

Where have all the children gone?



An exploration of Nature Deficit Disorder

Nature Deficit Disorder

“Nature-deficit disorder is not an official diagnosis but a way of viewing the problem, and describes the human costs of alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses. The disorder can be detected in individuals, families, and communities.”

— Richard Louv, Last Child in the Woods

The problem we created.

Evidence shows that right now, we are raising the first generation of Canadians to grow up disconnected with nature.



How did this happen?



- Preference for indoor, organized, supervised activities
- Parental fears of free reign play
- Need for structure is making nature a “programmed activity”

That's right, go ahead and cry.



- Per capita visits to U.S. national parks have been declining since 1987, after having risen for the previous 50 years.
- The majority of humans live in cities, and urbanization is accelerating so rapidly that by 2050 only a small portion of the human population will live outside urban areas

A 10 year olds typical Saturday

1989

- Building forts
- Tree houses
- Frog catching
- Hide & seek
- Bike riding



2009

- Computers
- Video Games
- Ipods / MP3's
- Organized activities



The Lure of the Screen

Current national data indicates that only 10% of Canadian children get less than 2 hours per day of screen time.

The national average for children's screen time is 6 hours per day.



= 42 hours a week spent indoors and on their butts.

TV's vs. Trees.....

TV Wins Round One

A new Nature Conservancy-funded study has confirmed evidence of a growing trend: more American families are spending time in front of the television and away from the great outdoors. The study, published in the Journal of Development Processes, also cited serious consequences for the future of conservation



Can't we see how fat our kids are?

Over half of children and youth aged 5-17 are not active enough for optimal growth and development.
Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute.



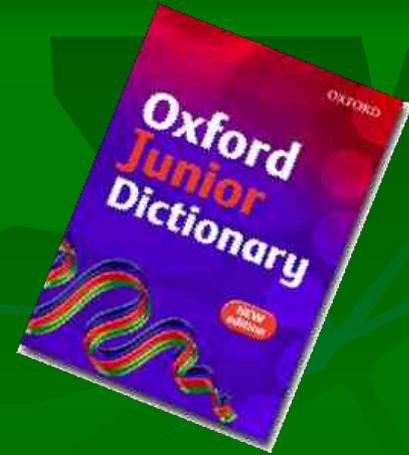
It get's worse.



2/3 of Canadian families live within a reasonable distance to walk or cycle to school **but**

- only 1/3 of children have ever walked to school
- 80% of children have never cycled to school

Boo on you Oxford



Oxford Junior Dictionary
has recently cut such
nature terms as:

To make room for such terms as:

