

THROUGH THE WOODS

FOREST & NATURE SCHOOL

FAMILY HANDBOOK



DISCOVER * CONNECT * GROW

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PHILOSOPHY AND VISION

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to foster a meaningful connection to the natural world and promote the holistic development of all participants by providing opportunities to build an intentional relationship with the land, our community, one another, and ourselves.

PHILOSOPHY AND VISION STATEMENT

Through the Woods Forest & Nature School is an entirely outdoor, play and nature-based program for children and youth. Our goal is to connect children and youth with the natural world and provide the time and space they need to dive deeply into their play. We believe children are intrinsically motivated to learn and capable of guiding their own learning journey through a process of inquiry and co-learning with peers and facilitators. We see participants as more than just learners and seek to support the development of the whole child; a human being with a vivid imagination, boundless creative potential and a rich emotional life.



ABOUT US

Through the Woods Forest & Nature school is a play and nature-based program that gives children and youth an opportunity to slow down and get curious about who they are and the world around them. Participants will experience open and flexible environments where playful exploration, problem solving and creativity are encouraged and purposefully planned.

The pillars of our program are:

Discovery

- Uninterrupted free play time allows us to explore who we are and how we connect to the world around us.
- Participants are encouraged to ask questions, explore their interests and try new things.

Connection

- Regular and repeated visits to the same location allows us to build a reciprocal relationship with the land and our natural environment.
- Meeting in small groups with low child-adult ratios allows us to develop our social and emotional skills while building relationships with each other.

Growth

- Meeting in mixed age groups gives us an opportunity to develop leadership skills, social skills and empathy towards others.
- Develop a sense of self awareness, confidence and resiliency when given an opportunity to take responsible risks in play.

Founder/Program Facilitator

Sarah Reder

Sarah grew up in a big city, accessing the natural spaces in her back yard and the local river valley. Sarah spent much of her youth bike riding, puddle jumping, fort building, tree climbing, making mud pies and camping. These opportunities laid the foundation for a deep connection and respect for the natural world.

Sarah began her journey working with children and youth as a teenager at summer camp. She worked her way up from a Jr. Leader to Counsellor to Program Coordinator. She developed an interest supporting individuals with disabilities and obtained a diploma in Disability Supports and Services from the Nova Scotia Community College in 2012. She had the opportunity to support young adults with Autism in a group home setting and provided 1:1 support for young children with disabilities in preschools and day homes. Sarah obtained her Level 2 Early Childhood Educator certification and joined the team at the Early Childhood Development Center in Drayton Valley in 2018. Sarah believes the Forest & Nature school's unique approach



offers children & youth a safe place to discover, connect and grow as individuals and is a certified Forest School Practitioner through the Child Nature Alliance of Canada.

WHAT IS FOREST & NATURE SCHOOL?

Forest & Nature school (FNS) is an educational approach that has existed worldwide since the 1950's and made its way to Canada in 2012 with the establishment of Forest and Nature School Canada. The defining features of this type of nature-based education program are that children are provided with regular and repeated access to the same natural space, as well as child-directed, emergent and play-based learning. Through this approach children and youth have the opportunity to build an on-going relationship with the land, to a dedicated educator, to one another, and to themselves. At FNS, children and youth are understood as competent learners that help forge their own program. Participants spend the majority of the session immersed in various outdoor settings where time is unhurried and there is space for independent reflection, collaborative creation and risky play. Facilitators are there to support, guide and learn with the participants as co-creators of a safe place for all who join.

Participation in a Forest & Nature school program has both long and short term benefits including:

- Improves mental well being and self regulation skills
- Increases self esteem and confidence
- Promotes responsible risk taking and resiliency
- Encourages gross and fine motor development
- Simulates creativity and imagination
- Fosters compassion, respect and empathy
- Inspires the next generation to be stewards of the land

OUR CLASSROOM

We acknowledge that we are gathered on Treaty 6 Territory and the lands of the Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Saltoux, Nakota Sioux, and the Metis. We give thanks for the ability to play, learn and explore on their native lands.

