



**The Alberta Recreation and Parks Association (ARPA)  
is pleased to present the  
*Dialogue on Children in Nature—Alberta Edition***

**Edmonton, June 11, 2008** . Stimulated by the book *Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv, the *Dialogue on Children in Nature—Alberta Edition* will involve professionals from varied backgrounds, each with a common interest in finding ways of dealing with the *nature deficit disorder* (as defined by Louv) afflicting today's children and youth. Participants will look at this issue from an Alberta perspective.

*Dialogue on Children in Nature—Alberta Edition will take place:*

June 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008

North Hills Inn, Red Deer

10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Over the course of the two days in the City of Red Deer, it is hoped the group will identify the barriers and opportunities for getting children and youth connected with nature, discuss, and develop strategic directions and actions, as part of a Provincial Strategy flowing out of this facilitated process. Proceedings will be produced. ARPA is committed to a long-term follow through on all of the key ideas generated. A Provincial Charter on Children in Nature is one outcome that could be considered.

ARPA is pleased to offer a limited number of spaces in the *Dialogue on Children in Nature . Alberta Edition* for professionals/practitioners dedicated to improving and/or increasing outdoor opportunities for children and their families in this province.

The scenarios outlined in *Last Child in the Woods* have ignited a bonfire of interest in the United States and more recently in Canada. At the *National Dialogue on Children and Nature* held in Shepherdstown, West Virginia in September 2006, representatives of government at all levels, national youth and environmental organizations and medical and psychological professionals joined forces to review the current situation of youth in America. Their process was to review the thoughts Louv presented in his book and seek ways of reducing the barriers for kids spending time in the natural environment.

*"I like to play indoors better, 'cause that's where all the electric outlets are." Paul, a fourth grade student from San Diego.*

## ARPA



Does exposure to parks and green spaces reduce the effects of Autism and ADHD? Can we build our communities to increase children's (and families) exposure to the outdoor world? Have we created bureaucracies that eliminate the opportunity for playing and learning in the outdoors?

*"Teachers find it easier to book the computer lab to study frogs, than to take a class off school property to visit a pond across the street. There is so much red tape involved in taking a field trip!"*

**Further information on "Last Child in the Woods" and the concept of Nature Deficit Disorder is available on the Children & Nature Network at <http://www.childrenandnature.org/>**

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### **About ARPA:**

*ARPA (Alberta Recreation & Parks Association) is a provincial, not-for-profit, charitable organization made up of volunteers committed to building healthy citizens and communities in Alberta through recreation, sport, arts, culture and parks. Serving Albertans since 1952, ARPA members include community and public recreation agencies, educators, corporate, elected/appointed officials, lay and student members.*

For more information on the Dialogue on Children in Nature- Alberta Edition and the ARPA, please visit [www.arpaonline.ca](http://www.arpaonline.ca) or call (877) 544-1747.

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## Backgrounder

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Alberta is not the first province in Canada to organize such an event. British Columbia organized *The Dialogue on Children, Families & Nature* in February 2007. In preparing for that gathering, Bob Peart, the main organizer writes:

*“British Columbia...need(s): 1) to evaluate the current state of environmental and outdoor education in our schools (or lack of it), 2) to determine better use of park systems to get children outside, and 3) for private land organizations to determine how their lands can better facilitate the opportunity for families to enjoy nature.”*

These same statements would hold true for Alberta, or indeed most provinces and territories in the country. The *Dialogue on Children in Nature—Alberta Edition* process will address issues similar, but not be limited to, those that became known in the B.C. instance.