Beaver

Acorn

Dandelion

Clover

Heron

Ivy

Magpie

Sycamore

Otter

Willow

Almond

Blackberry

Blackberry

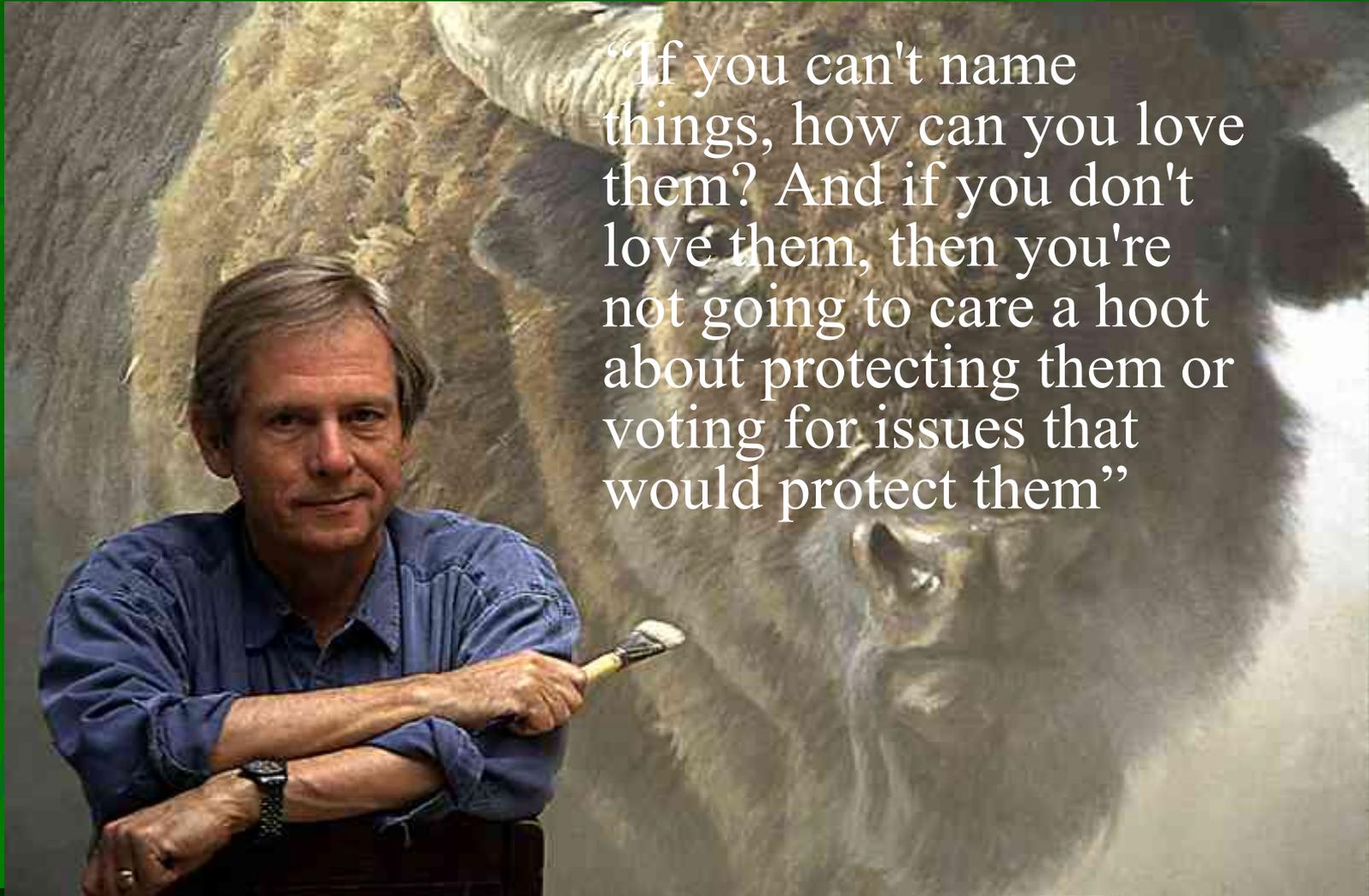
Blog

MP3 player

Voicemail

Broadband

Robert Bateman Gets It



“If you can't name things, how can you love them? And if you don't love them, then you're not going to care a hoot about protecting them or voting for issues that would protect them”



A sign of the
times....

Pediatricians report
seeing fewer broken
bones from tree
climbing and more
kids with repetitive
stress injuries from
keyboards

Eco-Watch Institute Study

300 of the world's most innovative leaders and thinkers showed clear links between childhood immersion in nature and an out-of-the-box creativity & tireless commitment to society



The costs of NDD

- Rising obesity epidemic
- Criminalization of old fashioned play
- Loss of simple pleasure of having dirty hands and dirty feet
- Our children will not share the same world we grew up in



The Costs get higher.....

- No stewards
- Loss of pro-environmental behaviour
- Implications on long term mental, spiritual & physical health
- Implications on attention and learning abilities



What can we do about it?



- Green hour – everyday, unstructured play and interaction with the natural world
- Forest Schools
- Green schoolyards and the K-12 curriculum
- Reunite your children and grandchildren with free play

More solutions please...

- Face the fear. Perception of stranger danger is greater than the reality. Num8.
- Support local nature centres and Scouting programs - get children involved in habitat restoration programs
- Green your city – push for better urban planning



We still need more solutions...

- Encourage educators to place greater emphasis on conservation as a career path
- Engage the outdoor industry as conveners of the movement
- Encourage the business community to support campaigns that reconnect children with nature such as *Children & Nature Awareness Month in April* or *Ontario Hiking Week, Oct 1-7*



And even more.....



