

Program Handbook

April 2024

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This Land

This place that holds us is the ancestral Lands and Waters of the Mi'kmaq and Beothuk. This place is upheld by provincial resources built from the hands and Lands of the Mi'kmaq, Beothuk, Innu, and Inuit. May we offer restorative kindness to the suffering endured by countless marginalized peoples leading to us now sharing time on the Land.

We can honour the long-standing caretakers of this territory by learning from their resilience, creativity, and humility. Engaging in Land-based education is an incredible privilege that demands we continue to reflect and uplift others meaningfully. The beauty of this work lies in inviting others to the sanctuary of the forest, listening to the Land, and embodying their stories of provenance.

May this land acknowledgement not end but begin a lifelong conversation with Indigeneity. We work in gratitude for the way place and community hold us. We work daily to center the voices of Mi'kmaq throughout all of Mi'kma'ki, including the places that raised us. As we explore the particularities and uniqueness of the Bay of Islands, we recognize our privilege in getting closer to the ground, to live, love, and learn on Indigenous Land.

Acknowledgments

This program owes its creation to Jacqueline Bennett, her work with Sapling Forest School, her support, and her mentorship. Her generosity continues to reverberate through this program.

We would like to thank Hannah Schell at Rising Roots Forest and Nature Programs in Tupperville, NS, for their support of our program and for providing the backbone of this policy manual.

We are grateful for the support of Brennan Lowery and the Navigate Entrepreneurship Internship for guiding us in starting a business in Corner Brook.

About Us

Our Philosophy

At Twisted Tuckamore Forest School, we are inspired by the growth and connectivity that emerges between children and the creative freedom of a forest classroom. This forest is our teacher, encouraging children and educators alike to centre place, play, and inquiry. This forest is also an invitation to children of all developmental stages and backgrounds to find themselves in nature, breathe fresh air, experiment, get creative, and pursue their respective and collective journeys of discovery.

We believe that children know best how they learn. Our goal is to facilitate and nurture these early stages of a prosperous relationship with the Land that connects children to their food, imagination, and our shared home.

Our program is unique in that we draw from the strengths and resources of forest school pedagogy while providing specific outlets to engage with food and art. These three avenues for learning are highly connected and make for a well-rounded experience. The active imagination of your remarkable children, coupled with our dedication, will bring novelty and valuable lessons to each day we spend together in the forest.

About Our Program

Our program offers children from all backgrounds the opportunity to build relationships with the Land through regular and repeated access to the same forest site, developing lasting relations and habits. We offer four days of programming in the forest each week over the summer for school-aged children from 5-12.

We have the gear to be outside all day - rain or shine. Our programming is, first and foremost, flexible, as we follow group interests and the weather. Within this, our days are designed to provide balance to accommodate our diversity of learners. We pair high-energy exploration and play with rest, reset, and individual exploration. We run

around, play games, draw, sow seeds, rest in our sit spots, build forts, pick berries, tell stories, sculpt mud, identify plants and animals, climb trees, harvest garden veggies, build fires, play in the stream, and tinker with recycled and natural materials.

Our program draws on three interconnected sources of learning and inspiration; Art, Food and the Land. These three pillars have well-documented life-long benefits and in concert, can provide children with the freedom to pursue their own interests while being exposed to a variety of life-affirming activities. Learn more about our holistic practice in the three sections below.

Learning with the Land

In our age of anxiety, amplified by dependence on technology, a global pandemic, and hyper-regulated childcare, we are re-learning the value of just being outside. Children are increasingly prone to experiencing Nature Deficit Disorder which impacts all aspects of their development, such as attention difficulties, underdeveloped motor skills, and higher rates of depression, anxiety, and placelessness. Time spent in nature can improve our mental health and coping skills when these challenges arise while supplanting them with life-affirming activities.

The Land provides children with critical opportunities to challenge themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally. The natural hazards and risks of an outdoor environment allow children to test their limits, develop an awareness of risk, and feel confident and capable when faced with uncertainty.

Children who have access to outdoor spaces, develop a relationship with the Land, and engage in risky play can benefit by enhancing the following:

- **Ecological Literacy and Stewardship**
- **Confidence and Emotional Intelligence**
- **Physical Health through fresh air, sunshine, and exercise**
- **Mental Health, coping strategies, and overall well-being**

- **Gross motor skills and fine motor skills**
- **Communication, Social Skills, and Relationship-Building**
- **Risk Assessment Skills and Natural Consequences**
- **Creativity and Food Skills**
- **Independence and Problem-Solving**

Twisted Tuckamore's understory classroom provides consistent access to nature's invitation to be curious. A program driven by inquiry and the children themselves means the opportunity to creatively deepen their own unique relationship to the Land and its plethora of benefits.

More Information:

- The Child and Nature Alliance of Canada has more information on [What Forest School Is](#) and the [10 Principles](#) that guide and govern our Forest School. You can learn more about the Alliance and Forest and Nature Schools across Canada [here](#).
- Boston University writes about the [Benefits of Outdoor and Risky Play](#)

Learning through Creation

At Twisted Tuckamore, children can create in countless ways, from crafting forts, weaving roots, and inventing games, to drawing, sculpting, and painting. Through creation, children practice their ability to problem solve, plan, and experiment with cause and effect while freely expressing themselves. This is how we learn to interpret and respectfully manipulate the world around us.

The world needs creative thinkers, and a creative mind is the key to success in any avenue of life. Whether it is what we want for our children or not, working with paper, digital or tangible, is a part of their future. Art allows children to practice problem-solving on paper, tune fine motor skills needed for writing, and comprehend the symbology we use each day. Art also allows children to rest while exercising their minds in a fun way!

Other benefits of art and creation for early childhood development are:

- **Math Skills:** Learning shapes, size, spacial awareness, counting, and comparison making.
- **Language Skills:** Describing and sharing artwork allows children to practice description skills all the while hearing new descriptive perspectives from others.
- **Communication:** Art better enables non-verbal children, children with English as a second language, or any child, to communicate their wants, needs, and emotions differently.
- **Encourages Neural Connections:** Art activates all our senses; sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste, creating lasting connections and associations.
- **Connecting With Others:** Collaborative projects invite children, who may not have similar interests, to find common ground while developing their teamwork skills.
- **Promote Creativity:** We always need more creative thinkers in this world!
- **Develop Problem-Solving Abilities**
- **Develop Fine Motor Skills**

For more information on the benefits of Art and Creating in early childhood education:

- [The Artful Parent](#)
- [The Art of Creating: Why art is important for early childhood development. MSU](#)

Learning through Food

Food is the language we speak with the Land, and the vernacular we rely on has lasting impacts for us both. Fostering a healthy relationship with food at a young age has countless benefits for enhancing mental and physical health, resilience, independence, problem-solving, and creativity.

Harvesting food from the Land is important to maintaining our relationships with nature, wildlife, and food. It requires that we practice reciprocity and discipline to not deplete the resources we depend on. Acquainting children and youth with these concepts early on

can contribute to establishing a healthy relationship with the Land and our food. The teachings that inform our food practice come from across Mi'kma'ki, including knowledge from countless generous knowledge keepers we honour every time we share with children.

At Twisted Tuckamore Forest School, we grow veggies in a community garden, forage for berries and other edible forest foods, prepare food over a fire, and share the harvest. We learn ancient stewardship values to only take what we need, enter relationships of consent, honour the lives that are sacrificed so that we can eat, and to share. Food is a call to get creative with what we have!

Meet the Co-Owners and Co-Operators

Tara and Sam both have experience facilitating Forest School programming. Tara draws on her background fostering intimate connections to our food while Sam brings a whimsical and humorous imagination through his Art-based approach to early childhood education. Drawing on their unique strengths, they deliver holistic programming that meets a diversity of learners where they are. The selection of activities available in a forest, garden, and art-creating space ensures that teachings come in all forms and our forest campers go home happy, tired, and a little bit muddy.