Our classroom is the **Lions West Valley Park** in Drayton Valley, AB. Drop off and pick up at the first picnic table on the path from the parking lot (next to the star plaque and outhouses).

OUR SUMMER PROGRAMS

FOREST FRIENDS

This is a 6-week session for children 2-8 years old. We will meet Wednesdays from 9:00-12:00 at Lions West Valley Park in Drayton Valley. Fall sessions will run Sept 11-Oct 16 and Oct23-Nov 27

\$180 +GST/participant for 6-week session

NATURE CLUB

This is a 6-week session for children and youth 7-15 years old. We will meet Thursdays from 10:00-2:00 at Lions West Valley Park in Drayton Valley. Fall session will run from Sept 12-Oct 17 and Oct 24-Nov 28

\$240 +GST/participant for 6-week session

NATURE PLAYGROUP

This is a single day adult/child program for children 0-6 years old (older siblings are welcome). Each adult is welcome to attend with up to 3 children. We will meet Mondays from 9:30-11:30 at Lions West Valley Park. Sessions will start Sept 9-pre registration is required.

\$10/session (1 adult with up to 3 children)

PAYMENT/REFUND POLICY

Registration will be opened on a first come first serve basis on our website throughthewoodsfns.ca. Once online registration and full payment have been received you will be emailed our registration forms and waivers to be completed. Registration will not be considered complete until all forms have been received. You will be contacted by email to confirm your registration is complete.

PLEASE NOTE: In case of illness, injury or vacation no refund will be given for days missed

Due to the nature of our program, there are times that cancellations due to weather, or staff illness may be necessary. Our refund policy for this is:

- The first day of cancellation by Through the Woods staff will **not** be refunded, but any days after that cancelled will be refunded based on cost per day.

Withdrawal

Through the Woods understands that life happens and circumstances change should you wish to withdraw from one of the Forest & Nature School sessions prior to the start date, a full refund will be given. Should you wish to withdraw from one of the Forest & Nature School sessions after the start date, no refund will be given unless we can secure another participant to fill your spot. If we fill your spot, you will receive a prorated refund.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Privacy Policy

Through the Woods Forest and Nature School takes the privacy of its participants and visitors seriously, and we have taken steps to protect it. Any personal data shared with us, including photographic images, will be processed strictly in accordance with privacy legislation and will be used for the purposes that you have consented to. We will not share details with third parties without consent, except where we are legally compelled or obligated to do so. Please note that where consent is given to share images on the internet, they can be viewed worldwide including countries where the Canadian data protection law does not apply. Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns about protecting the privacy of the information you provide.

ILLNESS POLICY

In the following cases, we ask that participants stay home from Forest & Nature School for at least 24 hours after their last symptom has subsided:

- Temperature over 101 degrees F or 38.3 degrees C
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea (watery, profuse stools)

Should the above-mentioned situations arise while at Forest School, the affected participants family/guardian will be contacted for immediate pick up. Participants affected by communicable diseases such as measles, chicken pox, mumps, flu, strep throat, viral pneumonia, conjunctivitis (pink-eye), etc., are asked to stay home from Forest & Nature School until their health care provider (i.e. naturopath, doctor, nurse, etc.) has communicated that it is safe for them to attend.

FOOD/ALLERGY POLICY

Participants are required to bring their own snacks and a full water bottle to each session. Please try to pack a garbage-less snack (take wrappers off at home to help with litter and keeping fingers warm while eating with mittens on). It takes a lot of energy to play and explore; please pack healthy, wholesome, energising food so participants will have enough to refuel themselves during program time. Please also consider the size/weight/safety of the containers in which snacks are packed.

We will assess on a session-to-session basis whether we have any participants with nut/food allergies. If we have any participants with a nut/food allergy we will adhere to a strict allergen free zone. Families will be informed of this topic via email prior to the start of the program.