- Pediatricians and doctors could use office posters, pamphlets etc. to promote the physical and mental health benefits of nature play
- Replicate campaigns such as “No Child Left Inside”
- Encourage developers to naturalize old and new urban parks

Look what the Terminator did

California Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights

1. Discover California's Past
2. Splash in the water
3. Play in a safe place
4. Camp under the stars
5. Explore nature
6. Learn to swim
7. Play on a team
8. Follow a trail
9. Catch a fish
10. Celebrate their heritage



New Mexico Got it Right Too

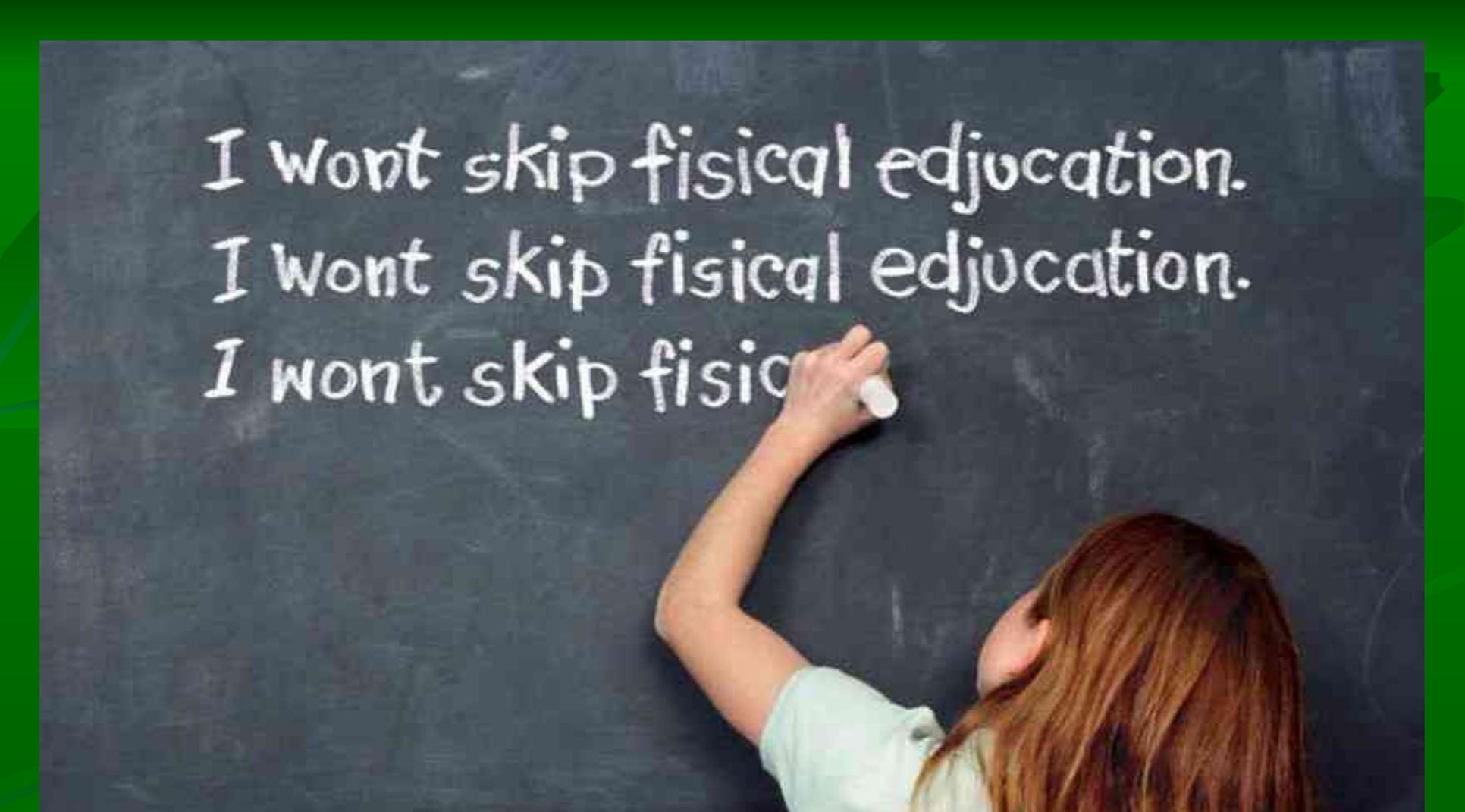
New Mexico's Parks Division and Public Education Department adopted a motion to bring all of the state's fifth-graders to a state or national park or wilderness area during the school year.



What you can do today.

1. Take a kid outside.
2. Stay for the table talk session and ask me how Hike Ontario's Young Hikers Program is part of the solution.



A woman with long brown hair, wearing a light blue shirt, is seen from the side, writing on a dark chalkboard with white chalk. She is holding a piece of chalk in her right hand, which is raised towards the board. The chalkboard has three lines of text written on it in a cursive, handwritten style. The background is a solid green color with some faint, darker green leaf-like patterns.

I wont skip fisical edjucation.
I wont skip fisical edjucation.
I wont skip fisio

For More Info Contact Terri LeRoux

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