



Roots & Branches Forest School Information

Who:

- ✓ ALL Children Buds 3-4 years, Roots 5-6 years, Branches 7-12 years, Tree-nagers 13-18

Where: Roots and Branches Forest School – Surprise Lake

When: Wednesdays

9:00am-3:00pm

*Tentative Dates-

Term 1 Fall starting September 16th - Dec. 2nd

Term 2 Spring starting April 1- June 17th

What: Roots & Branches Forest School is offering a community based educational forest school program that focuses on self-awareness and mindfulness all while embracing our natural environment. It aims to help children become confident, build self-esteem and learn strategies to help themselves whenever needed. Forest School Canada embraces an emergent curriculum where students lead their own learning. They will participate in mindfulness activities, meditation, outdoor exploration, art projects and do meaningful chores to build on community togetherness and encourage a love for our environment. The program will look at building 8 life skills including self-esteem, positive visualization, big emotions (emotional and stress management), relaxation, happy healthy living, positive thinking, positive relationships and dreaming big (achieving and believing). Roots & Branches Forest School inspires to offer education where children can make strong connections with the earth, themselves and others, have adequate time to learn, become confident and proud of who they are.



The Objective

- Offer holistic education encompassing the head, heart and hands.
- Offer a natural, artistic, community based program
- Teach self-awareness and mindfulness to children
- Guide children to love education and their creative selves
- Use a natural play space in the forest and surrounding area for children to learn
- Incorporate math, literacy, science, social studies, music, drama through inquiry based and experiential learning
- Develop community, well-being and social engagement
- Guide children to feel connected to the earth and express gratitude

Details:

- Small class sizes for students each day with two certified teachers. 1:10 ratio of adults or better.
- We now have a Yurt for our indoor space and have an outdoor classroom!
- Some resources/supplies for the program may be provided and some will be the responsibility of the parent (email or letter will be sent out if supplies needed). Parents will be responsible for appropriate clothing and maintaining a supply of extra clothes on site.
- We will be outside rain or shine. An Indoor space will be available under extreme weather conditions including inclement weather below -30 degrees or lightning storms.
- Natasha Pang Robertson, qualified elementary school teacher, a Forest school Canada practitioner, Certified Forest Therapist, Sound Healer, Breathwork Facilitator and soon to be certified children's relaxation expert and children's yoga instructor, will be organizing program along with other teachers and volunteers who will be helping to facilitate.
- A variety of guests may also help teach program (such as tracking experts, nature sound experts, Tibetan singing bowl master, local artists, authors, parents and other guests to inspire learning).
- We will go on monthly field trips to the Long Term care unit at the St. Joseph's hospital and may visit or have visit clients from the March of Dimes



and Options Northwest.

- Program will include things like mindfulness activities, self-awareness activities, math, language, science, social studies incorporated into learning, eco/re-cycled art, forest projects, survival, structures, life-cycles, respect for our environment, love for nature, awe of our world, empathy for others, animals and nature.
- Community Snack – Each student will provide ingredients to create a nutritious snack for one day during their session. Such as veggies, crackers and hummus.
- Students will spend time outside in rain, cold or shine. They should be dressed appropriately to ensure enjoyment of our time outside.
- Students will be allowed to engage in “Risky Play” such as climbing trees, building structures, taking off their jackets. There may be guidelines such as staying within sight of the educators, being kind to one another, respecting the environment, what could happen if you chose to ____? Etc. Educators will monitor to a certain extent and may suggest that a certain action is making them uncomfortable. Research shows that students learn from “Risky Play”.
- Our program will mostly be an emergent curriculum. There will be some structure and tentative lesson plans/timelines.
- The program will include teaching life skills such as self-esteem, positive visualization, big emotions (emotional and stress management), relaxation, happy healthy living, positive thinking, positive relationships and dreaming big (achieving and believing). Activities will include painting, morning pages, meditation, relaxation, games, art, yoga and more.
- There may be a snow day if any rural busses are cancelled. Please check our SeeSaw Page and Family FB page. No refunds sorry!
- Snow days will be attempted to be made up on alternate days depending on space allowance and if enough students can attend.
- Students will bring their own litterless lunches, snacks, water bottle and once or twice per term a snack to share with the class.
- We begin our day at 9:00 and end at 3:00. Please be on time as we may leave the location to go outdoors in our community to explore. If you will be late, please make prior arrangements in order to meet up with the group. Our outdoor activities include



- various art projects, drama, plays, forest hikes, bird and animal watching, gardening, playing music, baking/cooking, navigating, shelter-building, story-telling circles, doing chores, The Baggage Arts Centre or other community groups, quiet observation times, tracking, preparing and contributing in community action groups, etc.
- o We have a SEESAW page that shares some of what we do each week and posts valuable information. All parents are required to be a part of it and check it each week.



