



Nurture your child's connection with nature.

# Ebb and Flow

## Forest School Parent Handbook

### Programs Offered

#### Burrs and Buds Program

A 2-hour program for 1-4 year olds with an adult

#### Sprouts Program

A full or half day program for 3-4 year olds.

#### Seedlings Program

A full day program for 4-7 year olds.

#### Saplings Program

A full day program for 7-11 year olds.

#### Oaks Program

A full day program for 9-13 year olds.  
(Offered monthly)

#### Weekly Seasonal Camp

### What is Forest School?

Forest School provides learners with opportunities to connect to themselves, to others, to our land and to their source. It requires regular and repeated experiences in natural spaces combined with learning through inquiry, emergent and land based knowledge. The facilitator is not the holder of knowledge, but rather a guide. The participants and the land work together to direct the learning in an authentic and natural manner that reflects the interests and needs of all involved. Learners find balance and resilience which allows them to thrive in a complex, busy and challenging world. We gain an awareness of community and a deeper connection with nature and our fellow human beings, leaving us better suited to live authentic and rewarding lives rich with meaningful relationships. Our days will be filled with exploring and adventuring through the forest, supported risk taking, creative endeavours and meaningful connections to age appropriate curriculum. Together, we will play, problem solve, celebrate, reflect and discover ourselves and how we fit into the world around us.

### A Typical Day at Forest School

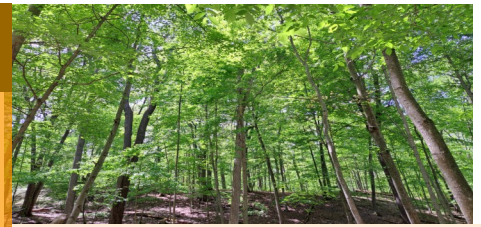


|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 9:00 - 9:15   | Arrival, open play and sign children in  |
| 9:15 - 9:45   | Learning prompt/circle time/lesson etc.  |
| 9:45 - 11:00  | Outdoor adventuring                      |
| 11:00 - 11:30 | Lunch                                    |
| 11:30 - 12:15 | Creative time/music lessons              |
| 12:15 - 12:45 | Learning Prompt/circle time/lesson, etc. |
| 12:45 - 2:15  | Outdoor adventuring                      |
| 2:15 - 2:45   | Consolidation of new learning            |
| 2:45 - 3:00   | Gratitude/land acknowledgement           |
| 3:00 - 3:30   | Open play, pick up and sign children out |



## What is our Philosophy?

Facilitators, learners and the land play equal roles in educating the whole child. We prioritize play and child-directed inquiry learning. This approach contributes to a more connected community, varied experiences and meaningful discussion. We believe that small group learning leads to real world connections and applications and a child's intrinsic motivation to thrive. We commit to instill a love of absorbing knowledge, connecting with those around us meaningfully and noticing the beauty with which we are surrounded. We believe it takes a community to meet the needs of the whole child and look forward to partnering with members of the community to allow our children to be authentic while simultaneously preparing them for their future.



*If we want our children to move mountains, we first have to let them get out of their chairs.*

*-Nicolette Sowder*

## Meet our Directors!



ADAM MUNCE

Adam is an Ontario Certified Teacher and has completed his Child and Nature Alliance of Canada certification. He has taught in the public education system for 8 years and has additional qualifications in Special Education, Mathematics and Music. Adam is a proud and active father of 4. Along with nature and mountain biking, Adam is passionate about music. He heads a local originals band as the singer-songwriter playing the guitar, ukulele and mandolin. Adam believes we must teach the whole child to truly provide balanced education. By providing varied experiences, asking rich questions and engaging in open dialogue and discussion, we can develop learners' ability to think critically with confidence and



BECKIE MUNCE

Beckie is an Ontario Certified Teacher with a specialist in Special Education and extra qualifications in mathematics. She has taught in the public education system for 17 years. Beckie is also a qualified and trauma informed yoga instructor and hockey coach. Beckie loves being a mom to three boys and enjoys adventuring in all types of weather in a variety of surroundings with her family. She is passionate about building youth capacity for facing adversity in a way that feels authentic to each individual. She believes that time outdoors is the antidote to over-stimulated, underactive kids growing up in a tech-saturated society.