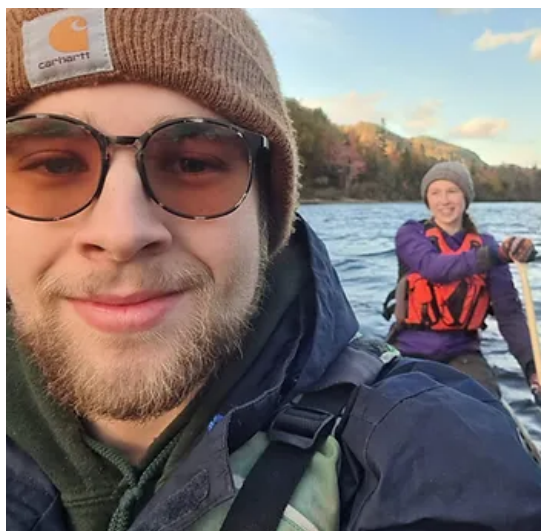
Tara and Sam work to foster a compassionate community that is dynamic, inclusive, curious, and supportive. Relationships mean the world to them. Through relationships, the wellness of people, their place, and their communities co-emerge to create a 'multi-organelled body' of stability and resilience.

Tara has Wilderness and Remote First Aid & CPR/AED Level C and Sam has Standard First Aid & CPR. Both facilitators have completed Psychological First Aid, WHMIS, Criminal Record Checks, and Vulnerable Sector Checks.

Tara's passion for spending time on the Land first sparked her love for food and education. She worked one season as a Forest School Facilitator at Sapling Forest School and has eight years of on-and-off experience leading children and youth in outdoor settings. Tara is happiest working with food and children, a responsibility grounded through Land-based teachings and earth-honouring traditions.

Tara's vocational offering is in relationally reorienting herself and her community to the Land. This slow yet bustling way of life cultivates a deeper humility and interdependent bliss for Tara. At Forest School, this means valuing lessons from the Land and being just as quick to share her knowledge with others.

Despite her existential mysticism, or as it was put for her growing up, having an 'active imagination', Tara enjoys the simple things too. She likes moving through landscapes (walking, running, biking, canoeing), staying in one place like rolling around in the moss or dirt, and eating ranks highly as well.



At his core, Sampson is a highly imaginative storyteller, silly jokester, and caring person who takes the time to ensure that everyone around him is safe, comfortable and having fun.

Sampson loves the outdoors and is passionate about art, creating, and working with his hands.

Though he often works in freelance design and illustration, Sampson's most rewarding work is with children, facilitating drawing activities and art games and designing fun and creative colouring sheets and imagination exercises.

As an instructor, Sampson offers kindness, acceptance, understanding, patience, and various creation-based skill sets. Sampson was raised in a home filled with creatives. At a young age, he began working in his father's specialty metal, wood, and acrylic workshop, spending seven years learning these trades. Sampson is now finishing a Bachelor's in Visual Arts, where he has honed his skills in drawing, painting, printmaking, and sculpting.

Forest Schools and Land-Based Education: Our Commitment

Our program is shaped by the guidance of the [Child and Nature Alliance of Canada](#) and the strong and diverse people that came before us. Although forest school pedagogy is seen as originating in Europe, land-based education has a very long and rich history on these lands. There are fundamental differences in the worldviews of Indigenous and Western cultures, values, practices, and actions; outdoor learning and play are no exception (CNAC, 2019). In recognizing this, there is also unity between both knowledge systems for the proven benefits of being on the Land.

Not only does outdoor/land-based education invoke multiple lineages of practice and worldview, but in spending time on the land, we are constantly engaging the Mi'kmaq. We share space with Mi'kmaq trees, plants, animals, rocks, weather, waters, children, families, businesses, and community members - and therefore, we must intentionally foster relationships grounded in respect and reciprocity. This is a resounding responsibility we feel at Twisted Tuckamore Forest School.

When we make offerings in community, we communicate our shared and varied stories of provenance with the intention of moving forward in kinship. When we engage cross-culturally with the land, there is an opportunity to heal and rearticulate our relationships. We can see with two eyes; the strengths of Western knowledges and Indigenous knowledges to mindfully draw from the deep understandings they represent. During our program, we aim to create space where both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people can relationally reorient themselves to the land, guided by Indigenous governance.

We (the operators) are of European ancestry. We were born into a home called Mi'kma'ki where we have no blood memory but that holds our most impactful teachings and relations. We have inherited countless strengths and weaknesses in a homeland where we benefit systemically at the expense of the Mi'kmaq. Guided by the ancestors of blood, vocation, and place, we resist, heal, and imagine better worlds for our young.

Our role as settler co-owners and co-operators is creating space and invitation to look deeper, to go to the source, the land and the intimate stewards whose experiences can be amplified. With respect to our capacity, this program hopes to grow and change to meet the needs of our community. This includes inviting knowledge holders to spend compensated time with the children and offering outdoor employment opportunities for Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Youth.

We are so beautifully held by a community of collaborators that started to take root in 2023, and has already begun extending into the gifts of 2024. This has proven to be the life blood of the program. We commit to supporting this learning space and inviting a wide range of collaborators; to value and extend an avenue to these remarkable lights in our communities. Thank you for supporting, and most of all, for dreaming with us.

Yours in dedication to co-create better worlds for our children through cross-cultural land-based learning,

Tara and Sam

Twisted Tuckamore Forest School Co-Owners and Co-Operators

Program 2024 Details

Dandelions (Ages 5-8)

This program focuses on nurturing relationships with nature, exploration and play. We will explore the land through free play, art activities, building, collecting, hiking, jumping, and exploring. As with all of our programs, children's interests, questions and ideas guide what happens on a day-to-day basis. Various materials will be available to support children's play as they build confidence, body awareness and relationships with others and the land. Facilitators learn alongside the children while providing a safe environment for risky play and exploration.

Dandelions programming in 2024 will take place for three weeks:

Week 1: June 24 - June 27

Week 4: July 15 - July 18

Week 7: August 5 - August 8

Wild Strawberries (Ages 7-10)

Time will be spent building, creating, exploring, gathering and learning on the land. Although each program will be different based on the children's ideas and interests, common forest camp activities include fire building and cooking safety, fort building, forest art, loose parts play, foraging, hiking, and tree/plant/fungi identification. While safety is of the utmost importance, risky play is a big part of our programs and contributes to confidence, body awareness, problem-solving and creative thinking skills.

Wild Strawberries programming in 2023 will take place for three weeks:

Week 2: July 2 - July 5 (Tues-Fri)

Week 5: July 22- July 25

Week 8: August 12 - August 15

Spruce Roots (Ages 9-12)

This program dedicates more time to skill-building and flourishing group dynamics. Activities will follow the capacities and interests of children but may include foraging, hiking, tree/plant/fungi identification, gardening, forest restoration, and creative building projects. Emerging from group capacity and interest, these activities will take our explorations a step further as we learn to listen to the land, cultivate and forage food, prevent overharvesting, and work creatively in groups.

Spruce Roots programming in 2023 will take place for two weeks:

Week 3: July 8 - July 11

Week 6: July 29 - August 1

All of our programs use emergent curricula to support risky play and learning. We know the value of mixed-age learning environments; our programs span 4 years in age to allow for a range of development levels and leadership opportunities while maintaining

focused programs that work for all participants. Our program age ranges overlap with each other to provide flexibility for families and to treasure the learning opportunities present within diverse group dynamics. A seven-year-old will glean different things from our Dandelions program than they would in our Wild Strawberries program. These programs are designed to dynamically meet the needs of diverse children and groups.

