

OUR MUD KITCHENS

By the staff at OLGC



OUR BARE CANVASES



It all started with what seemed to be blank canvas in our eyes. In the toddler play yard, we already had a great sink area. Where the preschoolers discovered a GREAT outdoor space to make their own.



PROGRESS!



And just like that, by adding a couple skids or vision was starting to form. The children loved this space before but our goal was to make it BETTER.

The preschool space was coming along nicely as well. Simple things repurposed and some things found in the beyond really started to change things.



FINAL PRODUCTS!



It took a lot of planning, determination, and grunt work but the final products were worth it! Bring on the dramatic play, and of course **THE MUD!**



MORE FINAL PRODUCTS



All of our our final mud kitchens! From out play yards right to the beyond!



MUD PLAY IN THE NEW SPACES!



KEEP THE PLAY COMING



MORE MUD THE BETTER



TODDLER EXPERIENCE

The toddlers mud kitchen experience was one that sparked every child's curiosity in so many different ways. The experience lasted an hour and a half and went through many stages. Every child displayed a great sense of self, competency and belonging. Each child explored our mud kitchen, the tools, and open-ended materials in their own way while still playing cooperatively along side their friends. They all engaged so well together taking turns, sharing, communicating, observing and learning. They practiced their fine motor skills through manipulating, squeezing, shaking spices, and transferring materials with different tools and materials. They engaged in math concepts like stacking wood cookies, counting them and lining them up. They tested the amounts of muddy liquid in that can fit into a variety of containers and tools. This touches on measurement concepts like volume and weight. They engaged in science exploration through observing the different states of water, soil and loose parts. The cause and effect of adding too much or too little of the materials they were supplied with. They experimented with adding materials like spice bottles filled with rice, cornstarch, spices and sparkles, watered down paint in squeeze bottles, water, soil, wood cookies, pine cones, birch tree seeds, and shrub cuttings. They engaged in creating their own version of soup by adding the different colours of watered down paint, and every spice available and enjoyed the concept of mixing and stirring. They practiced using their communication skills through problem solving, expressing their wants and needs and using their words. One child through the whole experience learned to say the words "please", "egg" and "on", all in one day! The whole experience lead to so many opportunities that helped build on and strengthen each child's developmental skills. It was all so amazing to watch as educators!



PRESCHOOL EXPERIENCE

As the preschool mud kitchen came to life in the forest the educators and children were moving the natural materials of the forest to add and build onto the kitchen. We moved a log and rolled it across two trees then added a string above to hang what the educators thought would be recipes. But quickly became a takeout window. Bennet looked over and said what can I get you? Ellie replied with a burger please. The conversation took off then B “what do you want on it” E “ketchup and pickles please”. The children then took to the kitchen to see how they could create the burger they were asked for. Bennet came up with some sponges placed together for the bun and meat. Well other children felt that the mud burgers needed a plate and spoon to eat it with. We also added the cash register and the giving and taking of money was added to the play. “That will be 20 dollars” “Here you go”.

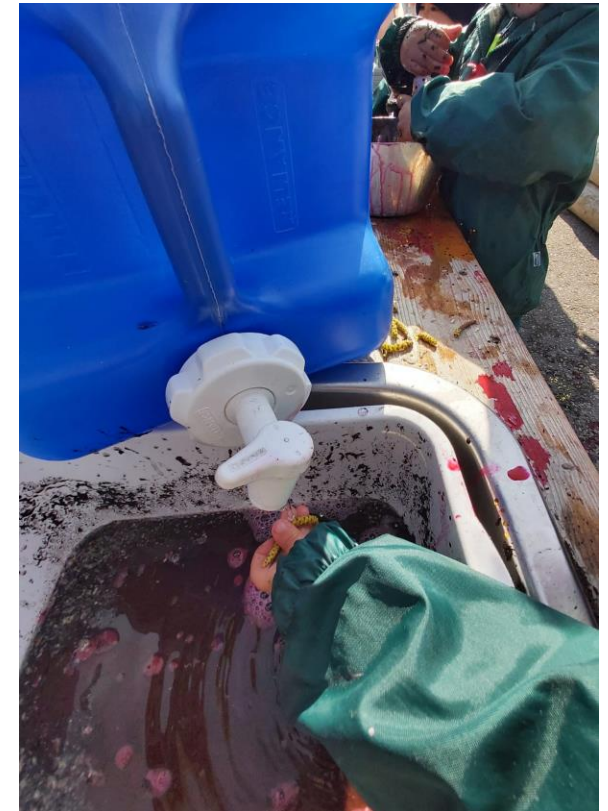
Over at another part we had baking going on with two children. Sophia says “we have to mix all the ingredients up” Oliver “pour it in”. We talk about measuring and mixing and pouring and all the steps followed to bake. After the baking was over Oliver walks round with the tray and asked if anyone would like one.

Playing in the forest with the mud kitchen has given our preschoolers so much opportunity for fun and creativity, the options are endless for the things we can add and expand on with this learning and there is no better place like our forest class to do it.



THE BENEFITS

There are many benefits to mud exploration. When children play with mud it not only gives them the opportunity to have fun, it also allows them to develop and practice very important life skills. It provides a variety of different learning opportunities including sensory, imaginative, creative and exploratory play. It improves cognitive function such as thinking, reasoning and remembering. It allows children to express their creativity while enhancing their fine motor skills. Children practice social skills through cooperation, negotiation, communication, sharing and turn taking. Mud play also enables children to make before and after comparisons, solve problems, test theories, measure and count, allowing for emergent math and science skills to be practiced. The open-ended nature of mud also encourages creative thinking and allows children to freely create without fear of making mistakes, contributing to a sense of self and competency. Lastly, mud play, inspires children to feel a connection to nature and develop an appreciation for the environment. So the benefits of mud exploration out weighs the fear of getting dirty because any opportunities for children to learn is worth encouraging.



THANK YOU!

- We hope you enjoyed seeing the transformation of our spaces. The joy in the children's eyes when they were involved in their experiences. This definitely was a fun challenge had by all! Now the children have wonderful spaces to enjoy!