# roles & responsibilities

## Role of Facilitators

The facilitator's responsibilities include planning and programming for sessions, ensuring that all equipment is available for all learners to participate meaningfully, documenting learner's experiences and communicating regularly with parents/caregivers. The facilitator must also complete regular risk benefit assessments to ensure the safety of all learners. It is a facilitator's role to ensure learners feel safe physically, socially and emotionally and address any situations that arise.

## Role of Parents

It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that all registration paperwork has been submitted prior to your child's first day of Forest School and that payment has been received in full. Parents must also adhere to the policies outlined in the Parent Handbook. It is imperative that parents help their children dress appropriately for the weather and that they have the necessary gear for their day. Finally, it is a parent's responsibility to communicate any information they feel would be useful for the facilitator upon drop of.

## Role of Learners

The learner's responsibility is to engage actively in Forest School activities. They will be expected to treat everyone at Forest School with respect and approach new learning with an open mind. Learners will be encouraged to reflect on their day, show gratitude for the learning the land provided and engage in discussion with facilitators and peers to deepen their understanding of the world. Learners will challenge themselves to approach new experiences with curiosity and work hard to develop their knowledge and

## Role of Volunteers/Accompanying Adult

The role of volunteers is to take direction from the facilitator. They must follow safety protocol, encourage engagement from learners and help manage behaviours. If the volunteer/accompanying adult has been assigned a particular learner, they are to remain within proximity of that learner to support them with their goals outlined in the behaviour plan. We welcome all forms of volunteers within our program including joining our sessions for periods of time or contributing to our organization in other ways. Please contact us if you are interested in volunteering your time or expertise in any way.



## Sustainability of our Environment

### *Leave No Trace*

We have rules for learners and facilitators to help ensure the sustainability of our land.

1. Leave little to no trace within our learning environments.
2. Boomerang lunch system - any food/waste materials produced will be returned home to dispose of.
3. Kindness must be exhibited to all living things.
4. Contribute to the land as it contributes to us.
5. We use our senses to observe and understand the land.
6. We show gratitude for the learning opportunities presented to us through our land.

It is through these rules that we will ensure our land maintains its beauty and health. We will watch the land for signs of stress and/or deterioration and will adjust actively to keep our forest in a natural symbiotic relationship between learners and the 'natural classroom'.





# What to BRING to Forest School

- Enough water for the whole day
- Backpack with nutritious lunch and pocket snacks (1-2)
- Large waterproof bag with extra clothes in case of soakers/accidents

Please label all your children's items

## BONUS ITEMS

- Work/garden gloves that fit
- Travel mug for group beverages



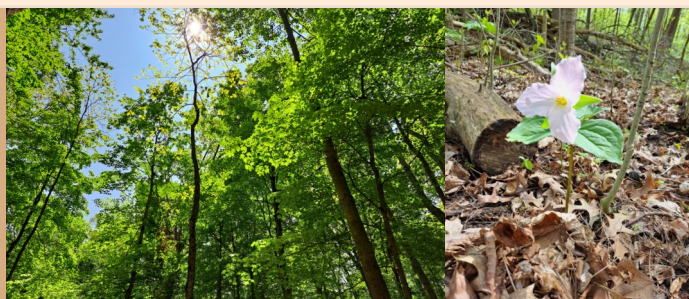
*"There is no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing"*

- Alfred Wainwright

## Inclusion and Accessibility

Everyone is welcome to our Forest School. We strive to be creative about finding solutions to ensure that all interested families have access to our facilities regardless of ability levels, race, religion, socio-economic status, gender, etc. Please do not hesitate to ask if you feel your particular circumstances create a perceived barrier to attending a program and we will work with you to find appropriate solutions. We view families as partners in education and look forward to collaborating with you.

