

FERN

FLOWER

Nature School

Team Handbook

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# General Information about



Name of the facility: Fern Flower - Nature School

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Phone Number: 250-299-2054

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Our Programs for 2.5 to 6 years old:

- 🌿 Our Morning Sessions (Monday to Friday) start at 8:00 am and end at 12:15 p.m.
- 🌿 Our Afternoon Sessions (Tuesday to Thursday) start at 12:45 pm and end at 5:00 p.m.

Directors' Names: Lera (Valeriya) Lucas

Philosophy: Nature School with Play Based Learning, Reggio Emilia, and Waldorf Approaches

# Introduction

## Message from the Director

Welcome to Fern Flower - Nature School, a place rich in dialogue, collaboration, discussion, pedagogical excellence, and of course Nature. We invite you into this diverse community, where families, children, and educators are free to share and engage others in discussing the values that they hold about children, early childhood education, nature, practical life skills, connection to the land, and various ways of knowing.

Thank You and Welcome!!!

*Lera Lucas*

## Mission

Our mission is to use the Nature and Forest School model to bring children closer to nature in the early, primary, and secondary years. By cultivating rich learning experiences, children will make a connection with the diverse natural environment our locations have to offer.

Our vision is for your child to play and learn within our local forests with a knowledgeable and experienced educator who understands the importance of play and inquiry-based learning and how this can lead to a healthy child and a more sustainable world.

Our Educators Certified British Columbia ECE and ECEA, with Outdoor Specialists (Forest School Level 1, 2 and 3), guide children to self-learning and discovery in a ratio of one teacher to eight students or less!

## About Fern Flower - Nature School

The Fern Flower - Nature School is located at 3826 Charlton Drive next to Rose Park approximately 5 minutes south of Bowser or approximately 20 minutes north of Qualicum Beach. From our "Home Base" – our log circle set located close around a forest clearing alongside our outdoor provocation areas and natural playscape - we can access and explore over 1,000+ acres of crown land, including Lighthouse Country Regional Trails, Nile Creek Enhancement Society (Fish Hatchery) and the local Beach.

Fern Flower - Nature School launched in the year 2024 when the very first young students settled the site and the surrounding forest with their discoveries, exploration, adventures, and artwork, and it began to feel like home.

We now offer morning and afternoon Nature School sessions to a wide range of children beginning of 2.5 to 6 years of age.

At Fern Flower - Nature School we are dreamers and builders. In the future, we hope to have an outdoor organic greenhouse garden, and a community library, and to be home to a vibrant community that is connected to the natural world.

## What is Forest or Nature School?

Forest School is an educational approach, and program of delivery, that has existed since the late 1950s, with thousands of programs expanding the world over, starting in Denmark and Sweden, moving through Scandinavia, onto Europe, China, Australia, New Zealand, the United States and now Canada. Although Forest School is called by many different names (e.g., Nature Kindergarten, Outdoor School, Waldkindergarten, Rain or Shine School, Bush School), in Canada, two prominent names are taking hold: Forest School and Nature School. In this guide, we have chosen to refer to our work as Nature School (NS) to reflect what is happening in Canada to date.

In NS, children spend anywhere from a half day to a full day outdoors in local woodlands and green spaces, in various urban and near-urban parks, natural spaces adjacent to or on school grounds, or natural playgrounds and outdoor classrooms. Children attending NS have the opportunity to learn in a natural environment regularly. Some programs are offered to students one half-day per week, whereas other schools and early years Nature Schools have embraced this approach on a more full-time basis, with students spending the majority of their days outdoors.

Two main features separate Nature School from other outdoor and environmental education programs. As described above, NS can happen on a part-time or full-time basis; and it can also take place in a variety of contexts, and environments, with varying age groups, and in different climates.

Despite variations, all Forest and Nature School programs adhere to the following: regular and repeated access to the same natural space, as well as emergent, experiential, inquiry-based, play-based, and place-based learning. The defining feature of this type of nature-based education program is that children are provided with opportunities to build an ongoing relationship with the land, with a dedicated educator, with one another, and with themselves through this educational approach.

The activities that happen in Forest and Nature School vary and can depend on the following circumstances: the season, the community context, climate, landscape, animals that have visited the night before, trees that have blown down in the wind, the kinds of provocations elicited by the educator, the kinds of tools and loose parts provided, the children who are in attendance, how long the group has been formed, and—most importantly—what interests the child(ren). Sometimes children work independently, finding solace in their own worlds and creations and ponderings. Other times children work collaboratively to create, problem-solve, support one another, and dream of a bigger and better world. NS is often described as a “magical” thing to witness, as it’s often a microcosm of collaboration, communication, trust building, and a working model of consensus building.

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

## The Nature School Ethos

Children's experiences with learning are defined by their capacity for inspiration, innate sense of exploration, a strong desire to learn through play, and their level of engagement with their surroundings. In Fern Flower - Nature School, a walk in the woods becomes a fantastical adventure where curiosity and fascination guide a child's spirit of enchantment; where a stick takes on a thousand magical meanings; where learning ebbs and flows, crossing multiple subject areas; and where the process is valued as highly as an outcome.

Intimate and meaningful connection with the natural world through Nature School helps develop a sense of "heart knowledge," which helps children tread the landscape — figuratively and literally — moving from "I know" to "I care". Helping children recognize themselves as an important part of a larger whole encourages them to develop an ethic of care towards themselves, others, and the more-than-human world.

### Forest and Nature School Principles:

Multiple principles of learning need to be considered when implementing Forest and Nature School programs. These principles can help form the foundation upon which broader learning objectives and curriculum requirements rest.

### Why Outside?

We spend our days in the woods and creeks, where children learn through their own exploration – and it's developmentally appropriate! Keeping it local gives students an appreciation of all the wonders of their own backyards. As we immerse our learning community in the same outdoor setting regularly, students develop a lasting connection with (and respect for) nature.

### Forest and Nature School:

- takes place in a variety of spaces, including local forests, creeks, meadows, prairie grasses, mountains, shorelines, tundra, natural playgrounds, and outdoor classrooms.
- is a long-term process of regular and repeated sessions in the same natural space.
- is rooted in building an ongoing relationship with place and on principles of place-based education.
- is rooted in and supports building engaged, healthy, vibrant, and diverse communities.
- aims to promote the holistic development of children and youth.
- views children and youth as competent and capable learners.
- supports children and youth, with a supportive and knowledgeable educator, to identify, co-manage and navigate risk. Opportunities to experience risk are seen as an integral part of learning and healthy development.
- requires qualified Forest and Nature School practitioners who are rooted in and committed to NS pedagogical theory and practical skills.
- requires that educators play the role of facilitator rather than an expert.
- uses loose, natural materials to support open-ended experiences.
- values the process is as valued as the outcome.
- requires that educators utilize emergent, experiential, inquiry-based, play-based, and place-based learning approaches.



## Aboriginal Perspective

*There is a teaching in every part of creation. It is our task to find it, learn it, and apply it.*

*- late elder Ken Goodwill (the First Nations University of Canada, n.d.)*

Although Nature School is relatively new to Canada, Aboriginal people have been offering sophisticated, land-based education to their children on this land for millennia. The content of that education varies from place to place with the diversity of the Nations that live here in Canada. However, there are some similarities between them. Like Forest and Nature School, Aboriginal approaches to education emphasize experiential learning, and peer-to-peer learning, and require people to take responsibility for their own learning. When educators use Aboriginal pedagogy in their classrooms and let the students know that what they are doing has Aboriginal roots, it helps create an atmosphere of mutual respect and sharing, it helps Aboriginal children and their families to feel more welcome in the school, and it helps non-Aboriginal children to develop a healthy, positive understanding of their Aboriginal neighbors. With at least 15,000 years of intellectual tradition and educational experience on this land, Aboriginal education can lend a great deal to Forest and Nature School, making NS all the richer, more locally appropriate, and more representative of a diversity of traditions.

Forest and Nature School offer students and educators the chance to find joy in learning from connecting to each other and the environment, the chance to experiment with new activities, honor and respect our place in the natural world, and observe and learn about nature as it surrounds us.

Aboriginal pedagogy makes use of wonderful, interactive approaches to learning. Probably the most known Aboriginal pedagogy is teaching through stories and anecdotes. Traditionally, legends and lore were used in the winter only, and this is still true today in some stories. However, many traditional stories have been written down and can be used any time of the year to help engage students. There are also new stories that have been authored from an Aboriginal point of view. (Some great books to start with are listed in the resources section of this guidebook). Aboriginal stories include history as told from an Aboriginal perspective and personal stories. While there is a serious taboo in many Aboriginal cultures against telling someone else's personal story without their permission, educators often refer to their own experiences to help their students learn.

Observation and emulation are also important ways of teaching and learning for Aboriginal peoples. Mentoring was and is still a significant part of learning practical skills, traditional roles, and ceremonies. Above all, Aboriginal pedagogy is Nature Schooled on observation of nature and trying to learn the lessons that plants, animals, and natural systems can teach us. In most Aboriginal cultures everyone was and is considered equal and the primary focus is on the community. The role of educator and learner can change throughout the day, depending on who has more knowledge of a given task. Elders, of course, are held in high esteem for their wisdom and knowledge and can be a vital resource for communities and individuals.

## What happens during Nature School Day?

Typically, small groups of individuals (depending on the child/adult ratio) take part in five days a week of sessions lasting for over four hours. The sessions involve practical hands-on activities which aim to build up participants' skills, abilities, and confidence week by week.

All sessions are designed and led by our trained staff, with the help and direction of our Fern Flower - Nature School practitioner. However, Nature School strongly encourages participant-led learning, so as the week progresses, learners are given more freedom and responsibility to explore their interests and therefore initiate and direct their own learning.

Fern Flower - Nature School uses natural resources to stimulate imagination, creativity, and investigation. Activities can include:

- 🌿 Shelter building
- 🌿 Natural art
- 🌿 Using knots and lashings
- 🌿 Fire lighting
- 🌿 Animal tracking
- 🌿 Bug hunts
- 🌿 Tree investigations
- 🌿 Climbing and balancing
- 🌿 Woodwork using tools, e.g.,
- 🌿 Creating bug homes and bird feeders
- 🌿 Collecting, identifying, and sorting natural materials such as leaves
- 🌿 Team games

Most activities are curriculum-linked and span several subjects, including Math, English, Design & Technology, Science, Music, and Art.

## What sort of Activities do the Children do?

Activities are linked to the topic that the children are covering that term. Typically, these may include:

- 🌿 Music and Movement – Keeping a pulse or copying a rhythm pattern by beating sticks together, learning songs, and singing and dancing as a group.
- 🌿 Design Technology and Science – Building dens and bridges that are suitable for them to sit in and walk on, whittling wood, making wooden disks.
- 🌿 Language and Literacy – Storytelling around the fire, Writing, following instructions, and creating story maps with natural objects.
- 🌿 Math – Data handling, Measuring, Shapes, and Problem-Solving.
- 🌿 Art – Creating 3D pictures or sculptures out of clay or mud, color matching, and making our own charcoal to draw with!
- 🌿 Fine Motor – involves the use of the small muscles that control the hand, fingers, and thumb; also, promotes eye-hand coordination.
- 🌿 Gross Motor –It involves the coordination of the arms, legs, and other large body parts and movements, nevertheless, movements such as running, crawling, swimming, or hopping.
- 🌿 Community Building – Participating in a community bonded by attitudes, values, and goals is an essential ingredient to enjoying a fulfilling life.
- 🌿 Cooking – Cooking not only builds confidence and prepares a kid for difficult life situations, but it also teaches them to think on their feet. It also develops the same type of discipline as any form of sports or martial arts.
- 🌿 Sensory - Sensory play is an important part of childhood and, within reason, there are really no limits to what you can use in sensory activities. Nature can often be your best friend when it comes to sensory play!

## The Benefits of Nature School

Why is Forest and Nature School important? And why now? Well, two pressing concerns make Nature School more important than ever. First, research shows that youth participation in outdoor activities has declined. It has gotten to the point that, for instance, in the Canada and U.S. the average child spends “as few as 30 minutes of unstructured outdoor play each day, but more than seven hours each day in front of an electronic screen. While it’s tempting to write this off as a problem unique to North America, children’s activities outside school are strikingly similar across nations. The second — and closely related — concern is that childhood obesity rates have increased and prescriptions for childhood mental health problems (like ADHD) have skyrocketed.

While obesity and poor mental health are complex problems, researchers believe that— among children — more screen time and less physical and outdoor play are among the causes. As the National Wildlife Federation (2014) puts it, “Our kids are out of shape, tuned out and stressed out, because they’re missing something essential to their health and development: connection to the natural world.” The evidence suggests that viewing, interacting with, and living in natural environments can have multiple effects on reducing stress, increasing patience, increasing self-discipline, increasing capacity for attention, and increasing recovery from mental fatigue, or from crisis and psychophysiological imbalance. In a timely way, Forest, and Nature School weaves together many elements that help counteract the physical and psycho-social deficits linked to a sedentary lifestyle and disconnection from nature. By including outdoor play, Forest and Nature School can heal and strengthen children’s bodies through increased physical fitness, higher levels of vitamin D, and better eyesight. NS can also heal and strengthen children’s minds and relationships: environmental education is linked to better performance in math, reading, writing, and listening and better critical thinking skills; and exposure to nature can reduce ADHD symptoms. Play and exposure to green spaces can also reduce children’s stress levels, protect their emotional development, and enhance their social relations. By exposing children to areas rich in biodiversity where they can learn about environmental issues hands-on, Nature School can help children become well-informed and caring stewards of the natural world.

### Potential Benefits of Participating in Forest and Nature School:

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

## Our Nature School of Conduct

<i>Entering the Forest</i>	We will enter the Forest respectfully and know that when at Nature School specific expectations are in place. We will explore, investigate, learn and play in a manner that will not damage our Forest environment. We understand that we share our Nature School with plants and animals and that when we are in our Nature School, we are sharing the environment with them.
<i>Walking on a Street and Crossing</i>	At FFNS Teachers will wear safety vests during the off-site outings. On big outings, we will have at least 2 educators helping during the day. During the walk, one teacher will be in front, and the other teacher will be in the back, also children will be in between holding hands if needed. If FFNS needs to cross the street teachers will use the STOP/SLOW sign to stop the traffic and cross safely.
<i>Boundaries</i>	Before each session begins children are made aware of how far they can explore. We do have lots of fun beneath the trees. If children move to explore hidden areas an adult should also move into the cover deep enough to be able to see the children but allow the children, the freedom to explore independently. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🍃 If you lose sight of a child shout '1, 2, 3, where are you?' The children have been taught to respond '1, 2, 3, I am here', or signal in other ways if non-verbal. This enables the leader to trace children who have strayed.</li> <li>🍃 Also, we may play a game "Green Means - Go!": <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <span style="background-color: #90EE90;">Green</span> – Run</li> <li>• <span style="background-color: #FFFF00;">Yellow</span> – Walk</li> <li>• <span style="background-color: #FF0000;">Red</span> – Stop</li> <li>• <span style="background-color: #800080;">Purple</span> – Come Back</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Usually, we use this technique during the walk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🍃 At NS we use the phrase/concept "If you can't see me - I can't see you", so usually that encourages all kids to look at the educator.</li> </ul>
<i>Lighting a Fire</i>	When lighting a fire, the Forest School Leader will take control of the operation and all accompanying adults will be briefed before we start. A lit fire will not be left unattended at any point. A fire may not be lit until it has been confirmed to all that our fire safety equipment is in place. Open fires will be built within a fire square/circle.
<i>At the Fire Circle</i>	An open fire will be lit within a fire square or stone circle. A fire circle using log sitting stools may be established around the perimeter, 2.0m from the fire square. No one may enter the fire circle perimeter unless invited to do so by an adult. There is no running past the fire circle. No items must be carried and placed within the fire circle unless by an adult. If you wish to move around the fire to a new stool, you must step out of the circle and walk around the outside of the log circle. Even when the fire is unlit, we will treat it as if it is lit.
<i>Picking up and Playing with Sticks</i>	Children can carry sticks shorter than their arm's length but are encouraged to think about how close they are to other children. Longer sticks may be dragged or carried with the help of another person when each person is at either end. Sticks must not be thrown. Sticks must not be pulled from living trees.
<i>Digging</i>	Digging large holes is not encouraged. Children may carefully move soil to look for insects and their habitats using fingers or small sticks found within the forest, but deep holes should not be made.

<i>Using Tools</i>	All tools have their own clear code of conduct for correct use which will include consideration of specific personal protective equipment, correct use of a specific body posture, and consideration of the appropriate types of activity that each tool may be used for. Tools are only used in the designated areas with the educator's full supervision until the tools are cleaned and put away in the toolbox which will be locked afterward.
<i>Tree Climbing</i>	An adult must be present when children climb trees in the Nature School. The ground cover should be checked for 'sharp objects and the tree marked as suitable for climbing. A visual check must be made for loose and rotten branches. Children are permitted to explore to their own limits or to a maximum height of 1.5m. Adults should be near enough to catch if a child should fall but far enough away to not be invasive to the children's exploration.
<i>Leaving the Site</i>	We work according to the ethos 'leave no trace' that we were in the woods as much as is reasonably possible. Shelters should be taken down, and imported materials need to be removed. All equipment is carefully counted out and back in again, especially when using tools and tent pegs. Very occasionally large items may be left between sessions. All rubbish will always be removed. If artifacts have been found or made these may be taken off the site with the consent of an adult.
<i>Carrying and Transporting Materials</i>	Children are encouraged to roll, lift, drag, and pull materials, either by using their hands or by using ropes. We encourage safe lifting by bending our knees and keeping our backs straight. Safe lifting should always be modelled by adults. Heavier objects should be rolled, lifted, or carried by more people working together. (Safe lifting risk assessment)
<i>Toileting</i>	Children are invited to use the toilets before we leave the "base". Children will be allowed to return to the "base" with an accompanying adult. Also, if we are far away from the "base" or nearest porta potty children will be encouraged to use the bush, and the educator will help the child if needed.
<i>Rope and String Use</i>	We encourage the collection and transportation of materials. We do not allow children to tie up with each other. If a child has a good idea and wants to tie up something, for example, a tarp or a swing, an adult should help them as needed, modelling appropriate knot tying and modelling how to talk through ideas and decisions.
<i>Eating and Drinking</i>	Nil by mouth policy (No lick, no pick) for anything found in the area, unless this activity has been specifically planned for during the session. Children must be reminded not to put their fingers or hands in their mouths or noses. When having drinks and snacks children will use wipes & water to clean their hands before consumption.
<i>Collecting Wood</i>	Wood is collected for fire lighting purposes. It is collected in four thicknesses – matchstick-sized, pencil-sized, thumb-sized, and wrist-sized. This is a good mathematical activity involving sorting and matching. Sticks may be collected for creating pictures and patterns but should be collected sparingly so as not to disrupt creature habitats.
<i>Picking up and Playing with Stones</i>	Stones may be picked up and transported. Children often like to make patterns and pictures with them. Stones may not be thrown. They may be dropped but thought must be given to whether it is safe to do so, i.e., what is beneath where I am dropping it?

# Philosophy

At Fern Flower - Nature School we primarily practice Forest/Nature School Philosophy. For us the main focus is Nature. We are mentors and facilitators, helping young children grow and connect in our all-outdoor classroom. In our Fern Flower - Nature School sessions, we nurture the seeds of connection to self, others, nature, and those who have come before us. In addition to teaching respect for the Earth and we teach respect for all alive beings.

Also, Nature School integrates lots of principles from the Reggio Emilia Approach which became a beautiful addition to our Philosophy. Reggio Emilia's Approach puts the *natural* development of people and the close relationships that they share with their environment at the Nature School into its philosophy. The Reggio Emilia approach and curriculum are just one of the many systems we have researched to create the Education for Life Program and this page is meant to function as an ever-expanding archive of open-source, free-shared, and duplicable Reggio Emilia theory and application-inspired ideas.

Fern Flower - Nature School practitioners offer lessons in a similar way to Montessori teachers; they will show the child how to do something and then allow the child to have a go. It is 100% hand on. Activities are age-appropriate meaning the children are always able to participate. Both Montessori and Nature School see children holistically, or as a whole learner and not individual areas of knowledge. This type of approach puts emphasis on children's development of mind, body, spirit and friendship. The teacher and the leader are seen as guides to greater learning destinations, focusing on observing children and how they are learning from and in the world around them. It is recognized by both that interrupting children during learning could disturb their momentum, motivation, interest and thought processes.

Waldorf schools also place a great emphasis on rituals and natural cycles, and as such can sometimes seem to be a world unto themselves, however, the students tend to greatly appreciate these aspects of the curriculum with schools putting on highly impressive and inclusive school productions in drama and music. Waldorf is particularly good for those students who have a passion for nature and the arts, and for fostering empathy and self-awareness. Waldorf and Nature Schools are.

## People's Roles in Fern Flower - Nature School

### The Role(s) of the Educator:

*The very skilled educator knows when to offer an insight, a question, or materials to support a child's learning, but more importantly, knows when to get out of the way.*

*— Jon Cree, UK Forest School Association*

Fern Flower - Nature School educators are people who love natural places, and they share this love with children by bringing them to those places to play and learn. The outdoors is their classroom, and they choose and tend to it carefully. The Forest School Educator's role is that of a facilitator, one who moves from active sparking of the children's interests into quiet observation and planning.

- 🌿 Sparking Engagement: By modelling enthusiasm for nature play, the educator encourages children who might be nervous or new to outdoor play. Forest and Nature School educators act as a creative spark for the group, encouraging the growth of new ideas by making available to the children's materials, resources, and experiences that expand their creative, imaginative, and exploratory play. An educator might bring a personal story that sends the children off into stories of their own or ask a question that encourages the children to look more deeply into something that they have found.
- 🌿 Observing: Once the children are engaged in the exploration, the educator steps back to give the children space to play and explore. This is an opportunity to become an observer, watching the children's interactions with each other and the site, collecting and documenting these experiences, and using this knowledge to enhance future outdoor learning.
- 🌿 Learning Alongside Children: The educator gets dirty, explores, creates, builds, learns, gains knowledge, and celebrates alongside the children they work with.
- 🌿 Staying Safe: During Nature School, the educator's role is to make sure the group is physically safe and comfortable. The children need to dress well for the weather and stay warm and dry throughout the day. The educator also assesses the overall safety of the site and the risk management required for specific activities, which can change from day to day, in collaboration with the children they work with.
- 🌿 Creating Connections: The educator works to create a community with the children, the parents, the place, and the community at large and works with the children to help them through conflicts and discussions that arise. Before and during the group's visit to a site, the educator works with staff and students to assess the risk, ecological sensitivity, and play value of the site. Forest and Nature School educators choose rich natural places where the children



can engage with loose parts and with natural features that engage the imagination and promote the children's physical and social development. They also act as stewards of the place, conscious of the group's interactions with it and their impact on it over time.

A Fern Flower - Nature School educator wears many hats. They slip seamlessly from playmate to researcher, at times actively participating in their students' exploration, while at other times maintaining a distance to listen and observe, and at other times stepping in as site and risk managers. They believe in the importance — and the joy! — of not simply permitting but encouraging children to get dirty and wet to experience a sense of connection to place, and to fall down to experience a sense of accomplishment when they get back up, or trust in a peer when they are helped back up.

The educator both leads (invites, nudges, pulls) students beyond their comfort zones and misconceptions into deeper thinking and understanding and follows their interests. Additionally, they spend much time reflecting on the day's events for future session planning, which itself is more an act of imagining the possible provocations, questions, and situations they might set up to build on prior experiences.

Indeed, reflecting on and articulating "what really happened" during the periods of outdoor free play and exploration that characterize Forest and Nature School is one of the most important roles a Forest and Nature School educator plays. In this way, they act as a translator, reading the day's events with an eye that has been rigorously trained to uncover or decode the meaning made by and the growth facilitated in students while they were building forts, splashing in a creek, or scrambling up and sliding down slippery hills — and then communicating that value to parents, colleagues, and the broader community.

The Forest School Educator is a defender of play, and a protector of fantasy, wonder, and awe. They are the caring adult modelling, respect and appreciation for the surrounding beauty, and under whose wing children come to feel safe in and connected to the natural world. It is this connection that will give purpose and meaning, moving a child through play, towards stewardship, and back to play once more.

### **The Role(s) of the Child:**

The child's day begins with those first sensual experiences of the natural world. This 'classroom' is an infinite reservoir from which experience upon experience can be pulled, and children intuitively know this and immerse themselves in it. The sounds of the birds and other forest creatures, the crunch of snow or branches underfoot, and the whistle of the wind in the trees; the first view of the meeting place, the sight of a bird in flight, the blue or overcast sky overhead; the feeling of cold air, the sun's warm rays, or the touch of pine boughs on the skin; the smell of the trees, the earth, and sometimes a fire; sometimes they can even taste those smells as the wind brings them to the group. These sensual experiences create anticipation of the day ahead.

Fern Flower - Nature School sessions begin with a group meeting that bonds the children together and gives voice to their first impressions and any ideas that might lead to unforeseen adventures. While experienced educators will always have a rough outline for the day in mind built on previous sessions, they also know the children provide the impetus that will drive the day and express the collective needs of the group. So, with plans made and ideas expressed, the first expeditions can begin. Each day is different; tasks and initiatives can span several days, weeks, or months depending on where children will lead themselves and/or the group at large.

The children bring their own personalities, their own experiences, and their own stories to the group, and oh, what stories are told! Marvelous tales and grand fantasies play out in the minds of the children and are enacted through their experiences in the forest. Sometimes the play is pure imagination, while other times it is deeply rooted in the realities before them—imagined rescue missions for a comrade lost in the wilderness or the salvation of forest creatures, unseen but empathically acknowledged.

The children, through their deep immersion in the experiences of the forest, don't realize the profound connections they are making with the natural world or the social and physical skills they are constantly developing. But we, the educators, know — and that is why we do the work. Through their play, we fulfill our vocations and, in turn, assist the children in viewing nature as an extension of themselves, as a critical part of their lives and world.

# Working in Fern Flower - Nature School

## Introduction and Objective of the Staff Policy and Procedure Handbook

### Introduction:

This employee handbook is a compilation of the policies, procedures, working conditions, and Behavioral expectations that guide employees' actions at the Nature School.

### Definition page:

- Director: A person who oversees all staff members and the operation of the Nature School.
- Manager: A person who acts as a resource and support for the team and all staff. They also help the director with day-to-day management.
- ECE and Forest School Leader: A person who has their Forest School Level 3 training. Their job is planning sessions and thinking of fun games and activities. They are also responsible for looking after tools and maintaining the site that the Forest School uses. They look after the children involved in the session, making sure that they are safe and happy, and chat with parents and caregivers, reporting on what fun things the children have been up to!
- ECEA and Forest School Assistant: A person who has their Forest School Level 2 training. Their job is to help and initiate planning sessions, thinking of fun games and activities. They are also helping a Forest School Leader during the session. They look after the children involved in the session, making sure that they are safe and happy, and chat with parents and caregivers, reporting on what fun things the children have been up to!
- Responsible adult: A person who has Forest School Level 1 training. A person who is of 19 years of age, has experience working with children and can provide care and mature guidance to children while following our policies and educational program. Their job is to help Forest School Leader and Assistant during their session. Also, they can perform Ground Keeper duties.
- Volunteer: A person who is willing to volunteer their time to diversify children's experiences and help run the program. Before volunteering a person must fill up the volunteer form and provide a criminal history check.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Manager/ Owner:

Currently, the manager of Fern Flower - Nature School is also the owner of Fern Flower - Nature School. This may be subject to change in the future.

- Overseeing and supervising the staff.
- Managing phone calls and emails.
- Delegating with parents and answering any questions they may have.
- Overseeing and approving curriculum.
- Dealing with complaints and payments.
- Making appointments.
- Booking and hosting tours.
- In charge of hiring and firing staff.
- Person in charge of creating policies and procedures for staff and parents.
- In charge of planning and running staff meetings.
- In charge of yearly staff reviews.
- Ensuring all staff and parents follow policies and procedures.
- May supervise children if needed to be within the ratio.
- Will run the educational program in either Nature School program when needed.
- Will check on staff and children to make sure everything is running smoothly.
- Will schedule the meeting with all staff when needed.
- In charge of check-in meetings when needed.
- In charge of buying and supplying Nature School with supplies.
- Run program and curriculum on a week-by-week rotation.

