

# NATURAL PLAYGROUNDS

Connecting kids with nature through natural materials and imagination.



**PLAYWORKS**

We bring **play** to life

# Keeping kids active for 30 years.

- 1. Four offices:** Edmonton, Winnipeg, Saskatoon & Calgary.
- 2. Children First:** Research is the foundation behind our play products and designs.
- 3. Optimized Designs:** We consider play value, budget and site in every project.
- 4. More than Play:** Our equipment fosters physical, intellectual, emotional and social growth for all ages & abilities.
- 5. One-Stop-Shop:** We offer play equipment, safety surfacing, water play, seating, and other site amenities.
- 6. Support from Start-Finish:** You get support from initial design concepts to installation and maintenance.



# Today's Agenda

1. Important Health Issue
2. Three Major Benefits of Nature Play
3. Nature Play Considerations
4. Important Design Elements
  - Nature Play Equipment
  - Surfacing
  - Water, Garden, Slopes
  - Natural Site Furnishings
  - Other Nature Play Add-ons
5. Safety



# Important Issue – Childhood Obesity

**“Over the past four decades, obesity rates in children and adolescents have soared globally, and continue to do so.”**

***Majid Ezzati, Professor, Imperial College London UK***



# **Frightening Trends**



- **Unhealthy eating & behaviours in childhood are creating a life full of unhealthy eating & living.**
- **Sedentary behaviours; TV, video games & computer use are associated with obesity.**
- **Childhood obesity has been shown to continue into adulthood.**
- **Playgrounds are not meeting children's needs or expectations in relation to outdoor play.**



# What can we do?

Broaden our understanding of the traditional playground concept. Create spaces that:

- enable children to play how they want to play
- test cognitive and physical capabilities
- stimulate senses
- provide social interactions
- teach about living things and how to care for them.

# 3 Major Benefits of Natural Play\*:

1. Mud, sand, water, leaves, sticks, and pine cones are good for kids' immune systems.
2. Kids who play outdoors are more physically active and less likely to be overweight.
3. Bullying is greatly reduced in areas with nature-based play environments.



# Designing a Natural Play Space.

**Where to start?**



# Consider a range of play spaces\*



**Opportunities for adventure**

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**Stimulate imaginations & creativity**

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**Nurture a love for animals**

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**Explore maps, hills & paths**

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**Offer special places just for kids**

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**Build mini-worlds**

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**Enable hunting & gathering**

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# Range of Play Spaces



## 1. Opportunities for Adventure

Activities with a physical challenge component speak directly to children via the mind/body link.



*\*From Nature Play Australia (2016) & Childhood and Nature by David Sobel (2008)*

“Walking may be active for an adult, but becomes boring very quickly for children who need and want more stimulation.”- *KOMPAN Play Institute, 2015*



**Children Need Thrill**



**Children Need Thrill**

# Range of Play Spaces\*



## 2. Stimulate imaginations & creativity

Children live in their imaginations. We need to create simulations in which children can live and act out their imaginations.



*\*From Nature Play Australia (2016) & Childhood and Nature by David Sobel (2008)*

# Range of Play Spaces\*



## 3. Nurture a love for animals



Designs should foster close allegiances between children and animals: being animals, interacting with animals, and taking care of animals.



*\*From Nature Play Australia (2016) & Childhood and Nature by David Sobel (2008)*

# Range of Play Spaces\*



## 4. Explore maps, hills & paths

- Children have an inborn desire to explore local geographies.
- Designing gentle slopes and height changes keeps kids moving.



Forsyth Park , Surrey BC

*\*From Nature Play Australia (2016) & Childhood and Nature by David Sobel (2008)*

# Range of Play Spaces\*

## 5. Offer special places just for kids



Everyone remembers a fort, tree house, or secret hidden closet. Children like to find and create places where they can hide away and retreat with their friends.



*\*From Nature Play Australia (2016) & Childhood and Nature by David Sobel (2008)*

# Range of Play Spaces\*



## 6. Build mini-worlds

Kids love to create miniature worlds. Creating miniature ecosystems, helps kids grasp the big picture.