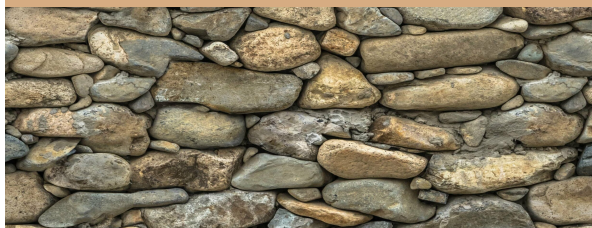
Discrimination of any sort will not be tolerated within our program. We will address any misconceptions and misunderstandings from a place of learning and personal growth to help even our youngest learners celebrate differences. We feel it's important to create a space where learners and their families are comfortable asking



## Behaviour Management Policy

Learners will be actively engaged in all activities and will be encouraged to always demonstrate kindness towards others and the forest. The foundation of our program is kindness, gratitude and mindfulness. Each day there will be time for focused goal setting, quiet mindfulness, and gratitude sharing - all contributing to healthy, happy learners. Because of these factors, we typically see few undesirable behaviours. Behaviours that contribute to another individual feeling uncomfortable will not be left unaddressed. Undesirable behaviours will be addressed as a learning opportunity in the early stages of a learner's Forest School experience. However, as sessions proceed, if undesirable behaviours persist, more involved steps will be taken. Due to low ratio numbers, concerns with learners' behaviour or conduct will be addressed at pick up with parents. We believe that facilitators and parents are a team and that there should be no surprises. We strive to avoid learners missing out from learning experiences and will only take that step if safety of the learners is at stake because of the behaviours.

We do not want to exclude anyone from this opportunity. If severe behaviours continue to occur, facilitators will ask that a parent/trusted capable adult accompany their child to Forest School to help improve behaviour while maintaining safety and protecting the well-being of other learners. A clear plan will be created with parents, facilitators and the child to ensure that all are aware of the learner's specific goals and expectations. This will allow for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of successful achievement of goals. The goal will be to gradually remove the use of a support person and reintegrate learners into independently participating in Forest School.





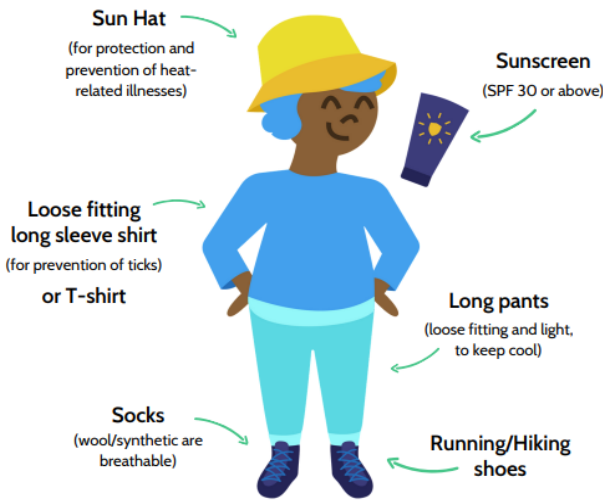
# What to WEAR to Forest School



## What to Wear for Outdoor Teaching and Learning



### Warm Weather



#### HELPFUL TIPS

- TUCK IN all clothing - shirt into pants, pants into socks (for tick prevention)
- In your kit/when out on the land, pack bug repellent and sunscreen
- Pack extra clean hats and socks (in case someone needs dry ones)
- Bring spray bottles full of water to mist/cool down children/yourself
- Bring a water source for refills and cool downs