- o Sample Day Itinerary for program below. Please keep in mind all activities will be outside when possible:
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9:00 Morning Journals and Free Forest Time (building on self-awareness, this may be outside) Sensory Play

9:30 Mindfulness Activity

- Community circle
- Visioning and Gratitude
- Set our intentions for the day
- Breath of the Week

10:00 Snack

10:15 Cooperative Game

Outside Adventures

- Community work
- Cooperative Game
- Inquiry/Purposeful Projects
- Forest play

11:45 Magic Forest Spot time - Children spend their own time in a special spot chosen by them (5-20 min). They may sit, observe, sketch, play etc. They may have a task such as paying attention to smells, sights, sounds.

12:00 Lunch

12:40 Meditation/Relaxation Time/Quiet Time

1:00 Mindfulness Lessons- Self Awareness Activities/Creative Movement/Shambala Life Skills

1:50 Outside Adventures/Hikes/Inquiry Projects/ Art Projects/ Cooperative Games

3:00 Gratitude Circle, Fire, story or song around the fire and shared snack, Home Time



What is Forest & Nature School?

<http://www.wesleycloverparks.com/learn/forest-school-canada/what-is-forest-school>

Forest School is an educational approach, and program of delivery, that has existed since the late 1950s, with thousands of programs expanding the world over, starting in Denmark and Sweden, moving through Scandinavia, onto Europe, China, Australia, New Zealand, the United States and now Canada. Although Forest School is called by many different names (e.g., Nature Kindergarten, Outdoor School, Waldkindergarten, Rain or Shine School, Bush School), in Canada two prominent names are taking hold: Forest School and Nature School (FNS).

In FNS, children spend anywhere from a half day to a full day outdoors in local woodlands and green spaces, in various urban and near-urban parks, natural spaces adjacent to or on school grounds, or natural playgrounds and outdoor classrooms. Children attending FNS have the opportunity to learn in a natural environment on a regular basis. Some programs are offered to students one half-day per week, whereas other schools and early years centers have embraced this approach on a more full time basis, with students spending the majority of their days outdoors. Despite variations, all Forest and Nature School programs adhere to the following: regular and repeated access to the same natural space, as well as emergent, experiential, inquiry-based, play-based, and place-based learning.

The activities that happen in Forest and Nature School vary, and can depend on the following circumstances: the season, the community context, climate, landscape, animals that have visited the night before, trees that have blown down in the wind, the kinds of provocations elicited by the educator, the kinds of tools and loose parts provided, the children who are in attendance, how long the group has been formed, and—most importantly—what interests the child(ren).

Forest and Nature School touches on all subjects and disciplines: in any given moment an experience can cut across math, science, art, literature, physical education, etc. Skilled educators in FNS will often plan their lessons at the end of a session, (also known as 'backwards lesson planning'), and will know what curriculum standards they need to meet on any given day. The learning outcomes are based on real-time explorations and experiences, rather than pre-determined concepts in books or on screens, done within the four walls of a classroom.

Benefits of Participating in Forest and Nature School



The following benefits have been demonstrated and acknowledged through various studies:

- Improved confidence, social skills, communication, motivation, and concentration
- Improved physical stamina, fine and gross motor skills
- Positive identity formation for individuals and communities
- Environmentally sustainable behaviours and ecological literacy
- Increased knowledge of environment, increased frequency of visiting nature within families
- Healthy and safe risk-taking
- Improved creativity and resilience
- Improved academic achievement and self-regulation
- Reduced stress and increased patience, self-discipline, capacity for attention, and recovery from mental fatigue
- Improved higher level cognitive skills
- Male inclusion in education

Benefits of Mindfulness <http://www.mindfulkidsandfamilies.com/mindfulness/>:

- **Body and Emotion regulation:** when our bodies and emotions are balanced and appropriate in our lives
- **Insight:** “self-knowing awareness”...this is key to building positive social connections
- **Attunement with others, i.e.”resonance”.** This leads to the other person’s experience of “feeling felt”, of being understood. When children become more “tuned in” to themselves, they are more “tuned in” to others around them
- **Empathy:** allow us to see from the stance of another person’s experience, imagining others’ reality and perspective
- **Better Impulse Control/Response Flexibility:** the capacity to pause before taking action (this is key with children and teens!); being able to consider a variety of possible options and to choose among them.
- **Fear modulation:** our ability to calm and soothe, and even unlearn, our own fears
- **Intuition:** access to awareness of the wisdom of the body
- **Increased Attention Span:** practice of paying attention can build our attention muscles in our brains
- **Morality:** taking into consideration the larger picture, imagining and acting on what’s best for the larger group rather than just ourselves

We hope to have you as part of our Forest School Family! Please come join our Wolf Pack!