*\*From Nature Play Australia (2016) & Childhood and Nature by David Sobel (2008)*

# Range of Play Spaces\*



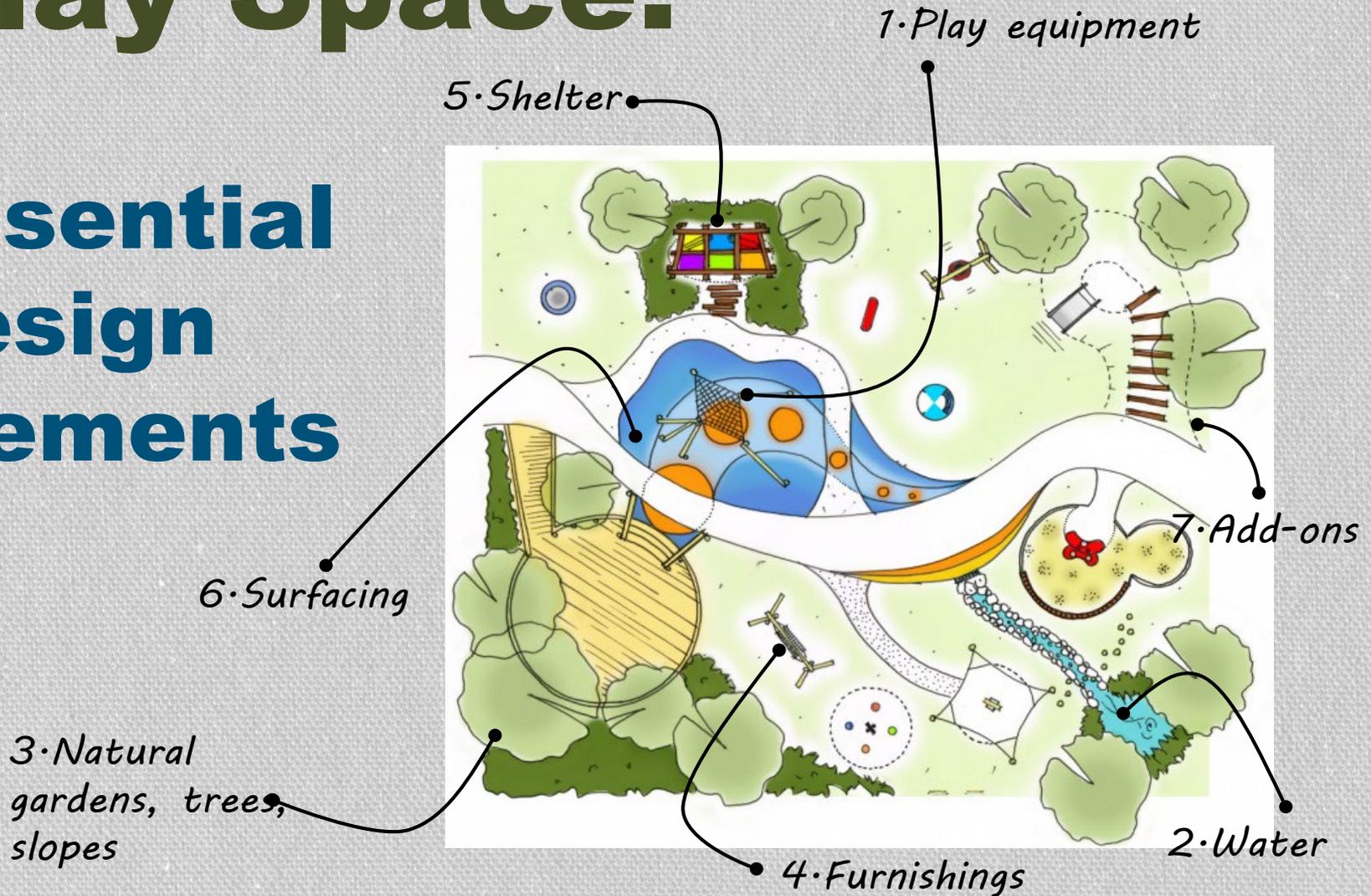
## 7. Activities that enable hunting & gathering



- Kids love collecting rocks and pebbles.
- Designs should let them play with natural materials.

# Designing a Natural Play Space.

## Essential Design Elements



# Important Design Elements

1. Play equipment
2. Water
3. Natural gardens, slopes & trees
4. Furnishings
5. Shelters
6. Surfacing
7. Unique add-ons



# Important Design Elements

## 1. Play Equipment from the Robinia Tree



- Hard to split: tough and flexible
- High stress tolerance
- One of the most rot-resistant trees
- Natural resistance to fungi and insects

- Sized for children's hands
- Curving shape creates unique playgrounds

# Important Design Elements

## 1. Natural Play Equipment Standards & Safety



**KOMPAN Robinia products are:**

- IPEMA Certified – You know your playground equipment meets strict safety and manufacturing standards.
- FSC® Certified which means Kompan is committed to sustainable forestry.
  - Products can be ordered in FSC® certified wood and you can receive an FSC® Certificate upon request.