A Day at Forest School

Approximate Daily Routine for all Programs

| | |
|----------------|---|
| 9:00 - 9:30 AM | Arrival Time and free play in the field |
| 9:30 | Morning Circle, Safety Orientation, and plan for the day emerges |
| 10:00 | Enter the forest for play and exploration OR visit the community garden plot |
| 10:30 | Snack time in the forest, field, or garden |
| 10:45 | Play and exploration mixed with group activities |
| 12:00 PM | Lunch |
| 12:30 | Free-play and group activities |
| 2:00 | Rest and Relaxation time in individual sit spots: Art and/or Connect with the Forest |
| 2:15 | Snack time in the forest |
| 2:30 | Free play, run, climb trees, build, tell stories, hike, identify plants and animals, etc. |
| 3:15 | Forest clean-up and care, then head up to the field |
| 4:00 | Pick-up |

Registration, Cancellation, and Waitlist Policy

Enrolling at Twisted Tuckamore Forest School is on a first-come, first-served basis. Registrations must be made using the form on our website. Upon registration and successful payment, you will receive a confirmation email within 3-5 business days.

Fees are partially refundable (less \$50 administration fee) up until three weeks before that program/week runs. If you cancel after the three-week period, you will be charged the full amount. Exceptions may be made on an individual basis in the event that the child is no longer able to fully participate due to unforeseen long-term health conditions. Appropriate documentation will be required to apply for this reimbursement. In the unlikely event that we unexpectedly close due to dangerous weather, the dollar amount equivalent to the hours missed will be transferred to a future date of the participant's choice. Enrollment fees are subject to change from year to year.

If a program is full, you can secure your spot on the waitlist via the link provided. Families on the waitlist will be called when openings emerge. Enrollment is confirmed when the full payment is received, except in special circumstances when a payment plan is agreed on.

Health and Safety Policies

Illness Policy

Please let us know if your child is staying home due to sickness. We ask that children stay home for 24 hours after the following:

- Vomiting

- Diarrhea

- Fever: temperature over 101 Fahrenheit or 38 Celsius

- Cold or flu symptoms

- A contagious illness (chicken pox, pink eye, rashes)

- Infections of the ear, nose, throat, or lungs, such as strep throat

If any of the above symptoms develop while the child is at the program parents/guardians will be called and asked to pick up their child. Offering a sick child water and a place to relax until their parent/guardian arrives is common practice.

In the event that a child attends programming with a contagious condition, parents of other participants will be notified without disclosing confidential information.

*Due to COVID-19 these precautions will be adhered to closely, we urge children and facilitators to stay home if they are sick and follow public health protocols. To prevent the spread of all illnesses everyone will be encouraged to wash their hands frequently.

Food/Allergy Policy

Packed Food

Guardians are responsible for packing lunch and snacks that are nutritious and support a whole day of outdoor play. Aside from the occasional campfire, there is no heat source for packed lunches. Packed food must be prepared so children can eat without assistance and in a forest environment. We encourage “wrapper-free” lunches when possible to minimize the chances of pollution and litter on the land.

Allergies

All allergies and dietary restrictions must be documented in the medical information form during registration. Allergy and diet information will be kept on our roster document, which facilitators carry at all times during programming. Foods reported as allergies during any given week will be prohibited from the site, and guardians will be notified before camp about said items.

Mild allergy medications are the sole responsibility of the parent/guardian. If your child requires an EpiPen, guardians must provide the EpiPen and inform us during registration. The EpiPen will be carried by the child unless there are unique circumstances and prior arrangements. Facilitators will have an additional EpiPen in

their first aid kits for emergencies and severe unknown allergies. If a child is having an allergic reaction with signs of anaphylaxis, facilitators will:

Immediately call 911

- Administer the EpiPen if needed
- Maintain a calm and supportive environment
- Have the child lie face up and be still
- Loosen tight clothing and cover the child with a blanket, don't give them anything to drink
- If vomiting or bleeding from the mouth, turn the child to the side to prevent choking
- If there are no signs of breathing, coughing or movement, begin CPR. Do uninterrupted chest presses until paramedics arrive
- Get emergency treatment even if symptoms start to improve. After anaphylaxis, symptoms can start again (recur). Monitoring in a hospital for several hours is usually necessary
- Notify child's emergency contact as soon as is reasonable to do so
- Complete incident report and communicate with guardians after the child's immediate needs are tended

Symptoms of unknown allergies that surface during programming will be closely monitored. Facilitators will help the child to feel comfortable, correspond with guardians to determine if pick-up is necessary, and complete an incident report as soon as reasonable to do so.

Food-Based Programming

Our programming may dedicate significant time to food education depending on group development, interest, and needs. Food activities include gardening, preparing food over a fire, foraging and processing foods. All consumable plants that are both seasonally available and a part of programming will be documented thoroughly in the informed consent for guardians. Research and information on each food available in food programming for the week will be provided for caretakers to decide whether their

child can consume any particular food, knowing that the risk of unknown allergies surfacing is present. Under no circumstances are children allowed to ingest anything found in the forest without the approval of a facilitator. All edibles found in the forest will be examined by facilitators before consumption to ensure they are what the child believes them to be (e.g. strawberries) and are approved by guardians. Guardians can request more information about the ingestible foods available and food programming at any time.

What to Bring

Forest School attendees should be prepared to spend the whole day outdoors in all safe weather conditions. We have shelter for unfavourable conditions and cancellation protocols for extreme weather conditions, but preparation goes a long way to keeping your children comfortable in the forest. Clothing layers and options are encouraged for children to participate fully and have fun at forest school. We understand you will send your child however they are most comfortable. We also recommend that caregivers and guardians check the weather before packing for the day.

Please check the weather forecast before preparing your child for the day.

Please label your child's belongings. This is helpful during clean-up to ensure every camper goes home with what they brought. We have a lost and found in our office and a supply of extra clothing articles for borrow.

Everyday Items:

- Full water bottle
- Nutritional snacks and a lunch, extra food is encouraged
- Extra change of clothes
- Extra socks
- Close-toed shoes (running or hiking shoes)
- Rubber boots

- Sweater/jacket/sweatshirt
- Bug spray
- Backpack to carry the above

Hot and/or Sunny Weather:

- Sunscreen labelled with the child's name
- Sunhat
- Sunglasses, optional
- Long pants and shirt for protection against bugs and sun (according to yours and your child's comfort)
- Shorts and short-sleeved shirt for the heat (according to yours and your child's comfort)
- Water shoes, optional

Wet and/or Rainy Weather:

- Hooded and waterproof rain jacket
- Rubber boots
- Splash pants or water-resistant pants
- Sweatshirt
- Complete change of clothes (including underwear and socks)

Optional items:

- Art supplies (that can be exposed to the elements and shared with others!)

What NOT to bring

- Electronics
- Valuables or items with sentimental value
- Personal toys
- Knives and dangerous tools. It is wonderful if your child is comfortable using tools like this in outdoor settings, but for the safety of the whole group, it is not a part of

child-led programming. Knives and other dangerous tools are managed uniquely by facilitators at Forest School.

Privacy and Social Media Policy

We adhere to all legislated privacy guidelines and maintain confidentiality about children's and families' personal information. All family correspondence and records are kept confidential unless written permission to share information is given by parents/guardians or we are mandated by law to do so. Parents/Guardians are given the opportunity to sign or decline to sign a waiver outlining permission for their children's photos to be taken for in-program use, social media, and the family group. We do not show children's faces in photos used publicly. Employees are prohibited from taking photos of children attending Forest School.

Child Protection Policy

The safety and well-being of children is most important. Facilitators are legally obligated, under the Child and Youth Care and Protection Act (2015), to report any suspected or disclosed abuse. Facilitators have a duty to report when a child may be in need of protective intervention, including suspected involvement or witness to family violence, sexual abuse, and neglect. It is not the facilitator's responsibility to investigate but to record notes and call community services to report it. Facilitators are not permitted to contact the parent/guardian.

If a child discloses, facilitators will:

- Remain calm and ensure the child is safe
- Call the Child Protection Office, (709) 637-2686, report all the relevant information they have access to and answer questions to the best of their ability. Report the facts, not opinions.
- NOT inform the parents/guardians of the call

Toileting and Handwashing

Children will be encouraged to wash their hands at the following times:

- Before eating
- After toileting
- After applying sunscreen or bug repellent

There will be an outdoor hand-washing station available for use. Due to COVID-19 and other transmissible diseases, children and facilitators are encouraged to wash their hands often.

