporters of the Charter can promote it in their communities and improve opportunities for children of all abilities and backgrounds to play and learn outdoors.

Vision

Every child in Ontario will have the chance to:

- **DISCOVER** the wonders of nature in all of Ontario's seasons through active outdoor experiences;
- **DEVELOP** a connection with nature that inspires appreciation and a sense of caring;
- **EXPERIENCE** free active time in the outdoors and have regular contact with nature;
- **PLAY** in natural spaces within their community;
- **LEARN** about and take action to conserve Ontario's rich diversity of plants, animals and ecosystems; and
- **UNDERSTAND** and celebrate Ontario's biodiversity and cultural heritage.

Principles

- **ACCESS:** All children should have access to nature in their neighbourhoods and in the broader community. The creation of networks of parks and protected areas, trails, conservation areas and other public natural spaces enables this access.
- **DISCOVERY:** Children should have formal and informal opportunities to discover and learn about nature through outdoor play and exploration.
- **AWARENESS:** Families, communities and decision-makers across Ontario should be aware of the many personal and societal benefits of connecting children with nature, and take action based on this awareness.
- **STEWARDSHIP:** Children develop a deep personal understanding of and care for the natural world through outdoor experiences, and should learn how to take action to protect biodiversity and use resources sustainably.

Follow a trail



No matter your ability, and whether you hike, bike, ski or stroll, following a trail is a great way to get active, explore and discover new things. Follow the path of an old railway or portage, hike a rocky ridge that tells stories of glaciers and ancient seas, walk atop a boardwalk through a wetland or stroll down a trail where you live and observe all things wild in your neighbourhood!

Swim in a lake



Ontario is full of freshwater lakes: 250,000 of them! The Great Lakes are some of the biggest in the world and are close by and easy to get to for millions of people in the province. Ontario lakes, whether large or small, are great places where you can enjoy a sunny beach, feel the wonderful touch of water, skip a stone and splash in the water!

Observe plants and wildlife



Every living thing, from a tiny ant to a giant tree, can teach us the story of our biodiversity—the variety of life on Earth. Watch a dragonfly or bee, listen to a bird, examine a flower, or think about how each species fits in to its surroundings or ecosystem. Learning about the plants and wildlife that share our province ties us to them and helps us take better care of the wonderful world we live in!

Explore a park



Ontario is full of parks, big and small, close by and far away, and they are perfect places to stop, look and listen. Find the biggest tree and guess how old it is. Count all the living things you see, from birds and butterflies to squirrels and centipedes. Everything is possible: walk, bike, swim, picnic, camp, or sit under a tree. Breathe the air and listen to the sounds—even the smallest park is filled with nature to enjoy!

Camp under the stars



Camp in a park or your backyard, or curl up on your balcony for a wondrous nighttime experience. Consider where Ontario is in the universe and think about how stars have helped people find their way for centuries. Enjoy night noises at a campfire and gaze up at the beautiful starry sky!

Paddle a canoe



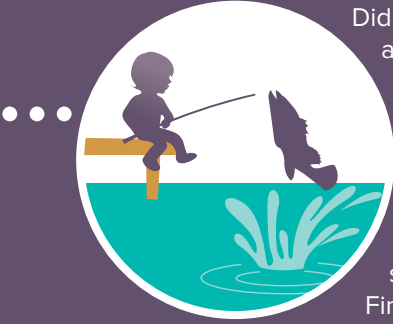
Before pavement and cars, Ontario's rivers and lakes were our roads and highways. Now it's your turn to explore! Grab your life jacket, push off from shore and glide across the water. Explore the shoreline and watch for fish, turtles, insects and birds. Practise your paddling or simply enjoy the ripples on the water, reflection of fluffy clouds and sounds of nature!

Build an outdoor fort



Forts are special places to have fun, enjoy time alone, or do top-secret kid stuff! Build a fort with whatever you can find, like sticks in the summer and snow in the winter. Crawl in under the lowest branches of a tree or throw a blanket over a picnic table. No matter how you make yours, forts stir imagination and adventure!

Go fishing



Did you know Ontario lakes are full of fish? Grab your fishing rod and start casting. Ask a friend or family member with an Ontario fishing licence to help you get started. Learn the names of fish species you can catch. Find your own favourite spot to catch the big one then release it and try again. Or keep one and help prepare a fish feast to eat!

Harvest something to eat



Grab a meal from nature! Aboriginal peoples have always collected and harvested what nature provides for food, medicines and other life essentials. Fishing, hunting and collecting wild berries are activities many of us continue to enjoy and savour. There are other ways you can harvest something to eat. Why not try growing tomatoes in a pot or making a salad out of dandelion leaves? Harvest something with your own hands, like picking apples in an orchard, and enjoy the tasty reward.

Play in the snow



Snow turns Ontario into a winter wonderland—jump into your boots and enjoy it! Build a snowman, make a snow angel or toboggan down a hill. Watch snowflakes as they float past and try to catch one with your tongue. Learn how to ski or snowshoe. Pack some snacks and have a fun and frosty picnic with your friends and family!

Visit a farm



Hay! Go on a wagon ride, pick your own fruit, feed a goat or learn how to make butter at an Ontario farm! Find out how food grows and gets from a farm to your table. There's something fun to do each season—sample strawberries in the spring, learn about farm animals in the summer, pick a pumpkin in the fall, and stop at a sugar shack at the end of winter! Visit the places where good things grow in Ontario and don't forget to get your hands dirty!

...or create an outdoor adventure



Let your imagination go wild in the outdoors! Invent a game with friends, tunnel through the snow, pretend you're a forest animal or an adventurous explorer! At school, at home, in a park and everywhere nature is found, the outdoors offers endless possibilities to create your own story in nature!