### ECE/Forest School Leader:

- Plan and maintain an environment that protects the health, security, and well-being of children.
- Assess the abilities, interests, and needs of children and discuss progress or problems with parents and other staff members.
- Observe children for signs of potential learning or behavioral problems and prepare reports for parents, guardians, or supervisor.
- Guide and assist children in the development of proper eating, dressing, and toilet habits.
- Establish and maintain collaborative relationships with co-workers and community service providers working with children.
- May supervise and co-ordinate activities of other Forest School Leaders, Forest School Assistants, Responsible Adults, and Volunteers.
- Be flexible to help with other sessions if needed.
- Clean and organize the area and ensure that the area reflects the child's interests and needs.
- Ensure policies and procedures are being followed.
- Ensure your room is always following licensing standards.

### **ECEA/Forest School Assistant:**

- Support Forest School Leader in carrying out programs that promote the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development of children.
- Engage children in activities by telling stories, teaching songs, and preparing provocations.
- Prepare, arrange, clean and pack the area/items when needed.
- Submit written observations on children to Forest School Leader or Manager.
- Maintain Nature School equipment and assist in upkeeping duties.
- Attend emergency meetings to discuss the progress and problems of children.
- May assist Forest School Leader or Manager in keeping records.
- Follow the policies and procedure.
- Ensure the room is following licensing standards.

### **Responsible Adult:**

- Assist other staff members in the running of the program.
- Maintain Nature School equipment and assist in upkeeping duties.
- Supervise and assist children in their day-to-day activities.
- Assist with administration duties and communicate with Director with questions and concerns.
- Follow policies and procedures.
- Ensure Nature School is always following licensing standards.

### **Volunteer:**

- Work as part of the Nature School team in all areas.
- Interact with the general public in a courteous and enthusiastic manner.
- Ensure equipment and library materials are organized and cleaned.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Assist Nature School staff with the resource library: inventory, counting, cleaning, and organizing library materials.
- Promote Nature School values and serve as a positive role model.
- Report equipment repair/replacement as required.
- Attend meetings, training, and planning sessions when needed.
- Support Forest School Leaders, Forest Assistants, and Responsible Adults in carrying out programs that promote the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development of children.
- Play with, care for, and talk to during the session.
- Maintain a safe environment for the children.
- Act as a positive role model, particularly modelling and promoting non-violence and healthy interpersonal behaviors.

## Qualifications and Credentials

### For Manager:

- Complete their Manager Certification.
- Have their Early Childhood Educator Certificate.
- Forest School Level 3.
- Outdoor First Aid.
- Must provide Criminal History Check.
- Any other certification regarding ECE, Child Development, Nature, Outdoors, and Other Certificates/Continue Education is very welcome in FFNS.

### ECE/Forest School Leader:

- Have their Early Childhood Educator Certificate.
- Forest School Level 3.
- First Aid.
- Must provide Criminal History Check.
- Any other certification regarding ECE, Child Development, Nature, Outdoors, and Other Certificates/Continue Education is very welcome in FFNS.

### ECEA/Forest School Assistant:

- Have their Early Childhood Educator Assistant Certificate.
- Forest School Level 2.
- First Aid.
- Must provide Criminal History Check.
- Any other certification regarding ECE, Child Development, Nature, Outdoors, and Other Certificates/Continue Education is very welcome in FFNS.

### Responsible adult:

- Responsible Adult Course.
- Forest School Level 1.
- First Aid.
- A person who is of 19 years of age or older.
- Must provide Criminal History Check.
- Any other certification regarding ECE, Child Development, Nature, Outdoors, and Other Certificates/Continue Education is very welcome in FFNS.

### Volunteer:

- A person who is 14 years of age or older.
- Respect and appreciation for children of diverse backgrounds.
- Must provide Criminal History Check (18 years and older).

## Code of Ethics

We accept the Forest Leaders and Early Childhood Educators of BC's Code of Conduct to ensure that our staff understand their ethical obligations to the children of our Nature School, and work with each other to promote quality family childcare for families in the community. The Canadian Child Care Federation's 8 Principles of Ethical Practice are followed; they are:

1. Educators promote the health and well-being of all children.
2. Educators enable children to participate to their full potential in environments carefully planned to serve individual needs and to facilitate the child's progress in all areas of development.
3. Educators demonstrate caring for all children in all aspects of their practice.
4. Educators work in partnership with parents, recognizing that parents have primary responsibility for the care of their children, valuing their commitment to the children and supporting them in meeting their responsibilities to their children.
5. Educators work in partnership with colleagues and other service providers in the community to support the well-being of children and their families.
6. Educators work in ways that enhance human dignity in trusting, caring and cooperative relationships that respect the worth and uniqueness of the individual.
7. Educators pursue, on an ongoing basis, the knowledge, skills, and self-awareness needed to be professionally competent.
8. Educators demonstrate integrity in all their professional relationships.

## FFNS Staff: Participant Ratios

The ratios between Fern Flower - Nature School educators/volunteers and participants vary depending on the age of the group of participants and the adults accompanying them.

For example, in BC according to licensing regulations

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/caring-for-young-children/how-to-access-child-care/licensed-unlicensed-child-care>

the maximum ratio:

- of Group Child Care ages (2.5 to 6 years) children to educator/volunteer is 8:1.

At FFNS we are allowed to follow the ratio stated above, but to provide better care and one on one education we are going to maintain a ratio of NS students (3-6 years of age) to FFNS educators/volunteer is 8:1.

### Children to Educator/Volunteer Ratio:

Children	Adults
≥ 8	1 ECE
≤ 9 and ≥ 16	2 ECEs Or 1 ECE + 1 ECEA

### Stuff Responsibilities

Class Educator Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The class teacher ensures that any relevant medical information about the children is to hand.</li> <li>• The class teacher ensures any relevant information is shared (class or checklist for accountability).</li> <li>• The class teacher will confirm the number of children attending the session.</li> <li>• ** To create CHECK-LIST for the teacher</li> </ul>
Forest School Leader Requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The NS Leader will gather the essential equipment: walkie-talkie, GO bag, class list, medications (if applicable), and session plan.</li> <li>• The NS Leader is to ensure that the GO bag is ready (first aid kit, tissues, hand sanitizer, handbook, bin bag).</li> <li>• The NS Leader will assess whether a daily site risk assessment is required.</li> <li>• The NS Leader will carry out a check of all tools before use in accordance with the tool's procedures in this document.</li> <li>• The NS leader will brief any adults on the session plan, relevant risk assessments and the children involved.</li> </ul>

#### During the session:

- The NS Leader and assisting staff will carry out a dynamic risk assessment of the activities taking place. Whenever possible, they will encourage the children to assess the risk of their activity and for the children to find a solution to any occurring problems.
- The NS Leader will aim to be aware of the location of the students throughout the session.



**Post session:**

- The NS Leader is responsible for ensuring that all equipment is returned at the end of the session. This includes ropes, tarpaulins, safety, and cooking equipment, and additionally keeping the table clear, so fire is appropriately extinguished.
- The NS Leader will carry out a head count before leaving the site.
- The NS Leader will carry out a review of the session, including debriefing the class teacher where appropriate.
- The NS Leader will check the serviceability of all tools before putting them in storage.
- The NS Leader will carry out an evaluation of the session and make the relevant plans for that group’s next session.
- The NS Leader will ensure that the GO bag is replenished.

## Schedule

As you know already FFNS is open 5 days a week:

	<i>Open</i>	<i>Closed</i>
<i>Monday</i>	8:00 am	12:15 pm
<i>Tuesday</i>	8:00 am	5:00 pm
<i>Wednesday</i>	8:00 am	5:00 pm
<i>Thursday</i>	8:00 am	5:00 pm
<i>Friday</i>	8:00 am	12:15 pm
<i>Saturday</i>	Closed	
<i>Sunday</i>	Closed	

Fern Flower - Nature School is offering 2(two) programs for children 2.5 to 5 years of age.

<i>Programs</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>End</i>
<i>Morning Session</i>	8:00 am	12:15 pm
<i>Afternoon Session</i>	12:45 pm	5:00 pm

This is our day-to-day schedule. Note: that schedule may change, and it is working as a suggestion more than a strict measure.

Time	Actions
7:45 am To 8:00 am	Teachers will set up before Morning Session
8:00 am To 8:30 am	The morning Session begins at 8:00 am. Drop off time. Saying goodbye to parents or guardians, putting their belongings away, washing hands and Free Play – Children will choose their games and activities. There will be a variety of centers, games, and activities available to the children geared toward enhancing their growth and development
8:30 am To 9:00 am	Continuation of free play and Centers.
9:00 am To 9:15 am	First Fire Gathering – Children will be able to share any news or special experiences
9:15 am	Bathroom
9:15 am To 9:45 am	Snack
9:45 am To 11:15 am	Time to explore – children will guide and choose what they would like to do
11:15 am	Bathroom
11:15 am To 11:35 am	Second Fire Gathering – Children will be able to share any news or special experiences about their day and what they learned
11:35 am To 11:45 am	Clean-Up Time – Put away not needed activities and downsize the set-up
11:45 am To 12:15 pm	Free Play until the pick-up. The morning Session ends at 12:15 pm.
12:15 pm To 12:45 pm	<u>Break Time</u> (No Children in Care)

12:45 pm To 1:15 pm	The afternoon Session begins at 12:45 pm. Drop off time. Saying goodbye to parents or guardians, putting their belongings away, washing hands and Free Play – Children will choose their games and activities. There will be a variety of toys, games, and activities available to the children geared toward enhancing their growth and development.
1:15 pm To 1:30 pm	Continuation of free play and Centers.
1:30 pm To 1:45 pm	First Fire Gathering - Children will be able to share any news or special experiences
1:45 pm	Bathroom
1:45 pm To 2:15 pm	Snack
2:15 pm To 4:00 pm	Time to explore – children will guide and choose what they would like to do
4:00 pm	Bathroom
4:00 pm To 4:20 pm	Second Fire Gathering - Children will be able to share any news or special experiences about their day and what they learned
4:20 pm To 4:30 pm	Clean-Up Time – Put away not needed activities and downsize the set-up
4:30 pm To 5:00 pm	Free Play until the pick-up. The afternoon Session ends at 5:00 pm.
5:00 pm To 5:15 pm	Teachers will clean up and put away items from Afternoon Session and Close Off the Fern Flower - Nature School for the day

This is our day-to-day schedule.

Note: that schedule may change, and it is working as a suggestion more than a strict measure.

## Nature School Set-Up/Closure Procedure for Outside

Please remember that the Morning Session will have the same flow as Afternoon Session.

We at Fern Flower – Nature School will spend as much time outside as possible, so starting the day outside is the best thing that you can do.

### Set-Up:

1. You as an FSL will come 15 minutes before the beginning of the session and perform a site safety check at Rose Community Park("Home-Base").
2. Unlock the Center.
3. Do Center Opening Checklist (for the building).
4. Then bring out anything that you are planning to use for this Session outside in a lockable bin and set it beside Fire Gathering Circle. Including your backpack, sign-in sheet, and communication device.
5. Set the washing station by filling up the Washing Station Bin with water from the hose.
6. Set Garbage bin outside.
7. You're welcome to set up provocations, etc. while the children are arriving.
8. The Session begins.

### Closure:

1. The Session ends.
2. Make sure that everybody signs out.
3. Everything is packed and brought back to the center.
4. Water is drained from the washing bin.
5. Garbage is collected and thrown away.
6. Do the last site walk through to make sure that everything is safe and in the same shape as you found it.
7. Report/Document at the Centre if you find anything.
8. Do Center Closing Checklist (for the building).
9. Lock up the Centre.

### Note:

- If we are starting the day outside, please leave the sign at the Center's Door and ask parents to leave their children's backpacks at the Centre and bring lunch kit with the child to the "Home-Base".
- If the weather is changing and we will need shelter, please set it above Gathering Circle.
- All equipment will be in the lockable containers in the Centre, and you are welcome to bring anything that you need outside for the session. Remember that you are responsible for cleaning and putting it away after.

## Full and Part-Time Schedules

### Full-time schedule:

A position that is considered full-time is 38 hours per week plus 1 hour of casual curriculum development that includes paid breaks.

*Note: the amount of curriculum development hours can change and vary so please communicate with the manager if you need more time.*

Total: 39 hours per week.

### Part-time schedule:

A position that is considered part-time is a position that is less than 30 hours per week.

- Any other part-time Arrangements must be communicated with the manager.

### Set Schedules:

Our set shifts are as follows:

- Morning Session: 7:45 am to 12:30 pm (With kids from 8:00 am to 12:15 pm)
- Afternoon Session: 12:30 pm to 5:15 pm (With kids from 12:45 pm to 5:00 pm)
- Full Day (Morning and Afternoon): 7:45 am to 5:15 pm.

### Changes with the season:

During certain times of the year, our number may be lower such as Christmas, school breaks and summer. If numbers go lower than a certain capacity we may send you home early, ask if you would like the day off or change your schedule slightly. All changes to the schedule will be communicated between the manager and employee and only with both sides agreeing to changes the schedule will be changed.

### Keeping Sign-In and Out Record:

All staff must keep their sign-in and out records in designated areas and keep them up to date. It is the Manager responsibility to calculate all work hours for the Director.

## Personal and Contact Information

It is very important for the Nature School to have the most accurate and up-to-date information for all employees. Should there be any changes in your name, address, telephone number, e-mail, or any element which may affect payroll, benefits programs, or income tax deductions, you can update some of these changes in Workday while other items must be done in person at Payment and Procurement Services. In addition to changing your contact information online, please inform your Manager of any contact information updates.

## Pay

Your pay from FFNS will be deposited directly into your bank on the 15th and the last day of each month the 29th or 30th or 31st.

Participation in direct deposit is a condition of employment. Your pay statement will be available throughout the workday.

## Probationary Period

You will be employed on Probation for a period of 3 Months with a review after. During this period meetings between you and your manager will be arranged for the purpose of evaluation, conduct and performance.

## Evaluations

Evaluations of a staff member's performance will be conducted by the Director and/or Manager. Evaluations will be performed annually. Informal evaluations will be performed throughout the year during scheduled and unscheduled classroom observations. Parent surveys will be passed out shortly before a staff member's evaluation meeting and feedback will be included in the staff member's evaluation. Staff members will be required to complete a self-evaluation before meeting with the Director and/or Manager.

## Appraisal

A system of regular appraisal will be operated during your employment, which may involve discussion between you and your Manager in relation to your Performance and Conduct.

## Benefits

You will have been asked to set up your benefits in the Workday. If you have questions, refer to the collective agreement and the link below.

Link to Benefits website

- *Full-Time Regular Employees:* After a 3-month probation period also upon request.
- *Part-Time Regular Employees:* Employees who have worked less than 30 hours per week will not be eligible to receive benefits.

## Discounted Sessions for Children of Educators

FFNS covers half (50%) of the Childcare fees. All full-time employees are eligible for discounted childcare. (Note that care is not provided during the 3 months' probation period.) The Director and/or Manager will provide additional information to eligible staff members upon hire. Discounted childcare is only available when the employee is working full-time.

## Vacation Leave

Vacation benefits are offered as part of FFNS's overall commitment to helping staff and faculty achieve work-life balance. Your vacations will be fully played for. The vacation days are fully set in advance.

- **Spring Break** – One week in Springtime (Follow SD69) (1 week closure)
- **Summer Closure** - Last week of August until September first day after Labor Day (1 week closure)
- **Winter Closure** - Last week of December including Christmas Day 25<sup>th</sup> until New Year 1<sup>st</sup> (1 week closure) (We are open on January 2<sup>nd</sup>)

## Sick and Dependent Leave

You might need to take time off from work to recover from an injury or illness.

- If you are a full-time employee, you accumulate sick leave at 1 day per month worked, after your probation period. In the end of the year, all your unclaimed sick days will be paid to you, or you can transfer them to the next year.
- If you are a part-time employee, your sick leave is pro-rated based on your percentage of employment.
- All regular employees shall be able to draw on a block of five days' sick leave when they commence employment. This will be paid back as sick leave is accrued.

### What do I do if I'm sick?

Follow the sick-call procedures to ensure your manager/supervisor are informed that you're too ill to be at work that day. Your supervisor will ask you to enter your sick time in Workday or will enter it on your behalf depending on the circumstances. For prolonged absences, you may be asked to provide a doctor's note.

### What if I use up all my sick days?

If you use up your allowed number of sick days or your sick leave bank, you should apply for an unpaid medical leave of absence.

### Can I use my sick days to care for a dependent who is ill?

You can take up to five paid sick days to care for a dependent if you have at least 12 days in your sick leave bank for personal use. An eligible dependent is your child, foster child, spouse/partner or parent related to you by blood, marriage or adoption or, as a partner, is living in a marriage-like relationship with you.

### **Vacation or Non-medical Leave Requests:**

All requests are to be submitted in writing to the program supervisor and entered in Workday for approval.

- Requests of more than one day should be submitted a minimum of one week in advance.
- Approval must be received before the absence occurs.

### **Medical and Dental Appointments:**

You should make every effort to schedule your medical/dental appointments outside of working hours or when it least impacts your shift. All appointments are taken from your sick leave bank. Approval for appointments must be obtained from the program manager in advance.

## **Pregnancy and Maternity Leave**

### **Pregnancy:**

FFNS is congratulating you on such good news. To make it go smoothly for you, your baby and Nature School, we encourage you to share your news with us so we can support your journey to becoming a parent.

We are asking you to keep us informed about your health so we can accommodate your needs as a future mother deserves. We are encouraging you to take prenatal classes and do all your medical check-up during Monday or Friday evenings when the NS is off. But if it is not possible, we will try to arrange something that will work for everybody.

Further and further into your pregnancy, we will try to easy-up your workload and if you are concerned about going on a deep forest outing, we will always accommodate small and easy jobs for you around "Home Base".

It is your choice when you would like to start your maternity leave so, so please notify your Manager or Director about the arraignment which will work for you.

### **Maternity Leave:**

If you become pregnant while in employment, you are entitled to take maternity leave. The entitlement to a basic period of maternity leave from employment extends to all female employees in Canada (including casual workers), regardless of how long you have been working for the NS or the number of hours worked per week.

As per the Employment Standards Act, pregnant employees qualify to take 17 weeks' leave from work to have their baby.

Pregnant workers are entitled to begin their maternity leave up to 13 weeks before they have their baby – leaving 4 weeks of leave after the baby is born.

In any event where the pregnancy ends or is terminated, employees are allowed to take up to 6 weeks. In these circumstances, your employer could request a doctor's note indicating the date that the pregnancy ended.





### **Maternity Benefits:**

Maternity benefits are only available to the person who is away from work because they're pregnant or have recently given birth. They can't be shared between parents. The person receiving maternity benefits may also be entitled to parental benefits.

### **Parental Benefits:**

Once the baby is born or the child has been adopted, the Employment Standards Act allows parents to take additional leave known as parental leave.

Once taking maternity leave, an employee is entitled to take up 52 or 78 weeks of parental leave immediately following the period of maternity leave.

In cases where the child has a special condition requiring extra care, BC employees are empowered to ask their employer to take an additional 5 weeks of leave.

Parental benefits are available to the parents of a newborn or newly adopted child. You must choose between 2 options:

1. standard parental benefits.
2. extended parental benefits.

Your choice determines the number of weeks and the weekly amount you'll receive. If sharing, each parent must choose the same option and submit their own application. Parents can receive their weeks of benefits at the same time or one after another. Although you don't have to take weeks of parental benefits consecutively, you must take them within specific periods starting the week of your child's date of birth or the week your child is placed with you for the purpose of adoption.

*These periods are:*

1. standard parental: within 52 weeks (12 months)
2. extended parental: within 78 weeks (18 months)

Before you apply, consider carefully whether standard or extended parental benefits are better for you. Once a parental benefits payment has been made for the birth or adoption, the option (standard or extended) can't be changed.

For more information please visit:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/ei-maternity-parental.html>

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/careers-myhr/all-employees/leave-time-off/maternity-parental-pre-placement-adoption/parental>

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/careers-myhr/all-employees/leave-time-off/maternity-parental-pre-placement-adoption/maternity>

### Getting Paid while on Maternity Leave in BC:

While some employers may offer their employees paid maternity leave under the terms of their employment contract, maternity leave (also referred to as pregnancy leave) is generally without pay.

The law in BC does not require employers to pay any employee while they are taking maternity leave.

Accordingly, there are various employment insurance benefits available to pregnant workers that they can utilize during the time that they are away from work.

These are known as Employment Insurance (EI) Benefits.

If you're on maternity leave due to being pregnant or having a baby, the following EI benefits can be collected:

- up to 55% of your earnings.
- for a period of up to 15 weeks.

There is typically a weekly maximum cap to ensure that the benefits are spread across the period that you are away from work.

### What are your Rights Under Maternity Leave in BC?

1. Your Years of Service Continue: Taking maternity leave (or parental leave) does not affect your years of service to the employer. In other words, the time that you've worked for the employer will continue while you are away from work due to pregnancy and giving birth. This means that you'll still be entitled to claim your vacation leave. Your vacation leave will also continue to accumulate while you're away on maternity leave.
2. You cannot be Fired for Being Pregnant: Employers are also prohibited from changing the terms of employment, while the worker is on maternity leave, without their written consent. Under [BC's human rights laws](#), your employer is also prohibited from treating you differently as a result of your pregnancy.
3. Returning to Work after Maternity Leave in BC: Provided that your employer doesn't terminate their operations before you are returning back from maternity leave, the *Employment Standard Act* requires that you are returned to the same employment position you held before you took the time off. The entire purpose of maternity leave is to allow you to have your baby while knowing that your job remains secure.

### Key Takeaways:

All employees covered by the BC Employment Standards Act are entitled to take maternity leave while pregnant and after having a baby.

Employees are also entitled to take parental leave following the period of maternity leave and if they've adopted a child.

Here's what you need to know:

- you're entitled to take up to 17 weeks of maternity leave.
- maternity leave is generally unpaid.
- you may qualify to claim employment insurance benefits while on maternity leave; and
- you hold various rights while on maternity leave, including the right not to be discriminated against on the grounds that you're pregnant.

If you're unsure about your maternity leave rights or if you believe you're not receiving the rights you're entitled to under the BC Employment Standards Act.

### Medical Visits:

Once your pregnancy is confirmed you may take reasonable time off for medical visits connected with the pregnancy. There is no maximum or minimum amount of time off specified for these visits. Rather, you are entitled to as much time off as is necessary to attend each visit. This includes the time required to travel to and from the appointment and the time taken for the appointment itself. You will need to provide your employer with medical evidence confirming the pregnancy, giving 2 weeks' notice of your medical visits. You should show your appointment card if requested by your employer at any time after your first appointment. You may also take time off for medical visits after the birth for up to 14 weeks following the birth. You are entitled to be paid while keeping these medical appointments both before and after birth.

### Ante-Natal Classes:

You may also be entitled to take paid time off to attend some ante-natal classes. Your entitlement is for one set of ante-natal classes except for the last 3 classes of the set. Fathers are entitled to paid time off to attend the last 2 classes in the set of ante-natal classes.

### Actions that you must follow during and after pregnancy:

- Notice: You must give your employer at least 4 weeks' written notice of your intention to take maternity leave and you must also provide your employer with a medical certificate confirming the pregnancy. If you intend to take the additional 16 weeks' maternity leave you must provide your employer with at least 4 weeks' written notice. Both these notices can be given at the same time.
- Early birth: If your baby is born more than 4 weeks before your due date, you will have fulfilled the notice requirements if you give your employer written notice within 14 days of the birth. This document is for guidance only and is not a legal guide. This document is constantly being updated.

- Medical certification: Section 11 of the Maternity Protection Act 1994 provides that if you are certified by your doctor as needing to start maternity leave for medical reasons, your maternity leave will start on the earlier date as specified on the medical certificate. In this case, you are considered to have complied with the notice requirements.
- Return to work: You must give your employer at least 4 weeks' written notice of your intention to return to work. It is important to comply with these notice requirements, as failure to do so may cause loss of rights. You must notify your employer as soon as possible if you wish to postpone your maternity leave (but remember, your employer can refuse this application).

## Attendance

Consistency is crucial to creating a successful program. Therefore, all staff members are expected to be in regular attendance, to provide a consistent environment and routine. Regular absences will be subject to disciplinary procedure.

In the event that a staff member needs a day off due to illness, children's illness, etc. without the 2 weeks required notice, attendance points will be given.

## Care and Supervision of Children

In the context of our Nature School, effective supervision stands as a fundamental pillar in ensuring the safety and well-being of the children under our care. Together with thoughtful design and arrangement of the natural learning environments, supervision plays a crucial role in preventing accidents and mitigating the severity of potential injuries. Children, in their natural inclination to challenge their abilities, may not always recognize associated risks. Therefore, our staff is committed to actively supervising children, identifying, and minimizing potential risks to ensure a safe and enjoyable play and learning experience. Through close observation, our caregivers can identify opportunities to support and enhance children's play experiences, recognizing moments when children seek independent play. The determination of the appropriate level of direct versus indirect supervision is a nuanced decision that caregivers, possessing a keen awareness of each child and their unique needs, are best suited to making. This includes recognizing the developmental stage of each child, with younger children requiring continuous close monitoring and older children benefiting from a balanced approach that respects their growing independence. Our commitment to effective supervision is rooted in the understanding that it not only ensures the safety of the children but also promotes a positive and enriching learning environment.

This policy outlines the guidelines and principles for the care and supervision of children at our Nature School. It is designed to ensure the safety, well-being, and positive development of each child while fostering a nurturing and natural learning environment.

## Active and Positive Supervision

Care providers who are involved, aware and appreciative of children's behaviors are in the best position to safeguard their well-being. Here are some points to consider:

- Know each child's abilities.
- Establish clean and simple safety rules.
- Be aware of potential hazards.
- Position yourself strategically.
- Scan and circulate.
- Focus on the positive rather than the negative.
- Redirect.
- Always be Emergency Prepared.
- Do regular Health and Safety Checks.
- Check and follow weather and nature guidelines.
- Communicate with parents regularly.
- Keep documentation up to date.

## Indicators of Active and Positive Supervision at Nature School:

1. Engaged Interaction:
  - Caregivers actively engage with children during outdoor activities, encouraging exploration, and facilitating meaningful interactions with the natural environment.
2. Proactive Risk Identification:
  - Staff members consistently scan the outdoor environment to identify potential risks and hazards, taking immediate actions to mitigate or eliminate them.
3. Age-Appropriate Supervision:
  - Caregivers tailor their supervision approach based on the age and developmental stage of each child, recognizing the need for continuous monitoring for younger children and allowing age-appropriate independence for older ones.
4. Responsive to Individual Needs:
  - Caregivers are attentive to the unique needs of each child, adapting their supervision style to accommodate diverse abilities, interests, and comfort levels.
5. Facilitation of Learning Opportunities:
  - Staff members actively observe and identify spontaneous learning opportunities during play, providing support and guidance to enhance the educational value of the natural experiences.
6. Effective Communication:
  - Open and clear communication is maintained among staff members, ensuring that everyone is aware of each child's location, activities, and any specific considerations or concerns.

7. Promotion of Independence:

- Caregivers foster a sense of independence by allowing children to explore, make decisions, and engage in age-appropriate risk-taking within the boundaries of safety.

8. Inclusive Supervision:

- Inclusive practices are employed, ensuring that every child, including those with diverse abilities, feels supported and included in all activities, adapting supervision methods as necessary.

9. Regular Safety Checks:

- Systematic checks of the outdoor environment are conducted at regular intervals to ensure ongoing safety, including equipment inspections and assessment of changing weather conditions.

10. Positive Reinforcement:

- Caregivers use positive reinforcement and encouragement to motivate and acknowledge safe and positive behavior, creating a supportive and affirming atmosphere.