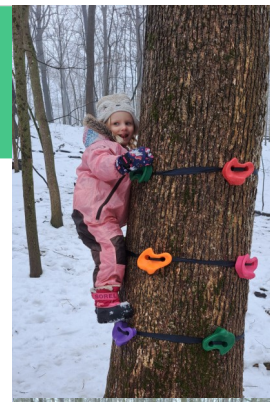
thriveoutside.ca



@childnaturecanada



@cnalliance



## What to Wear for Outdoor Teaching and Learning



### Cold Weather



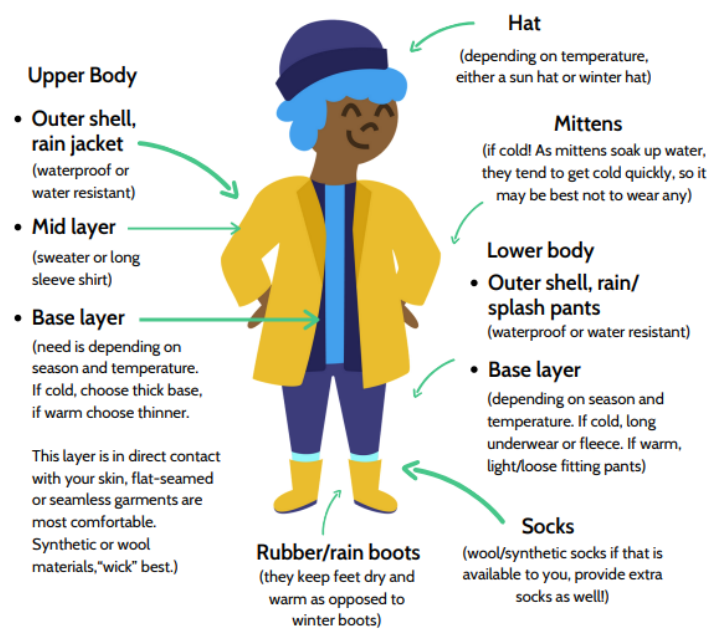
#### HELPFUL TIPS

- Hand warmers and feet warmers work well for instant warmth and relief
- For educators, pack the following extra gear when in your kit/when out on a hike:
  - Socks, mittens, 2-3 pairs of winter boots, handful of grocery bags (these can be used to prevent further wetness, as they act as a protective layer in rubber boots/winter boots against further seepage. They can keep the new socks dry!)

## What to Wear for Outdoor Teaching and Learning



### Wet Weather



#### HELPFUL TIPS

- For educators, pack the following extra gear when in your kit/when out on a hike:
  - socks, mittens, 2-3 pairs of rubber boots, handful of grocery bags (these can be used to prevent further wetness, as they act as a protective layer in rubber boots/winter boots against further seepage. They can keep the new dry socks dry!)



thriveoutside.ca



@childnaturecanada



@cnalliance



thriveoutside.ca



@childnaturecanada



@cnalliance



# Curriculum

## Land Stewardship

- Respect the land, protect the land, nourish the land

## Species Study

- Identification of plants and animals, life cycle observation, habitat study, etc.

## Creative Expression

- Music, art, story-telling, with a focus on the process over the product

## Problem Solving

- Team work, challenges with choice

## Tool Use

- Fire building, orienteering, building, whittling, etc.

## Risk Taking

- Teach learners about risk/benefit analysis, provide guidance and open communication, allow learners to explore their risk comfort zone.

## Play

- Loose parts, imaginative play, open-ended prompts, providing time and space

## Inquiry/Emergent Learning

- Follow learners' interests and inquiries, notice the lessons the land is providing, flexible planning and preparation

## Community Connections

- Finding ways to impact the community positively, connect to literacy and math learning from traditional education

## Character Development

- Mindfulness, gratitude, metacognition, resilience, self-esteem and self-awareness, confidence, etc.



In Canada, forest schools are relatively a new way of education. However, Indigenous groups all over Turtle Island have been teaching land based education to children for thousands of years. Our Curriculum is rooted in understanding these methods of teaching, such as the Seven Grandfather Teachings, emulation based learning, story telling and more and integrating them into our programs. Our educators are always learning more about ways we can continue to incorporate Indigenous pedagogy into our everyday routines. Honouring and acknowledging our past and growing our future with the knowledge and wisdom from those who lived on the land before us.

## *Land Acknowledgement*

We are grateful to be gathered here today on this lush and beautiful land. We sit close to where the Nith River joins the Grand River on the Haldimand Tract in Brant County. In the traditions of the First Nations, who are the original stewards of this land, we consciously choose to cherish and honour this land the plants and animals that thrive here. We choose to allow the land to be our partner in our learning and to walk on this land with soft feet, open minds, and brave hearts. All my relations.