TOILETING AND HANDWASHING POLICY

While bathrooms are available on some sites, we will not always have access to an indoor bathroom. We are teaching participants to respect and care for the earth, and to leave nature as untouched as possible—we will follow Leave No Trace principles when using the washroom in nature. Participants should be comfortable using the washroom outdoors, with minimal assistance from a facilitator. They will need to pack necessary wipes or toilet paper and a small zip loc or compostable bag to pack out any garbage and dispose of it in a safe manner. Please talk to your child about this scenario and help them learn to ‘go’ outside beforehand.

All participants must be toilet trained upon starting forest school.

Exceptions can be made, please contact us for more information.

All facilitators will carry appropriate hand washing supplies such as soap, water and hand sanitizer. Participants will be offered hand washing opportunities before snacks, after bathroom breaks and as needed throughout the session. Please send a small hand towel to be kept in participants backpacks each day.

PROCEDURES FOR TOOL USE

Through the Woods Forest & Nature School believes there is great value in providing participants with opportunities to use real tools in a supervised and supportive environment. We believe that by empowering children with these responsibilities and valuable life skills, they learn about their own limitations and the importance of caution, and it builds self-confidence and feelings of meaningful accomplishment.

TOOL USE PROCEDURE

- FNS facilitator will check all tools prior to use
- Correct and safe use of sharp tools will be demonstrated prior to use
- Tools will be counted when handed out and again when collected
- All participants are to be supervised closely, one-on-one, until deemed competent to work with limited supervision

- All safety guards of tools will be replaced immediately after use

RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk - the experience and management of it - is an inherent and integral part of Forest & Nature School, and an important part of healthy child development. Through the Woods Forest & Nature School facilitators co-assess and co-manage risk with participants on a daily basis, so that students learn to acknowledge, manage and overcome risks. We believe this to be an essential skill for participants to acquire and for adults to support. Through the Woods facilitators conduct daily and seasonal site risk assessments, as well as activity risk assessments and individual risk assessments on an ongoing basis, always considering the balance between risks and benefits when doing so.

No participant will be expected to participate in tasks they do not feel safe or comfortable doing. The objective of Forest & Nature School is to encourage growth and confidence, and we respect that each participant's abilities grow at different times.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES AND FIRST AID

Through the Woods Forest & Nature School has written emergency procedures with which all facilitators are familiar. A copy of the procedures, including emergency phone numbers, is carried by the facilitator at all times in the emergency/first aid binder. All facilitators are first aid certified and will carry a current first aid kit in their backpack at all times. Facilitators will always have a means of communication to families/guardians, and emergency help via cell phone.

In the event of a serious accident or emergency the staff at Through the Woods will follow this procedure:

ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURE

1. Establish the nature and extent of the emergency. Refer to the first aid SAMPLE protocol. The lead facilitator will take the lead responding and administering first aid.
2. Ensure the area and all other members of the group are accounted for, safe, and adequately supervised. This means they fully understand what they must do to remain safe e.g. stop all activities.
3. Assess the casualty and call 911/emergency services if needed. Administer appropriate first aid. The person phoning 911 will need to respond to the following questions:
 - Nature of emergency
 - Injured party details: age, gender, medical history (see Emergency Medical Form in first aid backpack)
 - **Location:**

- **Lions West Valley Park 4700 West Valley Park Road Drayton Valley AB T7A 0E1 (across from Ricochet Aquatic Center)**
 - First aid administered
- 4. Send another adult to meet the ambulance at the parking lot and direct them to the Forest School site. In case there is no other adult on site, stay with the injured party.
- 5. Inform the participants emergency contact of the incident as soon as possible.
- 6. Ensure that an appropriate adult attends the receiving hospital, taking with them any medical information available for the injured person.
- 7. Ensure that remainder of the party:
 - Is adequately supervised throughout
 - Is returned as early as possible to drop off/pick up location
 - Receives appropriate support and reassurance
- 8. As soon as reasonably possible after the event, the accident will be reported using an Accident Report Form.

