

Renfrew County District School Board Outdoor Learning Project

August 2025

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Introductions

- Bill Murray, Senior Manager, Facilities, RCDSB
- Scott Nichol, Superintendent of Education, RCDSB
- Kristen Niemi, Director of Education, RCDSB
- Jamie Thomson, Director of Development, Re-Nature Foundation

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Overview

- During the spring of 2025, we completed a comprehensive consultation for the 2026-30 Strategic Plan
- Through this process and the past two years' of budget consultations, overwhelmingly the feedback from the RCDSB community is to prioritize student engagement and well-being
- We have made significant investments in this area including dedicated school staff to support students directly and staff professional development with experts (e.g., Dr. Ross Greene, Hannah Beach and Sarah Kesty)

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Overview

- Renfrew County District School Board is committed to inquiry-based learning, environmental education and outdoor learning
- We are expanding our partnership with EcoSchools Canada to engage students in environmental education throughout the school year
- RCDSB schoolyards are incredible, beautiful green spaces with so much potential
- ***RCDSB has partnered with the Re-Nature Foundation to access resources to further support outdoor learning in RCDSB***

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Who is Re-Nature?

- Re-Nature is a Canadian non-profit organization that creates regenerative landscapes for schools - addressing mental health, climate change and educational equity.
- Re-Nature's goal is that every school in Canada will have its own forest and outdoor learning space, and every educator will have the support they need to use it.



Who is Re-Nature?

Four guiding principles:

- Educators will take their children outside if there is ***a forest*** to provide shade, ***a classroom*** to teach in, ***a mentor*** to lean on, and ***a curriculum*** to teach.



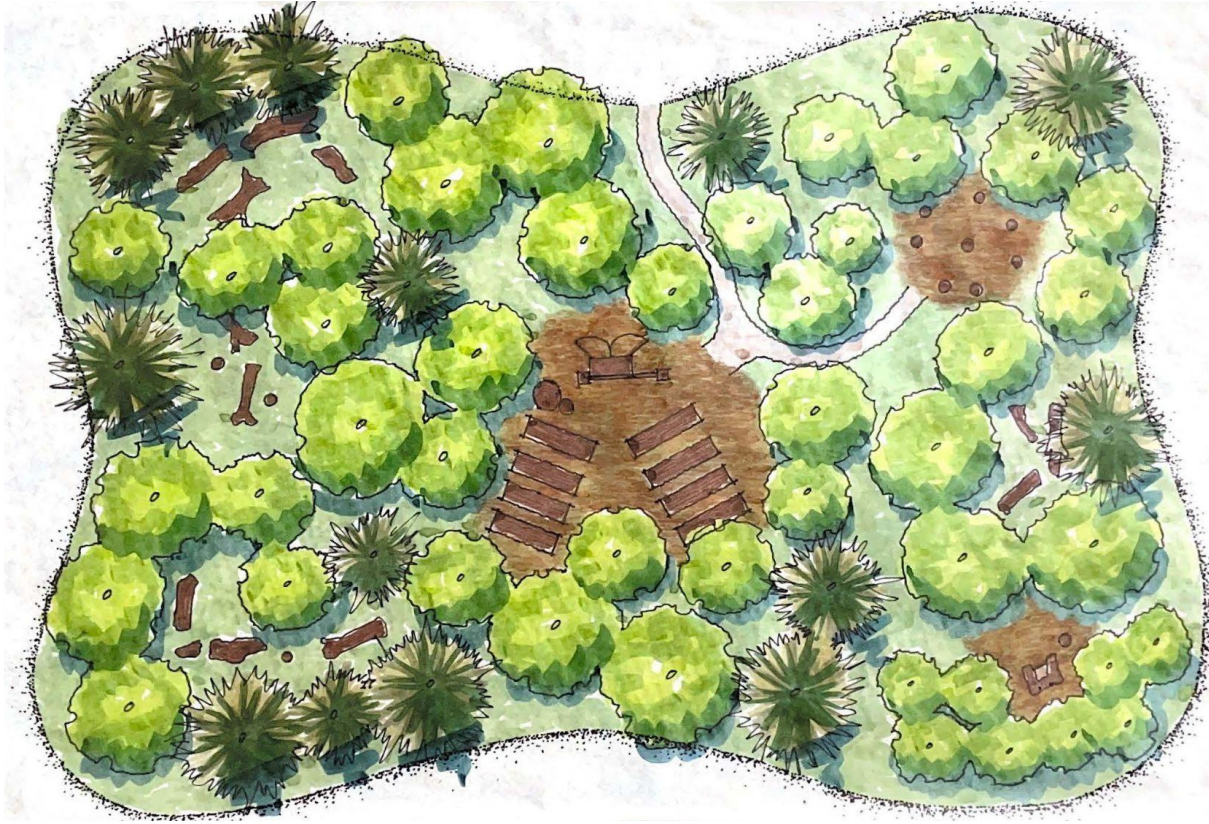
What does this project involve?

- Renfrew County District School Board has partnered with the Re-Nature Foundation to design and install outdoor learning spaces in 19 elementary schools across Renfrew County.
- The space will support experiential and inquiry-based learning. The focal points and zones are framed by trees, which provide shade, habitat, and the living backdrop for the spaces.
- Re-Nature will apply for and access various grants, with RCDSB as a partner, to support this project

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Sample Design



- 1 blackboard
- 1 curriculum cabinet
- 8 milled benches
- 1 teacher station
- 8 sculpted stump seats
- 1 carved chair or spiral bench
- 100 feet Eco Restoration logs
- 50+ trees

The Re-Nature Foundation's Role

- Streamline and complete multiple grant applications
- Assist in stakeholder coordination
- Oversee project management including documentation

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Renfrew County District School Board's Role

- Partner with Re-Nature through Memorandum of Understanding
- Connect with Municipalities and seek local support
- Commit to covering portion of cost for project
- Support implementation through regular maintenance of spaces and engagement with students and staff

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Each Municipality's Role (We need your support!)

- Support Renfrew County District School Board in applying for the Growing Canada's Community Canopies (GCCC) program through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)
 - Letter of intent (by end of August)
 - Resolution (required for grant to be approved)
- The lifetime value of the GCCC is 10 million dollars per municipality and RCDSB asking to access \$50,000 for each school site
- **There is no cost to each municipality**

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Summary

- Renfrew County District School Board has partnered with the Re-Nature Foundation with the goal of designing and installing an outdoor learning space in 19 elementary schools
- We are requesting each municipality's support, through a resolution, to apply for the GCCC program through FCM

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Next Steps

- Receive support from as many municipalities as possible in August and September
- Complete applications for FCM's GCCC program for the schools where we have municipal support
- If approved for the grants, design and install the outdoor learning spaces by summer/fall 2026

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