Children must be capable of toileting and handwashing independently. Children are encouraged to have nature pees in appropriate spaces if they want to. Facilitators are not permitted to assist children with toileting alone. We will have a luggable loo/composting toilet (a bucket filled with woodchips with a toilet seat on top) and toilet paper. The luggable loo is in a private space but does not have a locking door for safety reasons, facilitators may enter this private space if the child's safety is in question.

Medications and Medical Information

Medications are the sole responsibility of parents/guardians. Facilitators will not give a child medication under any circumstance other than an EpiPen and antihistamine if needed during an emergency allergic reaction. Inhalers will be the responsibility of the child or the parent. Pills, liquid, cream, ointment and all other types of medication are the sole responsibility of the parent or caregiver.

Parents/guardians must provide all relevant medical considerations to us during registration, and notify us as soon as is reasonable about a change in their child's health and medical condition. All records are kept secure and confidential.

Emergencies and First Aid

Facilitators are all trained in Standard First Aid/CPR and Psychological First Aid, the lead facilitator on emergencies has Wilderness/Remote First Aid. All facilitators have trained on site and are highly familiar with emergency procedures. During programming, facilitators will carry the emergency contact information for each child at all times.

In case of severe injury or accident requiring Emergency Medical Services, the following protocols are in place.

- The lead facilitator will assess the extent of the emergency and provide first aid, asking another adult to call 9-11 while first aid is being given. The following information will be needed for the 9-11 dispatch:
 - Nature of emergency
 - Details of the injured person
 - Location and what first aid is being administered
- The emergency contact will be informed as soon as possible.
- Find a safe location to meet the ambulance and send one adult with the injured person.
- The rest of the group enters a risk reduction state as detailed in section Participant-Facilitator Ratios and Facilitator Responsibilities. The other facilitator(s) will make sure all other children are accounted for, safe, and remaining calm. The group will return to the field/indoor lodge until another facilitator is able to join.
- File an incident report as soon as reasonably possible.

Children Unaccounted For and Lost Child Emergency Protocol

If a child is unaccounted for during a headcount and does not respond to immediate calls, finding them is the highest priority. If the child is known to run and hide, prior to enrollment, facilitators will work with the child to pick a 'safe spot' (a place a child can go

if they feel the need to run and hide away from stimulation) that they can use when needed. In the event that a participant is missing, facilitators will first check the 'safe spots' and hopefully, the participant will be located.

The following procedure is in place in the event of a lost child emergency.

Facilitators will:

- Ensure that all other children continue to be supervised while a search for the child concerned is carried out. The group remains together in a central location, calmly undergoing quiet activities in a risk-reduction state (see section Participant-Facilitator Ratios and Facilitator Responsibilities for more information on our risk-reduction procedures).
- Searching facilitators/remaining adults follow concentric 'laps' moving further from home base calling the name of the child. The route of search is specific to the site and is known and practiced by facilitators during training.
- If unsuccessful in finding the child, searching facilitators will report back to base after 20 minutes to call the police.
- Contact the child's parents and reassure them that everything is being done to locate their child.
- Make note of the circumstances in which the child has gone missing and where they were last seen. Prepare a detailed physical description of the child, to include their hair and eye colour, approximate height and build, and the clothing they were wearing.
- Follow police guidance if further action is recommended and maintain close contact with the police.
- Relocate the rest of the children to our indoor lodge to further reduce risk and make way for the searching party in the woods until children are picked up by parents/guardians.
- If the child is still not found, all programming will stop. An extensive search that includes all emergency services, forest school facilitators, and the child's parents/loved ones will be conducted.
- Inform all relevant parties of updates including whether the child is found.

- File an incident report when it is reasonable to do so.

Information retrieved from *Procedures for missing children at sports events*.

Extreme Weather and Cancellation Policy

The safety of children, facilitators and families is of utmost importance. If the weather is not safe to be outside we will cancel the program that day and notify you by 8am via email. There will be no refunds for cancellations due to weather.

Because we live in a province with unpredictable weather, facilitators will frequently check the weather forecasts and be prepared for all conditions. If potentially dangerous weather is in the forecast the program will take place closer to base in order to ensure safety. **Some reasons the program may be cancelled are: heavy and prolonged forecast of rain or thunder and lightning. We will make the call by 8am on the day of the program.**

Heat: time outside in the sun when it is above 30 degrees celsius will be kept short with frequent time offered to cool down. Water play, lots of shade, sunhats, sunscreen, and frequent water breaks are important and common practice during extreme heat. Luckily the forest provides lots of shade!

Thunder and Lightning: At the first sign of thunder or lightning facilitators will closely monitor the proximity of the lightning. Drawing on their assessment of the risks, the program may move to a shelter or indoors and will not resume outdoors until 30 minutes after the last thunder.

Forest Fire

In the event that we are notified of a forest fire in the area, we will all gather in the main meeting area for a headcount and debrief. The Lead Facilitator will be responsible for

accounting for all children and adults. Parents will be notified after we have evacuated the site. All children and facilitators will immediately evacuate the area, moving north on Lundrigan Drive, crossing Route 450 and heading north on Sunnyslope Drive. The meeting place for parents to pick up their children will be Myles' Groceteria; 398 O'Connell Drive. Emergency Services will be contacted to control the situation. We will reopen after the area has been reassessed and deemed safe.

Encountering Wildlife

Encountering wildlife is a natural part of spending time on the land and a likely event during programming. Maintaining and facilitating safe interactions with diverse forms of wildlife is critical. Daily Site Risk Assessments are conducted to monitor daily animal activity and adjust programming accordingly.

Plants

Under no circumstances are children allowed to ingest anything found in the forest without the approval of a facilitator. Dangerous plants will be monitored and used as a learning tool about forest safety. Facilitators guide children in respecting the plant life by engaging them (observing, harvesting, processing, etc.) while only taking what you need. Children are encouraged to be stewards to the forest and plants that call it home by not over harvesting or over trampling plants. Notably, there is cow parsnip in the surrounding area.

Insects

We learn a lot about insects at forest school as we share all of our spaces with them. Children are encouraged to approach insects with respect and curiosity over fear. The wood chips used for forest restoration and trail maintenance is the home of long, scary looking but harmless wasps.

Animals

There is lots to learn from both large and small animals, but the way we deal with them is different. In our weekly safety orientations we cover the procedures for encountering a bear, moose, bird, mouse and handling frogs and toads. We learn about maintaining safe interactions with wildlife, respecting boundaries, and how to handle toads specifically. Everyday we clean the site to ensure that food has not been left behind. Food litter can attract unwanted/proximal wildlife as well as harm their natural process of food acquisition. Evidence of bears, through poop, is very infrequent. Moose walk through the site at night. This forest is also home to squirrels, foxes, caribou, voles, rabbits and mice.

Procedures for Tool Use

Tools are sometimes available for use at our programs. They are wonderful additions to learning, promoting fine and gross motor skills and confidence. The tools that students may use at Twisted Tuckamore are shovels, trowels, wheel barrels, ropes, tarps, and pencils/art supplies.

- All tools are kept in good condition and working order, checked and stored safely after use.
- Activities using tools are done when children are not tired or distracted
- Facilitators and children are trained on how to safely use tools
- Children will be supervised by a facilitator at all times when using tools
- Children will use tools in very small groups in a designated space
- Only trained staff facilitate the use of appropriate ropes
- Children will not be permitted to use **lighters**. Lighters will be used by facilitators and experts only and will be stored out of reach of children.
- When knives are a part of programming, very specific facilitation on their use is provided by an expert, and the group will maintain a ratio of 1:4.