11. Adaptability to Changing Conditions:

- Staff members exhibit flexibility and adaptability in their supervision approach, recognizing that the dynamics of outdoor play and learning can change, requiring responsive adjustments.

12. Parental Engagement:

- Regular and transparent communication is maintained with parents, keeping them informed about their child's experiences, achievements, and any noteworthy observations during outdoor activities.

13. Crisis Preparedness:

- Caregivers are trained in emergency response and demonstrate preparedness to address unforeseen situations, ensuring the safety and well-being of the children in all circumstances.

These indicators collectively contribute to the establishment of a secure, enriching, and positive learning environment at our Nature School, promoting the overall well-being and development of the children under our care.

## Safety

### Accidents in the Workplace:

Hopefully, you will never experience a workplace injury at FFNS in your new role but if you do there are a few steps you will need to follow:

1. FFNS First Aid must be called to assess your injuries.
2. Report your injury to your Supervisor/Manager ASAP
3. Your supervisor is legally responsible for completing an investigation and submit an employer report about what happened.
4. You will be asked to call the WorkSafe BC claim line: 1-888-967-5377 if you needed to see a doctor, missed time from work, or plan to miss work. This initiates the claims compensation process.

### Prevention:

If you notice an unsafe condition or Behavior in the course of your work, you must report it to your supervisor.

### After an Accident/Incident:

Ensure any hazard(s) in the workplace are removed/contained and/or fixed in a timely manner for the safety of all. Report your injury to your Supervisor/Manager immediately.

### First Aid at FFNS:

All full-time employees of FFNS must have their First Aid! These is the steps we recommend you follow First Aid where needed:

1. Inform your supervisor.
2. Explain the situation and request first aid.
3. First aid support will be dispatched to your location.

### First Aid Posters and Educational Material:

- Know where this poster is at your Nature School
- Big First Aid Kit which is located at the “Base” will have First Aid Kit as well as First Aid Book just in case.

### Safety Committees:

The Forest School Leader and Manager will monthly discuss accident reports and safety concerns with staff members and will try to figure out if there is any way we can prevent the injuries and if NS needs to adjust its curriculum so we can provide safer and healthier practices for children.

## Risk Management

*Risk* - the experience and management of it - is an inherent and integral part of Nature School, and indeed of healthy child development. Fern Flower - Nature School educators and volunteers endeavor to co-assess and co-manage risk with participants, including FFNS students, teachers, and accompanying volunteers. We believe this to be an essential skill for children to acquire and for adults to support. NS educators and volunteers conduct 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.

Some of the risks inherent to NS and outdoor play include, but are not limited to:

- Injuries from executing strenuous and demanding physical activities, possibly on uneven ground in the forest.
- Injuries from failing to properly use tools such as carving knives.
- Injuries resulting from matches or fire.
- Contracting poison ivy.
- The presence of wild animals and ticks.
- Inclement Weather.

### Nature School Site Risk Assessment:

Hazard	Risk	Safety measures
Trip hazards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uneven ground/holes</li> <li>• Wet slippery surface</li> <li>• Muddy ground</li> <li>• Icy ground</li> </ul>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal/visual instruction to walk carefully and look where they are walking.</li> <li>• Wear appropriate footwear.</li> <li>• Mark off area if necessary.</li> <li>• Remove obvious trip hazards on pre-visit site check if possible.</li> </ul>
Low branches cause eye injuries	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Point out the location of low branches.</li> </ul>
Brambles, prickly or thorny plants and stinging nettles	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show the location of any brambles and stinging nettles and ask children to avoid them.</li> </ul>
Insect bites and stings	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal/visual warning does not approach or try to catch bees and wasps.</li> <li>• Monitor site for nest activity and avoid nest sites.</li> <li>• Keep arms and legs covered.</li> <li>• Check anyone with severe allergies has their epi-pen and can administer it.</li> </ul>



Tasty-looking fruit/berries and fungi	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal/visual instruction that some fruit/berries and fungi are poisonous and should not be eaten.</li> <li>• Ensure hands are washed before eating and verbal instruction to keep hands away from the face.</li> </ul>
Nuts, e.g. horse chestnut, hazel, acorns	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of children with allergies.</li> <li>• Check anyone with severe allergies has their epi-pen and can administer it.</li> </ul>
Harmful litter, e.g. metal, glass, hypodermic needles	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove harmful litter during pre-visit site check.</li> <li>• Point out the location of any harmful litter as the activity progresses and remove.</li> </ul>
Contact with harmful substances – Soil	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure hands are washed before eating and verbal instruction to keep hands away from the face.</li> </ul>
Exposure to the elements – Rain, Wind, Snow, Ice	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure that children are wearing appropriate clothing.</li> <li>• Use tarpaulins for shelter.</li> <li>• In extreme cases work indoors and have alternative activities plan.</li> </ul>
Exposure to the elements – Sun	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in the shade.</li> <li>• Wear hats.</li> <li>• Check sunscreen is being worn.</li> <li>• Provide regular drinks.</li> </ul>
High winds	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid areas with trees – work on the playing field.</li> <li>• In extreme cases work indoors and have alternative activities plan.</li> </ul>
Structural damage to trees	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check branches during pre-visit site check.</li> <li>• If an area's unsafe, work in a meadow or work indoors and have alternative activities plan.</li> </ul>
Animal feces	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look out for feces during the pre-visit site check and remove.</li> <li>• Point out the location of feces during the session so it can be avoided.</li> <li>• Wash hands thoroughly if anyone comes into contact with feces.</li> </ul>
Fencing perimeter	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-session checks to assess any gaps in the school fence.</li> </ul>

## Animal Policy

### Wild Animal/s:

Children are always curious about animals. We believe in do not hurt/kill it also affects bugs, small lizards, fish, and big animals. Educators must always be in the Nature School of animal/child interaction. Remember if you encounter dangerous wild animals, you must follow *Wildlife Safety* (each animal has different protocols to be able to stay safe).

### Domestic Animal/s:

As you know we are out a lot and may encounter somebody's pets. Children are always curious about animals, so we encourage children not to pet animals immediately. Children must ask first the owner of the animal and be mindful that the animal can get overwhelmed easily because of the number of children. Educators *must* monitor children during animal-child interaction. Note – if you encounter a domestic animal that you don't know or it looks aggressive you as an educator must inform everybody about the danger, gather all children and maintain a safe distance from the animal. Perform *Wildlife Safety* if the animal is aggressive.

### FFNS's Animal/s:

Currently, the Director has pets at her home who are friendly and are welcome to interact with FFNS clients. So, you may encounter animals from time to time.

## Equipment for Nature School

In addition to tools suited to the planned activities, the Forest School leader will always take an *Emergency Bag* with them.

The contents of the emergency bag will vary depending on the time of year and weather conditions, the site being used, and the planned activities according to the relevant risk assessments and daily risk assessments. There are of course also essential items that should be carried out for every session.

- Trolley for transportation.
- Sit mats – carpet tiles or tarp.
- Set of spare clothes.
- Fire striker/cotton wool/kindling.
- Spare clear plastic bags and bin liners.
- Wet wipes.
- Dry tissues.
- Tarpaulins & tent pegs.
- Disposable gloves.
- Whistle for use in emergencies.
- String and rope.
- Pen and paper.
- Washing up bowl & antiseptic hand wash gel.
- Fire blanket and bucket.
- Kelly kettle and gloves.
- Facial tissues and kitchen towel.
- Drinking water in a mason can with a date.
- Spare water in jerry can.

**Emergency procedure information:**

- Mobile phone with emergency contact numbers.
- Emergency Cards - children's and educator's medical and contact information.
- Staff handbook and emergency procedures in a waterproof folder.
- Map of forest school site with postcode and/or grid reference.

**First aid kit:**

- First aid guidance booklet.
- Disposable gloves (latex free).
- Radio Safety pins.
- Sterile non-medicated dressings.
- Eye bandage.
- Triangular bandages.
- Eyewash.
- Cleansing wipes.
- Instant ice pack.
- Space blankets x 2.
- Burn cool x 4.
- Cling film.

**Tools when needed:**

- Tool bags and toolbox.
- Knives in a lockable box.
- Bow saws 12".
- Loppers.
- Potato peelers.
- Work gloves for adults & children.
- Tent pegs.
- Rope – various sizes inc. poly prop.
- Pruning saws.
- Billhooks.

## Required Training

- We recommend everybody in FFNS obtain their Forest School level 3.
- Maintain their First Aid.
- If you are interested in obtaining any other training, certificates and continuing education please talk to the Manager about it.

FFNS has a policy about continuing education. If you are taking any big/expensive training during the work in FFNS the NS will pay for it or pay part of it. But if the employee will leave before a year of working in FFNS – the employee must refund the money FFNS paid for continuing education.

## Employee Development

Now that you are at FFNS, this may be an opportunity to branch out and build and develop new skills beyond your current role. You can explore the many opportunities available to you as a Forest School Staff member, such as online learning, Professional Development Funds, First Aid Certificates and mentorship programs.

### **First Aid:**

Educators must take their first aid and FFNS will pay for its cost. We suggest you take the First Aid course not during work hours but if you can FFNS will give you a day off(unpaid) but will pay for the First Aid course.

### **Forest School Level 1 and 2:**

All educators must take at least FSL1 and 2 but are encouraged to take their FSL3. FFNS will fully pay for your FSL1 after a 3-month probation period.

### **Forest School Level 3:**

All educators are encouraged to take their FSL3. FFNS will help you to pay for the course after a year of working with FFNS. FFNS will pay the educator \$100 per month after the time when you start the course until FFNS fully reimburses you for the course. Note that if you decide to leave FFNS the reimbursement will stop.

### **Other Continue Education:**

We appreciate all educators/volunteers bringing something new to FFNS starting with hobbies and passions. We highly encourage you to continue your education in Child Development, Forest Schooling, Nature, Safety and other fields. FFNS will ask you to wait until 3-month probation period to start the Continue Education Please, communicate with FFNS Manager to set up reimbursement for your courses. FFNS will pay the educator \$100 per month after the time when you start the course until FFNS fully reimburses you for the course.

## Statutory Holidays & Closures

Nature School is closed on Statutory Holidays. For all employees to qualify for a Paid Holiday, they must have worked a minimum of 11 of the 30 calendar days immediately preceding the Paid Holiday. All Nature School Programs will be closed:

- Family Day - Second Monday in February
- Good Friday – Friday before Easter Sunday
- Easter Monday – Monday After Easter Sunday
- Spring Break – One week in Springtime (Follow SD69) (1 week closure)(First week of Spring Break)
- Victoria Day – Monday before May 25th
- Canada Day – July 1st (or Monday Following)
- B.C. Day - Monday, August 1st
- Summer Closure - Last week of August until September first day after Labor Day (1 week closure)
- Labor Day – First Monday in September
- Truth and Reconciliation Day – September 31st
- Thanksgiving – Second Monday in October
- Remembrance Day – November 1st (or Monday Following)
- Winter Closure - Last week of December including Christmas Day 25<sup>th</sup> until New Year 1<sup>st</sup> (1 week closure)

(We are open on January 2<sup>nd</sup>)

## Winter or Extreme Weather Conditions

In the event of heavy snow or an extreme weather event where services are curtailed, the Director, or designate, will base the decision on the following factors:

- The Director's decision about cancellation of classes and or curtailment of nonvital services
- Operational Requirements for Child Care Services Programs
- Safety of employees travelling to and from work and home; the decisions made by other units and departments; and availability of public transportation.

The Director, or designate, will inform the employees via email and phone messaging.

## Lunch Breaks

If an employee works more than five hours a day, they are entitled to one paid 30-minute break. All breaks are on a fixed schedule and run from 12:00 pm to 12:30 pm. Also, if the educator wants to have food with children, they are welcome to do so, and we are not limiting any food or liquid intake during the session time.

## Dress Standard

FFNS employees must ensure that they are dressed in a way that enables them to move freely and engage comfortably in all aspects of a child's day. Being outdoors is integral to FFNS's pedagogical values and philosophical direction. Educators must be prepared to be outdoors in all types of weather, including rain, wind, snow, sun, etc. FFNS believes that there is no bad weather, just bad clothing. All childcare staff and volunteers will dress in a professional and appropriate manner for the work at hand, considering the demands of the job and the clients whom we serve. Consideration will be given to the safety of the children and staff and the requirement to work out in all seasons.

We suggest you follow the Four (4) Bs rule:

- No Brass
- No Belly
- No Boobs
- No Butts

The best clothing is a combination of sport, hiking, outdoor, gardening, and military clothes. Also, don't forget that at FFNS we have a cotton band during winter and advise you to wear WOOL or synthetic clothing to stay dry and warm.

## FFNS E-mail

All employees are required to check their FFNS e-mail regularly, as this is the main form of contact for important updates. Having a consistent look and feel for our email communications creates a sense of legitimacy and trust in our communications. Please ensure you adhere to our e-mail guidelines, so we use this important communication channel responsibly. All e-mails will be responded to during work FFNS hours only and Friday is Admin work for Director.

Also, if you want to create your own FFNS email. Please ask for assistance from the Director or Manager.

## Behavior

We expect all educators to maintain a standard of professional and respectful Behavior towards everyone including their colleagues, supervisors, the children, and parents.

Equally, we expect others, including visitors and parents, to treat you with respect. If at any time you feel threatened, bullied, or harassed, please refer to your Senior Educator or Manager immediately.

## FFNS's Respectful Environment Statement

The FFNS Respectful Environment Statement for Staff and Clients speaks to our freedoms and our responsibilities and provides the guiding principles to support us in building an environment in which respect, civility, diversity, opportunity, and inclusion are valued.

The nature of the work at FFNS is impacted by the quality of the relationships between the staff and the participants using our services. It is expected that all relationships will be friendly and professional. FFNS will not restrict the development of personal relationships outside the work of FFNS, however, all FFNS employees are expected to conduct themselves with integrity, legally and ethically, that always reflects well on the FFNS. Employees should promote the core values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility in their speech and demeanor in all public forums and conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the interests and mission of the FFNS and in a manner that maintains the community's trust and confidence.

## Social Media

Employees should take care to:

- Refrain from doing FFNS business on personal social network sites or at any event or gathering unrelated to FFNS.
- Where employees have identified themselves as FFNS employees is clear that the views expressed are theirs alone and not those of FFNS.
- Not disclosing information that is confidential or proprietary to FFNS.
- Not use photos, logos, or other images of FFNS, its programs, staff, program participants or volunteers taken on FFNS premises or as part of FFNS activities without permission from FFNS management.
- Not initiate any contact with program participants that is unrelated to FFNS business.
- Not disclose their own or any other FFNS employee's personal contact information to program participants.
- Ensure compliance with FFNS policy "Confidentiality and the Protection of Personal Information".

## Use of Personal Information

All FFNS employees will conduct themselves in such a way that protects the privacy and personal information of FFNS employees, clients, and children in care.

Only personal information required for the business of FFNS will be collected and retained.

Discussing matters of a confidential nature regarding other employees or clients or children in care is strictly prohibited unless such discussions are necessary to the FFNS. Such discussions include any online communication including personal emails, Facebook, etc.

## Cell Phone Use

Personal use of a cell phone should only be done on personal time. You are welcome to use your phone to check the information, take photos, do planning, etc., which is connected to the work.

### Un-Plug Policy:

At Fern Flower - Nature School we believe in UN-PLUGGING. It is a policy based on respect for work and home life. Please, contact the FFNS during work hours and FFNS will do the same. We are not trying to restrict communication between staff but provide staff with mindful breaks. Of course, if you have an emergency, get sick, or can't come to work the employee must contact the Manager of FFNS as soon as possible.

## Parking

You are welcome to park at 3827 Charlton Drive or at the end of the street. Please, remember not to block anybody's driveway or cars. Thank you for staying mindful.

## Supply

Each Session has a yearly budget for purchases. Lead Teachers are responsible for complying with the budget and submitting supply/material requests to the Director and/or Manager. Any additional purchases above the allotted budget must be approved by the Director and/or Manager.

In FFNS we try to provide the best for educators and children so if you have something in mind, please put it down in the "To Purchase List" and if it is something very specific feel free to communicate to Manager about it.

## Reimbursement

The Director/Manager must first approve all purchases made by a staff member using personal funds. Any unapproved purchases may not be eligible for reimbursement. Original receipts be submitted to the Director and/or Manager within one week of purchase to receive reimbursement.



## Personal Belongings

Coats, backpacks, purses, etc. must be safely put on hooks, in closets/cabinets and out of reach of children. Personal belongings may also be stored in the FFNS Garage. FFNS is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

You are welcome to bring your own resources to FFNS. Please, store them neatly in FFNS Garage. Remember if items get stolen or broken that FFNS is not responsible for it.

## Food/Meal Policy

FFNS doesn't have any food restrictions. But please follow the same policy guide as FFNS's customers, like:

- We do request Educators to keep their food in the bag with an ice pack.
- Reduce the waist from the meal.
- Remember that children are watching and learning from you all day so please make healthy food and drink choices to inspire little ones to stay healthy.
- Please remember that we sometimes will not have a microwave available for you to warm your food if we are having picnic/mealtime in the forest. Also, when an educator is on their break, they are welcome to use the main microwave to warm up their lunch.
- We encourage you to eat with children.
- Teachers are welcome to warm up / boil water as part of the curriculum to make themselves coffee, tea or hot cocoa. Not only it will make your drink taste amazing but also will teach children a valuable lesson during the process.

## Staff Meeting

FFNS is a true believer in free time and at NS we will not have mandatory monthly meetings. Instead, all the changes will be communicated to employees directly or by e-mail. Nevertheless, if FFNS must have emergency staff meetings due to:

- a child's behavior
- parent and educator meeting
- maiger changes of policies
- other topics

which can't be discussed by email or can't communicate during the workday while children are in session. The meeting will be during the Lunch Break so teachers will not need to have a long day. Educators are welcome to have their food and take a walk during the meeting.

## New Staff Orientation

All new staff members will be asked to read the FFNS staff and parent handbooks. Prior to working in the classroom, the Director and/or Manager will schedule an orientation meeting to complete required paperwork, and review Nature School operation and policies.

## Suggestions

Fern Flower - Nature School is always seeking suggestions that will: improve methods, procedures, and working conditions; reduce costs or errors; and benefit the children, staff, and Nature School. Staff members who have suggestions or innovative ideas are encouraged to discuss them with the Forest Leader Director and/or Manager.

## Breastfeeding Policy

### NS Responsibilities:

Breastfeeding employees who choose to continue providing their milk for their infants after returning to work shall receive:

- Milk Expression Breaks: For up to one year after the child's birth, breastfeeding employees are allowed three twenty-minute breaks to breastfeed or express milk during work hours. For time that may be needed beyond the usual break times or full first year, employees may use their lunch break or personal leave, or they may clock out or make up the time as negotiated with their supervisors.
- Maintain Ratios in Classroom: If another staff member is not able to switch classrooms to maintain the ratio, one of the directors or if available extra staff will be provided for the employee to step out of the classroom to breastfeed or express milk.
- A Place to Express and Store Milk: If the employee does not want to breastfeed in the classroom another closed-door room will be provided for staff to breastfeed or express milk in privacy. Employees wishing to use this room must reserve the room by informing one of the directors when they will need to use it. Staff may store expressed breast milk in a Fern Flower - Nature School refrigerator and must be labelled with the name of the employee and the date of expressing the breast milk. Any nonconforming products stored in the refrigerator may be disposed of. Employees storing milk in the refrigerator assume all responsibility for the safety of the milk and the risk of harm for any reason, including improper storage, refrigeration and tampering.

### Employee Responsibilities:

- Communication with Supervisors: Employees who wish to express milk during the work period shall keep supervisors informed of their schedule in the mornings so that appropriate accommodations can be made to satisfy the needs of both the employee and the company.
- Maintenance of Milk Expression Areas: Breastfeeding employees are responsible for keeping milk expression areas clean. Employees are also responsible for keeping the general lactation room clean for the next user. This responsibility extends to both designated milk expression areas, as well as other areas where expressing milk will occur.
- Milk Storage: Employees should label all milk expressed with their name and date collected so it is not inadvertently confused with another employee's milk. Each employee is responsible for the proper storage of her milk.

## Substance Abuse

Any staff members reporting for work under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances will be asked to leave immediately. If the Director and/or Manager or other staff member has probable cause to believe a staff member's faculties are impaired while on the job, the staff member may be suspended or terminated immediately.

## Tobacco Use

Cigarettes and smokeless tobacco products are prohibited on FFNS premises, including parking lots and outdoor play areas. Smoking and the use of smokeless tobacco products is also prohibited in FFNS vehicles or in personal vehicles being used for the transportation of FFNS children, and while on field trips. Staff members who smoke is strongly against doing so immediately before or during their shift, as smoke can stay on clothing and hair for an extended time. Staff members must wash their hands immediately after smoking, before returning to work.

## Exposure Control Plan

Fern Flower - Nature School is committed to providing a safe work environment for all employees. In pursuing this endeavor, Fern Flower - Nature School is providing a Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Plan (ECP) which meets the requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Organization (OSHA)'s Bloodborne Pathogen Standards. This ECP includes the following information:

- Employee exposure determination
- Methods of Implementation and control
- Training and communication of hazards to employees
- Post-exposure evaluation
- Record keeping

### Program Administration:

The Director is responsible for:

- Implementing ECP and reviewing the plan at least annually and updating it as needed.
- Assuring that written clean-up procedures are developed and that an appropriate disinfectant is available and used.
- Maintaining ongoing controls such as labelling biohazard bags and solutions and providing all personal protective equipment (PPE), and other needed supplies, such as sharps containers and "spill kits". ("Spill Kits" refers to a kit made up of disposable medical gloves, resuscitation bags, eye protection or goggles, aprons, disinfectant,

disposable towels, and red/biohazard labelled bags. Red/Biohazard bags are needed only for items which release blood when compressed.

The Manager is responsible for:

- Ensuring Universal Precautions training is available for employees.
- Documentation of completed training.
- Making the written ECP available to employees.

### Employee Exposure Determination:

The following is a list of job classifications in which employees will be expected to handle blood or OPIM:

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| 1. Director/Owner | 3. Teachers (Leads, Assistants and RA) |
| 2. Manager        | 4. Volunteers/Interns                  |

### Methods of Implementation and Control:

- Universal Precautions procedures must be used by employees when handling blood or OPIM. Universal Precautions means an approach to infection control in which all human blood and certain bodily fluids are treated as if known to be infected with HIV, hepatitis B, and other bloodborne pathogens.
- Exposure Control Plan (ECP) is available to all employees and volunteers.
- Work Practice Controls include:
  - Accessible handwashing facilities
  - No eating drinking, smoking, applying cosmetics or lip balm, and handling contact lenses when blood or OPIM is present.
  - No food or drink shall be kept in areas (such as on countertops) where blood or OPIM is present.
  - All surfaces contaminated with blood will be cleaned with bleach and water solution.
  - Most items used in cleaning a blood spill (i.e. paper towels) will be placed in the regular trash unless saturated with blood. Items saturated with blood to the point that blood is released when compressed shall be placed in a leak-resistant bag labelled with the biohazard symbol.
  - Containers for "sharps." All needles and syringes will be discarded in the container immediately after use. Needles must not be recapped.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) shall be available to employees. The following PPE is available at Fern Flower - Nature School:
  - Single-use non-latex gloves.
  - Mouthpieces for resuscitation (CPR).
- Gloves shall be used when handling blood or OPIM and replaced if torn, punctured, contaminated, or if their ability to function as a barrier is compromised.
  - Hands and any exposed skin shall be washed immediately or as soon as feasible after the removal of gloves. Unless saturated with blood, gloves may be placed in the

regular trash. Gloves saturated with blood shall be placed in a leak-resistant bag labelled with the biohazard symbol.

- Training in Universal Precautions and Bloodborne Pathogens is required of all employees. The training must cover at a minimum, the following elements:
  - A copy and explanation of the OSHA standard.
  - Epidemiology and symptoms of bloodborne pathogen.
  - Modes of transmission.
  - Methods to recognize exposure tasks and other activities that may involve exposure to blood.
  - Use and limitations of engineering controls, work practices and PPE.
  - PPE types, use, location, removal, handling, decontamination, and disposal.
  - PPE-selection and basis.
  - Hepatitis B vaccine (stated to the employee that vaccine is free of charge before offering vaccine).
  - Use of “spill kits” and location of kits with quick access.
  - Procedures for limiting exposure to blood or OPIM.
  - Post-exposure evaluation and follow-up.

### Post-Exposure Evaluation:

Should an exposure incident occur, the Director must be immediately notified, and a medical evaluation will be provided by McFarland Clinic, Ames, at no cost to the employee. Fern Flower - Nature School will see that the following elements are performed:

- Documentation of the route of exposure and how the exposure occurred.
- Identification of the Source (person's blood that the employee was exposed).
- Obtain consent and test source individual for HIV and/or Hepatitis B antibody as soon as possible.
- If the source does not give consent, document that consent could not be obtained.

Fern Flower - Nature School will ensure that the medical care provider is given the following information:

- A description of the employee's job duties relevant to the exposure incident.
- Route and circumstances of the exposure · If possible, the results of the Source antibody testing.
- Relevant employee medical records, including hepatitis B vaccination status.
- Copy of regulation.

The medical provider will be requested to provide the facility with the following:

- If Hepatitis B is indicated and if the employee has received the vaccine.
- Whether or not the employee has been informed of the results of medical and any medical condition that may require further evaluation and treatment.

### Record Keeping:

Employee medical records and records of exposure will be kept on-site for a minimum of 10 years.

Training records will be maintained in each employee's personnel file for a minimum of 3 years. Training records must include the date of training and the name of the trainer.

## Medication Authorization

Prescription and over-the-counter medications must be given to a staff member in the original container, clearly labelled with the child's full name and birth date. FFNS staff will not administer any medication without a signed Medication Authorization Form. Forms can be obtained from your child's teacher or from the Director and/or Manager.

All medications will be stored in the office and only administered by directors or lead teachers. Prescription medications will only be given if a doctor's note is provided with a beginning and end date. A medical authorization form must also be filled out and signed by a parent or guardian. Prescription medication will only be given at the Nature School if they are not able to be given at home. (ex. Twice daily can be administered at home. Three times per day requires a middle-of-the-day dose and can be given at the Nature School.) Over-the-counter medications will only be given for special circumstances, with a doctor's note that has a beginning and end date.

## Duty to Report

The Child, Family and Community Service Act requires that anyone who has reason to believe that a child has been or is likely to be abused or neglected and that the parent is unwilling or unable to protect the child has a legal duty to report the suspected abuse or neglect to a child welfare worker.

"Reason to believe" means that based on what you have seen or information you have received; you believe a child has been or is likely to be at risk. You do not need to be certain. It is the child welfare worker's job to determine whether abuse or neglect has occurred or is likely to occur.

Childcare staff can access the following resources to help determine whether there is reason to believe that a child has been or is likely to be abused or neglected:

- Taking Care Manual.
- The BC Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect.
- Observations or information other colleagues may have.
- Confidential discussions with the senior supervisor or another senior supervisor at CCS
- In the case of suspected or disclosed abuse or neglect of a child the following procedure will followed:
  - Make the call to the social worker from a private location at the FFNS.
  - Inform the Director once the report has been made or do it with the Director.
  - Record the date, time, contents of the report and the name of the child welfare work that the report was made to in the Nature School's bound book.

While reports are made confidential, it is not unusual for a parent that is investigated by the Ministry to believe that the report came from the FFNS staff. As a result, parents often feel angry and distrustful of the staff. Staff should have a plan in place to ensure their safety and well-being should parents arrive at the FFNS angry or accusatory. Some strategies are:

- Ensuring no staff is alone during hours of operation immediately following a report having been made.
- Agreeing on code words or signs that indicate a potentially threatening situation.
- Alerting the neighboring Nature School staff that they may be called upon for support or that children and staff may come to their Nature School for shelter if the need arises.
- Reminding staff to call 911 or to pull the emergency alarm in situations of serious threat.