# Important Design Elements

## 1. Natural Play Equipment

Robinia equipment helps to bring an appreciation for nature into children's lives.



# Important Design Elements

## 1. Natural Play Equipment – Physical Fitness

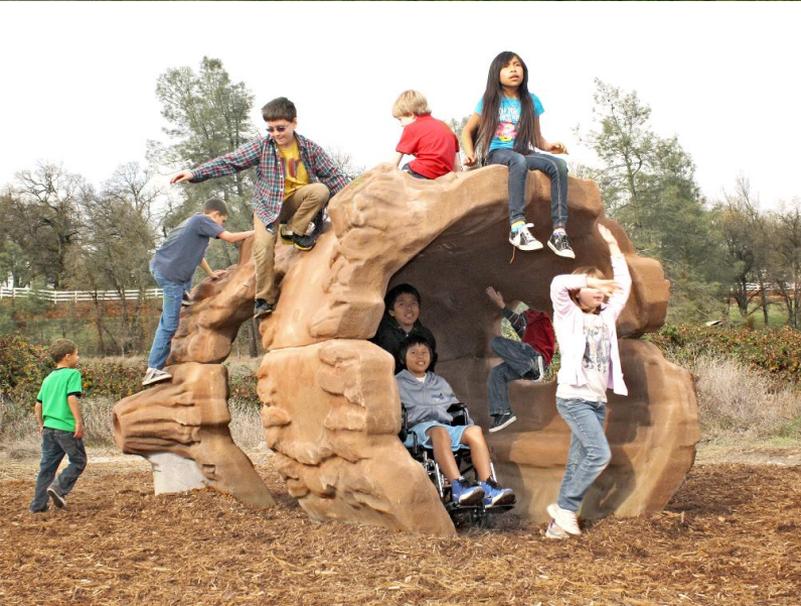
Physical fitness is an important element of any natural play space.



# Important Design Elements

## 1. Natural Play Equipment – Surfacing

Surfacing is important for accessibility and safety.



- Fibar is unique in that it only requires 8” of material to attain a 10’ fall height.
- Most surfacing materials require 12” for a 10’ fall height.
- You need less material when you use Fibar.

# Important Design Elements

## 1. Natural Play Equipment – Surfacing

Playground turf is designed to protect children from falls as high as 10'.



# Important Design Elements

## 1. Natural Play Equipment – Surfacing

Walkways and surfacing (asphalt, limestone, concrete, rubber) to and around the play area need to be accessible.



Change in slopes and surfacing provide excellent learning opportunities for children.

# Important Design Elements

## 2. Water



- Water fosters development of hand / eye coordination through pouring, squeezing, stirring, and squirting.
- It also teaches math and physics.



# Important Design Elements

## 3. Natural gardens, trees, shrubs, rocks & slopes



***“Children who play on playgrounds that incorporate natural elements like logs, rocks and flowers tend to play longer.” University of Tennessee***

- Use the nature slope of an area rather than limiting yourself to less than 2%.
- Difficult for traditional play equipment, but easy for Robinia equipment as it can accommodate for slopes.



# Important Design Elements

## 4. Natural Site Amenities

Research shows if there are places for parents to sit, kids get to play longer at the park.





Create seating for the kids to socialize.

# Important Design Elements

## 5. Natural Shelters

Keep the kids cool with shelters.



Shelter on the equipment

Traditional wood shelter



Shelter from the trees



# Important Design Elements

## 6. Unique add-ons

Enhance the nature theme with unique add-ons like rocks, logs, artwork, and sculptures.



# A natural play space should be safe, but with some risk.

*'You're not allowed to do crazy stuff on the swings. But we do. When the teacher's not looking.'* Grade 6 student



Being exposed to risk is how children learn to assess and manage it.

# Chicago Nature Park

## Downtown Chicago





















# Let us help you plan your next natural playground.

**We offer you:**

- **advice on play space design & equipment.**
- **a list of communities that have built nature based play areas.**
- **support throughout your project.**

**Contact us for more information:**

**1-800-667-4264**

**[www.playworks.ca](http://www.playworks.ca)**

**[info@playworks.ca](mailto:info@playworks.ca)**



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