Parent Participants and Volunteer Responsibilities

If a child requires an assistant, for whatever reason, that accompanying adult/parent participant is responsible for the following. Duties include, but are not limited to:

- Adhering to the methods, practices, procedures and policies set forth by Twisted Tuckamore Forest School.
- Supporting said child in play in whatever way necessary. The adults at Twisted Tuckamore Forest School are facilitators of child-led play and learning, rather than educators of concepts.
- Ensuring that the said child is able to participate, understand and experience the full benefit of forest school.
- Meet the needs of said child.
- Promote a positive, problem-solving attitude toward all situations that the adult or child may face.
- Support the child to make reasonable, safe and justified choices when taking risks and engaging in risky-play.

Accompanying Adults and Parent Participants are only responsible for the children they are accompanying. They are not included within the ratios set out in this handbook. All parents and accompanying adults are required to sign a waiver. Parent participants may be asked to provide a current Child Protection Records Check prior to participating

Volunteers must provide a Criminal Record and Vulnerable Sector Check. An interview will be conducted with the Co-Operators where the volunteers can raise questions/concerns and sign a waiver.

Parking and Arriving at Forest School

Pick-up and drop-off is at the Blow Me Down Cross Country Ski Lodge on Lundrigan Drive. Parents/caregivers must park in the designated parking area before the lodge and walk up with their child(ren) to sign in. The vehicles of participants are not permitted

past the parking area as it poses a safety risk to the children walking and playing in the greeting area/field.

Risk Management Policies and Procedures

We acknowledge that risky play is at the core of Forest School philosophy and associated with the development of the whole child, we, therefore, embrace risky play but have protocols in place to ensure the risk is rational while being beneficial for the child. Some risks that may be part of forest and nature programs are falling or injury from playing on the uneven ground etc, animals, bugs and inclement weather.

We complete both Site Risk Assessments for all of our sites, as well as Experience Risk Benefit Assessments for the activities and experiences that occur during the program. These documents outline potential risks and have steps that are to be taken to mitigate the risk associated with the location or activity. We also have daily site assessment checklists which are used each time we arrive at a site to ensure the area is free of major hazards, or that we have the proper protocols in place to mitigate major risks associated with that hazard.

We have an informed consent form that is to be signed by all participants parent's/guardian's as well as all facilitators and volunteers before participating in or facilitating programs.

Below is our Risk-Benefit Assessment (RBA) Summary that was condensed from our complete RBA for sites and experiences. Parents/guardians can request our full Risk-Benefit Assessment at any time.

Risk-Benefit Assessment Summary

Assessor: Tara Cashen, Co-Owner & Co-Operator

Site Locations:

All Sites: Base Camp, Field, WEC Community Garden, Sacred Fire Spot, Sister Trees, Mossy Corridor, Hill Site, Tree-house, Indoor Lodge, and Hiking Trail

Blow Me Down Cross-Country Ski Club

20 Lundrigan Drive

Benefits:

- Ecological literacy, stewardship, and connection with the Land
- Confidence and emotional intelligence
- Physical health through fresh air, sunshine, and exercise
- Mental health, coping strategies, and overall well-being
- Gross motor skills and fine motor skills
- Communication, social skills, and relationship-building
- Risk assessment skills and understanding natural consequences
- Creativity and food skills, including foraging, growing, tending, and harvesting
- Independence and problem-solving
- Sensory experiences (sight, touch, sound, smell)
- Explore natural science concepts (life cycles, habitats, and ecologies)
- Establishing personal boundaries, self-advocacy skills, and learning the boundaries of others (children, facilitators, wildlife, plants, insects, the stream and the land)
- Risk-taking in supported environments can supplant fears and phobias with excitement
- Achieve tool-based tasks (gardening, building) and create/manipulate spaces with sticks/ropes/loose parts
- Learn how to start and put out fires in a low-risk way
- Opportunities for nature-based storytelling
- Establishing connections with others, developing kinship and social literacy

- Experience new tastes and integrate healthy grown and foraged foods into diet

Risks:

- Physical injuries: cuts, bruises, insect bites, sun/weather over-exposures, dehydration, getting too warm or too cold, splinters, rope burn, strangulation, whiplash, puncture wounds, bone and muscle damage, burns, smoke inhalation, drowning, fatigue, and head and spinal injuries
- Emotional distress and fear trigger
- Lost and abducted children
- Bold and aggressive wildlife
- Food contamination and unknown allergies
- Forest injury due to the overharvesting of plant material and misuse of tools/loose parts
- Dividing the attention of facilitators and straining the facilitator-child ratio, putting other children at risk
- Ingesting unauthorized foods that are inedible
- Harm to the community garden plots of other members when space is used inappropriately
- Areas with reduced visibility
- Infrequent vehicles/visitors on neighbouring gravel road
- Covid-19 transmission in the mostly closed space of the indoor lodge

Site factors worth noting:

- The site is located on private property past a gate unlocked and locked by staff before and after programming. The land is used by a couple of other known community groups over the span of the summer. However, the traffic is very limited
- All sites have gravel road access where children would be a maximum of 40 meters from a road at any given time for ambulance access
- Each site has specific factors worth noting. See the Site Risk Assessments on pages 13-17 of the complete RBA for more information

Precedents and/or Comparisons: Statistics from early childhood education centres in Norway (which strongly focus on outdoor play) show that minor injuries (frequently involving falls) are common but life-changing injuries are rare. One study looked at more than 95,000 children in more than 2,000 settings and found that only three serious injuries occurred over the course of one year (CNAC, 2019).

Decision: Access to active play in nature and outdoors—with its risks—is essential for healthy child development (CNAC, 2019).

Actions Taken:

- Written Health and Safety Procedures and Emergency Response Plans that facilitators are knowledgeable about and practiced during training
- Strategic site location with restricted access to strangers but road access for an ambulance
- Facilitators are trained in Wilderness First Aid and Psychological First Aid
- Risk-Benefit Assessments are conducted for significant experiences within the program as well as for each site
- All sites are surveyed and tended at the beginning of the season. Dead falls, unstable climbing trees, unstable branches, and some rocks are removed from the forest site or made inaccessible. Designated climbing trees are known to facilitators. Tripping hazards are removed or mitigated with wood chip mulch. The forested site is marked with flagging tape. Dangerous plants are monitored, educational opportunities, and occasionally removed
- Informed Consent Form and Medical information is completed by guardians during enrollment
- Compliance with child protection legislation
- Handwashing stations and drinking water is always available onsite

Ongoing Management and Monitoring:

- Maintain a maximum facilitator-child ratio of 1:7
- Daily Site Risk Assessments (including weather checks) and Dynamic Risk

- Assessments are conducted. Incident Reports are documented as needed
- Safety orientation with children at the start of each week. Recognizable call/sound established for all children to gather for regular headcounts. Under no circumstances are children allowed to ingest anything found in the forest without the approval of a facilitator
 - Ongoing communication and transparency with parents/guardians
 - Risky play is given focused attention (Yellow) by facilitators
 - Facilitators practice Positive Behaviour Guidance and ensure all parties feel safe and are having fun
 - Facilitators carry emergency contact information for each child, a first aid kit, and a charged cellphone. Facilitators manage the use of tools for programming.
 - Children are encouraged to regularly drink water, apply sunscreen, and wear/change into weather-appropriate attire
 - Participants move sites as one group, with headcounts before and after travel

Sign-off Signatures: Tara Cashen and Sampson Vassallo

Date: May 7th, 2023

Participant-Facilitator Ratios and Facilitator Responsibilities

All of our programs are held with up to 21 school-age children and at least three facilitators (ratio 1:7), ensuring adequate safety and time for all children.

Facilitators have a wide range of responsibilities including but not limited to:

- Supporting the development of the whole child: Physical, Emotional, Social and Cognitive by engaging in play and creating a welcoming and caring environment.
- Observing and responding to children's interests and engaging in reflection.
- Providing a safe and inclusive environment where all children are supported and appropriate opportunities for risk-taking are available.
- Modeling a sense of respect and care for nature and all of its beings.
- Adhering to all safety and cleaning policies and procedures.