Staff can try to de-escalate angry parents by listening without arguing and reassuring them without defending the decision to make the report. If the parents can listen, staff can say that their role and duty is to report concerns, not to investigate or determine whether abuse or neglect has taken place.

Acknowledge the anger and lack of trust and express a desire to maintain the relationship. Above all staff should see to their well-being and the well-being of the children in their care. Disengage from the conversation and ask the parent to leave if their anger persists. Inform your supervisor/director immediately and record the incident.

## Parent Relationship

### Parent Interaction:

Many of our employees will become well acquainted with the parents of the children. This is an important part of providing quality care, but there are a few guidelines to which staff members must adhere:

- Address parents by their first name.
- Talk with parents about an issue with their child only if you are not in the classroom with children.
- Never talk about concerns about a child in front of any other children.
- When stating concern about their child, also state at least two positive things about their child. Don't focus only on the negative.
- Do not use other children's names when discussing Behavior concerns and/or incident reports.
- Avoid the phrase "I don't know." Instead, say "I'm not certain of the answer to that; can I get back to you?" then find the answer and reply to the parent as soon as possible.
- Conversations at pick-up and drop-off should be brief; your chief responsibility remains with the supervision of the children. If you feel a parent needs more time or attention, ask to schedule a time to meet outside the classroom.

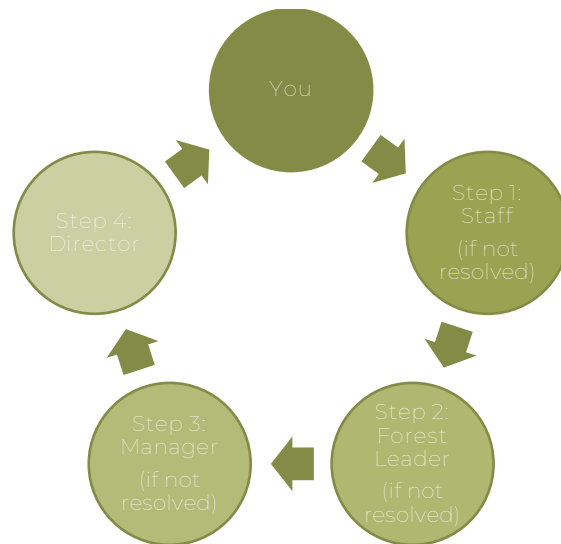
**Handling Parent Complaints:**

- Listen carefully. Many times, a person just needs an opportunity to air his or her feelings and feel they've been heard.
- Repeat what you have heard the other person say, trying to summarize it in one sentence. ("You're upset that Gavin isn't able to stay awake for dinner and seems crabby at night.")
- State the changes that you think the parents would like to have made. ("You would like us to make sure Gavin lies down for at least an hour every afternoon.")
- State what you will do to solve the problem. ("I will speak with the other teachers and make a note on his chart to make sure the message reaches everyone.")
- Follow through. If you tell a parent, you will do something, do it promptly and follow up with them immediately afterward. ("I spoke with the other teachers last week; how are things going with Gavin? Did you notice a change?")
- If you are unsure how to solve the complaint, refer the parents to the Director and/or Manager. ("I'm not sure how to answer that; the Director and/or Manager will be able to better help you.")

## Workplace Issues and Concerns

FFNS has a pathway of communication. Please refer to the following infographics for specifics of communication pathways and resources available to support communication and clarity. Employees may connect with a shop steward for support, advice, or consultation at any point in the process.

**FFNS Pathway of Communication:**





**As a Parent – Where do I go to have my questions answered?**

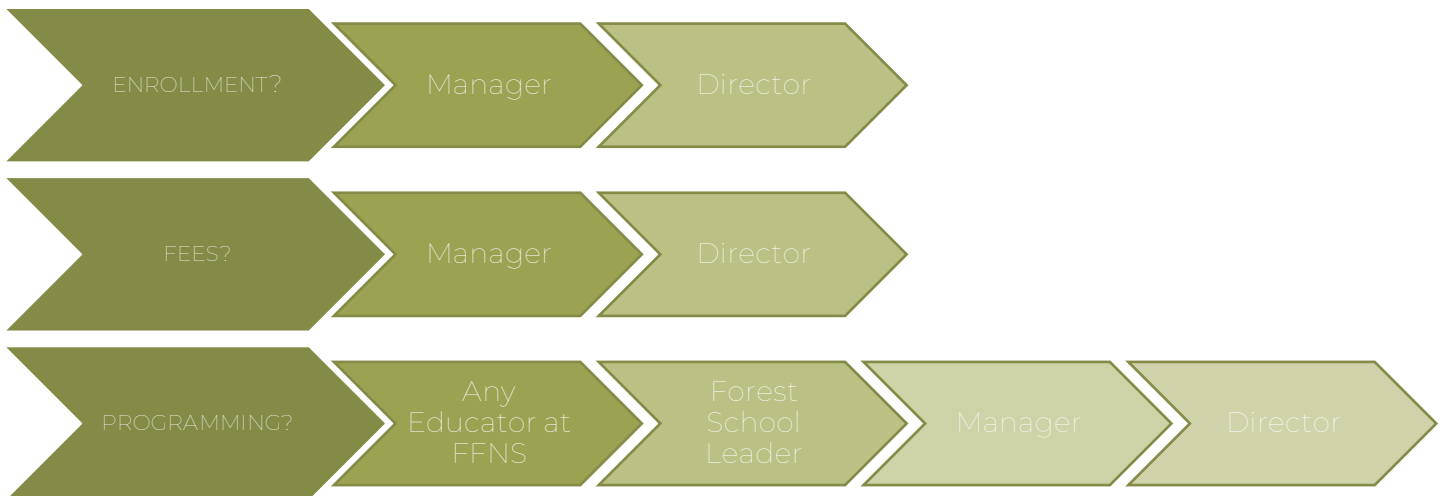


Operational considerations fall under the oversight of FFNS’s Director but other members of the FFNS team will likely be able to assist you.

Operational considerations are divided into three broad categories:

1. Enrollment (waitlist, schedule changes, space offers, timelines)
2. Fees (payment options, billing)
3. Programming (pedagogy, policies, procedures, staffing)

Depending on which category your question falls into, you should follow the pathway of communication as outlined:



**Co-Worker Communication:**

Open communication between staff members, parents, and children is crucial to a successful program. Before leaving a classroom for any reason (bathroom, making a copy, calling a parent) an employee should inform his/her cooperating teachers of the reason he/she is leaving. For all involved, all issues must be addressed and resolved as they arise. All employees are expected to always function as a team member.

## Conflict of Interest

Employees of Fern Flower - Nature School are expected to adhere to the highest standards of personal and professional integrity. Personal gain shall not conflict with the duty to the FFNS. Participation of the employee in other businesses, organizations or activities that compromise the employment relationship or disadvantage FFNS will be considered a conflict of interest.

FFNS is okay with providing privately arranged childcare services (babysitting) outside of the normal working day to currently or previously enrolled families of FFNS. A private arrangement with families outside of the employee's role with FFNS changes the employee's relationship with the family from a professional to a personal relationship.

FFNS will ask all employees not to take FFNS's clients if they decide to change the workplace or open their own childcare facility after a year after leaving Fern Flower - Nature School the policy will be lifted/removed.

## Unacceptable Job Performance

Remember it is in the best interest of FFNS to have all educators have a high performance and we will work as a team. The director and/or Manager don't want to jump to conclusions and want always to hear all information/sides to be able to draw a better picture and understand how we can help. FFNS uses progressive discipline as a positive way to correct unacceptable job performance. This is not a contractual obligation because all FFNS employees are "at will" which means an employee can be terminated at the will of FFNS for any reason or no reason. The following are the steps, which are taken using progressive discipline.

### 1. *STEP 1: Verbal Warning*

If a staff member's job performance is not meeting FFNS standards, or if a staff member is in violation of any policy stated in this handbook, he/she will be informed of the problem and the possible penalties if performance does not improve. Suggestions on ways to improve job performance are discussed. Verbal warnings may be given for violation of FFNS policies, failure to follow procedures, unsatisfactory performance, absenteeism or tardiness.

Verbal warnings will be recorded, discussed, and signed by both the staff members and Director and/or Manager. After one (1) verbal warning has been issued for any reason within six (6) months, a written warning will be issued.

### 2. *STEP 2: Written Warning*

A written warning is given if a problem/s identified by multiple verbal warnings has not been corrected. Written warnings will be recorded, discussed, and signed by both the staff members and Director and/or Manager. A staff member may receive only one (1) written warning during a six (6) month period. After one (1) written warning has been issued, any further issues or actions subject to the Disciplinary Procedure may result in suspension or termination.

Written warnings will be issued immediately for refusal to follow lawful instructions or any other serious policy violation, which endangers the safety or integrity of a child or staff member.

### 3. *STEP 3: Termination*

Termination may result when using progressive discipline if steps have not produced satisfactory and acceptable performance. Termination may be immediate without using progressive discipline. Reasons for immediate termination may include, but are not limited to:

- The commitment to child abuse
- Abuse of a parent/guardian of a child or another staff member
- Harassment
- Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol while at work
- Theft
- Possession of a weapon during work hours
- Violation of any policy which states that violation of such policy may result in termination.

The above violations are only examples and are not meant to be all-inclusive. Disciplinary action up to and including termination may be taken immediately at the discretion of the Director.

Also, if an educator will have 3 different Written Warnings (with different reasoning) that alone can be a reason for Termination.

## Voluntary Resignation

Forest School Leaders and Forest School Assistant Teachers should submit a letter of resignation to the Director and/or Manager when resigning from a position. Fern Flower - Nature School appreciates but is not required, at least four(4) weeks' notice if you choose to resign. This will ensure an appropriate replacement can be hired and adequately trained.

# Learning and Developmental Curriculum

## Learning Approaches and Implementation

### Learning Approaches

The true meaning of education can be derived from the Latin word 'Educare' which means 'to draw out'. In Nature School, an educator utilizes learning approaches that do just that, drawing out ideas and theories that start with and come from the whole child. In this way, Nature School is said to involve a curriculum which 'pulls' out, rather than a curriculum which 'pushes' in.

### Inquiry-Based, Emergent and Experiential Learning

#### What does this mean?

Forest and Nature School start with the child in the context of the natural environment, but where do we go from there? One of the first questions asked of the Forest School Educator is, "But, what do you DO when you get outdoors?" Although we cannot prescribe activities for an educator to adapt, we can describe a process that is rooted in learning approaches that add depth, meaning and purpose to NS.

Children are born with an innate desire to explore and experience everything that surrounds them, to ask questions about these experiences, and to learn by doing. When these processes are supported, through further investigation and inquiry by a significant adult in their life, the results can be far-reaching. Most importantly, Nature School models to children and youth that learning can be fun can feel like an adventure and can lead to a lifelong passion for learning.

Inquiry-based Learning is a dynamic and emergent process that builds on students' natural curiosity about the world in which they live. As its name suggests, Inquiry places students' questions and ideas, rather than solely those of the teacher, at the Nature School of the learning experience. Students' questions drive the learning process forward. Teachers using an inquiry-based approach encourage students to ask and genuinely investigate their own questions about the world. Teachers further facilitate students' learning by providing a variety of tools, resources, and experiences that enable learners to investigate, reflect, and rigorously discuss potential solutions to their own questions about a topic the class is studying.

In Fern Flower - Nature School we build upon children's experiences, as well as their "emerging" ideas, questions, and interests, scaffolding towards greater learning. Inquiry, at it, is the most fundamental form, fuels this process and helps educators and children to dive deeper into knowing, learning and being.

### **Highlights of inquiry-based, emergent and experiential curriculum include:**

- It's based on the individual interests of the children involved in the program.
- It allows for personal research by the children in areas of interest.
- It lets students work on their own interests at their own pace, addressing problems with multiple learning needs in the classroom environment.
- It incorporates the whole child, in the context of their family, community, and cultural background, as they carry these with them throughout their experiences.
- It explores problems that offer a variety of responses (its process based).
- It supports children to expand on their experiences, knowledge, and wisdom in a non-threatening and empowering manner; and
- It uses self-directed learning to promote academic engagement and motivate participation.

Lastly, through this lens, children are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and inspired to participate in activities that interest them. Children become engaged as "partners in the learning process" and are involved in small group activities that promote social interaction and problem-solving. However, children are not always predictable in the direction they take in their learning, which makes the role of the educator both rewarding and challenging: educators who facilitate an emergent curriculum need to be flexible and creative.

### **What Does This Look Like in Practice?**

1. Creating a culture of observing and listening, both of students and of the natural world, supporting students to do the same for one another and their environment. An educator cannot "draw out" what they cannot hear, see or understand in a child.
2. Being willing to acknowledge and keep in check assumptions, prejudices, and preconceived notions, to move beyond what one "thinks" they know towards deeper learning instead.
3. Establishing low-ratio groups that support relationship-building.
4. Creating and modelling community standards that include respect, care, non-judgement, safety and inclusion.
5. Allowing children to make mistakes.
6. Allowing children to learn by doing.
7. Learning alongside children.
8. Introducing a resource, idea, or inquiry only after a child prompt explicitly or implicitly.
9. Giving children more time to explore, experience, solve problems, resolve conflicts, and provide answers to questions.

## Whole Child Approach

Fern Flower - Nature School encompasses a holistic approach to learning. The three domains of the whole child development include:

- Physical
- Social-Emotional
- Cognitive

Please note that the domains are interrelated and influence one another.

- *Social/Emotional:* Including the child's emotional regulation, healthy attachment, self-image, ideal self, self-esteem, confidence, self-awareness, self-concept, managing strong emotions, self-efficacy, teamwork, community building, relationship with others (acceptance, love, kindness, ability to read others), social skills and competence, empathy, trust, perception, inclusion, empowerment, reflection, pushing comfort zones, connection to land, nature appreciation, sense of agency, and cultural appreciation.
- *Physical:* Including the child's fine and gross motor skill development, manipulation of objects, relationship with others, spatial awareness, organizing, interpreting and responding to sensory information, skill acquisition, perception and decision making, physical literacy, visualization, and pushing comfort zones.
- *Cognitive:* Including the child's decision-making, higher-ordered thinking, critical thinking, and problem-solving, deep knowledge and understanding of the activity, intrinsic motivation, concentration, pushing comfort zones, emotional intelligence, eco-literacy, local knowledge and identification development, nature appreciation, empowerment, reflection, cultural appreciation, imagination, and planning.

## Active Play

### What is Active Play?

Active play refers to any physical activity or movement that involves children using their bodies and energy in a dynamic and engaging manner. It is characterized by actions that contribute to the development of physical fitness, motor skills, and overall well-being. Active play is typically unstructured and spontaneous, allowing children to explore their physical abilities, interact with their environment, and have fun.

### Key features of active play include:

1. **Physical Movement:** Active play involves a range of physical movements such as running, jumping, climbing, crawling, skipping, and other activities that require bodily exertion.
2. **Engagement of Muscles:** Children use various muscle groups during active play, contributing to the development of strength, coordination, and motor skills.

3. **Spontaneity:** Unlike structured activities, active play is often spontaneous and driven by the child's interests and imagination. It allows for creativity and exploration.
4. **Social Interaction:** Active play can promote social interactions and cooperation among children. It provides opportunities for collaboration, communication, and the development of social skills.
5. **Outdoor Exploration:** While active play can occur indoors, it is often associated with outdoor activities that allow children to connect with nature, experience different terrains, and enjoy fresh air and sunshine.
6. **Promotion of Health:** Regular engagement in active play contributes to overall physical health and well-being. It helps prevent sedentary behavior and encourages a more active lifestyle.

Examples of active play include playing tag, riding bikes, playing on a playground, participating in sports, dancing, and engaging in imaginative games that involve physical movement. Active play is considered essential for the holistic development of children, supporting not only their physical health but also cognitive, emotional, and social development. Encouraging active play in childhood sets the foundation for a healthy and active lifestyle later in life.

## Why is Active Play Important?

Active play is crucial for the overall development and well-being of children. The importance of active play stems from its positive impact on various aspects of physical, mental, and social development. Here are key reasons why active play is considered essential:

1. **Physical Health:**
  - **Motor Skills Development:** Active play involves various physical movements that contribute to the development of gross motor skills (large muscle movements) and fine motor skills (small muscle movements).
  - **Strength and Endurance:** Running, jumping, climbing, and other active play activities help build strength and endurance, promoting a healthy cardiovascular system.
2. **Healthy Lifestyle Habits:**
  - **Establishing Active Habits:** Engaging in active play during childhood helps establish habits of physical activity, contributing to a healthier lifestyle throughout life.
  - **Preventing Sedentary Behavior:** Regular active play reduces the risk of sedentary behavior and associated health issues, such as obesity and related conditions.

3. Cognitive Development:

- Enhanced Brain Function: Physical activity has been linked to improved cognitive function, including better concentration, attention, and problem-solving skills.
- Stimulating Creativity: Active play fosters creativity and imagination as children explore their environment and engage in imaginative games.

4. Social and Emotional Well-being:

- Social Interaction: Active play often involves group activities, promoting social interaction, teamwork, and cooperation.
- Emotional Regulation: Physical activity helps release endorphins, which can contribute to improved mood and emotional well-being.

5. Stress Reduction:

- Natural Stress Relief: Active play provides a natural outlet for releasing energy and reducing stress. It can be particularly effective in managing anxiety and promoting mental health.

6. Nature Connection:

- Outdoor Exploration: Many active play activities occur outdoors, fostering a connection with nature. Outdoor play provides exposure to natural elements, fresh air, and sunlight.

7. Academic Readiness:

- Improved School Performance: Regular physical activity has been associated with improved academic performance, as it enhances cognitive function and concentration.

8. Life Skills Development:

- Problem-Solving and Decision-Making: Active play often involves decision-making and problem-solving, contributing to the development of critical life skills.
- Self-Regulation: Through active play, children learn to regulate their behavior, manage impulses, and navigate social interactions.

9. Family and Community Bonding:

- Quality Family Time: Active play provides opportunities for families to engage in recreational activities together, fostering bonding and communication.
- Community Engagement: Participation in group activities and sports promotes a sense of community and belonging.

Encouraging and facilitating active play in various forms is essential for providing children with a holistic foundation for their physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development. Schools,



caregivers, and communities play vital roles in creating environments that support and prioritize active play for children.

## Nature School Active Play and Movement Policy?

At our Nature School, we prioritize the well-being and holistic development of our children, recognizing the intrinsic value of active play and physical movement in fostering a connection with nature. Our Active Play and Movement Policy aligns with the Standard of Practice, emphasizing the following principles:

### 1. Daily Active Play Goal:

- We commit to incorporating a total of 120 minutes of active play and physical movement each day, recognizing the vital role it plays in the overall development of our children.

### 2. Outdoor Play Emphasis:

- We ensure a minimum of 60 minutes of outdoor active play daily, fostering a strong connection with the natural environment. In instances of poor weather or limited outdoor space, we offer the flexibility for indoor active play while preserving the essence of nature in our activities.

### 3. Active Play Plan Development:

- Our Licensee is dedicated to developing and implementing a comprehensive Active Play Policy. This policy encompasses both un-facilitated play and facilitated games, encouraging children to explore and engage with nature in a variety of ways.

### 4. Integration of Fundamental Movement Skills:

- Fundamental movement skills and injury prevention, guided by the principles of physical literacy, are seamlessly integrated into all our active play activities. This approach ensures a well-rounded and enriching experience for the children.

### 5. Mindful Screen Time Management:

- We limit screen time to 30 minutes or less per day, emphasizing the importance of real-world experiences over digital engagement. Exceptions are made for shorter programs, and no screen time is provided for children under the age of two.

### 6. Screen Use Policy Implementation:

- In tandem with our commitment to mindful screen time management, we have developed a Screen Use Policy. This policy guides our educators in creating a balanced and intentional approach to screen activities and is shared with our parents and families.

#### 7. Active Lifestyle Promotion:

- Prolonged sitting activities, such as those in strollers or highchairs, are discouraged. Instead, we schedule frequent short bursts of activity, lasting one to two minutes, to promote an active and dynamic lifestyle among our children.

#### 8. Employee Role Modeling:

- Our dedicated employees are integral in creating an environment that promotes active play and movement. They model appropriate behavior by actively engaging in play activities and demonstrating responsible screen time usage.

Our Nature School's Active Play and Movement Policy underscores our commitment to providing a healthy, enriching, and nature-connected environment for the children in our care. Through these practices, we aim to cultivate a lifelong appreciation for active living and a harmonious relationship with the natural world.

For more information, please refer to *Director of Licensing Standard of Practice - Active Play*  
<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/FMfcgzGwJcmXNdHgVLHBxLDtpWTxIBKI?projector=1&messagePartId=0.1>

## Different Learning Techniques and Strategies

### Play-Based Learning

#### What Does This Mean?

Childhood connection begins in specific places but extends beyond those places: as the poet Rilke wrote, “I live my life in widening circles, that reach out across the world” (Rilke et al., 1996). Once you fall in love with one place, your heart can open to the world.

Place-based learning is firmly rooted in the act of connecting children to a particular place through direct experiential contact. The ability to know a place intimately and to return to a natural space, again and again, provides children with familiarity while honing their ability to recognize and understand processes of change. With a connection to place comes a desire and sense of responsibility for caretaking and protection. Frequent encounters lead to an increased sense of belonging and, ultimately, to a sense of stewardship for that place, for the broader community, and beyond.

Place-based educators call this the “pedagogy of community” because of the reintegration of the individual into her home ground and the restoration of the essential links between a person and her place. Not all children are lucky enough to have a city park or naturalized area behind their school, but the places for deep nature connection do not need to be vast or grand: the ditches, ravines, and pockets of wildness even in urban landscapes are places of initiation, where the borders between ourselves and other creatures break down, where the earth gets under our nails

and a sense of place gets under our skin ... [These places] teach us to care enough for all the land. Forest and Nature Schools are a means by which young people can forge this sense of place.

*Play is explicitly recognized in Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, on November 29, 1989), which declares:*

- Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
- Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activities.

### **What Does This Look Like in Practice?**

Researchers have identified various types of play, and each can be demonstrated by children in Nature Schools groups. Here are some of types of play are discussed below:

### **Storytelling**

With a holistic and child-directed approach to learning, the Forest and Nature School environment provides many opportunities for sharing stories. As discussed above, folktales, fairy tales, riddles, rhymes, myths, fables, legends, and personal stories can all be part of storytelling in FNS. The tradition of oral storytelling can be a way to teach, engage, and provoke thinking. It can also be a jumping-off point for inquiry, a stimulation of the senses, a tuning into place, and even an elicitation of the imagination.

Children and adults alike love to hear and tell stories. Oral stories in particular are a valuable form of education, entertainment, and sharing. Storytelling can be a powerful way to express emotions, describe experiences, enhance imagination, and develop listening skills. Storytelling can be at its most powerful when it happens “face to face, eye to eye, gesture to gesture, voice to ear, heart to heart and mind to mind in one location by one person to one or more” (Finnegan, 1992).

We learn sequencing, rhythm, and vocabulary as we listen to stories. By following the plot of a story, children learn how to understand sequences of events and their connection to each other. Stories also provide a platform for children to learn the meaning of new words: they learn what one word means by comparing it to other words around it. This happens subconsciously and constantly while children listen to stories.

The act of verbalizing memories is also important for developing children's language and memory skills. Reconstructing a story about what they have experienced gives children language practice. It also gives children the opportunity to go back in their minds and stretch their cognitive abilities as they think and talk about past events. Telling stories boosts memories. It also boosts self-esteem: recalling experiences helps children identify with their personal history and heightens their sense of self. In this way, sharing tales about the day, family history, and folklore is important for children's cognitive and emotional development.

Stories can also be a safe place for children to explore life. Through story, they can take risks and face fears that might be too powerful for them to face in real life. In this way, storytelling is empowering and therapeutic. Many traditional and literary tales provide children with the opportunity to reflect on and validate feelings of sadness, joy, anger, empathy, jealousy, and many other feelings children experience on a day outdoors.

Storytelling helps children put themselves in other people's shoes. They learn to empathize with the teller, the hero, and the situation. Their bodies react to the story by tensing and relaxing at every twist of the plot. In this way, as children are experiencing the story, they are practicing empathy.

Stories can transport children to other times and places while expressing universal truths relevant to their own lives. They allow children to safely experience the adventures of others while teaching them values and history and helping them to discover themselves. In Forest and Nature School, connections to storytelling emerge in children's play and interactions with one another.

### **How we bring Storytelling into our Nature School:**

- learning folktales and fairy tales.
- telling personal, original, family, and traditional stories.
- making a regular time and place for storytelling.
- involving or getting involved with your local storytelling guild.
- using a musical instrument or noisemaker to introduce each story or start storytelling time (e.g., a harmonica, xylophone, or bird whistle).

## **Loose Parts**

*"The Wider the Range of Possibilities We Offer Children, The More Intense Will Be Their Motivations and The Richer Their Experiences."*

*- Loris Malaguzzi, Founder of the Reggio Emilia Approach*

At Fern Flower - Nature School we are also inspired by Reggio Emilia Approach. Loose parts are materials that can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up, taken apart and put back together in multiple ways. The idea of 'loose parts' uses materials to empower a creative imagination. The more materials and individuals involved; the more ingenuity takes place. We encourage our children to make use of all loose parts indoors and outdoors. They are incorporated into much of the children's project work.

At Forest and Nature School, loose parts are inherent. Nature, which excites all the senses, remains the richest source of loose parts. Sticks, rocks, pine needles and pinecones, low branches, stumps, logs, and grasses all are loose parts that may be found in a Forest and Nature School environment. FNS is a setting in which different people and groups can interact in myriad ways.

### How we bring loose parts play into our Nature School:

- Natural materials sourced sustainably on your site, such as sticks, rocks, pine needles, flowers, acorns, stumps, branches, logs, fallen bark, etc. (Note: bringing in non-native or foreign objects from other sites can be disruptive to local habitats).
- Tools for building, making and creating (used in a timely, safe and purposeful manner, with appropriate training to support its use, and only when elicited by a child's interest).
- Handmade wooden mallets, stakes, and tree cookies (can be made by educators and/or adults).
- Buckets, trowels, pulleys, rope, natural fibers, and tarps of varying sizes.
- Identification books and tools for plants, animals, birds, etc.
- Clay, charcoal, wax crayons, pencil, paper, and twine (for documentation, reflection, and/or making learning journals).

## Wildschooling

Wildschooling is a movement designed to honor and support our innate, inexorable bond with nature and lend a voice to our inner wild. Wildschooling recognizes nature connection as a fundamental human need, right and state of being, values. It respects the whole child, is relationship led, favors place-bonded, contextual & emergent learning and aligns with nature's rhythms. It also encourages village building, respects and honors ancestral knowledge, preserves and honors story and supports a future paradigm.

At FFNS, we believe that now more than ever, children and nature need each other. Children must be given the time, space, and opportunity to bond with nature. The simplest, most meaningful and effective place to do that is in their nearby nature! By connecting to their local habitat, biome, backyard nature and community, children are participating in a timeless human tradition, and connecting to generations before and generations after.

## Tools in Nature School

### What tools will be used in Nature School?

In Nature School the children use the same tools that they use in school as part of the Design Technology curriculum. These include potato peelers, palm drills and when they are competent, small knives and bow saws. The Nature School Leader will be the supervising adult when tools are being used and the ratio will be no more than 1:8. The Nature School Leader will give the children a safety talk each session and when appropriate will explain how a tool should be used and when it can be used safely. If a child is not using a tool in a safe manner the activity is stopped and safety instructions will again be given.

Gloves are kept on site and can be worn if the child wants to or if the Forest School Leader feels that the child needs to. Gloves can protect the hand if worn on the bracing (supporting) hand but when working the child needs to feel the object and always have a good grip.

All activities using tools are fully risk assessed.

### **Tool Policy:**

The variety of tools like saws, loppers, knives, etc. can all be used with any of the age groups at Fern Flower - Nature School. The decision of, if and when to do so will reside with the NS Leader at the point that he feels that the group can be trusted to use the tools safely. The decision to use the tools can only be revoked by the NS Leader.