PARTICIPANT: FACILITATOR RATIOS

Small ratios are important to the success of the program, the safety of participants and the ability to facilitate the child led learning approach in an outdoor environment. The ratios between participants and facilitators will vary depending on the age of the group.

- Forest Friends: 1 facilitator to 6 participants (1:6)
- Nature Club: 1 facilitator to 8 participants (1:8)

STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of a Forest & Nature school facilitator are wide-ranging and include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ensuring the physical safety of participants, including Through the Woods participants, facilitators, and accompanying volunteers, by co-assessing and co-managing risk with them on an ongoing basis such that all participants feel connected to and comfortable in the natural world
- considering the social and emotional safety of participants, and endeavouring to foster a caring and respectful community so that the risk taking and question posing necessary for deep, inquiry-based learning can occur
- modeling care and respect for the natural world, as well as safe use of the tools and supplies at Forest School
- playing with and closely observing participants - the trajectory of their play, the evolution of their interests, their questions and struggles - in order to support facilitators in using their experience at FNS as a “launching pad” into a deep, lively, and meaningful exploration of the curriculum
- ensuring all forms and fees are collected prior to attendance at FNS

- ensuring participants' families/guardians understand how to equip participants with the proper clothing, outerwear, and other supplies according to the season and duration of visit to FNS
- supporting participants in their play and exploration of the natural world by both playing with and closely observing them, allowing that getting wet and dirty is part of healthy play, as is taking part in risky play
- following all policies and procedures outlined in this handbook

CHILD ENTRY & RELEASE POLICY

We will meet at the Lions West Valley Park (across from the Ricochet aquatic center), our meeting spot will be the first picnic table on the path next to the outhouse and star plaque. For safety purposes, an adult must sign the participant in once they have reached the meeting spot and are in care of our staff. At pick up time, a participant will not be released into any adult's care until they have been signed out.

Families/Guardians must give authorization to Through the Woods staff for the people who have access to their participant (such as a relative picking up, emergency contacts in case the family/guardian cannot be reached). Families/guardians must notify facilitators before changing the usual pick-up routine. If someone other than the parent/guardian or authorized pick-up person arrives to pick up a participant, we will:

- Call the parent/guardian
- Call the emergency contact
- If the parent/guardian and emergency contact cannot be located, the participant will **not** be allowed to leave the site until the parent or guardian/ emergency contact is reached
- A Through the Woods facilitator will stay with the participant until an authorized person arrives for pick up

According to the law, both parents of a child or youth have equal access to a child or youth and to the information about the child or youth's development, health and welfare. The only time a staff member can deny access of a parent to a child or youth is when there is a written separation agreement or a legal court order. Through the Woods Forest & Nature school staff require a copy of this document.

Staff will not release a participant to a person who appears intoxicated or impaired. In such cases, staff will assist in making other pick-up arrangements (i.e., a spouse or other authorized person). Staff members are legally responsible to protect the children and youth in their care from any perceived risk.

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Through the Woods Forest & Nature School is committed to taking a proactive position regarding child protection. In accordance with the Child and Family Services Act, it is our

responsibility to immediately report if we suspect that abuse has occurred or if a child or youth is at risk of abuse.

INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

One of the primary goals of Through the Woods Forest & Nature School is to make our programs accessible to a wide range of participants regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, language, physical ability, or socioeconomic status. We seek to dismantle the barriers to participation in Forest School by making our programs accessible for everyone, and our community safe and welcoming.

INCLEMENT WEATHER/CLOSURE POLICY

In the event that weather/road conditions make travel to/from Through the Woods Forest & Nature School unsafe, we reserve the right to cancel programs until we can safely resume. If a session is cancelled families/guardians will be notified by phone and/or email by Through the Woods staff.

EXTREME WEATHER POLICY

Facilitators at Through the Woods Forest & Nature School consult the forecast regularly, and weather-related safety is considered in all decision-making (i.e. how far to venture, how long to be outside).