Risk Reduction State

Our program generally embraces risky play, but there are times when for the safety of everyone involved, we enter a risk-reduction state. Risk reduction is important when the amount of risk already being taken on is high, and complications of other kinds may leave the group vulnerable to more severe consequences. Facilitators may choose to reduce risks when children are overtired/hyper, minor injuries become more frequent, the weather intensifies, or in more severe situations, a child is lost or taken away in an ambulance. Outdoor play incurs risks of many factors, so facilitators must dynamically assess the situation. For example, an acceptable level of risky play looks different when weather conditions are ideal to when they are not.

Our risk reduction actions may include:

- Redirecting play to more quiet and still activities such as art, or alone/meditative time in our special forest sit spots.
- Facilitating group activities to keep the attention of children in one central place.
- Avoiding our more remote sites, such as the hiking trail and community garden.
- Moving to the field for higher visibility and fewer obstacles. Moving to the forest to find shade or get out of the rain.
- Moving to the indoor lodge and calling parents/guardians for early pick-up (in response to more extreme circumstances such as a lost child, serious injury, or extreme weather).

Human Resources

Forest School Facilitator Job Description

Forest School Facilitators offer developmentally appropriate and provoking ways for children to interact with the forest, marking the beginnings of a lifelong connection to nature. Facilitators deliver curriculum and create learning spaces for lessons within the

themes of land, art, and food. Facilitators work with a team to support risky play, where children encounter rewards, natural consequences, and a curiosity for experimentation. This role requires that we observe children's interests, strengths, and needs to deliver emergent curriculum, taking their learning a step further while ensuring that risks are managed to prioritize safety. A Forest School Facilitator demonstrates respect for nature and strives to be in reciprocal relations with the land.

Duties include: 1) Ensure the safety of children by assessing, mitigating, and preventing risks and natural hazards, 2) Complete daily Site Risk Assessments and implement safety controls, 3) Prepare to work outdoors for 8 hours/day with the necessary equipment/clothing, 4) Observe children's interests, behaviour, and needs then share findings with the team, 5) Implement Emergent Curriculum with flexibility and alternatives for diverse learners, 6) Guide children using positive behaviour guidance, 7) Document injuries and incidents and report them to the supervisor, 8) Bring a nourishing and kind attitude to work to establish caring relationships with children and families, and 9) Problem-solve difficult situations professionally and creatively.

Eligibility:

- Between 15 and 30 years of age
- Full-time student returning to school in the Fall
- Valid First-Aid certification
- Criminal Record Check and Vulnerable Sector Check
- Preparedness and comfort in outdoor working environments for the whole day, including during varied weather conditions
- Experience working with children 5-12 years of age
- Availability for paid in-person training
- Ability to work in dynamic team environments
- Ability to communicate clearly and effectively

Other characteristics we value in facilitators:

- Experience on the land or facilitating Land-Based Education
- Lived experience (as a Mi'kmaq or Indigenous person, in supporting family/community members, learning outside formal education, or in navigating oppressive systems, etc.)
- Early Childhood Education Certification or equivalent
- Wilderness and Remote First Aid
- Background in the Arts
- Experience growing or preparing food

Rate of Pay: \$16.50/hour

Hours: 8 hours/day for 4 days/week. Our days include an unpaid 30-minute lunch and two paid 15-minute breaks, totalling 30 paid hours/week.

Contract Dates: 9 weeks from June 17th to August 15th (The first week is for on-site job-specific training, and the hours may be less than a typical work week).

Hours of Work and Overtime Policy

Employees will work their scheduled shifts and be paid for their hours worked. If over time is required, the employee will be paid in accordance with the over-time payment requirements set forth by the law. Over time hours will accumulate after 40 hours per week have been worked.

Hiring Process

Twisted Tuckamore Forest School is an Equal Opportunity Employer and Prohibits Discrimination and Harassment of any kind. We are committed to the principle of equal employment opportunity for all employees and to providing employees with a work

environment free of discrimination and harassment. All employment-related decisions are grounded in promoting the highest benefit to the school as a whole, including the quality of programming, the qualifications of individuals, and the efficacy of the team.

Training

Forest School Facilitators begin their work term with a paid 4-day in-person training at the forested work site. This training is essential to establishing team communication skills and familiarity with the land/risks. The training is unique and comprehensive in that we will weave between health and safety protocols, team-building exercises, and hard skill development on the land. Prior to working with tools, employees will be required to demonstrate safe handling procedures of all tools.

We will guide students to imagine the rich experiences we could offer participants collaboratively. This incurs a value for clear communication, safety for ourselves and the children, and a collaborative environment where student employees are a part of designing the very experiences they will offer children. This training, which then extends throughout the work term, will equip students with creative problem-solving & decision-making skills, increased ecological literacy, enhanced capacity to facilitate diverse groups and risk-management skills.

This training and orientation is mandatory for employees.

Mentorship and Evaluation

Students will be mentored and guided on the ground as well as receive work performance feedback in real-time. This hands-on yet informal exchange is complimented by a formal check-in midway through and at the end of the work term, where evaluations and feedback can be exchanged. Forest School is a unique workplace that encourages a nimble approach while focusing on clear communication and collaboration. The level of care necessary for this line of work, as well as our

organization's value for generative work placements, is reflected in our generous training opportunities and higher wages.

Every morning starts with team check-ins where we can speak openly about what we may need to feel supported in the forest and work well together. This daily communication is essential to operate with the most up-to-date information about team members, how they may be capable of taking an energetic lead, or how they may need to rest by way of a supporting role. This too, is a time to exchange feedback from both employers and employees.

General Health and Safety Policy

Employer: It is the responsibility of the Employer to comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulations. This will include the following responsibilities:

- Provide the information, training and supervision necessary to ensure the health and safety of employees under their supervision;
- Provide and maintain a workplace and the necessary equipment, systems and tools that are safe for the discharge of the duties of employees under their supervision;
- Ensure that employees under their supervision are aware of hazards that have been identified in the workplace and that workers are trained in controls;
- Ensure that employees under their supervision comply with safe work practices and procedures, OH&S policies, and the OH&S Act and Regulations;
- Identify potential/actual hazards associated with work performed by employees under their supervision, evaluate the hazard and implement controls to reduce or eliminate the hazard; - Assist with identification of hazards throughout the workplace;
- Develop and implement safe work and operating procedures for work performed by employees under their supervision;
- Develop and implement emergency preparedness and response plans for the

organization;

- Cooperate with employees, other supervisors, and the joint OH&S Committee or Worker Health and Safety Representative in all matters respecting OH&S;
- Participate in workplace inspections as required;
- Ensure that employees use personal protective equipment as required;
- Ensure that all personal protective equipment is properly maintained;
- Follow-up on work refusals where and when needed;
- Conduct regular safety meetings;
- Participate in and/or conduct Accident/Incident Investigations as required, and review, implement and follow up on corrective actions to prevent recurrences; and
- Cooperate with a person exercising a duty imposed by the OH&S Act or Regulations.

Employees: (In this section, volunteers are subject to the same rights as an employee—the words employee and volunteer are interchangeable here)

It is the responsibility of employees to comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulations. This will include the following responsibilities:

- Be aware of, and comply with, the OH&S Act and Regulations and this policy;
- Consult and cooperate with co-workers, the OH&S Committee or Worker Health and Safety Representative, supervisors and managers, and the organization to:
 - Protect his or her own health and safety at all times;
 - Protect the health and safety of other workers engaged in the work of the employer;
 - Protect the health and safety of other workers or persons not engaged in the work of the employer but present at or near the workplace;
- Work in a healthy and safe manner at all times, and to perform job duties in accordance with instructions and training provided;
- Use devices and equipment provided for his or her protection in accordance with

- the instructions and training provided with respect to the devices and equipment;
- Report to his/her manager or designate any actual and/or potential hazards identified in the workplace;
 - Not carry out work where there exists an imminent danger to his/her or another worker's health or safety or the health or safety of another person; or operate a tool, appliance or piece of equipment that will create an imminent danger to his/her or another employee's health and safety or the health or safety of another person; and
 - Cooperate with a person exercising a duty imposed by the OH&S Act or Regulations.