- All tools are to be kept in a locked cupboard within the school building after use.
- The NS Leader or assisting staff (when designated by the NS Leader) is responsible for demonstrating the correct use of each tool, including transportation.
- When any tool is in use, it will be within a designated area and under the supervision of the NS Leader or assisting staff under the ratio annotated in the tool's procedures.
- Gloves are not to be worn on the hand(s) controlling the tool.
- All serviceability of the tools is the responsibility of the NS Leader.

## Tool Talk:

Whittle a carrot with a peeler.  
Use secateurs to snip twigs.



Whittle carrot with a knife.  
Use hammer and nails.



Whittle a stick - remove bark and point a stick.  
Cut wooden disc using a bow saw with adult support.



Make a simple tent peg.  
Use loppers to prune bushes and trim sticks.



Use axe/billhook to see a mallet being made.  
Use axe/billhook to put point on a stake.



Make mallets. Use bow saws to cut branches.  
Knife and axe maintenance.

## Hand Saw Procedures

Hand saws are used to cut wood that is too large to be cut with loppers.

Hand saws are to be used with a ratio of 1:2.

*There are 2 types of hand saw blades:*

- Peg Tooth - for cutting dead wood.
- Raker tooth – used for cutting green wood.



*Safety Checks: (to be carried out by NS Leader before the session)*

- The tightness of the blade/cutting teeth is serviceable. \* Whole item BBC (bends, breaks and corrosion).
- Condition of the handle. \* Safety guard is present and serviceable.

*Teaching Points:*

- The handsaw is to be carried as a suitcase, with the teeth facing behind the carrier.
- When not in use, the protective case is to be fitted.
- If the saw is being passed to another person, the handle is to be offered toward them, not the blade.
- When using the saw a glove must be worn on the non-cutting hand only.
- The level of the sawhorse should allow the user to stand without excessive bending of the back.
- The user's feet must be positioned in a strong stance (boxing style), and right-handed users must have their right foot back to create a triangle with the saw.
- The non-cutting hand should be positioned with the metal of the sawhorse between the blade and the hand.
- The use of a partner for large pieces of wood may be appropriate.
- To start cutting, complete three full pullbacks of the blade to create a groove.
- The whole blade should be used.
- The blade should be kept level with the floor, not pushing down at the front of the blade and let the blade do the work.
- When nearing the end, do not reach down for the wooden disks before the saw has been removed.

*Storage:* The saw should be maintained by wiping away any debris by pinching away from the blade. Ensuring that the saw is dry, oil is applied before storage.



## Fixed Blade Knife Procedures

Fixed-blade knives are to be used for whittling, cutting, or carving.  
Fixed-blade knives are to be used with a ratio of 1:4 (maximum).

*Safety Checks:* (to be carried out by NS Leader before the session)

- Whole item BBC (bends, breaks and corrosion)
- Security of blade to handle.
- The sharpness of the blade.
- The safety guard is serviceable.



*Teaching Points:*

- The user is to be seated with either both legs turned to the side opposite the knife or open leg stance leaning forward with elbows on knees.
- A firm grip on the handle.
- Straighten the arm holding the blade only ever taking the blade away from the body.
- No one should be within your 'blood bubble' (complete arms distance plus tool away from the user in all directions)

*Storage:*

- Remove debris by pinching away from the blade.
- Wipe clean.
- Sharpen when necessary.
- Must be stored in a lockable container in alarmed premises.

## Loppers Procedures

Loppers are to be used for cutting wood that is too large for secateurs and up to approximately the size of an adult thumb.

Loppers are to be used with a ratio of 1:2.

*Safety Checks:* (to be carried out by NS Leader before the session)

- Visual inspection for blade sharpness.
- Check the locking bolt is secure.
- Check the security of the grips.
- Whole item BBC (bends breaks and corrosion).



*Teaching Points:*

- When carrying the loppers, they are to be held against the side of the body with the hand on the lower handle preventing the tool from opening. The blade is to be pointing forward with the bend of the beak down.
- When passing the loppers, they are to be offered a handle first.
- Stand in a strong position; feet shoulder width apart and one foot slightly forward.
- No one should be within your 'blood bubble' (complete arms distance plus tool away from the user in all directions).

*Storage:*

- Remove debris by brushing/pinching away from the blade.
- Wipe clean.
- Must be stored in a lockable container.

## Secateurs Procedures

Secateurs are to be used for cutting wood that is up to approximately the size of an adult little finger.

Loppers are to be used with a ratio of 1:2.



*Safety Checks:* (to be carried out by NS leader before the session)

- Visual inspection for blade sharpness.
- Check the safety catch is serviceable.
- Check the security of the grips.
- Whole item BBC (bends breaks and corrosion).

*Teaching Points:*

- When passing the secateurs, they are to be offered handle first.
- When cutting, ensure the blade is pointed away from the body.
- No one should be within your 'blood bubble' (complete arms distance plus tool away from the user in all directions).

*Storage:*

- Remove debris by brushing/pinching away from the blade.
- Wipe clean and dry.
- Must be stored in a lockable container.

## Pruning Saw Procedures

Pruning saws are used for cutting wood that is too large for loppers but requires more maneuverability than a hand saw.

Pruning saws should be used with a ratio of 1:2.



*Safety Checks:* (to be carried out by NS Leader before the session)

- Open the blade and inspect for sharpness.
- Check the security of the handle and the safety catch.
- Whole item BBC (bends, breaks and corrosion).

*Teaching Points:*

- When passing the pruning saw, they are to be offered a handle first.
- When opening the saw, open it away from the body.
- Stand in a strong, well-balanced position.
- To begin cutting, draw the blade backward three times to create the cutting line.
- Use the whole of the blade.
- No one should be within your 'blood bubble' (complete arms distance plus tool away from the user in all directions).
- When closing the blade, ensure the blade is away from the body.

*Storage:*

- Remove debris by brushing/pinching away from the blade.
- Wipe clean and dry and apply a light oiling with a rag.
- Must be stored in a lockable container.

## Electric Drill/Hand Drill Procedures

The drill is to be used to make holes in wood.

The drill is to be used with a ratio of 1:2.

*Safety Checks:* (to be carried out by NS leader before the session)

- Ensure the drill bits are the correct type for the drill.
- Ensure the battery is charged.
- Check the security of the handle.
- Check the working parts are serviceable.
- Whole item BBC (bends, breaks and corrosion).



*Teaching Points:*

- When passing the drill, they are to be offered handle first.
- Stand in a strong, well-balanced position.
- Ensure the drill bit is secure in the drill.
- To begin drilling, lean over the drill to use body weight.
- Ensure the wood is secure.

*Storage:*

- Remove debris by brushing/pinching away from the drill bit.
- Wipe clean and dry.
- The drill and bits are to be stored separately.

## Bill Hook and Axe Procedures

The bill hook/axe is to be used to chop or split wood.

The bill hook/axe is to be used with a ratio of 1:1.

These tools are used in accordance with the Nature Schools Skills Progression.

*Safety Checks:* (to be carried out by NS Leader before the session)

- Ensure the security of the handle and that there are no splinters.
- Check the security of the blade and that the eye is fitted correctly.
- Check the blade for sharpness.
- Whole item BBC (bends, breaks and corrosion).

*Teaching Points:*

- When passing it, it is to be offered handle first.
- Stand in a strong, well-balanced position.
- Ensure its handle is secured in the hand but with a relaxed hold to allow the wrist to flex without the upper arm taking all the work.
- Ensure the wood is secure on a tree stump which is level and secure before chopping.
- When used for splitting wood using a mallet, eye contact must be made between the individuals before striking.

*Storage:*

- Remove debris by brushing/pinching away from the blade.
- Wipe clean and dry.
- Sharpen when needed.



## *Fire Safety Policy and Procedures*

### *Policy:*

The introduction of fire into any Nature School session will be at the discretion of the NS Leader only. It will be planned to introduce fire lighting to the groups, but this can be withdrawn at any point if the NS Leader deems it to be unsafe.



### *Procedures:*

The following points must be adhered to before introducing fire:

- All the children have shown the correct Behavior in relation to the fire pit.
- The fire pit is positioned correctly, with no danger of spreading.
- The appropriate equipment is in place. (Water and first aid kit, including plunge bucket and towel)
- There is enough fuel to burn for the intended time.
- The correct way to approach a fire is from low down in a secure stance.
- When approaching the fire, the individual is not to wear gloves; the naked hand should be free to feel the heat.
- When extinguishing the fire, the children are to be made aware of the risk of steam burns.

The seating is to be no closer than 1.5m from the fire surround. When children need to move around the fire, they have to step out of the circle, walk around outside and step back in a controlled fashion. There is to be absolutely no running within the fire area.

The fire is to be always attended by the NS Leader.

At the end of the fire, the ashes are to be spread out, and water is applied via a watering can until the ashes are cool. This can be checked by holding the back of a hand over the ashes to check for any residual heat. The heat of the ground beneath the fire must also be checked before leaving the site.

When constructing the fire, there are three sizes of timber required:

1. The thickness of a piece of string.
2. The thickness of a pencil.
3. The thickness of a thumb.

*Aim:* To use fire safely as part of the Nature School experience.

*Method:* Fires must only be lit after a risk assessment has been carried out and they must only be within the fire circle area. This includes the use of Kelly Kettles. There must always be a trained adult present within the fire circle when a fire is lit or hot embers remain, never leaving a fire unattended.

Before the fire pit is built the soil or bedrock must have been assessed to avoid a fire being lit on a flammable surface such as peat. The fire should be surrounded by a 1-metre square of double logs to provide a good barrier to the fire in case a learner loses balance. Pegs should be

used to prevent the logs from being knocked. Fires should not be lit close to overhanging branches or on a windy day.

There must be an adequate supply of fire water close to the fire pit to ensure there is enough water available to extinguish the fire if it gets out of control. A fire blanket must be brought into the woodland to wrap round someone if their clothes become light. Fireproof gauntlets should be kept in the fire area to allow adults to pick up hot items.

Before visiting the area, the children should have had the opportunity to ask questions and be given information about fire safety. When at the fire circle the rules should be demonstrated for the children to see. There should be no more than 2 people, adults and children, within the fire circle next to the fire at any one time. The best position for cooking is on one knee (the respect position) so you can move backwards easily and remain stable. Long hair should be tied back, tassels and ties tucked away, and scarves removed.

Monitoring of policy: This policy will be reviewed annually but may also be influenced earlier by new research and government guidelines.

Kelly Kettle: The Forest leader may use this to heat water. Never leave the bung in whilst heating water. This is only to be in place during storage to keep the chamber clear from forest debris or insects and mini beasts. Once the fire is going in the Kelly Kettle base carefully add the chimney top to it by holding the handle parallel to the ground and supporting on each side with your hands. When lit, do not stand directly over, or look straight down the chimney. Never blow into the top. When pouring out the water support the base by holding the bung chain in one hand and the handle with the other. To put the fire out, pour the remaining water into the base. When not in use all tools will be securely locked away in the tool shed. Tools should be checked and cleaned before they are put away. Half termly the Forest Leader will ensure that each tool is thoroughly cleaned and oiled. Wear and tears will be monitored daily.










Fire Emergency Procedure:

1. In the event of a fire that cannot be put out quickly and safely by the Forest School Leaders, blew repeated long whistles to alert the group.
2. Gather everyone together, conduct a head count and evacuate the area to a safe location – A safe meeting point in case of fire.
3. Instruct one person to call the fire brigade and give directions to the site – see location and access 3827 Carlton Drive.
4. Ask a second person to telephone the emergency numbers (see emergency plan).
5. Arrange for someone to stand at the entrance to the school to direct emergency services.

Note: Fires are not to be lit in either very dry or windy conditions. See Beaufort Scale on the next page.



# BEAUFORT WIND SCALE

Beaufort Number	Description	Wind speed	Wave height	Sea conditions	Land conditions	
<b>0</b>	Calm	< 1 knot < 1 mph < 2 km/h	0 ft 0 m	Sea like a mirror	Smoke rises vertically	
<b>1</b>	Light air	1-3 knots 1-3 mph 2-5 km/h	0-1 ft 0-0.3 m	Ripples	Direction shown by smoke drift	
<b>2</b>	Light breeze	4-6 knots 4-7 mph 6-11 km/h	1-2 ft 0.3-0.6 m	Small wavelets	Wind felt on face	
<b>3</b>	Gentle breeze	7-10 knots 8-12 mph 12-19 km/h	2-4 ft 0.6-1.2 m	Large wavelets	Leaves and small twigs in constant motion	
<b>4</b>	Moderate breeze	11-16 knots 13-18 mph 20-28 km/h	3.5-6 ft 1-2 m	Small waves	Raises dust and loose paper	
<b>5</b>	Fresh breeze	17-21 knots 19-24 mph 29-38 km/h	6-10 ft 2-3 m	Moderate waves	Small trees and leaves begin to sway	
<b>6</b>	Strong breeze	22-27 knots 25-31 mph 39-49 km/h	9-13 ft 3-4 m	Large waves	Large branches in motion	
<b>7</b>	High wind, moderate gale, near gale	28-33 knots 32-38 mph 50-61 km/h	13-19 ft 4-5.5 m	Sea heaps up	Whole trees in motion	
<b>8</b>	Gale, fresh gale	34-40 knots 39-46 mph 62-74 km/h	18-25 ft 5.5-7.5 m	Moderately high waves	Twigs break off trees	
<b>9</b>	Strong/severe gale	41-47 knots 47-54 mph 75-88 km/h	23-32 ft 7-10 m	High waves	Slight structural damage	
<b>10</b>	Storm, whole gale	48-55 knots 55-63 mph 89-102 km/h	29-41 ft 9-12.5 m	Very high waves	Trees uprooted, considerable structural damage	
<b>11</b>	Violent storm	56-63 knots 64-72 mph 103-117 km/h	37-52 ft 11.5-16 m	Exceptionally high waves	Widespread damage	
<b>12</b>	Hurricane force	≥ 64 knots ≥ 73 mph ≥ 118 km/h	≥ 46 ft ≥ 14 m	Exceptionally high waves, sea is completely white	Devastation	

## Curriculum Planning

### Curriculum:

The curriculum at Fern Flower - Nature School includes child-initiated and teacher-directed activities and experiences offered to young children that support and enrich their development physically, emotionally, socially, and cognitively. Fern Flower - Nature School uses the specially designed emergent curriculum which is curated for each child and for the group in general. Each session has weekly lesson plans, posted in the classroom. These plans contain several activities, designed to foster each child's development, and the development of the group. Lesson plans should be changed to accommodate the children's changing interests. Each classroom is set up in Nature Schools, which include blocks, dramatic play, books, gross motor, fine motor, sensory, science or discovery center, playdough/clay area and art. Self-selection or "free play" is a daily part of the curriculum and means a child has the opportunity to choose which Nature School or activity he/she participates in. This promotes creative expression and the development of important social skills.

### Daily Activities:

The Lead Teacher, Assistants and Volunteers work cooperatively to create a daily schedule and plan activities that meet each child's developmental abilities and needs. Every staff member is responsible for carrying out the schedule and activities. The daily schedule and activities create a balance between active and relaxing times; large and small group, and individual activities; small and large muscle activities; indoor and outdoor play times; as well as times for self-selection and teacher-directed activities. Consistency from day to day is particularly important to the overall well-being of the children and the classroom environment. Children thrive on consistency! Routines will be maintained whenever possible for arrivals and departures; meals and snacks; resting; fire circle gatherings; personal care routines like toileting and hand washing; and transitions. Lesson plans and the daily schedule will be always posted in the classroom and visible.

### Project Studies:

The use of project studies is a practical and logical way to begin curriculum planning. The studies will be based on what the children know and see every day, as well as the children's interests. The studies are age-appropriate and may span the length of one week, or one month depending on the interest level.

Teachers will encourage students to discuss with each other their studies and coordinate the sharing of materials and activities.

### Physical Environment:

The actual room arrangement of each program room is the responsibility of the Program Lead Teacher and Full-Time Assistant Teacher. Space should be organized according to the Environment Rating Scales (ERS). Nature Schools should include blocks, dramatic plays, art, large and small motor, and books. These areas should be clearly defined, with obvious boundaries. Quiet

areas should be set up as far away from noisy activities (blocks, cars, etc.) as possible. The room décor should consist mostly of child artwork and photographs of animals, people, food, and the children themselves at the child's eye level. Room arrangement should take into consideration that staff must be able to always see every child.

For a more detailed description of room arrangement and the physical environment, staff members may refer to a copy of the appropriate ERS manual, available in the office. The Director and/or Manager must approve changes to the physical environment, including the room arrangement.

### **Free Play:**

“Free play” (also called child-initiated activities, free choice, self-selection) must be incorporated into the morning and afternoon schedule. Teachers are expected to actively participate with the children during free play activities by asking questions about what the children are doing, participating in their pretend play, reading books when prompted, encouraging children to try new activities or play with a new toy, etc.

### **Multimedia:**

The use of multimedia in our program is an extension of the teaching and learning that takes place in our classrooms. Teachers may select movie, television, and computer game titles based on weekly studies. Instead, the activity is offered as one of several Nature Schools. Children are limited to a maximum of 1 hour of time per week they may use or view multimedia (it will be occasional experiences).

## **Process, not Product**

We strongly believe that there is no destination or end result we are trying to achieve – that learning happens through work and play. Our process is unhurried.

## **Screen Time Policy**

At our Nature School, we are dedicated to fostering a holistic and nature-centric learning environment for children. Our Screen Time Policy is designed to guide educators, parents, and families in promoting balanced and mindful screen time practices that align with our commitment to nature-based education.

### **1. Purpose:**

- a. Screen time in our Nature School serves as a supplementary tool to enhance educational experiences and is purposefully integrated into the curriculum.
- b. The goal is to ensure that screen time complements our nature-focused approach and does not replace essential outdoor and hands-on activities.

2. Definition of Screen Time:
  - a. Screen time includes the use of electronic devices such as televisions, computers, tablets, smartphones, and other digital media.
  - b. Both educational and recreational screen activities fall under this definition.
3. Duration Guidelines:
  - a. Screen time is limited to a maximum of 30 minutes per day for all age groups, in accordance with British Columbia's recommended guidelines.
  - b. Exceptions may be considered for shorter programs, while children under the age of two will not have any screen time.
4. Content Selection:
  - a. Screen content is carefully selected to align with the educational objectives of our Nature School, emphasizing nature-based, educational, and age-appropriate material.
  - b. Prioritization is given to content that complements our commitment to environmental education and sustainability.
5. Screen Use Policy Implementation:
  - a. Educators will adhere to the guidelines outlined in our Screen Use Policy during all screen time activities.
  - b. The Screen Use Policy will be communicated with parents and families to ensure consistency between the school and home environments.
6. Alternatives to Screen Time:
  - a. Nature-based and hands-on activities take precedence over screen time to encourage physical, social, and imaginative play.
  - b. Educators will provide a variety of engaging, non-digital activities that align with the principles of our Nature School.
7. Parental Involvement:
  - a. Parents are encouraged to be mindful of their child's overall screen time, considering both school and home activities.
  - b. Regular communication between educators and parents is promoted to maintain a cohesive and supportive approach to screen time management.
8. Monitoring and Evaluation:
  - a. The effectiveness of our Screen Time Policy will be regularly reviewed to assess its impact on children's well-being and development.
  - b. Feedback from educators, parents, and ongoing research will inform any necessary adjustments to the policy.
9. Exceptional Circumstances:
  - a. In exceptional circumstances where screen time may be extended or modified, such decisions will be made collaboratively between educators and parents, considering the child's individual needs.

Our Screen Time Policy reflects our dedication to providing a nature-infused, balanced educational experience for children at our Nature School. By embracing this policy, we aim to instill

healthy screen time habits, foster creativity, and nurture a lifelong connection with the natural world.

## Special Educational Needs

At Fern Flower – Nature School we are practicing **Inclusive Child Care** occurs when programs support the individual strengths and needs of each child. All children are welcomed, supported, and valued, which allows them to participate meaningfully in all aspects of the childcare program. In inclusive programs, children of all abilities have equitable access to quality childcare and are provided supportive opportunities to learn through playing with other children in the program. All childcare providers work together as a team to collectively meet the needs of all of the children, including children with support needs in their care.

Our inclusive Nature School environment has connections to help families access early intervention and family services when needed. These early intervention services may also be provided in the childcare environment to assist childcare providers in supporting children with support needs and their families.

### **Inclusive Child Care Partners & Support:**

The following information, supports, and services can help build a wholistic picture of the systems that influence and support inclusive childcare.

### **Childcare BC:**

BC is moving toward a universal childcare system that delivers quality and affordable childcare accessible to all families who want or need it. This plan includes a vision of inclusive childcare, where children with support needs participate alongside their peers in a regular program. For more information on Childcare BC, please visit.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-socialsupports/caring-for-young-children>

### **Early Intervention Therapy:**

The **Early Intervention Therapy (EIT) Program** provides community-based occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech-language pathology and support services for eligible children and their families. These services support optimal growth and development for children who have – or who are at risk of – developmental delay or disability. These services are provided from birth up to school entry. EIT services may include assessment, therapy, family education and support, support for children in childcare and home environment, and training community members. The EIT Program accepts referrals from all sources, including families and any professionals (including childcare providers) involved with the child and family. If a family has any development concerns, they may reach out to their family physician to share their concerns and request a referral to a pediatrician and appropriate EIT providers. If the family is not the referral source, their permission

must be sought prior to initiating the referral. To find an EIT Program in your area, ask your public health nurse or physician, or contact your local Ministry of Children and Family Development office:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-socialsupports/data-monitoring-quality-assurance/find-services-for-children-teens-families>

### **Affordable Child Care Benefit:**

Affordable Child Care Benefit is a monthly payment to help eligible families with the cost of childcare. Factors like income, family size, and type of care determine how much support families can get. Children who have a designated special need and require extra support may be eligible for an additional \$150 per month towards the cost of childcare. An authorized professional (e.g. psychologist, physician, SCD/ASCD consultant) is required to confirm a child's designated special needs. Families can find more information on how to apply, including links to the special needs form, at Childcare BC - Affordable Child Care Benefit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/caring-for-young-children/child-carefunding/child-care-benefit/apply>

### **Autism Funding:**

Autism Funding can help families pay for eligible services and supports that promote skill development for children with living autism. Families may apply online at Apply for Autism Funding:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/child-behaviour-development/specialneeds/autism-spectrum-disorder/autism-funding/apply>

### **Implementing Inclusive Child Care:**

Fern Flower – Nature School is committed to fostering a school environment that promotes and sustains high quality inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care. We provide opportunities for all children to develop their language, social, physical and cognitive abilities. All children, including those identified with special needs are welcomed and valued.

The following principles guide all our services:

- Inclusive programs are quality programs.
- We must be responsive to the needs of our community.
- Children have the right to attend child care within the community of their choice.
- Our programming should be reflective of the varying needs of our participants.
- All children are welcome and bring value to our program.
- Children are best supported through collaboration.
- Parents are integral to a successful inclusion process.
- Every child is an individual and is unique.
- You place the person first and not the special need.
- Everyone has the right to privacy and dignity.

- Children learn best when they participate with others who have different goals and abilities.
- Fair does not always mean everyone gets the same.
- Good programming requires a dedicated staff who are flexible in their approach and who are provided with learning opportunities wherever possible.

### **Inclusion:**

For all children to fully participate in education, care and community, they must have equal access to programs including Early Childhood Education programs. Children who, due to emotional, familial, physical, behavioral, developmental, cognitive, communicative, or emotional factors, are at risk of not maximizing their potential. Special needs encompass children who require support and assistance with daily living, whether formally diagnosed or not, and whether a diagnosis is short- or long-term in nature.

Together Fern Flower – Nature School ensures that this Policy and Procedure is reviewed by Forest School Leaders, staff, students, and volunteers prior to commencing employment, and annually thereafter. We also keep a written record of the review which is signed by the staff member, as well as by the person who made the review. This written record is kept on file for at least two (2) years from the time of entry.

Training for all staff, students and volunteers will ensure:

- Communication of policy and procedure components.
- Individual roles and expectations.
- Importance of inclusive practices.
- Successful placement for children with special needs.
- Staff's ability to advocate for inclusion with all parents.

### **Programming:**

Fern Flower – Nature School uses the Ages & Stages Questionnaires, Third Edition (ASQ-3) to determine whether a child between the ages of 6 months to 12 years old could benefit from early intervention services, speech-language services, etc. This kit identifies developmental delays related to speech, language and early literacy (including motor speech, articulation, stuttering and voice disorders or delays), fine and gross motor skills, cognitive skills, social skills, feeding skills and sensory development.

Research suggests that one of the most critical aspects of effective inclusion practices is the attitude of practitioners. In order to optimize access, Fern Flower – Nature School liaises with Special Needs Resource Staff (i.e., early interventionists, speech language pathologists, etc.) to create individualized programming for any child that may require it. Documented Individualized program planning (IPP) will be shared with ECE's, ECA's, parents, specialists and the child themselves to ensure it meets their needs.

### **Confidentiality:**

Confidentiality is important to establish and maintain trusting and lasting relationships among parents/legal guardians and professionals. Confidentiality is the cornerstone to ensure that privileged information is accessible only to those authorized to have access. It acknowledges respect for an individual's right to privacy. Furthermore, it builds respect for human relationships in which personal information is shared and assumes that those who pledge to safeguard confidential information will do so.

### **Partnerships:**

Fern Flower – Nature School will foster partnerships by working collaboratively with parents and community support in order to meet the needs of all children. The Centre will, with the consent of the parents, enlist services from Special Needs Resourcing for children for whom they feel, or the parent feels, may need extra support.

### **Withdrawal:**

If the program is having difficulty meeting the child's needs, the program will ensure:

1. All families asked to withdraw from childcare programs are dealt with in a fair and equitable manner.
2. Notice of withdrawal is consistent with the Withdrawal Policy of the program and is the same for all families. It should include written notice of withdrawal, documentation of meetings and discussions with special needs support staff when appropriate.
3. Reasonable care has been taken in assessing the child's needs, including the program's ability to support those needs.
4. Special needs resources and other outside agency support have been exhausted prior to notice of withdrawal.



# Daily Duties for All Classroom Staff

## The Nature School Site - "Home Base"

Our Nature School is located in a small woodland area. The site is accessible to the public, but FFNS put the sign that Nature School takes place at this location. Nevertheless, it is a local park and local people, and wild animals have access to it so before each session starts educators will do a safety check at the area, also, if anything will be found at the location that can potentially hurt or endangered the children's educators will discard it. When NS take children on a walk to local parks, hikes, or crown lands educators will do a safety as they go along, and children will be reminded about potential hazards and will be informing the educator asap.

Children taking part in Nature School will also be encouraged to minimize their impact on the site. This will include:

- Finding out about the different animals and plants that live in and amongst the trees.
- Learning to respect animals' homes.
- Careful observation of live animals.
- Leaving lying deadwood in place.
- Taking all materials and litter with them when they leave.
- Ensuring that the site is left as they found it.

*As a Leader Educator before starting the session, you must perform and fill up the Daily Checklist of the Site.*

### Shelter at the Nature School Site:

In case of inclement weather, shelter from the elements will always be provided at the Forest School site or at the FFNS building. This will consist of one or more securely fixed tarpaulins which will provide shade in the summer months and protection from wind, rain and snow in the winter.

### Litter and Waste Procedure:

All waste/litter created by Nature School and any waste/litter will be collected for appropriate disposal.

- The Forest School Leader will provide waste containers.
- All waste produced or found on-site during the Nature School session will be placed within the waste containers.

- At the end of the Nature School session, the Forest School Leader will remove the waste containers for appropriate recycling/disposal.

A small amount of wastewater is created at Nature School, from hand washing and washing up. Solid debris is removed from the water for disposal in the waste containers. The wastewater is then disposed of in the woodland over as wide an area as possible, so it will evaporate quicker.

## A Typical Day

To ensure the safety of children and adults attending Fern Flower - Nature School sessions, certain checks need to be made before, during and at the end of each session. It is the Forest School Leader's responsibility to ensure that all checks have been completed.