In case of extreme weather (high winds, heavy rain, thunder and lightning, etc.), the facilitator may decide to cancel the day, or if the day has already started, call families/guardians to come pick up participants early.

In the case of extreme temperatures (-25C or below or +30C and higher), facilitators will limit participants' length of exposure based on age/outerwear, and will constantly assess participants' comfort and safety, watching for signs of frostbite, hypothermia, heat exhaustion, etc.

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

EMERGENT LEARNING

Learning at Forest & Nature School can and often does look different than it does in a conventional school setting. At Through the Woods, we are committed to student-led or emergent, and inquiry and play-based learning. This means that we believe that all participants

who come to FNS, are capable of constructing important knowledge through pursuing their own interests, asking questions, and expressing themselves in multiple, complex, and interrelated ways. At FNS, each day differs dramatically from the last. Participant's drive the learning process while facilitators support them. Thus, we uncover the curriculum as we go with participant interests at the forefront. We value the process, not the product.

PLAY BASED

At Through the Woods, we believe that unstructured, free play is fundamental to healthy development and learning. Play is the primary way through which children and youth make meaning of the world around them, and this form of play is something that people get less of in our current society. Play at FNS can take many forms. For example, symbolic play involves the use of an object (or a sign or symbol) to "stand in for" or represent something else - at FNS, a pine cone might become a person or a car or an animal. Social play requires participants to effectively negotiate rules and procedures - this is a part of nearly all play at FNS. Regardless of the type, all play provides the building blocks for greater cognitive functioning and learning for children, youth and adults.

PLACE BASED

Our program is firmly rooted in the act of connecting participants to a particular place through direct experiential contact. By getting to know a natural space intimately and revisiting it repeatedly participants are able to recognize and understand processes of changes while developing familiarity. When we are connected to a place, we develop a sense of responsibility that this place deserves caretaking and protection. Returning to the same place again and again leads to a sense of belonging, and eventually we take on a sense of stewardship towards the place, the broader community, and the world.

ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

At FNS, facilitators view participants as knowledge builders making meaning of the world through play and other self-selected activities means that the role of a FNS facilitator is also quite different than the role a teacher may play in a conventional classroom. Instead of being an "expert" or the one who has all the "right answers" (and thereby occupying a position of power over and above learners) FNS facilitators seek to be co-learners with participants. They aim to prompt questions, and extend and deepen participants' thinking about and compassion for the world around them by themselves posing questions, or by using or introducing tools, loose parts, and supplies that change the learning environment and therefore elicit a change in the learner. In brief, the facilitator sparks engagement, keeps everyone safe, builds community, and draws out learning - but also knows when to just get out of the way and let it happen!

PLANNING, OBSERVATION AND DOCUMENTATION

In order to truly follow the interests of FNS participants - to nurture emergent learning - FNS facilitators shift their emphasis from planning to observation and reflection. Instead of pre-determining the activities for the day, FNS facilitators closely observe participants, intervening with open-ended invitations to provoke further questions or exploration. FNS educators document their observations by taking photos, videos, and writing notes which are used to extend learning, refocus it, or redirect it and to co construct a theory of the learning taking place. Facilitators work to answer such questions as:

- “What was really happening there?”
- “What was being learned/mastered/struggled with?”
- “What kind of change in the participants’ experience/understanding of the world took place?”

We believe this kind of theorizing to be a meaningful way to “take stock of” or “assess” the learning and development of participants at Forest & Nature School.