Employees are expected to be sober at work. Failure to come to work sober is grounds for immediate termination. If employees wish to smoke, they must do so off the Forest School property during unpaid time.

Hazard Awareness

The Twisted Tuckamore Employer has done their due diligence to inform their employees and parents/guardians about the potential hazards of Forest School.

The employee has a duty to assess and remove and report potentially dangerous hazards that may arise throughout the day. The employee has a responsibility to prevent injury of parents/guardians, participants, and other employees.

Emergency Preparedness and Response Policy

It is the responsibility of the employee/volunteer to review emergency procedures and policies. Employees must be prepared for possible emergencies that may occur. These policies and procedures are listed in the Health and Safety section of this manual.

WHMIS Policy

It is the responsibility of the employee to understand how to properly use tools after training has occurred. Twisted Tuckamore is not responsible for injury due to tool use. Employees are expected to implement, demonstrate and supervise proper tool handling techniques when using tools with participants.

Employees will sign off on WHMIS training prior to the start of the position.

Personal Information, Confidentiality and Privacy Policy

Twisted Tuckamore Forest School respects the privacy of all families. All family enquires, conversations, and children's records will be kept confidential. Employees are never permitted to share personal participant or parent/guardian information with anyone at any time. Photos of children participants on employees personal devices is strictly prohibited.

All employees have signed a confidentiality agreement during the hiring process. Employee files will be kept secure and confidential and are only available to the Twisted Tuckamore Employer and the appropriate employee.

Twisted Tuckamore Forest School does not sell or share any personal information. Employee files will be kept for up to 6 years after the last date of work.

Social Media Policy

This policy adheres to all communications that the employee may encounter.

What You Should Do:

Disclose your Affiliation: If you talk about work related matters that are within your area of job responsibility you must disclose your affiliation with Twisted Tuckamore Forest School.

State That It's YOUR Opinion: When commenting on the business.

Protect Yourself: Be careful about what personal information you share online.

Act responsibly and ethically: When participating in online communities, do not misrepresent yourself.

Honor Our Differences: Live the values. Twisted Tuckamore Forest School will not tolerate discrimination (including age, sex, race, colour, creed, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, citizenship, disability, or marital status or any other legally recognized protected basis under federal, state, or local laws, regulations or ordinances).

What You Should Never Disclose:

The Numbers: Non-public financial or operational information.

Personal Information: Never share personal information about our participants, as per the confidentiality agreement in employment contracts.

Legal Information: Anything to do with a legal issue, legal case, or attorneys without first getting approval from the Twisted Tuckamore Employer

Confidential Information: Do not publish, post, or release information that is considered confidential or could jeopardize the privacy of a child or family.

Photos of children's faces: Employees are not allowed to take pictures of children enrolled under any circumstance. Photos of the experiences at Twisted Tuckamore Forest School may be posted pending approval from the Employer.

Violation of these policies could be grounds for termination as they may negatively affect the image of Twisted Tuckamore Forest School.

Violence and Harrasment

Twisted Tuckamore Forest School has zero tolerance for workplace violence or harassment of any kind and will be proactive in the prevention of workplace violence and harassment. We are committed to investigating reported incidents of violence and harassment in an objective and timely manner, taking necessary action; and providing appropriate support for victims.

Our proactive policies aim to ensure that our employees have a work environment that is free of violence or harassment of any kind, whether it arises from another employee or any other person visiting the workplace or interacting with employees. This practice ensures that:

- Individuals are aware of, and understand that, acts of violence or harassment are considered a serious offence for which necessary action will be imposed;
- Those subjected to acts of violence or harassment are encouraged to access any assistance they may require in order to pursue a complaint; and
- Individuals are advised of available recourse if they are subjected to, or become aware of, situations involving violence or harassment.

As defined by OHS, workplace harassment means:

- Engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace that is known, or ought reasonably to be known, to be unwelcome.
- This includes unwelcome words or actions that are known or should be known to be offensive, embarrassing, humiliating or demeaning to a worker or group of workers. It includes behaviour that intimidates, isolates or discriminates against the targeted individual.

As defined by OHS, workplace violence means:

- The exercise or attempt of physical force by a person against a worker in a workplace that causes or could cause physical injury to the worker,
- A threat to exercise physical force against the worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker.

Employer Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Employer to ensure that:

- All reasonable preventative measures are taken to protect employees and others at Forest School from workplace violence and harassment;
- A workplace violence risk assessment is conducted;
- Advise the Joint Health & Safety Committee of the assessment results and provide a copy in writing;
- Establish procedures, policies and work environment arrangements to eliminate the risk to employees from violence;
- Ensure all employees are trained on this policy;
- Reporting procedures are established with respect to workplace violence and harassment;
- Process is in place for responding to, and investigating incidents of workplace violence and harassment; and
- This policy and procedure is communicated to all employees.
- This policy shall be reviewed after any violent or harassment events take place to determine if changes need to be made.

Employee Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of every employee, volunteer or contract personnel to:

- Comply with this policy and all related procedures at all times for their own protection and the protection of others within the workplace;
- Immediately report any violent or potentially violent incident to their manager/supervisor. In the event of an extreme or imminent threat of physical harm to themselves or any person at Certificate of Recognition, the worker should contact Emergency Services; and
- Fully cooperate in any investigation of complaints or incidents of workplace violence or harassment as indicated within this policy.

Risk Assessment for Workplace Violence

Besides taking into consideration the general layout/environment of the workplace, the following risk factors will be taken into consideration when Twisted Tuckamore Forest School completes their workplace violence risk assessment.

- Working in a community-based setting
- Working with unstable or volatile participants
- Mobile workplaces
- Contact with participants, parents/guardian
- Working alone

We will not tolerate any incidents of workplace violence or harassment perpetrated against or by any employee, customer, vendor, contractor, visitor, etc.. With respect to workplace violence and harassment as defined by this policy, any contravention may result in the following:

- Removal from the property;
- Discipline or dismissal;
- Police involvement. All physical assaults involving an employee or occurring at Twisted Tuckamore Forest School will be reported to the police. Threats of physical violence will be reported to the authorities, as appropriate.

Knowledge of another employee experiencing violence outside of the workplace that may create a risk of danger to themselves or others in the workplace should be reported to the employer so that necessary preventative precautions may be taken to protect all employees.

Termination

Violation of policies will result in documentation of the incident or termination. The severity and consequences of the violations will be left to the discretion of the Employer.

Learning and Development

The Role of the Facilitator

At our programs, the facilitator is a co-learner. The facilitator encourages children to take the lead, providing time, space and resources to support them in their play, learning, and discovery. The facilitators believe in the innate curiosities and capabilities of all children and create an environment based on a respectful and power-sharing dynamic.

Facilitators are required to supervise and observe play at all times. They are also responsible for taking note of interests, play episodes and highlights of play. All of these findings will be used to the purpose of planning developmentally appropriate, interest-based programming for the child. Any documented information will be available to the parents/guardians upon request and will adhere to our Confidentiality Policy.

Child-Led Play

Our program recognizes play as the primary form of learning. We are a place for all children to play, learn and explore. During our program, children are invited to spend time in nature, building forts, climbing, jumping, running, and exploring nature while connecting to the land. Play is at the center of our time spent in the forest, as we follow the children's lead and support them with the materials and space they need to play to the fullest!

We value and nurture all children, providing meaningful, inclusive and developmentally appropriate opportunities to promote healthy growth and development of all domains (Physical, Cognitive, Emotional and Social).

We believe that children are co-constructors in their learning and we encourage collaboration with facilitators to create, imagine, investigate and explore their world. We believe there are an infinite number of ways children learn and express themselves,

most, if not all of which are rooted in play. We promote inquiry-based learning, noting the importance of play in the lives of children and the key role it plays in development.

Behaviour Guidance Policy

When necessary, children's behaviour must be guided or redirected in such a way that adheres to positive methods. Providing children with the freedom of choice within limits sets the foundation for responsible decision-making based on self-discipline and leads to respect of one's self as well as others. Facilitators will communicate with children in such a way that they can understand and is appropriate for their developmental level.

