

Comparative Cultures

Reality Check



By Kinjal Dagli Shah

It was on a recent play date that another mum and I were discussing the benefits of outdoor play and exposure to nature.

We realized how privileged our children and we are to be able to have such easy access to playgrounds and natural surroundings. Modern-day research has alluded to the fact that outdoor play not only improves kids' physical health but also has cognitive benefits that strengthen their mental muscles.

I remember growing up on rugged outdoor play along with boy cousins, enjoying overnight train rides through green fields and banyan trees to travel to my maternal grandma's house for summer holidays, where I would sit with a glass of milk and endlessly watch squirrels scurrying up and down the many Gulmohar (flame) trees in the front yard.

But that, I thought, was just a result of the time I grew up in – the 80s and 90s when computers had just been introduced, online games were limited to Pac-Man, and the internet was still spreading its wings. I do recall my mother teaching us to appreciate nature and its beauty, and encouraging us to play outdoors and enjoy picnics.

Turns out we were doing it right all along. It put to rest a niggling worry I had developed (I add one worry to my list

every fortnight on average, so it isn't really a big deal). My preschooler, I thought, didn't appear very tech-savvy compared to the three- and four-year-olds I heard and read about who were conquering technology and becoming mini Steve Jobs. She seems more interested in collecting little rocks (hmm, maybe an archaeologist?) or transferring sand from the sidewalk to the grass on our front lawn "for the ants". (social worker?) and helping our neighbour's son fill his Bug Catcher box (nature enthusiast?).

She does know how to slide and unlock her dad's iPhone and look at her own photos, but we haven't loaded her with technological toys, things that only beep and click and manoeuvre. As with everything, I was wondering if we were doing it all wrong and raising a misfit in a world driven by technology. I see children at the dentist's office or at the pediatrician's clinic with their heads buried into their little toy gadgets, and I wonder if I must buy into the game.

I have a feeling that technology will be hers the day she decides to adopt it, but an appreciation for nature must come from a childhood spent rolling in the grass and asking to be pushed higher and higher on the swing.

Write to Kinjal at kinjal.dagli@gmail.com

Clean Living

On July 20 a team of volunteers visited Bruce's Mill Conservation Area to pick up garbage and debris as part of the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup initiative. Site coordinator Holly Fullager, who is running as a Ward 4 candidate in the 2014 municipal election, is flanked by helpers Adam Schickedanz (left) and current Ward 2 councillor and mayoral candidate Phil Bannon.



Adam Schickedanz prepares to cart off the garbage. Attila Demjen photos

Moonlight Madness & Inside Whitchurch-Stouffville Event
Thursday Aug. 21 / 5:30 to 9:30 pm in Downtown Stouffville
Main St. Closed between Market St & Park Dr. 4-10 pm

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Don't forget to bring your blanket and/or lawn chair

All Movies Shown in Memorial Park (in the old outdoor pool area) in case of cancellation (i.e. inclement weather), a pre-recorded message will be available by calling 905-642-5799 or "Like" us on Facebook for up-to-date information

BBQ & Popcorn will be available on-site!

*This movie will be shown in the Old Train Parking Lot on Main Street.

For more downtown information contact Anna Rose at 905-640-0749 or annarose@townofws.ca