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

At Through the Woods Forest & Nature School we manage behaviour proactively by engaging in developmentally appropriate activities, and by nurturing a positive physical and social/emotional space. In general, our behaviour management will:

- Consider the participant’s developmental level and needs
- Make expectations clear and provide scaffolding to help participants contribute positively
- Focus on the behaviour rather than the child or youth
- Be implemented in a positive and consistent manner
- Be designed to help the participant to learn appropriate behaviour and techniques
- Involve consulting with families/guardians to include their input of successful approaches with a participant, as well as to keep them informed of issues/concerns as they arise
- Help participants to develop self-control, self-confidence, decision making skills, the ability to communicate effectively and sensitively in their interactions with others

At Through the Woods Nature School **inappropriate behaviour** is defined as using actions or words that make other participants or staff members feel uncomfortable or unsafe. **Unsafe behaviour** is defined as any behaviour that puts a participant or staff member at risk. This includes not responding when called, running away from the group, hiding, taking risk without consulting staff, and not following guidelines so that behaviour becomes potentially dangerous to the individual or others.

In the case of inappropriate/unsafe behaviour the following steps will be taken:

1. Staff will remove the participant from proximity of the group and the two will work together to define the inappropriate/unsafe behaviour and create a plan to modify it.
2. Families/guardians will be informed (by phone or at the end of the day face-to-face) of the behaviour and consulted to discover the cause.
3. Staff and families/guardians will work together to develop strategies to adjust and eliminate the inappropriate behaviour. These strategies will be implemented with the individual at home and at Forest School to offer a consistent approach. Staff and families/guardians will stay in contact to keep each other informed of the participant's progress with regard to the behaviour in question.
4. Staff will follow up with the individual to be consistent with expectations and approach as well as to offer feedback and positive reinforcement.
5. In the extreme case that a participant's behaviour is consistently inappropriate or unsafe for themselves or others, and after the above process has been implemented, the individual may be asked to leave the program for a short term or permanently.

GETTING READY FOR FOREST & NATURE SCHOOL: CLOTHING & GEAR

When everyone is dressed properly, the barrier of discomfort is removed, allowing everyone to freely and safely enjoy the outdoor experience. Part of the learning experience at Forest & Nature School is assessing the weather and properly dressing for it.

Please label all items of clothing, bags, and backpacks. Our staff are not responsible for any lost or stolen items while on site.

All Seasons

- Backpack to carry personal supplies in.
 - Participants will be expected to carry their own backpack during FNS sessions, please ensure it is an appropriate size to be worn by the participant and that it is large enough to fit the supplies they will need. Please try it on and adjust it before your session.
- Water Bottle and/or thermos for warm drink
 - Confirm these can seal securely to prevent leaking
- Ziplock bag of spare clothes
 - In a labelled, Ziplock bag please pack a full change of clothes including socks and underwear.
- Lunch/snacks
 - Participants will use a lot of energy through the day, please send plenty of wholesome nutritious options.
- Closed toed shoes ***No sandals, flip flops or croc style shoes please***

Depending on the season participants will need waterproof rain-suits, boots, extra warm clothing, waterproof/warm snowsuits, extra hats and mitts, hiking shoes, sneakers, wool socks, thermal underwear, etc. For cool/cold weather please consider the following factors when dressing for Forest School:

1. **Insulation:** Natural fabrics such as wool or silk work well as an inner layer, as does fleece. Polyester pyjamas are another good option. The key for this layer is to wick moisture away from the skin and insulate it with a breathable layer.
2. **Middle Layer:** This is another insulation layer that creates 'dead-air space' between skin and the elements. This airspace helps in keeping warm. Wool sweaters (Merino wool is exceptionally warm and soft on sensitive skin) and fleece tend to work well.
3. **Outer Shell:** This layer should be waterproof and windproof, as well as breathable.

Winter:

- Thermal long underwear and shirt
- Wool or wool-blend socks
- Wool/fleece sweater (cotton is not recommended for cold weather conditions)
- 2 winter hats (must cover ears and stay on the head)
- Wool/fleece balaclava or neck warmer (much safer than scarves!)
- 2 pairs of warm, waterproof mitts
- Warm, waterproof snowsuit
- Warm, waterproof boots
- Sunblock (optional)

Spring/Fall (transition seasons):