# Risk Awareness

## Outdoor Play

The variety of risks is more than can be listed here and will vary depending on the program. However, educators are trained and experienced, and their role is to support children in learning and playing, while keeping the risks to an acceptable level.

Below is a list of some of the more significant risks:

- Injuries from executing strenuous and demanding physical activities
- Injuries resulting from matches or fire
- Injuries resulting from the presence of harmful plants, natural loose parts, wild animals, and/or ticks
- Changing and inclement weather, including storms, high winds, and lightning
- The possibility that your child may not heed safety instructions or directions given to the group or delivered individually
- Injuries arising from the actions of other children
- Negligence on the part of other participants

\*Sourced from Risk-Benefit Assessment for Outdoor Play: A Canadian Toolkit \*

*"Risky play is really important for kids —all kids— because it teaches hazard assessment, it teaches delayed gratification, it teaches resilience, it teaches confidence. When kids get outside and practice bravery, they learn valuable life lessons."*  
- Caroline Paul



## Ticks

Spending time in nature exploring always comes with the risk of ticks. We encourage families to develop a tick checking ritual after Forest School or the evening of Forest School. This involves removing all clothing and thoroughly checking all areas, especially little nooks and crannies, to ensure that no ticks have hitched a ride home with your child. Please help your child complete tick checks each evening after Forest School. The risk of Lyme's disease in children is quite low, especially in the first 24 hours.

If you do find a tick, using tweezers, gently but firmly pull the tick off, grabbing close to it's head.

Put the tick in a ziplock bag or sealed jar and clean the area of the bite with soap and water. Finally, if you require the tick to be analyzed, contact your local Public Health Unit or your family doctor to help facilitate this process.



## Poison Ivy

As with many Ontario forests, there is poison ivy. We approach this through education, awareness and prevention. We teach even our youngest learners how to identify poison ivy, we complete risk assessments in areas of exploration, and we dress appropriately to prevent exposure. We have trails and play areas that we monitor closely to keep free of poison ivy, however, we cannot guarantee it's absence. Please ensure your child is dressed appropriately to avoid Poison Ivy exposure.



### American Dog Tick



does **Not** transmit Lyme disease

### Blacklegged Tick (Deer Tick)



can transmit Lyme disease



# Our Policies

## Cancellations

When you have registered for Forest School, you have committed to the entirety of the sessions. If your child misses a day due to illness or other reasons, unfortunately we will not be able to refund the transaction for that day. If classes are cancelled due to weather etc., there is also no refund. However, if you have decided that Forest School is not working out for your family, we can refund you your registration fee minus the days that were attended and an administration fee of \$100.

## Privacy

We respect each family's right to privacy and individual comfort level with photos of their child. Please indicate on your registration form whether or not you provide permission for photo sharing.

## Illness

Please do not send your child to Forest School if they are ill. Your child may return when they are feeling better. Runny noses are a part of life and we do not consider children with runny noses as ill. Please use judgement that is considerate to others.

## Food Allergies

All learners will be required to indicate, upon registration, of any known food allergies. The known allergies will be communicated to the other learners and families in order to keep all learners informed and safe. If there are no known allergies, there will be no restrictions to food that can be brought for lunches and snacks. Sharing snacks will be discouraged unless approved by families in advance for special occasions. (i.e.: cooking a snack over open fire) We also practice boomerang lunches, where all packaging/garbage goes back into lunches to be disposed of properly at home.

## Child Protection

Children will only be able to be picked up by preapproved guardians/caregivers. If your child's pick up person differs from the Registration form, we ask that you please notify us in an email or text. All facilitators have completed a Vulnerable Sector Police Check and have had reference checks. Any visitors on site will be accompanied by our facilitators and will not be left alone with our learners.

## Toileting and Hand washing

Learners will be using a dry toilet in the outhouse for toileting purposes. Hand wipes and sanitizer will be always available in the outhouse and yurt facility as there is limited running water in the forest facilities. Learners will be encouraged to do a nature squat if we are not near our bathroom facilities.