This daily health and safety checklist provides a reminder of all daily procedures. This must be used each day.

### Pre-visit checks:

- Run through the site risk assessment and amend/update as necessary. Remove all visible litter and feces.
- Remove obvious trip hazards and mark off areas as out-of-bounds where appropriate.
- Cut any overhanging vegetation from paths and boardwalks.
- Ensure risk assessments are completed for all activities.
- Erect shelter(s).
- Set up Forest School circle.
- Set up hand washing station.
- Check that the forest school rucksack contains all necessary items (see the section on Forest School equipment), including all emergency procedure information, a stocked and in-date first aid kit, a fire blanket and dated fresh water.
- Check you have all the materials and resources needed for the activities you have planned.
- Check that all tools you are planning to use are in good working order.
- Check that your phone is in working order, has sufficient credit and is fully charged.
- Check you have a fully charged school radio.

### At the start of the session:

- Take register and headcount.
- Remind children about physical boundaries (use visual cues when needed) and that they must stay within these. In the first sessions, and at the beginning of each session, play a game to reinforce this.
- Remind children how they should behave and how to stay safe on site (see site risk assessment).
- Explain the need for, and principles of, fire safety.

### Throughout the session:

- Be vigilant.
- Remind children of how to stay safe by highlighting potential hazards (see individual activity risk assessments), reminding them of the boundaries and asking that they make an adult aware of any possible hazards that they spot.
- Carry out regular head counts at the start of activities and at break time.
- Take photos and make observations of individual children.
- Use de-escalating techniques whenever possible when dealing with Behavioral issues.

### At the end of the session:

- Carry out a final head count and escort the group back to the school.
- Count and pack up all equipment.
- Count and pack up all resources.
- Clear the fire area and make it safe. Remove ash and cover the site of the fire.
- Evaluate the session.

## Cleaning and Maintained

FFNS believes in the organization.

### Educators are responsible for:

- Returning to the state you found the equipment in after the session.
- Organization of the equipment.
- Make sure all garbage's disposed of by the end of the day (to keep wild animals away from the "Home Base").
- Any additional cleaning is appreciated should the opportunity present itself.
- Educators are encouraged to have to do list for Grounds Keeper (washing cubby area, any equipment or structure up-keeping, etc.).
- Pack all the equipment for overnight closure.

### Grounds Keeper are responsible for:

- Perform required tasks if educators wrote them down in their "To Do List".
- Maintaining a "Home Base" clean and safe.
- Cleaning duties like disposing of the garbage, cleaning the bathrooms, tidying up the cubie area.

*Note: remember that "Environment is a Third Teacher" so FFNS staff needs to help by maintaining the "Home Base" clean, organized, and inviting. Also, FFNS provides all educators 15 minutes after the session to clean to tidy up without children. If you need more time, please contact the Manager or Director and always add additional time that you worked that day.*

## Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting

This policy aims to establish guidelines and procedures for the appropriate use of hand sanitizers in Nature School settings to promote a safe and healthy environment for children, staff, and parents. It aligns with the health and safety regulations set forth by Canada Island Health.

### Children are more sensitive to the health effects of toxic chemicals:

Fetuses and very young children are particularly sensitive to the effects of toxic chemicals. During early development, growth is rapid and organs, especially the brain, are developing. In the US and Canada, researchers estimate that 5% of childhood cancer and 30% of childhood asthma are related to chemical exposures. The President's Cancer Panel noted in 2010, "the true burden of environmentally induced cancer has been grossly underestimated."

Health effects from exposure to toxic chemicals may not show up for years or even decades. Unlike adults, children have many years to develop illnesses caused by early exposure to toxic chemicals. It is important to practice the "precautionary principle" and protect children from potential health effects, even if some cause-and-effect relationships are not yet fully proven.

Many new products are marketed with terms such as "green" to make the public think they are safer. However, there is no legal definition of these terms, and when they are used on a product label, they do not assure that a product is safe. Fortunately, there are independent organizations and government agencies working to review cleaning products in order to identify products that are effective and safer for human health, wildlife, and the environment. This Toolkit will help you make good choices about products and tools to use in your program.



### What is the difference between cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting?

Cleaning is done with water, a cleaning product, and scrubbing. Cleaning does not kill bacteria, viruses, or fungi, which are generally referred to as "germs." Cleaning products are used to remove germs, dirt, and other organic material by washing them down the drain.

Sanitizing and disinfecting products are chemicals that work by *killing germs*. These chemicals are also called antimicrobial pesticides. They are regulated by the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (or similar agencies in other states) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Disinfectants kill more germs than sanitizers. In most cases, a cleaning product is used first. Then the surface is either sanitized or disinfected when it is necessary.

### General Information

Reducing the spread of germs in childcare environments is the best way to prevent illness. To get the best results, first ensure objects and surfaces are thoroughly scraped clean of foreign materials and food scraps, then sanitize using the four-step method.

1. Wash	Wash with hot water and soap to reduce the amount of obvious dirt and debris. If you do not get rid of the large particles first, the power of the sanitizer is used up on the dirt that you can see and not on the harmful germs you cannot see on the surface.
2. Rinse	Rinse with clean potable (drinkable) water to remove the soap so the sanitizer can work on the germs and is not used up on the soap.
3. Sanitize	Sanitizing is usually done by soaking smaller items or spraying larger surfaces with a sanitizing solution and letting it sit for a certain amount of time. The sanitizing solution must be made with a product known to kill harmful germs. Read the product label to determine if rinsing is required.
4. Air Dry	This allows sanitizers to be in contact with the surface for a longer time to inactivate/kill any germs that may be present. Air drying also prevents spreading any germs from one surface to another through the use of a damp towel.

Best practice in Child Care and Nature Schools facilities:

- Ensure routine cleaning is conducted and hygiene protocols are in place with special emphasis on areas where an ill child has been, to prevent further transmission.
- Have an illness policy which clearly outlines when children should be kept at home and when parents/guardians will be contacted to pick up the child from care.
- Emphasize proper hand hygiene for all staff and children.
- All disinfectants and sanitizers must be properly labeled, stored, used as per manufacturers' recommendation, and kept out of the reach of children (preferably in a secured location).

### What, Where and How Often to Clean, Sanitize, and Disinfect in ECE

Areas	Before Each Use	After Each Use	Daily (At the End of the Day)	Weekly	Monthly	Comments
Food Area						
Food preparation surfaces	Clean, Sanitize	Clean, Sanitize				Use a sanitizer safe for food contact
Eating utensils & dishes		Clean, Sanitize				If washing the dishes and utensils by hand, use a sanitizer safe for food contact as

						the final step in the process; Use of an automated dishwasher will sanitize
Tables & high chair trays	Clean, Sanitize	Clean, Sanitize				
Countertops		Clean	Clean, Sanitize			Use a sanitizer safe for food contact
Food preparation appliances		Clean	Clean, Sanitize			
Mixed-use tables	Clean, Sanitize					Before serving food
Refrigerator					Clean	
Child Care Area						
Plastic mouthed toys		Clean	Clean, Sanitize			
Pacifiers		Clean	Clean, Sanitize			Reserve for use by only 1 child; use dishwasher or boil for one minute
Hats			Clean			Clean after each use if head lice are present
Door & cabinet handles			Clean, Disinfect			
Floors			Clean			Sweep or vacuum, then damp mop, (consider microfiber damp mop to pick up most particles)
Machine-washable cloth toys				Clean		Laundry

Dress-up clothes				Clean		Launder
Play activity centers				Clean		
Drinking fountains			Clean, Disinfect			
Computer keyboards		Clean, Sanitize				Use sanitizing wipes, do not use spray
Phone receivers			Clean			
<b>Toilet and Diapering Area</b>						
Changing tables		<b>Clean, Disinfect</b>				Clean with detergent, rinse, disinfect
Potty chairs		<b>Clean, Disinfect</b>				
Handwashing sinks & faucets			<b>Clean, Disinfect</b>			
Countertops			<b>Clean, Disinfect</b>			
Toilets			<b>Clean, Disinfect</b>			
Diaper pails			<b>Clean, Disinfect</b>			
Floors			<b>Clean, Disinfect</b>			Damp mop with a floor cleaner/ disinfectant
<b>Sleeping Area</b>						
Bed sheets & pillow cases				<b>Clean</b>		Clean before use by another child
Cribs, cots, & mats				<b>Clean</b>		Clean before use by another child
Blankets					Clean	

How Often Items to be Sanitized		
How Often	Items to be Sanitized	Solution
Immediately	Any surface that has been soiled with urine, stool, mucus, vomit, blood or nasal discharge.	Bleach Preferred
Before Use	Food preparation areas, food servicing table.	Natural Sanitization Solution is Preferred
After Use Toilet seats and diaper change areas	Food preparation equipment such as dishes and cutlery.	Natural Sanitization Solution is Preferred
Daily	Hard surfaced or washable toys that are mouthed. Bathroom doorknobs, sink handles, gate, toilets, flush handles, washable floors. Water tables, if used that day.	Natural Sanitization Solution is Preferred
Weekly	Beds or sleep mats, doorknobs, light switches, shelves, bathroom fixtures, helmets, hard hats for dress-up.	Natural Sanitization Solution is Preferred
Weekly	Bedding.	Machine Wash/Dry
Monthly	Hard toys, chairs, tables, shelves, other furniture or surfaces frequently touched.	Natural Sanitization Solution is Preferred
Monthly	Stuffed animals, pillows and slip covers.	Machine Wash/Dry

### Bleach as a sanitizer

In alignment with our commitment to providing a natural and eco-friendly environment at our Nature School, we emphasize a minimalistic approach to chemical usage. While maintaining the health and safety of our children and staff is of utmost importance, we understand the concerns associated with frequent use of chemical sanitizers.

Therefore, we have decided not to prioritize the daily use of bleach within our facility. Instead, we will incorporate bleach in our sanitation practices on a weekly basis or during specific periods such as sickness outbreaks or heightened seasons of illness.

Household Chlorine Bleach (5.25 % sodium hypochlorite) is a readily available, easy to use, effective and inexpensive multipurpose product for sanitizing.

- Bleach reacts quickly, the compound breaks up and the reactive part is only available for a brief period and then forms products (mostly salt and water) that are no longer reactive and are safe for the environment.



- The bleach compound is very easily broken down by light; that is why bleach is sold in solid-colored bottles and new solutions must be made every day. Once the compound is broken down by light, there is no reactive part left to sanitize (to kill bacteria or anything else).
- Bleach is a safe sanitizer to use in daycares. In the concentrations recommended for sanitizing in daycare settings, once the surface has air dried, the reactive part of the bleach has long been inactivated and is no longer available to be ingested or to irritate the skin.

Bathrooms, potties, and diaper change areas have more germs, and these are generally more harmful than germs in other areas. A stronger solution (more bleach) is recommended for these areas than for the rest of the facility. The following concentrations are using household bleach with a concentration of 5.25% hypochlorite.

For General Housekeeping (1:100 Solution)	
To make 1 Liter	2 ml (1/2 teaspoon) bleach to 1 liter water
To make 1 Gallon	1/2-ounce (1 tablespoon) bleach to 1 gallon water

For More Contaminated Surfaces	
To make 1 Liter	20 ml (4 teaspoons) bleach to in 980 ml (4 cups) of water
To make 1 Gallon	3 1/2 ounces (6 tablespoons) bleach to 1 gallon water

How Often Items to be Sanitized		
How Often	Items to be Sanitized	Bleach Solution
Immediately	Any surface that has been soiled with urine, stool, mucus, vomit, blood, or nasal discharge.	1:10
Before Use	Food preparation areas, food servicing table.	1:100

After Use Toilet seats and diaper change areas	Food preparation equipment such as dishes and cutlery.	1:10 1:100
Daily	Hard surfaced or washable toys that are mouthed. Bathroom doorknobs, sink handles, gate, toilets, flush handles, washable floors. Water tables, if used that day.	1:100
Weekly	Beds or sleep mats, doorknobs, light switches, shelves, bathroom fixtures, helmets, hard hats for dress-up.	1:100
Weekly	Bedding.	Machine Wash/Dry
Monthly	Hard toys, chairs, tables, shelves, other furniture or surfaces frequently touched.	1:100
Monthly	Stuffed animals, pillows and slip covers.	Machine Wash/Dry

Information regarding bleach:

- Allow the surfaces to air dry after application to achieve the required contact time.
- Bleach should not be mixed with other cleaning products.
- The bleach solution should be made within the previous 24 hours (or freshly prepared) to be most effective.

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure alignment with the latest guidelines from Canada Island Health. Any updates or changes will be communicated to staff and parents accordingly.

For more information, please read *Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting Toolkit*.

# Policies and Protocols

## Terms and Conditions

### FFNS Programs:

- Educators and volunteers agree to follow the lead of the Fern Flower - Nature School educators, allowing space for emergent, inquiry-based play, problem-solving and collaboration, and risky play, as well as allowing students to get wet and/or dirty.
- Educators agree to work to the best of their ability to inform families and students of the clothing requirements for a day at our Nature School understanding that students, educators and volunteers will be outside most of their time on site, regardless of weather.
- Educators and volunteers agree to dress appropriately themselves, modelling positive attitudes and Behavior in potentially challenging weather.
- To participate in Fern Flower - Nature School programs (Morning or Afternoon Session registration must be completed in full online and then in-person before the program begins.

### Parent/Gradian Orientation Policy:

Fern Flower - Nature School has implemented this Policy to ensure that all new and/or existing parents are fully introduced to the Nature School's policies and procedures.

### Parent Orientation Procedures:

1. The parent(s)/guardians must first contact the Nature School to discuss the Nature School's program details and coordinate a visit with the Nature School Director.
2. The parent(s)/guardians must then attend a scheduled session with the Nature School Director allowing for the parent/guardians and the program provider to communicate the expectations and requirements while the child interacts with the other children of the program.
3. The parent(s)/guardians must then attend a third and final scheduled session to become completely orientated with all paperwork, complete all required forms, read and sign the Nature School parent policy and handbook, and make arrangement for the child's commencement date in the program.

Fern Flower - Nature School ensures to have a minimum of one (1) parent meeting a year, to provide and encourage parental participation.

The Nature School ensures the employees are kept up-to-date with updated child documents on record.

### **Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations:**

a) Management:

- Ensure that all parents read and understand the Policies and Procedures of the Nature School and sign a copy acknowledging such. Management will explain in full detail and ensure understanding.
- Ensure that all parents complete the orientation package of all forms required for recordkeeping purposes. Ensure that parents receive a copy of the Parent Handbook and all forms completed.
- Remind parents and encourage open communication about Nature School policy and/or procedures. Answering and addressing any inquiries when required.
- Ensure that all parent orientation packages and forms are processed and filed accordingly.
- Ensure appropriate staff are kept up-to-date with updated child documents on record.

b) Employees:

- Ensure to read and understand important and appropriate child documents.

c) Parents:

- Parents must make initial contact.
- Expected to read and understand all Nature School policies and procedures and ask questions when uncertain.
- Must follow all policies and procedures outlined in the Parent Handbook.

## **Registration**

Parents/Guardians must fully complete the FFNS'S registration forms and family contract for services. All families will have received a copy of the Parent Handbook and must have completed the required forms and have arranged for payment before their child can attend the Fern Flower - Nature School. When a parent has made a confirmation to secure a spot and start date and then decides to withdraw their child from a secured spot the families will be responsible for a one-month withdrawal fee.

Registration includes the Registration fee of \$50.00 as a non-refundable deposit to secure your child's place on our waitlist or directly into the childcare program unless otherwise agreed in writing. If the registered child does not accept the first opportunity the child will either be removed from registration and/or placed at the bottom of the waitlist.

## **Pick-Up and Drop-Off Policy**

### **Arrival:**

Staff members are expected to greet each child and parent upon their arrival to the classroom. Arrival is the opportune time to discuss how the child's night was, what he/she ate for breakfast, special instructions for the day, etc. Upon arrival, each child must have direct contact



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with a staff member. Staff should be looking for previous injuries, signs of illness, or unusual Behavior. The cut-off time for Drop-Off is 30 minutes after a session.

**Departure:**

During the enrollment process, each family completes an “Emergency Contact and Parental Consent” form. This form provides authorization for select individuals to pick up children from the Nature School. If you are not familiar with the person attempting to pick up a child, you must request photo identification and check the “Emergency Contact” form. Pick-Up starts 30 minutes before the end of the Session. Parents are encouraged to pick up their child 5-10 minutes before the end of the session due to the educators would love to talk to the parents about how their child’s day went.

At the end of the day, staff must check the attendance clipboard to verify all children have been signed out.

**Child Entry:**

Parents must give Fern Flower - Nature School written authorization for the people who may have access to their children (i.e. a relative who picks up child, emergency contact in cases where parents cannot be reached). If written authorization is not possible, the parent must phone or email us to give authorization. Parents must notify NS before changing the usual pick-up routine. We always act in the best interests of the child if there is any confusion or uncertainty.

	Drop-Off Time	Pick-Up Time
Morning Session	8:00 am To 8:30 am	11:45 am To 12:15 pm
Afternoon Session	12:45 pm To 1:15 pm	4:30 pm To 5:00 pm

**Safe Release of Children:**

A child in the care of FFNS will be released only to the person(s) identified by the guardians as those authorized to pick up the child. Authorization must be given in writing and can be done by fax or email directed to the main childcare office when advance arrangements are not possible. An authorized person who is unknown to the staff will be required to show a picture ID before the child is released into their care.

Releasing a child to a person who appears to be impaired or unfit to provide the child safe transport home. FFNS staff will not release a child to an authorized person who appears to be incapable of providing safe care. If staff believe the person to be incapable of providing safe care the following steps will be taken:

- a) Express your concerns to the person and offer to call a relative, friend, or taxi to pick up the person and child.
- b) Taking into consideration the safety of the other children, staff, and personal safety, the staff members involved will make all reasonable efforts to stop the person from leaving with the child.
- c) If staff are unable to stop the person from leaving with the child, they must immediately contact the RCMP informing them of the situation.
- d) If the person picking up the child was not the guardian, the staff will immediately attempt to reach the guardians to inform them of the situation.

### **Unauthorized Pick-Up Procedure:**

If someone other than a parent/authorized alternate pick-up person arrives to pick up a child and we haven't been notified in advance by the authorized parent or pick-up person, we will:

1. Call the parent for verbal authorization.
2. If a parent cannot be located, the child is not allowed to leave NS until a parent has been contacted.
3. NS staff will remain with the child until an authorized pick-up person arrives.

### **Custody and Access to Children:**

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

### **Release of Children to a Person Who Appears Intoxicated/Impaired:**

Staff will not release a child 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 for protecting the children in their care from any perceived risk.

### **Procedures in the Event of a Custody Dispute:**

In the case of custody disputes, each parent will be granted access to the child, except when a copy of a court order indicating limited access is on the child's file. Such information will be included on the child's emergency card. It is the responsibility of the parents to produce a copy of a court order indicating limited access.

### Late Pick-Up Policy:

If children have not been picked up by 12:15 pm or 5:00 pm, depending on the session child is attending, and the Nature School has not been advised of the parent's tardiness, the following procedure will be employed:

- Parents will be phoned at home and at work and asked to pick up the child immediately.
- If the parents cannot be located, the emergency contact named on the registration form will be phoned and asked to pick up the child immediately.
- If neither the parents nor the emergency contact can be reached: Emergency Social Services (Child Protective Services) will be phoned and asked to take custody of the child.
- Employees will not take legal responsibility for the child or shelter him/her outside the Nature School for reasons of legal liability.
- Should it be necessary to contact Emergency Social Services, parents will be informed that their child can be located through Emergency Social Services and/or the City Police.

### Late Pick-Up Fee Payment:

FERN FLOWER - NATURE SCHOOL CHARGES \$25.00 AND ADDITIONAL \$5.00 FOR EVERY MINUTE THAT THE PARENT/GUARDIAN IS LATE FOR PICK-UP AFTER CLOSING TIME MONDAY TO FRIDAY 12:15/5:00 PM (depends on the session child is attending).

The Fern Flower - Nature School is closed at 12:15/5:00 PM Monday – Friday and the employee who is staying behind is now babysitting your child. The payment is made out to the employee that has stayed behind and it can be arranged with the employee how the payment will be paid.

If you are constantly late – after 3 late pick-up Fern Flower - Nature School can expel you from attending, it. No money will be refunded back to the family in that case.

### Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations:

#### a) Management/Employees:

- Both parties are responsible for ensuring the safety of the children in care during pick-up times daily. If the parent/guardian is not present, ensure that the individual has been listed on a pick-up form signed by the parent or on the emergency contact list filled out at the time of registration.
- Request legal proof of child access by a court of law in instances of custody disputes.
- Make arrangements with parents for payment of late pick-up fees.

#### b) Parents:

- Responsible for adhering to the rules and guidelines of this policy.
- Ensuring that children are dropped off and picked up on a consistent timeframe each day and that all appropriate pick-up forms for alternate pick-up arrangements are filled out in advance. If in a situation where the form cannot be filled out, a phone call confirming the emergency contact will be picking up the child is sufficient.

- Ensuring that their child/children are not dropped off after 9 am as so not to disrupt programming and compromise staff-to-child ratios.
- Provide letters/documentation from a court of law concerning custody battle disputes.
- Pay late pick-up fees when required.

### **Could Not Be Picked Up:**

- a) No later than ten minutes past program closing time the senior staff in attendance will call the legal guardians of any child not yet picked up.
- b) If the legal guardians cannot be reached, the staff will call all persons listed by the parents as emergency contacts.
- c) Staff will record all attempts to reach any of the guardians or emergency contact people noting the time the calls were made, the numbers called, and messages left.
- d) Staff will leave messages indicating the child is still in care, and request that a contact person come to the program Nature School to pick up the child.
- e) Staff will continue to attempt to reach the guardians until the child is picked up and will release the child to the first authorized person who arrives at the program Nature School.
- f) If the person who picks up the child is not the legal guardian, the staff will leave a note on the door of the program Nature School clearly indicating which emergency contact person has picked up the child and at what time.

When guardians have not arrived within 15 minutes past the pick-up time indicated on the sign-out sheet, staff may consider contacting them and the emergency contacts prior to the program Nature School closing. Consideration will be given to the normal patterns of the guardians and other extenuating circumstances that may hinder the parents' arrival, e.g., weather conditions.

- a) One hour after the program Nature School closing time, staff who have not been successful in reaching authorized persons to pick up a child still in care will contact emergency services to inform them of the situation.
- b) The staff will continue to attempt to reach all authorized and emergency contact persons listed by the guardians.
- c) One and a half hours after closing time the child will be released to emergency services. When emergency services personnel arrive, staff will request to see identification, noting the person's name, the time, and the location to which the child will be taken.
- d) The staff will inform the director and the senior supervisor of the outcome.
- e) Before leaving the program Nature School, the staff will leave a note on the door of the program Nature School clearing indicating the location of the child and the number for emergency services.
- f) Under no circumstances will a child be released to an unauthorized person, even if that person is known to the child.



## Waitlist Procedure

Fern Flower – Nature School recognizes the following priorities when space becomes available:

1. Employees of FFNS.
2. Siblings of children are currently enrolled in our programs.
3. Transfer of families from one location to another.
4. Previous FFNS families.
5. Families not currently enrolled.

These above priorities are based on the application date in which a family has applied to the Fern Flower – Nature School as well as the date of care requested. Families may contact the supervisor directly at the center to confirm their waitlist position at any time.

If FFNS attempts to contact a family and is unable to due to a change in information, the application will be removed from the wait list. If an attempt to contact a family to confirm a space has been made and the center does not receive a response by the designated date the application will be removed from the waitlist, and we will move to the next family on the list. If an attempt to verify your desire to remain on the waitlist has been made at the center and does not receive a response by the designated date the application will be removed from the waitlist. If a space is offered to a family and is declined, the application will be removed from the waitlist.

Placement on the waitlist is not a guarantee of space in the centers, a space cannot be confirmed unless the FFNS supervisor has provided confirmation of space and a deposit (Registration Fee) has been received to secure the space.

## Payment Policy

As the Fern Flower - Nature School is a place of business, we must charge for our childcare services provided.

### Childcare Service Rates before Reduction:

Fern Flower - Nature School institutes a flat rate payment system on the following Morning or Afternoon Sessions enrollments:

Month Rate per Child:

- 5 days/week – 1,050.00 \$
- 4 days/week – 850.00 \$
- 3 days/week – 650.00 \$
- 2 days/week – 450.00 \$
- 1 day/week – 250.00 \$

Drop-In Rate per Child:

- 1 session – 75.00 \$

Note that it is not guaranteed that your child can get a spot that day. Please call-in advance before drop-in your child for Dro-In Session also you need to Register in Advance.

*Whether your child attends the Nature School each day of operation or not, the full payment is expected, based on the original enrolment option.*

All payments are due on or before the first day of each month.

Each parent is given a payment method option in their starting packages in which they choose their payment option and sign off on.

We accept only E-Transfers made to

Enter an E-Transfer Account

All post-dated cheques can be made out to Fern Flower - Nature School, when received they are then locked up until a bank deposit can be made.

### **Affordable Child Care Benefit/Subsidy:**

Parents apply online at <https://www.gov.bc.ca/affordablechildcarebenefit> and we will provide you with the additional form required from the childcare provider. The Parent Reduction Fee Benefit is not an initiative of FFNS. As well, The Affordable Child Care Benefit (subsidy), an initiative of the Provincial Government and is not an initiative of the Fern Flower – Nature School. Subsidy bases their authorization on a family's income and should you not meet their criteria they may minus a parent portion from the maximum subsidy or not approve you for any subsidy. The family is required to pay any all fees subsidy does not cover by the 1st of the month. Should subsidy be authorized after this time, you are eligible for a refund or credit on fees you have paid for any overpayments on your account. It is your responsibility to ensure subsidy is renewed on time. In the event you have not renewed your child care subsidy, you will be expected to pay the full monthly fee. Please contact the Fern Flower – Nature School with any questions regarding your invoice or amounts claimed under your subsidy authorization. The contact number is **250-299-2054** or by email [fernfloweratureschool@gmail.com](mailto:fernfloweratureschool@gmail.com)

### **Calculation of Fees:**

Fees are based on the assumption that the average month has four weeks of childcare days (i.e., if a child is enrolled full-time, five days per week, we assume the child will receive at least 20 days of care in any given month (5 days/week x 4 weeks).

In the event that a child is attending part-time, 2-4 days per week, the same assumption applies. Based on a four-week month, a child attending 2, 3 or 4 days per week, will receive 8, 12, or 16 days of care, respectively. We make this assumption to create allowances for statutory holidays or other Centre closures (Winter Holiday Closure), as there are several months throughout the year in which a child actually attends 4.5 weeks, but has only paid for 4: For example, a child attending full-time, 5 days per week, may actually attend 23 days, but has only paid for 20. This also occurs

for children attending 2, 3 and 4 days per week, where they actually receive more days than what is allowed for in the fee structure.

**Fee Structure:**

Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative

As an organization we have been approved to participate in this program, parents do not need to apply to get this reduction this is applied to all of our fees. Parents with a child in full-time care will see fees reduced by up to 545.00 \$

As of December 2022, the subsidy is increasing by 201% to a maximum of \$900 per child, per month. In addition, you can combine this with other childcare subsidies you also qualify for, including the Affordable Childcare Benefit.

Reductions are based on the age of the child and not the program they are enrolled in.

	5 days a week	4 days a week	3 days a week	2 days a week	1 days a week	Drop-In – 1 session
Morning or Afternoon Session (2.5 to 6 years of age)	1,050.00 \$ / month	850.00 \$ / month	650.00 \$ / month	450.00 \$ / month	250.00 \$ / month	75.00 \$ per session
BC Government Fee Reduction	-545.00 \$	-436.00 \$	-327.00 \$	-218.00 \$	-109.00 \$	Not Qualified
Total (Fees after Government Fee Reduction)	505.00 \$ / month	414.00 \$ / month	323.00 \$ / month	232.00 \$ / month	141.00 \$ / month	75.00 \$ per session

**Late Payment Fee:**

A late payment fee of \$50.00 PER DAY will be charged for any payments or NS cheques made after the first day of the month.