- Thermal long underwear and shirt
- Fleece pants
- Wool/fleece sweater
- Hat (warm hat on cool days, sun hat on warmer days)
- Light knitted gloves
- Waterproof pants and jacket or Muddy Buddy (with extra insulation for colder days)
- Wool socks on colder days (they insulate even when wet)
- Closed toed hiking shoe or warm insulated rubber boots
- Sunblock (optional)

Summer:

- Lightweight clothing (silk/cotton ideal, synthetic fibres do not breathe well)
 - Long pants and long sleeves will help protect from scratches, ticks and insect bites)
- Full brim sun hat (to protect face, ears and neck)
- Closed toe supportive shoes/rubber boots
- Waterproof pants and jacket or Muddy Buddy (as needed)
- Sunblock (optional)

A note to families/guardians

It's not necessary to invest in expensive brand names to keep your child or youth warm. Thrift stores are great places to look for wool clothing at cheaper prices.

In terms of boots, we recommend purchasing boots that are one size larger than your participant's foot. Again, this creates dead-air space to assist in insulation. Socks help to wick moisture away from the skin, (please note: cotton tends to sweat and doesn't do a great job at wicking moisture). The best foot insulator would be two pairs of wool socks with waterproof boots that have wiggle room.

For warmer weather we ask that your child or youth has a light cotton/silk/hemp long sleeve shirt for the day. Participants are encouraged to wear a hat at all times. Our programs are altered slightly by following the position of the sun. It is amazing how cool it can be when towering trees shade the walking paths.

Participants will be encouraged to stay hydrated in both cold and warm weather as this will assist in regulating body temperatures. Please see us for further recommendations on staying comfortable throughout all weather conditions.

COMMUNICATION

GENERAL COMMUNICATION

Generally, Through the Woods staff will communicate with families via email or phone. To reach us in a timely manner, please send an email to sarah@throughthewoodsfns.ca or call/text 780-542-1910.

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION

In the event an emergency occurs during a Through the Woods program, families/guardians will be contacted by telephone once emergency personnel (if needed) have been contacted.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

Our goal is for all visitors to Through the Woods Forest & Nature school to feel comfortable and supported as they learn about the natural world and themselves through outdoor and potentially risky play. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding your visit to FNS, please do not hesitate to speak with Through the Woods staff. If you or the FNS staff member feels that you require an extended or more focused conversation than can be had in the moment, plans can be made to do so.

GRIEVANCE POLICY

Your concerns matter to us, and issues may arise in your dealings with Through the Woods staff. We want to have meaningful connections with all involved family members and maintain consistent open lines of communication. Please do not hesitate to communicate your concerns with Through the Woods staff in person, or via phone or email. We will make every effort to address and resolve these issues in a timely manner and in confidence. We want to work with you to make Through the Woods Forest & Nature school the best it can be and always welcome your feedback, whether it is complimentary or constructive.

CONTACT US

Email sarah@throughthewoodsfns.ca

Phone 780-542-1910

Website throughthewoodsfns.ca

Email and phone messages will be responded to within 24-48 hours on business days. Messages received on weekends will not be answered until Monday.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

One of the many special features of Forest School is that sessions are held in the same area of land over a period of time, allowing participants to become very comfortable in and knowledgeable about the area. Indeed, we believe that it is only through a deep connection to place that children and youth grow up to be stewards of the land. Although this is very positive for learning, it can have an adverse environmental effect due to overuse of an area. We therefore strive to meet a delicate balance whereby we promote participant's connection to nature through exposure and meaningful experience, while at the same time fostering an ethic of care and sustainable use of the land we are connecting to. We minimize our ecological impact by rotating our sites for play and staying on trails as much as possible.

At Through the Woods Forest & Nature School, we recognize the importance of environmental sustainability. We therefore conduct ongoing ecological impact assessments of our presence on the land, taking into account such factors as denudation/erosion, compaction, pollution, and the corruption/introduction of species. We have created a plan for the monitoring, management and limitation of our potential negative impact and for the positive development and improvement of the ecology of our site. We discuss site maintenance with participants and are conscious of our ecological impact.