When a child is exhibiting behaviour that is disruptive to other participants of the program, a facilitator will calmly approach the child and explain why the behaviour is disruptive and how it is affecting those around them. A facilitator will encourage the child to empathize with those affected and develop solutions to resolve the disruption. We acknowledge that children often act out to attract attention of those around them. Facilitators will encourage the child exhibit a more appropriate behaviour to achieve the child's desired results.

When a child is exhibiting behaviour that has the potential to become harmful to themselves or others, a facilitator will step in and stop the behaviour by either, using a loud voice or taking hold of the object that could cause harm. The facilitator will then explain to the child (if they don't already understand) why the action being taken is dangerous. The facilitator will make sure the child understands the potential consequences of the harmful action before working with the child to brainstorm alternatives to the behaviour. Parents will be included in discussions to develop a plan to encourage alternative behaviour that is safe and meets the needs of the child. The child may be asked to leave the program if they continue to pose a serious safety threat to themselves, facilitators, or their peers.

Facilitators will:

- Establish clear and consistent expectations/limits in collaboration with the children.
- Focus on the behaviour, not the individual child.
- Reinforce appropriate behaviour.
- Encourage children to resolve issues on their own and be there to support as required.

Guidance is meant to be supportive rather than punitive and should consist of techniques such as:

- Redirection
- Acknowledging feelings
- Modeling
- Offer appropriate choices
- Use both natural and logical consequences
- Provide opportunities for children to help other children rather than just saying sorry, be a facilitator of reconciliation.

The following are not permitted under any circumstances:

- Corporal punishment such as striking a child directly or with an object, shaking, spanking or shoving.
- Isolation or confinement
- Deprivation of basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing or bedding
- Use of harsh or humiliating language or tone

Inclusion and Accessibility

Accessibility is crucial at Twisted Tuckamore Forest School to ensure that forest experiences are available and applicable to diverse participants. We are an inclusive program that welcomes and celebrates all types of developmental levels, abilities, and backgrounds. Our programming incorporates the diverse needs of children by having

flexible days, alternative activities, variations within activities, and an emergent curriculum. An emergent curriculum is a teaching tool that utilizes observation and adaptability, responding to the distinctiveness of groups and individuals and freely pursuing alternate avenues as they arise.

Through observation, facilitators notice if someone is struggling to focus, is overwhelmed, or does not work well with others so that they can deliver specific support. If the child has a higher-than-average need for one-on-one care, or cannot comply with instruction, or requires assistance to use the bathroom, the additional support required must be provided by the parent, caregiver or respite worker. Parents and caregivers are invited to stay in the program to support their child in the program if the child requires.

Our forest site is currently not wheelchair accessible. We will make every effort possible to include children with varying physical disabilities. Contact us so that we can discuss the options together.

In the future, we also hope to provide more subsidized spaces so the program will be accessible to more families.

Communication Policies

Contact Information:

Tara Cashen or Sampson Vassallo

(902) 956-9384

Email: twistedtuckamore@gmail.com

Facebook: [Twisted Tuckamore Forest School](#)

Website: [Twisted Tuckamore Forest School](https://www.twistedtuckamore.com/) (<https://www.twistedtuckamore.com/>)

Open communication leading up to and during programming is critical for safety and success within our sessions. Questions and concerns are all welcome.

We encourage you to reach us by call, text, or email at any time. We may not be able to respond on weekends. Exceptions will be made to ensure that ease of communication is available to all guardians.

General Communication

Facilitators must be professional and respectful in their interactions with parents/guardians. Parents/guardians and Facilitators are encouraged to have an interaction at drop off or pick up time, even if it is brief. Parents/Guardians with questions and concerns may speak to a facilitator at any time or contact the lead facilitator by email or phone.

This handbook will be accessible to parents/guardians upon registration and available onsite at all times. This document discusses policies surrounding care, as well as logistical information about the program. This Program Handbook will always be a work in progress and adaptable. Any feedback and concerns will be reflected in the way we review this document and our guidelines.

Emergency Communication

All facilitators have their cell phones available to call out and receive calls during programming. Parents/Guardians will be contacted immediately if their child is unaccounted for or experiences serious injury or injury that requires any transfer of care to a hospital or medical clinic. Facilitators will carry a binder with all children's emergency contact information for easy access.

Sustainability

We are committed to restoring sustainable relationships with the land and their stewards. This plays into our bigger commitment to engage in reciprocal relations with

the community, including developing meaningful relationships with the natural world. All programs will compost and recycle, as well as use as many natural materials as possible. We always carry a bag for garbage so we can clean up anything we see, even if we didn't leave it there. Spending time in the forest leaves a mark. Our programming includes children and youth volunteers in the process of tending to these impacts. All of our programs minimize these impacts and engage forest restoration activities in developmentally appropriate ways.

FAQ

What are Forest and Nature Programs?

Our programs aim to connect children with nature through unstructured play and repeated exposure to the same land. Through returning to the same land children have the opportunity to deepen their connection to their surroundings. Forest and Nature programs offer children the time and space to play, learn and explore in nature. We view children as innately capable and curious and strive to provide an environment for play that contributes to confidence building, risk assessment capabilities, communication and social skills, creativity, negotiation and problem-solving. For more information about Forest and Nature Schools, check out www.childnature.ca.

What types of activities will my child be doing?

Because our programs are child-led, the program totally depends on the interests of the children. Common activities include hiking, fort/shelter building, tool use, nature art, flora and fauna identification, survival skills, fire starting and cookouts, dramatic play, hammock time, group games, loose parts play, orienteering and climbing.

My child is between 7 and 10 years old and can register for the Wild Strawberries program (7-10) OR the younger/older program (Dandelions is 5-8, and Spruce Roots is 9-12), what is the difference?

The Dandelion program provides open-ended child-led play, the Spruce Roots program will be more skill-based, and the Wild Strawberries program will be a mixture of the two.

Our program age ranges overlap with each other to provide flexibility for families and to treasure the learning opportunities present within different group dynamics. These programs are designed to provide developmentally appropriate opportunities and dynamically meet the needs of diverse children and groups.

What should my child wear/bring to the program?

Close-toed, comfy shoes, active clothing, extra layers and a water bottle. Please see our program handbook for a full list!

Is food provided?

No, children should come with their own snacks/lunches. We feel this ensures children will have the food they enjoy. Sometimes we will make food together at the program as a special activity so please let us know of any allergies. We will always have extra snacks on hand in case children are feeling extra hungry!

What are your child-facilitator ratios?

If programs are completely full, we have one facilitator for every 7 school-age children.

When do programs open for registration?

Registration for 2024 programs open to the public on Earth Day, Monday, April 22nd.

How do I register?

There are registration links for each week of programming under the 'Register' tab on our website.

Is there a waitlist?

If a program is full, the same registration page will say so at the top of the page. We encourage you to secure your spot on the waitlist via the link provided. We will notify you if a space becomes available.

How do I pay?

We accept payment through e-transfer or cash. Enrollment is only confirmed upon receipt of payment.

Can I register for a program after it's started?

If there is still space in the program, you are welcome to register.

What happens if a program is cancelled due to weather?

Refunds will not be given due to weather, as we try to have make-up days. Although we love to play outside in all weather - there are some reasons the program may be cancelled. These are: prolonged heavy rain or snow, cold temperatures, high winds, freezing rain, thunder and lightning storms, combination of cold weather with prolonged precipitation.

What if my child is sick?

If your child is sick and not feeling well please keep them home and let us know they won't be coming. There will be no refunds for sick days.

Can I cancel my registration?

Yes, up to three weeks before a program starts you may cancel your registration and receive a full refund minus a \$50 administration fee. Within three weeks of a program starting there will be no refunds issued.

How do children go to the bathroom at forest school?

We have a private luggalou (outhouse) on site and children are encouraged to take 'nature pees' in appropriate places in the forest if they are comfortable.

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