After two (2) late fee charges Fern Flower - Nature School has the right to terminate care.

### Subsidy Procedure:

Families receiving subsidies will get a printout of their government subsidy amount per month and a printout of childcare fees with an owing balance. Parents/Guardians are responsible for paying the owed Parent Portion of the monthly fees on or before the first of each month.

### Refunds Policy:

- Refunds are not given unless there are extreme circumstances that prevent a child from participating in Nature School. Fern Flower - Nature School reserves the right to determine and assess these circumstances on a case-by-case basis.
- Refunds will not be given if a day's program must be cancelled due to inclement weather.
- A full refund will be given if a program is cancelled due to insufficient registration.
- Any person who leaves during the middle of a program due to illness, injury, expulsion, or any other reason will not be refunded any portion of the program fees.

### Withdrawing from our Program:

If you are no longer needing care within our program, we require one(1) month's notice before the removal of your child.

## Attendance and Closure

### Attendance Notification Procedures:

1. Should a child be sick or be absent from the Fern Flower - Nature School on a scheduled attendance day, the Nature School MUST be notified by 8:30 am(morning session) or 1:15 pm (afternoon session) on the day of the absence at minimum.
2. Parents are expected to inform Nature School employees of possible non-attendance as soon as possible and with as much notification as possible.
3. Parents CANNOT drop off children after drop-off time as it can disrupt the class and other peers of the late child.
4. Parents are asked to give notification if an early Pick-Up of the child will occur, to avoid disruption to the other children during our day, also, educators will make that child will be at the pick-up area rather than deep in the forest, etc.

### Nature School Closure Dates:

Fern Flower - Nature School will be closed on all of the following Statutory Holidays:

- Family Day - Second Monday in February
- Spring Break – One week in Springtime
- Good Friday – Friday before Easter Sunday (Follow SD69) (1 week closure)
- Easter Monday – Monday After Easter Sunday
- Victoria Day – Monday before May 25th

- Canada Day – July 1st (or Monday Following)
- B.C. Day - Monday, August 1st
- Summer Closure - Last week of August until September first day after Labor Day (1 week closure)
- Labor Day – First Monday in September
- Truth and Reconciliation Day – September 31st
- Thanksgiving – Second Monday in October
- Remembrance Day – November 1st (or Monday Following)
- Winter Closure - Last week of December including Christmas Day 25<sup>th</sup> until New Year 1<sup>st</sup> (1 week closure) (We are open on January 2<sup>nd</sup>)

**Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations:**

a) Management:

- Shall ensure parents are informed of all services fees and payment due dates. Management will ensure that Parents are given an advance warning when fees are scheduled to increase.
- Shall ensure that parents are notified of Nature School closures well in advance, so other childcare arrangements can be made.
- Will collect and process fee payments and keep a record on file.
- Will issue late payment warnings when required.
- Will discontinue services when payments are in arrears.

b) Parents:

- Make fee payments on or before the deadline dates.
- Inform the Nature School employees when child/children will be absent with as much advance notice as possible.
- Provide us with at least one(10-month notice before removing your child from our program.

## Integration Period

It is very important, when possible, that your child is integrated into the programs. The purpose of this gradual integration is to ease children into a new childcare environment that involves many routines and transitions throughout the day. Another important factor is that a child will need to adjust to many new friends and adults in his/her life. This integration period is up to the parents/guardian’s discretion, arranging with FFNS Manager based on ratios and available times will allow you the additional opportunity to familiarize parent/caregiver and child with the

surroundings and answer any additional questions you may have. This will also allow the staff the opportunity to meet with you and your child to familiarize themselves with your family's routines and specific needs.

Adjusting to the NS and program can vary between each child. It is important to encourage child to go through routines and interact with other children but do not insist. Child is adjusting to new people and transitions. The child may become more fatigued the first few days. The child may cry during this time of separation, this often occurs when a child is transitioning to a new environment. The child's teachers may have some helpful insight into ways to decrease a child's anxiety with the new transition. For further comfort, the child's teacher will be able to answer any questions about whether child settled throughout the day and the activities they have participated in.

## Environmental Awareness Policy

### Ecological Impact on Forest School Site:

There are of course consequences to running forest schools' projects at a woodland site. The increased footfall of young people will of course impact on the ground. The philosophy of this Forest School shall be to try and minimize the harm caused to local plant species and wildlife on the site. During the Forest School sessions, the participants shall be encouraged to be more responsible for the protection of plants and wildlife and be aware of their surroundings. We shall abide by The Forest School Rules and The Leave No Trace 7 Principles.

### Extract:

#### *3-year Forest Management Plan:*

- **Ground** – continuous footfall on pathways and more specifically on wild areas with ground cover such as ivy, bramble, and other wild plants – these will get walked on, bashed, broken and worn down with continued footfall from a forest school. If there is bad weather or water underfoot – this would increase the breakdown of the ground into a potential mud bath, which would also then pose hazards to groups present.
- **Trees** – branches might get broken or snapped from the presence of a group – unintentional or intentional – this is liable to happen.
- **Shrub layer** – bushes and shrubs at children's height – branches broken, some of the plants trampled on, general wear and tear from the presence of the group.

#### *1. Maintenance/Impact on woods:*

- Vary the areas of wood that are used – repeated use of one area would cause breakdown/ damage to ground layer plants especially.
- Teach children about the various plants – raise awareness of plants around them.
- Don't use wood during wet periods – it would destroy the ground layer.
- Observation – tree diseases, damage – pruning necessary to maintain trees in good condition.

- Coppice saplings – small trees growing too near mature trees, general thinning that is needed – useful resources for forest school – and a resource that will come back but also manage the woodland.

2. *Long-term:*

- Tree Seed collection – there are tons of trees seeds in the area, on the walk to the woods, on the trees at the edge of and in the woods – tree nursery project with forest schoolers – gather tree seeds, and plant in a tree nursery in school – grow the trees – pot on – eventually re-pot into the woods.
- Planting new trees, shrubs & ground layer.
- Coppicing trees – new saplings will grow – can use wood for forest school projects.
- Introduce new ground cover plants – to knit ground layer together to decrease ground being damaged by presence of groups.
- Introduce habitats such as log piles and bug hotels, these can be done by FS participants.

## Leave No Trace Policy

At the heart of Leave No Trace are 7 principles for reducing the damage caused by outdoor activities.

1. *Plan Ahead and Prepare:*

- Before you go check, where possible, if access is allowed and your activity is permitted in the area you wish to visit.
- Respect any signs, regulations, policies, and special concerns for the area that you wish to visit. Permits may sometimes be needed for activities on public lands.
- Where possible travel by public transport or shared cars; consider the availability of parking.
- Ensure you have the skills and equipment needed for your activity and to cope with emergencies that could arise.
- Check the weather forecast and always be prepared for changing weather conditions.
- For environmental and safety reasons, and to minimize your impact on other users, keep group numbers small; split larger parties into smaller groups.

2. *Be Considerate of Others:*

- Respect the people who live and work in the countryside.
- Park appropriately - avoid blocking gateways, forest entrances or narrow roads. Remember that farm machinery, local residents and emergency services may need access at all times.
- Take care not to damage property, especially walls, fences and crops.
- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
- Let nature's sounds prevail. Keep noise to a minimum.

3. *Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife:*

- Dogs should be kept under close control and should only be brought onto hills or farmland with the landowner's permission. Some public areas stipulate that dogs must be kept on a lead at all times, please adhere to local guidelines.

- Observe wild animals and birds from a distance. Avoid disturbing them, particularly at sensitive times: mating, nesting, and raising young (mostly between spring and early summer).
  - Keep wildlife wild, and don't feed wild animals or birds - our foods damage their health and leave them vulnerable to predators.
  - Farm animals are not pets; remain at a safe distance.
4. *Travel and Camp on Durable Ground:* Durable ground includes established tracks and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow.
- *In popular areas:* Concentrate use on existing tracks and campsites. To avoid further erosion, travel in a single file in the middle of the track even when wet or muddy.
  - *In more remote areas:* Disperse use to prevent the creation of new tracks and campsites. Avoid places where impacts are just beginning to show.
  - *If camping:* Protect water quality by camping at least 30m from lakes and streams. Keep campsites small and discreet. Aim to leave your campsite as you found it, or better.
5. *Leave What You Find:*
- Respect property. For example, farming or forestry machinery, fences, stone walls etc. Leave gates as you find them (open or closed).
  - Preserve the past: examine - without damaging - archaeological structures, old walls and heritage artifacts e.g. holy wells, mine workings, and monuments.
  - Conserve the present: leave rocks, flowers, plants, animals and all-natural habitats as you find them. Fallen trees are a valuable wildlife habitat; do not remove or use them for firewood.
  - Avoid introducing non-native plants and animals e.g. zebra mussels in rivers and lakes.
  - Do not build rock cairns, structures or shelters
6. *Dispose of Waste Properly:*
- "If You Bring It In, Take It Out" - take home all litter and leftover food (including tea bags, fruit peels and other biodegradable foods).
  - To dispose of solid human waste, dig a hole 15-20cms deep and at least 30m from water, campsites and tracks. Cover and disguise the hole when finished.
  - Bring home toilet paper and hygiene products.
  - Wash yourself or your dishes 30m away from streams or lakes and if necessary use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Bring home any solids and scatter strained dishwater.
  - For more information on sanitation in the outdoors read the "Where to go in the outdoors" leaflet.
7. *Minimize the Effects of Fire:*
- Fires can cause lasting impacts and be devastating to forests, natural habitats and farmland. Therefore, when camping use, a lightweight stove for cooking.
  - Where fires are permitted: Use established fire rings, barbecues or create a mound fire.
  - Keep fires small. Only use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand. Do not use growing vegetation for use as firewood.
  - Avoid burning plastics or other substances: which emit toxic fumes.
  - Burn all fires to ash, put out fires completely, and then scatter cool ashes.



### **Environmental Sustainability:**

One of the many special features of NS is that sessions are held in the same areas of woodland over some 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 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 children'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 connected to. We minimize our ecological impact by rotating our sites for play, staying on trails as much as possible, and keeping activities with the highest impact in our main area in front of the cabin.

At Fern Flower - Nature School, environmental sustainability is at the heart of our motivation for running programs. We, therefore, conduct ongoing ecological impact assessments of our presence in the forest, considering such factors as denudation/erosion, compaction, pollution, and the corruption/introduction of species. We have created a plan both for the monitoring, management, and limitation of our potential negative impact and for the positive development and improvement of the ecology of our site.

## **Clothing and Packing List for FFNS**

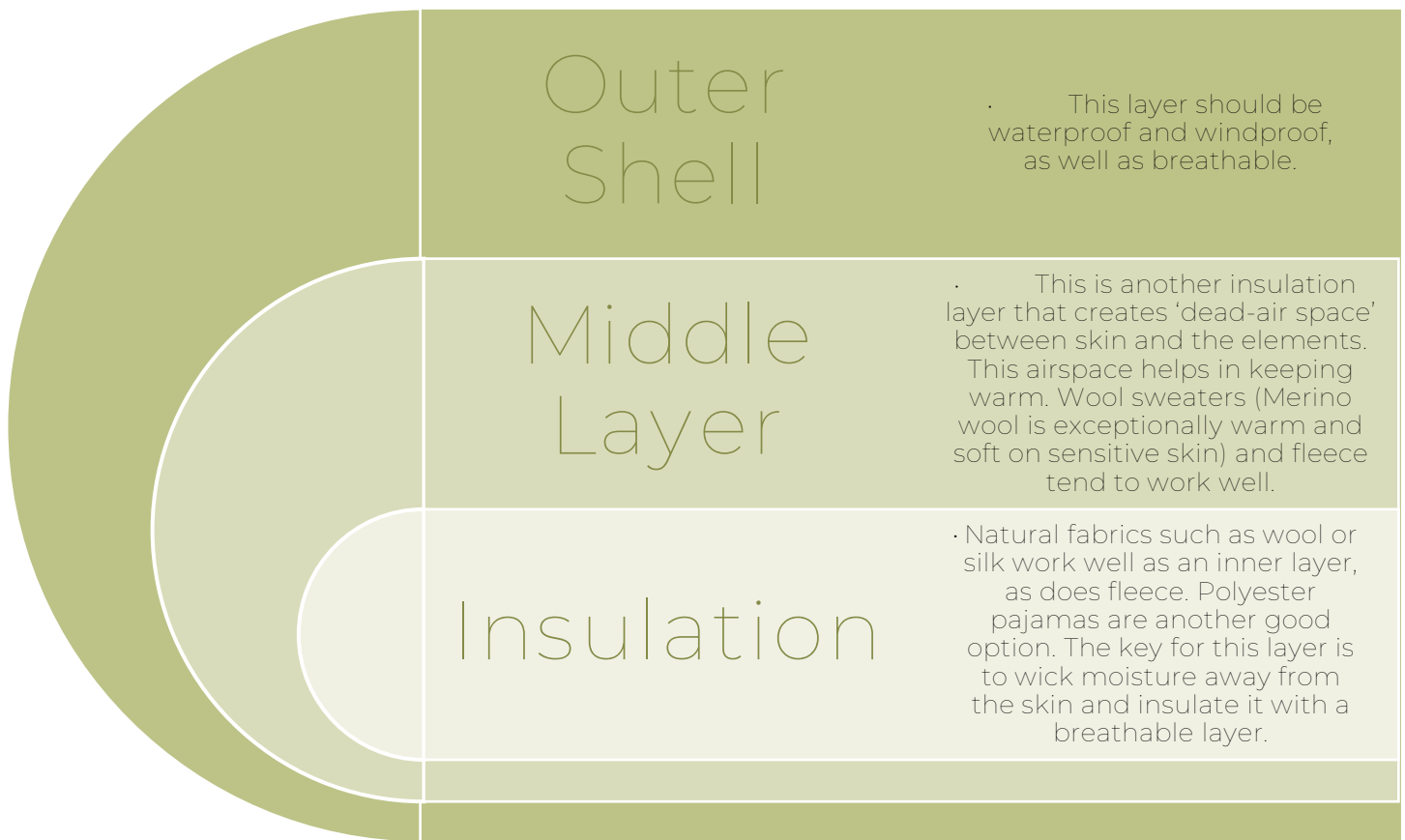
### **Packing List for a child**

A major achievement of Nature School participants is experiencing and enduring the outdoors year-round. Our hands-on programs take place in all types of weather and usually require that we fully immerse ourselves in the environment. Children must come prepared for the day's weather and with the understanding that it is ok to get dirty! Comfort and proper clothing are of utmost importance for your child's learning experience. The packing list below is cold-weather specific and can be adjusted for warmer months.

Please bring the following items to every session:

- Backpack
- Water bottle (filled with fresh water)
- Snacks and Utensils if needed
- Spare Full Set of Cloth (t-shirt, pants, long sleeve shirt, underwear, socks)
- Extra Hat, Mittens, Balaclava

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



<i>Winter</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two winter hats (must cover ears and stay on the head).</li> <li>• Balaclava or neck warmer (no scarves please due to risk of strangulation).</li> <li>• Two pairs of warm, waterproof mitts.</li> <li>• One warm, waterproof snowsuit.</li> <li>• One set of warm, waterproof boots.</li> <li>• Wool socks.</li> <li>• Three base layers: thermal shirt and pants, middle layer, wool/fleece sweater (cotton is not recommended for cold weather conditions).</li> </ul>
<i>Spring</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rain gear (waterproof boots, pants, jacket), with extra insulation on colder days.</li> <li>• Wool socks on colder days (they insulate even when wet).</li> <li>• Sneakers for running shoes (please no open toe shoes even in summer).</li> <li>• Sun Hat (for warmer months).</li> <li>• Warmer sweater or jacket for colder days.</li> <li>• Bug Jacket (optional).</li> </ul>
<i>Summer</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rain gear (waterproof boots, pants, jacket).</li> <li>• Sneakers for running (please no open toe shoes even in summer).</li> <li>• Sun Hat.</li> <li>• Lightweight clothing (silk/cotton ideal, synthetic fibers do not breathe well).</li> <li>• Bug Jacket (optional).</li> </ul>
<i>Fall</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rain gear (waterproof boots, pants, jacket).</li> <li>• Sneakers for running (please no open toe shoes even in summer).</li> <li>• Sun Hat (for warmer months).</li> <li>• Warm Jacket (fleece or other breathable fabric ideal).</li> <li>• Bug Jacket (optional).</li> </ul>
<i>At all Times</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Backpack of sufficient quality and comfort that your child can carry for distances of up to 500 meters at a time and walks of up to 30 minutes long (must include a chest strap).</li> <li>• Water bottle (filled with fresh water).</li> <li>• Snacks and Utensils if needed.</li> <li>• Spare Full Set of Clothes (t-shirt, pants, long sleeve shirt, underwear, socks).</li> <li>• Extra Hat, Mittens, Balaclava.</li> </ul>

### **A note to parents/caregivers:**

It's not necessary to invest in expensive brand names to keep your child warm. Thrift stores are great places to look for children's wool clothing at cheaper prices. If you are looking for a regular store to purchase outdoor clothing, Mountain Equipment Coop (MEC) has excellent children's outdoor wear for all seasons.

In terms of boots, we recommend purchasing boots that are one size larger than your child'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 has a light cotton/silk/hemp long-sleeve shirt on for the day. Children are encouraged to always wear a hat. Our programs are altered slightly by following the position of the sun. It is amazing how cool it is when towering trees shade the walking paths.

Children will be encouraged to stay hydrated for 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.

### **What to Leave at Home:**

#### *No Home Toys in Nature School!*

Bringing toys from home is discouraged. Personal toys can get dirty and broken and may cause problems when others want to play with them. Better yet — if your child would like to bring a doll, truck, or horse they can let us know and we could try making one out of natural materials. The forest holds cordage materials, acorns, wood, sticks (there are hundreds of things to do with a stick!), mud, bark, leaves and so many things for your child to play with! Encourage your child that their beloved toy will be waiting when they get home, but they can create a toy at Nature School.

We do make exceptions for special items like bikes, sleds, etc. on those Bike Days or so.

### **Lost Items Policy:**

Fern Flower - Nature School is not responsible for any lost or stolen items while on site. We encourage parents to label everything coming with their child to help ensure it ends up back home. Any items left at NS will be placed in a Lost & Found, which will be made available on request after a month the items will be donated to the local thrift store.

### **Damages Policy:**

The FFNS takes responsibility for normal wear and tear of the Nature School facility's equipment and toys. However, if a child willfully damages or destroys toys, equipment, or personal belongings within the facility the repair or replacement will be at the cost of the parents.

The Nature School will not be held responsible for damage to any belongings the child brings to the center. This includes any assistive devices. Please ensure such devices are insured should such an incidence occur.

## Toileting and Handwashing

FFNS requires that all participants are fully toilet trained prior to starting sessions.

If your child has an accident, educators will happily assist them in changing into their spare clothing. However, FFNS cannot accept children into the programs who are using diapers or pull-ups during the day. Please ensure that your child is independently using a toilet prior to the start of the session.

The washroom facilities at Fern Flower – Nature School are available while we are indoors or in the yard. Nevertheless, children must be comfortable using the “washroom” outdoors, with minimal “coaching” from an educator. All educators will carry appropriate toileting and hand washing tools such as toilet paper, wipes, hand sanitizer, water, and soap.

Educators will provide children with hand washing opportunities before and after meals and after washroom breaks whether indoors or in nature. The educators will carry water and hand soap and hand sanitizer for this purpose on each outing.

## Bug and Sun Protection

Fern Flower - Nature School requires all participants to arrive with sunscreen and bug spray applied. Participants may bring extra if it will need to be re-applied later in the program. NS facilitators will assist participants in re-application if needed.

- NOTE: It is very important to do a thorough tick check after Nature School! Removing a tick early and safely is a great defense against tick-borne illness. Always save the tick in a zip-lock bag to have for testing if necessary.
- A brimmed hat is one of the best defenses against the sun and buzzing bugs!
- Consider both the child and the environment when deciding on insect deterrents. Those containing pyrethrin or DEET are highly effective but should never be used on children’s skin. Note that long-lasting pyrethrin, sprayed on boots and pants, can be just as effective, but can also be hazardous to aquatic life if freshly sprayed (for example, that morning). Please read the cautionary labels. Many safe and natural bug sprays are available! Ask us for suggestions if you are unsure!
- Another great way to stay protected is with clothing. Keeping covered with long sleeves, long pants (and boots or socks over pants) and a wide-brim hat, are very safe and effective methods for dealing with both sun and bugs!
- A spring day when no leaves are on the trees, or even a sunny winter day, can expose your child to too much sun. Zinc-based sunscreens are suggested.

## Poison Ivy Policy

Poison ivy is present in the woodlands at Fern Flower - Nature School. To limit exposure, we require that all participants wear long pants, long socks, and closed-toed shoes while taking part in

our programs in all seasons. Washing affected skin within 15-60 minutes of exposure is likely to remove the oil that can lead to a reaction, so staff always carry potable water and soap. In the event of a participant coming in contact with poison ivy, we can wash the affected area immediately.

## Tick Policy

Ticks are present at Fern Flower - Nature School. To limit exposure, we require that all participants wear long pants, long socks, and closed-toed shoes while taking part in our programs in all seasons. We suggest that participants tuck their pant legs into their socks and shirts into their pants to also limit possible tick exposure. We recommend using insect repellent to deter ticks. Staff always carry insect repellent that contains DEET, as well as natural alternatives, to offer to families at drop-off and to re-apply as required throughout the day. If a tick is seen on a participant, it is brushed off. If a tick is attached, we will remove it using tweezers or a tick key and save it in a baggie. Parents/guardians will be informed at pick-up and allowed to take the tick to the health unit for testing.

For more information about ticks in British Columbia, we recommend visiting the website: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/animals-and-crops/plant-health/insects-and-plant-diseases/home-garden/ticks>

## Snakes Policy

Due to the nature of the Fern Flower Forest School sessions being held in a bush setting, there is always the possibility that a participant may encounter a snake.

The risk of this possibility is minimized with the following strategies:

- High-risk areas are avoided during mating season or times of the year with high snake activity (February to March).
- Base camp will have minimal cover for snakes to hide.
- The daily sweep will include checking base camp and paths leading to and from school. Participants will be encouraged to use “heavy feet” when heading to base camp and new areas.

Before first entry to the Nature School area participants will be taught basic safety procedures.

- Stand still, legs together, arms crossed over chest in an “X” and head looking up.
- When asked to do so by the leader slowly back away from the area (this may involve walking backwards with the leader guiding) maintaining “X”.

Return to base camp or designated area and wait for further instructions from the leader. If a snake is encountered the following procedures will be followed:

- The call is made “Freeze” or the whistle is blown (three short, sharp blasts).
- Everyone remains where they are and adopts a safe stance.
- The leader ascertains the location of the snake and its proximity to the participants.
- If determined safely to do so the leaders approach participants individually and have them back slowly away from the snake before returning quietly to base camp.

- If the snake is too close to a participant for the participant to move away safely then the participant is asked to remain still until the snake has moved away.
- If the snake is located near the base camp, then leaders are to remove participants to another location deemed appropriate by the Forest School Leader.
- The leader then contacts the office to request a snake catcher if appropriate.

If any of participants is bitten by a snake:

1. Call 9-1-1.
2. If possible, we will take a photograph of the snake from a safe distance.
3. Wash the bite with soap and water.
4. Cover the bite with a clean, dry dressing.
5. Mark the leading edge of tenderness/swelling on the skin and write the time alongside it.
6. Inform the Director/Manager and parents.

## Child Protection Policy

Fern Flower - Nature School is committed to taking a proactive position regarding the prevention of child abuse. In accordance with the Child and Family Services Act, it is the responsibility of every person in Ontario, including a person who performs professional or official duties with respect to children, to immediately report to a Children's Aid Society if s/he suspects that child abuse has occurred or if a child is at risk of abuse. The Child and Nature Alliance of Canada, including Fern Flower - Nature School staff, take this responsibility seriously. Reporting procedures and training are provided to all staff.

### Dealing with Abuse:

It is important to deal with concerns in a positive and non-judgmental way. Forest School aims to do this by establishing a good relationship with children and young people and encouraging them to express their views and opinions.

1. Record concerns in an agreed place separate from other children's notes.
2. Share concerns with the appropriate Forest School Leader and others who need to know.
3. Do not let concerns become common knowledge or gossip.
4. Seek advice from Social Services.
5. Do not investigate further or decide whether concerns are true or not 18.
6. If worried contact the appropriate agency (Social Services).

### Disclosures:

Children and young people will talk to adults who they trust. This could include disclosing abuse to an adult or another child at Forest School. When this situation arises, follow these steps:

The FS Leader will be responsible for dealing with disclosure or suspicion of abuse. This person will be responsible for recording information and contacting the relevant authority.

1. Receive:
  - Listen to what is being said.
  - Accept it.
  - Do not display shock or disbelief.
  - Take notes.
  
2. Reassure:
  - Reassure the child/young person but be honest.
  - Don't make promises you may not be able to keep.
  - Do not promise confidentiality, you must refer.
  - Reassure the child/young person that they were right to tell you. If the child/young person expresses guilt, point out that they are not to blame.
  
3. React:
  - Do not interrogate for further details.
  - Do not ask leading questions (this can invalidate court evidence).
  - Do ask open questions e.g., "Anything else you need to tell me?"
  - Do not criticize the person the child is talking about.
  - Do not ask the child to repeat what they are saying for someone else.
  - Explain to them that you must do next.
  
4. Record:
  - Make brief notes as soon as possible.
  - Do not destroy original notes.
  - Record the time, date, place, noticeable non-verbal Behaviors, and the 'actual' words used by the child/young person.
  - Draw a diagram to show any marks/bruises.
  - Record what is said rather than your assumptions.
  
5. Remember:
  - Follow the guidelines in this policy.
  - Consult with the appropriate person as soon as possible.
  - Ask for support from your manager if needed, you have been dealing with a traumatic situation.

## Smoking By-Law Policy

Fern Flower - Nature School abides by the City of Qualicum Beach Smoking By-Law to ensure that our building and forest are a nonsmoking environment. Fern Flower - Nature School also promotes this policy to ensure a clean air and air-pollutant-free environment for the employees and children in care.

Smoking in and/or around the Forest premises is STRICTLY PROHIBITED on school premises.



### **Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations:**

- a) Management:
  - Management is responsible for ensuring that all employees adhere to the Smoking By-Law Policy.
  - Responsible for enforcing strict discipline when and where necessary.
- b) Employees:
  - Responsible for adhering to the rules and guidelines of this policy.
- c) Parents:
  - Responsible for adhering to the rules and guidelines of this policy.

## **Travel and Field Trip Policy**

### **Travel Policy:**

Transport to be organized in advance of forest schools' sessions. The FFNS decide on their own travel arrangements in collaboration with Forest School Leader.

### **Travel to and from "Home Base":**

- 🍃 Child participants (under 18 years) will walk in pairs with an adult leader in front and behind the group.
- 🍃 All participants must stay near the Forest School Leader within the grounds.
- 🍃 Participants must return to the NS leader when the group call is given.
- 🍃 When going on the road – educators will wear high visibility vests.
- 🍃 If NS is going to go on the field trip/walk children will always be supervised by at least with 2 adults.

### **Field Trip Policy:**

Fern Flower - Nature School offers a variety of experiences both at and away from the Nature School. Field trips are a creative way to enrich one's study and expand the learning environment. The Director and/or Manager must approve all field trips. Field trips outside the Huxley/Ames city limits and/or longer than two hours require a parent to complete a "Field Trip Permission Form." These forms can be obtained from the Director and/or Manager. Parents must be notified at least one week before the planned field trip.

Teachers may decide and are encouraged to conduct short, unannounced field trips including but not limited to walks as a class around the perimeter of the building and/or nearby neighborhoods; trips to local playgrounds; trips to local businesses. Teacher-child ratios must be always maintained. Parents complete a "Parent/Guardian Permissions" form at enrollment for this type of field trip and do not need to complete a separate form for the above-named instances.