## Risk Management

A site risk assessment will be completed each morning to evaluate the safety of the Forest School premises and facilities. In the case of inclement weather, facilitators will decide to proceed with their regularly scheduled day by finding alternate learning locations to optimize safety. Experience Risk Benefit assessments will also be completed for activities that include higher risk. These activities will be discussed with learners beforehand to ensure safety protocols are being adhered to. Safety will be monitored during activities and debriefed following activities.

## Emergency Procedures and First Aid

A facilitator with First Aid and CPR training will always be on site. Each facilitator will always have a personal sized First Aid Kit on them. A larger First Aid Kit will be stored in the indoor facility. Each family completes an Emergency Contact and Information Form upon registration. Emergency contacts will be contacted immediately if an injury occurs that the facilitator feels requires further medical attention. Facilitators will communicate minor injuries upon pickup.

## Inclement Weather

If we feel parents or facilitators would be unsafe driving to Forest School, a decision will be made and emailed out to families by 7:30am. Forest school is cancelled if wind gusts are predicted to reach 60 km/hr or a high likelihood if thunder and lightning storms are predicted. We practice quick forest exits for unpredicted hazardous weather.

## Tool Use

Learners will always be pre-taught how to use tools during Forest School to ensure safe and appropriate use. Learners will be directly supervised by the facilitators when learning how to use tools and will be provided with ongoing feedback and modeling to use tools properly. Learners will be provided with appropriate safety equipment should it be needed, such as protective eyewear and gloves.

## Grievances

If you feel the need to report a grievance, we ask that you email us your concerns. We will respond to grievances within a 24- 48 hour period. We assure you that we are committed to working alongside parents to find solutions to concerns and/or complaints. We believe in regular and ongoing honest communication.

## Site Visits

Children who are 3 and 4 years old must come for a site visit before their first day of a regular program.

## Late Policy

To ensure all parties' time is being respected, repeated late pick up, without contact, will result in a reminder email and then a late fee.

## Documentation of Learning

We recognize the value and importance of being involved in your child's education. During each day we will post stories on our Instagram/Facebook pages, so you can see updates throughout the day.

After each day at Ebb and Flow, your child's facilitator will complete a collage of photos, anecdotes and prompts so that you can engage in discussion with your child about their days in the forest. We encourage you to share these collages with your child to help guide conversations and learn about the adventures they get up to each day!

## General Communication

[ebbandflowforestschool@gmail.com](mailto:ebbandflowforestschool@gmail.com)

Please email us with questions or inquiries. We will use this email to send out updates and group messages.

Please use (226) 747-7859 for inquiries for Adam directly.





# What will my child do at Forest School?



**Develop a deep connection with nature and community**



**Adapt and become resilient to all types of weather**



**Foster curiosity and creativity**



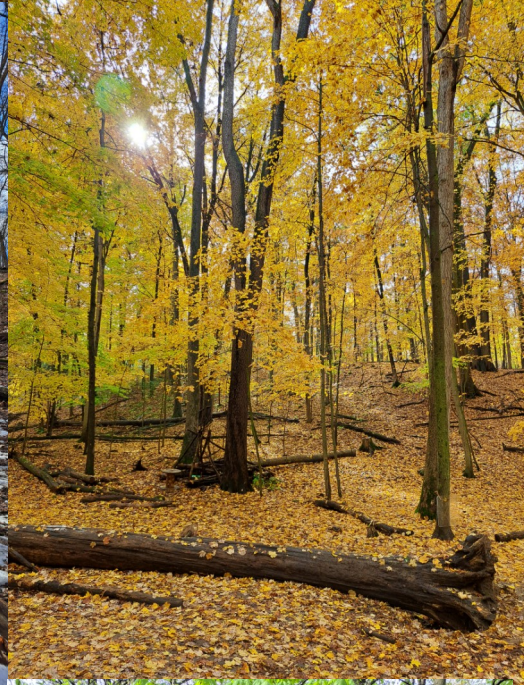
**Build self-confidence through healthy and safe risk**





# EBB FLOW

Beautiful forest  
throughout the seasons



Follow us!



[@ebbandflowfs](https://www.instagram.com/ebbandflowfs)



Ebb and Flow  
Forest School