Our goal in FFNS we planning to have one Field Trip a month. With that said educators will find a place in advance. FFNS will set a temporary "Home Base" at the field trip location. Educators will be responsible for gathering, packing, transporting, and setting up the temporary "Home Base".

### **Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations:**

- a) Management:
  - Find the location.
  - Help Educators gather, pack, transport and set up the temporary “Home Base”.
- b) Employees:
  - Remind Parents the week and night before the Field Trip.
  - Educators will gather, pack, transport and set up the temporary “Home Base” during the field trip day.
  - Enjoy the field trip.
  - Educators will gather, pack and transport the equipment back to FFNS after Field Trip.
  - *Note: All additional time for field trips will be paid (set up, transportation and extra hustle)*
- c) Parents:
  - Drive child to Field Trip Location during the Field Trip Day.

### **Field Trip Procedures:**

Before a field trip is approved, enough parent volunteers must be available to attend to meet the following adult-to-child ratios with staff members included:

### **Head Count:**

Head counts will take place every 5-10 minutes during a field trip, as well as at the following times:

1. During any transition
2. Before leaving the classroom
3. Before starting the vehicle (after buckling the children)
4. After students exit the vehicle at the field trip location
5. After entering the field trip location
6. When exiting the field trip location
7. Before starting the vehicle (after buckling the children)
8. After exiting the vehicle at Fern Flower - Nature School
9. When returning back into the classroom

### **Required Materials:**

1. Permission slips
2. First aid kit
3. Clipboard containing:
  - a) that day's attendance
  - b) children's “if lost” headshots.
4. Each child must wear a Fern Flower - Nature School field trip “if lost” lanyard.
5. Pocket lanyards for each teacher containing:
  - a) Class list with that day's attendance
  - b) Class total number

- c) Emergency phone numbers
  - d) Fern Flower - Nature School's phone number
6. A copy of Fern Flower - Nature School's missing child procedure  
Other Field Trip Policies Only staff members or the child's parent are allowed to take children to the bathroom.

## Parent Involvement

We hope you will be excited to get involved in our Fern Flower - Nature School community. It is our goal to create a culture and community of connection, and we can't do that without you.

We also need your help to support your child's experience and extend the learning and connections beyond Fern Flower - Nature School. There are many ways you can be supportive, including having a positive attitude yourself about things your child does that might seem "yucky" or scary (getting wet or muddy, touching bugs and slugs, being outside in the cold) and role modelling being relaxed and happy about saying goodbye at drop-off time. We will communicate with you regularly about what we've been up to so you can ask your child questions; telling their stories is an important way for children to integrate their new knowledge. Feel free to ask us for even more information to inform your queries.

There are also opportunities for you to learn more about the mentoring model we use, and become able to use some of the techniques yourself at home. A terrific resource is Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature, by Jon Young, Ellen Haas, and Evan McGown. At times, Primitive Pursuits offers adult programs, from weekend workshops to more intensive immersion programs.

Details are on the Primitive Pursuits website. We can also recommend similar experiences with other programs around the region, country, and world. Participation in any of these will help bring greater connection into your home and support your Nature Schooler's journey.

## Privacy Policy

In registering your child for a program, you are providing FFNS with sensitive information about your child.

FFNS collects this information to communicate with you (parents/guardians) and to protect your child's health and safety during our programs. Any personal data you give to us will be processed following the privacy legislation and will only be used for the purposes for which you have given consent. We will not share your details with third parties without your consent, except where we are legally compelled or obligated to do so.

Select pieces of information (allergies/medical conditions, emergency contacts) will be printed and kept in a binder marked "Authorized Personnel Only". The binder and/or an electronic document will be kept in the emergency backpack, which is carried by a Nature School educator at all times so that pertinent information will be quickly accessible in the event of an emergency.

Please note that, with your consent, images may appear on our website, Facebook page and marketing material (including in the local newspaper).

## Photos & Video Permission

Permission will be requested, via consent form before NS takes place, to take photographs of participants for monitoring and evaluation purposes and suitable use in publications for leaflets/materials/websites. Where permission is refused, we will aim to avoid photographing and videoing that child and blur out faces wherever they do appear in recorded material.

## Video Camera Usage Policy

### Purpose:

The purpose of this Video Camera Usage Policy is to outline the guidelines and procedures for the use of video cameras at Fern Flower - Nature School. These cameras are installed to ensure the safety and security of both teachers and children attending our Nature School. This policy is designed to protect the privacy and security of all individuals involved while maintaining transparency in the use of surveillance footage.

1. Camera Placement and Purpose:
  - a. Video cameras are strategically placed in common areas, entrances, and outdoor play areas of Fern Flower - Nature School to monitor activities for the safety of children, staff, and visitors.
  - b. Cameras are installed solely for security, safety, and operational purposes.
2. Access to Footage:
  - a. Access to video footage is restricted to the Director only responsible for monitoring and maintaining the surveillance system.
  - b. Parents or legal guardians will not have access to the video footage for any reason.
  - c. Video footage will not be shared with any external parties, except as required by law enforcement or regulatory authorities.
3. Data Retention:
  - a. Video footage will be stored securely and retained for a maximum of three (3) months, after which it will be automatically erased.
  - b. If video footage is required for an ongoing investigation or legal matter, the Director may extend the retention period as necessary, following legal requirements.
4. Consent and Notice:
  - a. Parents and guardians will be informed of the presence of video cameras within the Nature School facility upon enrollment.
  - b. Written consent for video camera usage will be included in the Nature School's enrollment agreement.
5. Maintenance and Security:
  - a. The surveillance system will be maintained regularly to ensure proper functioning.
  - b. Access to the surveillance system will be password-protected, and only authorized personnel will have access.
  - c. Appropriate measures will be taken to safeguard the integrity and confidentiality of the video footage.
6. Legal Compliance:

- a. The Nature School will comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations regarding video camera usage and data privacy.
7. **Complaints and Concerns:**
  - a. Parents or guardians with concerns regarding video camera usage may bring their issues to the Director, who will address them promptly and transparently.
8. **Review and Updates:**
  - a. This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its continued effectiveness and compliance with legal and operational requirements.
  - b. Any updates or changes to this policy will be communicated to parents and guardians.

By enrolling their children at Fern Flower - Nature School, parents and guardians acknowledge and agree to the terms outlined in this Video Camera Usage Policy. The Nature School is committed to using video cameras responsibly and solely for the safety and security of all individuals at our facility.

## Illness Policy

Fern Flower - Nature School recognizes the effects of the spreading of germs and harbouring illnesses within the Nature School. Therefore, Fern Flower - Nature School strives to provide a clean environment free of illnesses. Fern Flower - Nature School must ensure that children who are sick/ill do not attend the Nature School until the illnesses have subsided. All parents are informed about our program's management of children who are ill when reading and signing off on our policy booklet, which is included in their starting package.

### Potential Health Risk:

Illnesses can cause severe potential health risks in a childcare environment. The spread of germs can lead to a decline in health for all the children and employees in contact with the illness.

Room staff will greet each child and discuss with the parent(s) any health problems or symptoms. The parent(s) are responsible for informing the staff of any medications being administered at home in case of any reaction during the day.

### Symptoms Causing Non-Attendance:

Parent(s) are responsible for keeping their child at home if they are displaying any of the following symptoms:

- A fever (38 degrees Celsius and higher), especially if the temperature is high or persistent.
- Diarrhea or vomiting (when 2-3 times per 3-4 hours).
- The child appears to have an undiagnosed rash/skin condition.
- The child has contracted a communicable disease (other than an upper respiratory tract infection).

- The child is showing signs of an obviously infected discharge (thick and coloured i.e.: brown, red, green).
- The child shows signs of lethargy and irritability.
- The child is claiming persistent pain.
- The child shows signs of a bad cough (frequent bouts: 2-3 times/hour), especially if choking or vomiting.
- The child has eye discharge, pink eye, or severe redness.

### **Child Illness Procedures:**

- A receiving staff member who notices any of these symptoms upon the child's arrival i.e.: a child feels warm and using a blue cross ear thermometer takes the child's temperature (it reads 38 degrees or higher), will then ask that the child be taken home for at least 24 hours or to a doctor for a note confirming that the child is healthy and not infectious, given the group care situation.
- If a child begins displaying any of the above symptoms at the NS, the child may be isolated from the other children and may be taken to the Directors office and placed in the sick room so that the parent(s) can be called to remove the child within 30 minutes of the call.
- Should a child display recurrent or long-lasting symptoms, the Director reserves the right to request a signed note from a doctor. A form will be provided to the parent(s) for completion by a physician before returning to the Nature School.
- For every child that has been observed with any of the above symptoms a form will be filled out by a staff member that includes.
- Supervision for Sick Children - A sick child must be kept as far as possible from the other children and directly supervised by a primary staff member. This being in the office with the Director or Assistant Director until they are picked-up.
- Outbreak - In the event of an outbreak of the below communicable diseases or any situation that is classified as that by the public health practice, the Nature School must notify the public health unit. This can be anything from separating infected children to shutting the Nature School down for amount of time needed to stop the spread of infection.

### **Illness Prevention:**

1. Hand Hygiene:
  - a. All staff members, children, and visitors must practice proper hand hygiene by washing hands with soap and water regularly, especially after using the restroom, before meals, and after sneezing or coughing.
  - b. Hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol are available and encouraged for use when soap and water are not readily available.
2. Respiratory Hygiene:
  - a. Children and staff members are encouraged to cover their mouth and nose with a tissue or their elbow when coughing or sneezing.

- b. Used tissues will be disposed of promptly and hands will be washed immediately afterward.
3. Environmental Cleaning:
  - a. Frequently touched surfaces, toys, and play equipment will be cleaned and sanitized regularly throughout the day.
  - b. Cleaning products used will be safe and effective for eliminating germs.
4. Illness Education:
  - a. Parents and guardians will be provided with information on recognizing symptoms of common illnesses and advised to keep children home when they exhibit signs of illness.
  - b. Educational materials on illness prevention will be prominently displayed within the daycare.

### **Illness Management:**

1. Exclusion Criteria:
  - a. Children exhibiting symptoms of contagious illnesses, such as fever, vomiting, diarrhea, severe cough, or other symptoms as outlined in our illness guidelines, will be excluded from daycare until they are symptom-free for a specified period.
  - b. The daycare reserves the right to exclude children or staff with contagious illnesses to prevent the spread within the group.
2. Communication:
  - a. Parents or guardians are required to inform the daycare promptly if their child is diagnosed with a contagious illness.
  - b. The daycare will communicate known cases of contagious illnesses to other parents or guardians, while maintaining confidentiality.
3. Return Policy:
  - a. Children may return to daycare once they are symptom-free for a specified period, as determined by our illness guidelines.
  - b. A doctor's note may be required for certain illnesses before a child is readmitted.

### **Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations:**

- a) Management:
  - Follow all procedures of this Policy and ensure that all employees are well trained on how to handle child illnesses.
  - Ensure that parents/guardians/emergency contacted are notified immediately and make arrangements for pick-up no later than 2 hours after the observation of illness.
  - Ensure that the sick child is comforted and taken care of while waiting to be picked up.
  - Request a physician note from the sick child's parent and validate for re-entry to the Nature School.

- In the event of an outbreak of a communicable disease - contact the public health unit for an inspection and/or debriefing on how to address the issue. Direct and perform any and all necessary steps outlined by the public health unit.
  - Remove children from program if necessary.
- b) Employees:
- Discuss with the parent any displayed symptoms that the child may have.
  - Observe and assess children's health. ie): Take child's temperature, etc.
  - Discuss with Director and/or Assistant Director the possible illnesses of a child or children.
  - Complete any and all health and wellness report forms.
  - Send the child to the office/sick room to await pick-up.
- c) Parents:
- Pick-up or send family/emergency contact to pick-up the child within two hours of receiving the call from the Nature School for pick-up.

## Head Lice Policy

In our Nature School, the health and well-being of every child are of utmost importance. If head lice are detected on a child, parents or guardians will be promptly notified, and the child will be temporarily sent home. We kindly request that the child undergoes the recommended lice treatment before returning to the Nature School. To foster a lice-free environment, we have implemented comprehensive prevention measures within the facility. These include regular educational programs on personal hygiene, routine checks, and the use of preventive products. By working together with parents and staff, we aim to create a daycare setting that prioritizes the health and comfort of all children in our care.

If head lice or nits are present, we ask that you:

- Contact staff at Fern Flower - Nature School immediately so that other families can be informed (the affected individuals will remain anonymous)
- Follow the treatment suggestions on the information sheet provided by BC Public Health

## Medication Administration Policy

Students are NOT to administer their own medications unless previously approved by FFNS staff. Parents are to bring all medications to FFNS staff – they will be stored and administered by staff. Parents are to fill out the necessary sections of the [Medication Administration Form](#) about medications.

## Immunization Records Policy

Parents may be asked to provide copies of children's Immunization Records for FFNS to keep on file, however, at this time filling out the appropriate section of the [Registered Participant Information Form](#) will suffice. If you decide not to vaccinate them due to medical, religious, or



philosophical reasons, you will need to provide us with a valid written exemption and completion of the 'Statement of Conscience or Religious Belief' Affidavit. If the disease appears at FFNS, your child may have to stay home until the disease is no longer present.

## Food Policies

*Fern Flower - Nature School will NOT provide snacks and meals to children in care.*

### Canada's Food Guide FAQs:

To stay at a healthy weight and prevent disease, Canada's Food Guide recommends that you make it a habit to eat a variety of healthy foods each day, limit highly processed foods, and be aware of things that can shape the food choices you make.

### Choosing healthy foods:

When you choose healthy foods regularly, you can start to make healthy eating a pattern. Patterns of healthy eating help keep you well and lower your risk for disease. Here are things you can do to make healthy eating a pattern for you.

1. Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits.
  - At meals, try to fill half your plate with vegetables and fruits. And make sure the types you choose have a good variety of colours, textures, and shapes that you enjoy.
  - Choose vegetables and fruits for snacks during the day, too.
  - Vegetables and fruits can be fresh, frozen, or canned. Just make sure you choose options with little to no added sugar, salt, or seasonings and sauces.
2. Eat whole-grain foods.
  - Whole grains have more nutrients than refined grains, and more fibre, too.
  - Choose whole-grain options for bread, oats, rice, and pasta. Quinoa is a good choice for a whole grain, too.
3. Eat a variety of protein foods, and include protein foods with healthy fats.
  - Protein foods include things like eggs, lower-fat dairy products, lean meats and poultry, seafood, nuts and seeds, beans, peas, lentils, and soy products.
  - Choose the types that come from plants more often than the types that don't.
  - Choose foods that have less saturated fat.
  - Choose more foods with healthy fat, like nuts, seeds, avocado, fatty fish, and vegetable oils.
4. Make water your drink of choice.
  - A lot of drinks are high in calories, sugars, sodium, and fat.
  - Water is good for your health and helps you stay hydrated without adding calories to your diet.

### Limiting processed foods:

Highly processed foods often have a lot of sugar, sodium, or saturated fat. And too much sodium, sugar, and saturated fat can increase your risk of high blood pressure, obesity, and type 2 diabetes.

*Limit the amount of highly processed foods you eat. Some examples of these types of food include things like:*

- Candy
- Fast food
- Sugary drinks and foods
- Frozen meals (like pizzas, or premade dinners)
- Processed meats (like bacon and sausages)

### Being a careful consumer:

Knowing what is in the food and drinks you buy, and learning about how they're marketed and sold, can help you be wise when shopping. Here are some things you can do to make smart choices in the store.

1. Use food labels to help you make healthy choices
  - Food labels tell you what ingredients are in a product, and if it has a lot of nutrients or a lot of sugars, salt, and fat.
  - Labels can also help you compare foods and drinks, so you can choose the best options for you.
2. Watch for food marketing.
  - Brands advertise their foods and drinks in ways that will make people want to buy them. This means that ads might make you see a certain food as healthy, trendy, or good for your lifestyle.
  - When you know about food marketing, you can question why you want to buy a certain item and decide whether it is a healthy choice.

### Practicing healthy habits:

Choosing nutritious foods is a key part of healthy eating. But so is choosing healthy habits around food. When you build healthy food habits, you can make healthy choices more often. Here are some healthy food habits to practice.

1. Pay attention to when, how, and why you eat.
  - Ask yourself questions to help you find out if you have eating patterns you might like to change. For example, "Do I skip meals when I'm busy?" "Do I eat more than I need to when I wait too long to eat?" "Is it harder for me to make healthy choices when I'm stressed or upset?"
2. Cook more often.
  - When you plan and cook your own meals, you are in charge of what is in them. This means you can avoid processed foods more easily and choose healthy ingredients instead.

- Involve others in planning and preparing meals. This lets you learn from others. It also lets you model and share healthy eating habits with people you care about, like your friends and family.
3. Enjoy your food.
- Different things help different people enjoy their food. Some people enjoy growing their own food, while others really like shopping for their ingredients. Some people enjoy food most when they eat with others, while some prefer a good meal enjoyed alone.
  - Make food choices that reflect the foods you like, the ways you like to eat, and the culture and traditions that are important to you.
4. Be safe.
- Always store and prepare your food safely in order to avoid illness.
  - Know the safe eating recommendations for special groups, and follow them. These groups may include: People who are pregnant; People with certain health conditions; Small children.

Source: HelthLinkBC ( <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/ug2160> )

In our care we are promoting a healthy and nutritious diet. We highly recommend parents or guardians to make homemade meals for their children.

In Fern Flower - Nature School we believe in shared mealtime responsibilities:



The main rules to consider in Fern Flower - Nature School when parents/guardians are packing children's lunchboxes are:

- Parents will be asked to provide ice packs for children's lunch bags.
- Snack-Sharing: In addition, we ask that participants do not share or trade snacks, as this ensures the health, safety, and happiness of the community.
- Garbage-Less Lunches: We encourage participants to try to bring a garbage-less lunch. At the same time, we ask that parents/caregivers consider the size/weight/safety of the containers in which their child's snacks are packed. At NS we seek to empower even our youngest participants to carry their own snacks and water bottles on our adventures, which is totally possible with small containers.
- Drinking Water: Parents/Guardians will be asked to bring a water bottle full of water before every NS session and the water bottle will be stored in the child's backpack. They will also be

able to refill their water bottles on-site. Also, please remember that our establishment is JUICE-FREE POLICY! All juice will be sent home.

- Cooking/Nature tasting at Nature School: Sometimes during our learning children come across well-known plants which are eatable; children are welcome to try the fruit/vegetable/herb only in case teachers are fully sure what it is. Also, sometimes we may host cooking classes with children where we can try something new. Nature School will make sure your child is following any kind of food restrictions or allergy requirements during the process.
- Litter-Less Lunches: We encourage parents/guardians to try and pack a litter-less lunch. At the same time, we ask that parents/guardians consider the size/ weight/safety of the containers in which their child's snacks are packed. At FFNS, even our youngest children pride themselves on carrying their own snacks and water bottles on our adventures, which is made easier with small containers.

### **Dealing with Allergies:**

Any children in the Fern Flower - Nature School who have allergies should be made known upon enrollment. All children with allergies will have their picture taken to be posted along with the indicated allergies in the classroom.

### **Communication:**

Management will ensure that all employees are educated with regard to this policy and its guidelines through the use of the orientation system and regular staff meetings, personal conversations, performance management and evaluation conversations and records, etc. Management sees this policy as another fundamental factor in the health and safety of the children in care and as is why they feel it is vital to address all issues immediately and to keep the line of communication open. If ever in doubt, employees are expected to ask the Directors for assistance.

### **Risk of Choking:**

To help reduce the risk of choking, certain caution foods are modified, and hard vegetables and fruits are peeled and cut into small pieces for children under 2 years of age.

*To prevent any choking accidents:*

- Children are closely supervised.
- Children are to remain seated while eating.
- Rocking on chairs is not allowed.
- Talking with their mouth full is discouraged.
- Forcing food is not allowed.
- No beverages are provided to the infants while napping.
- Children are not to be running with food or drinks in their mouths and hands.

### **Special Events like Birthdays and Holidays:**

During the events parents and teachers are welcome to bring special treats to celebrate the event. There will be a sign sheet provided for a parent to sign up who and what they are bringing. Also, we will write down any allergies in the classroom. Please, remember that Fern Flower - Nature School is promoting healthy and nutritious choices and will very much appreciate it when parents and guardians follow this rule.

## **Emergency Procedures and First Aid**

Fern Flower - Nature School has written emergency procedures with which all NS educators and volunteers are familiar. A copy of the procedures, including emergency phone numbers, is always carried by an NS educator/volunteer in the emergency/first aid backpack.

In the event of an accident during a school program Nature School staff will take the lead in responding to the emergency and visiting educators/volunteers will support their lead.

The procedures are as follows:

### **Accident and Emergency Procedure:**

In a severe accident or emergency, the Fern Flower - Nature School staff will follow this procedure:

1. Establish the nature and extent of the emergency. Refer to the first aid SAMPLE protocol. Lead educator to take the lead in responding and administering first aid.
2. In consultation with other educators, make sure the area and all other members of the group are accounted for, safe, and adequately supervised by co-educators or volunteers. This means they fully understand what they must do to remain safe e.g., stop any tool or firework.
3. Assess the casualty and ask another adult to call 911, or emergency services, while you administer appropriate first aid. The person phoning will need to respond to the following question:
  - Nature of emergency
  - Injured party details: age, gender, medical history (see 'Emergency: Medical Form in first aid backpack)
  - Location: 3827 Charlton Drive, Qualicum Beach, BC, V9K 1Z3, CANADA.
  - First aid administered.
4. Send another adult to meet the ambulance at the main campground entrance and direct them to the Nature School site. In case there is no other adult on site, call the Nile Creek Family there will be more volunteers or Director's cell phone to meet the ambulance at the front entrance.
5. Inform the Director and the emergency contact of the injured 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 the remainder of the party:
  - a) Is adequately supervised throughout.

- b) Is returned as early as possible to base.
  - c) Receives appropriate support and reassurance.
8. The Director of FFNS will continue to liaise with the emergency services until the incident is over.
  9. As soon as reasonably possible after the event, the accident will be reported using an Accident Report Form.

### **If the casualty is the FFNS Educator:**

The other educators will phone emergency services immediately (911) and inform THE Director:

- Nature of the accident/injury.
- Exact location.
- Whether First Aid is being applied.

As soon as reasonably possible after the event the accident needs to be reported with an 'Incident/Accident Report Form'.

Notify the Director and send her a copy of the Accident Report Form.

A copy of this policy is in each emergency backpack.

The emergency/first aid backpack is equipped with such things as various sizes of bandages, antiseptic wipes and polysporin, eye wash, anti-allergy medication, bear spray, a whistle, and a hypothermia blanket.

## **Communication Policy**

Generally, Fern Flower - Nature School will communicate with families, and school groups through their teachers, and predominantly via email. To reach us in a timely manner, please send an email to [fernflowernatureschool@gmail.com](mailto:fernflowernatureschool@gmail.com). Please be sure to communicate the following:

- if you will be late/absent
- if any member of your group is ill with a communicable disease
- if any member of your group is being treated for lice

### **Open-Door Policy:**

Maximum parental involvement will be encouraged by:

- Encouraging the parents to enter the Nature School frequently and freely.
- Ensuring that there are frequent, willing, friendly and positive verbal interactions between parents and all employees and management of the Nature School. Ensuring that parents/guardians feel equal to staff with respect to the significance of their knowledge and NS for their child.
- Ensuring respectful and friendly interactions between parents and staff.
- Promoting supportive and prompt responses by staff to parents' questions or needs for discussion, meetings, etc.
- Ensuring that all parties perceive the Nature School relationship as a partnership, with two-way communication.

- Providing parents with information regarding the Nature School through various media (ie): newsletter, poster, bulletin board, etc.
- Promoting resources available through the Nature School to parents and encouraging their use.

### **Parent / Nature School Meetings:**

The Nature School generally has one(1) parent meetings a year held on the Nature School premises. The Nature School strives to make the meetings as easy as possible to attend.

The meetings are a time to discuss upcoming events, such as fundraisers, and parties, and to review the parent handbook and any changes made to it. Meetings are a time for parents' NS to be heard. Although it is not mandatory for a parent/guardian to attend the meetings, without input from parents the Nature School has no way of knowing that needs are not being met and what you as the primary caregivers would like to see being done.

### **Complaint Policy and Procedures:**

Fern Flower - Nature School recognizes that parents/guardians/families may have concerns, issues, or complaints from time to time and want to encourage open communication with the Nature School so that issues are addressed immediately.

If a parent/guardian has a concern, issue or complaint to make about any of the following items listed below, he/she can arrange for a private meeting with the Director:

- |  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| • Nature School cleanliness (appearance and up-keep) and maintenance of facilities | • Hours of operation           |
| • A specific policy or procedure; About another child                              | • Program objectives and tasks |
| • Food Policy  | • Communication                |
|  | • Payment of fees and          |
|  | • Other                        |

For all other complaints, there is a suggestion box and form that can be filled out underneath the parent board. If it cannot be said at pick-up or drop-off times, feel free to talk to the Director personally. All complaints will be addressed and resolved in a timely manner. We value parent communication and it is important to us.

### **Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations:**

- a) Management:
  - Must encourage regular, consistent and open communication with all employees, parents/guardians and families.
  - Must coach and encourage employees to address minor parent/guardian issues.
  - Address all concerns, issues, complaints and suggestions with a great deal of tact, professionalism and ensure that they are addressed immediately and in a timely and efficient manner. All issues/complaints must be recorded and filed appropriately.
- b) Employees:

- Are expected to perform regular, consistent and open communication with all employees, parents/guardians and families and management.
- Are expected to address minor issues and complaints and/or relay written complaints or verbal to the Director.
- c) Parents:
  - Are expected to bring all concerns, issues and complaints to the Directors' attention as immediately as possible so that they can be dealt with appropriately.
  - Communicate openly and provide input regarding the development of their children.

### **Emergency Communication:**

In the event of an emergency at NS, parents/guardians will be contacted by telephone once emergency personnel (if needed) have been contacted.

If an emergency occurs during an FFNS program, The student's classroom teacher will contact parents/emergency contact by telephone once emergency personnel (if needed) have been contacted.

If weather/road conditions make travel to/from NS dangerous for staff/participants and NS needs to cancel programs or close early for the day, parents (community-based program) or FFNS teachers will be notified by telephone.

### **Questions and Concerns:**

- Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask to speak with FFNS staff during drop-off/pick-up times or to email, also if you have a major concern, we always can arrange an emergency parent-educator meeting after Nature School hours. As mentioned above, if you require an extended or more focused conversation, please communicate this request via email.
- Similarly, should FFNS staff have a question or concern requiring an extended or more focused conversation, this will be communicated via email.
- If you should have a complaint or concern that cannot be resolved directly with FFNS staff either through:
  - an in-person conversation
  - via email – [fernflownatureschool@gmail.com](mailto:fernflownatureschool@gmail.com)
  - calling to Lera Lucas at **250-299-2054**

### **Grievance Policy:**

Your concerns matter to us, and issues may arise in your dealings with Nature School staff. Please communicate your concerns with Nature School staff in person, or via phone or email. We will make every effort to address and resolve these issues in a timely manner.

If you should have a complaint or concern that cannot be resolved directly with Nature School staff, please bring that concern to the FFNS Director/Manager Lera Lucas:



[fernflownatureschool@gmail.com](mailto:fernflownatureschool@gmail.com). In the unlikely event that the concern still cannot be resolved, a letter can be submitted in writing or electronically to the board of directors of FFNS.

## Fundraising

Fern Flower - Nature School participates in many fundraisers. Our main fundraising events are:

- Bottles, parents can drop off bottles at any time. A large white bag is located at the front entrance of the building it is labeled. They do not need to be sorted. Bottles are taken to the bottle depot to collect a refund.
- Annual Bake Sale, this is held before the Holiday Season in December. Parents/guardians and staff members are encouraged to make baked goods and other homemade items donated to their child's classroom. Parents and the public are then invited to attend and purchase the baked goods, and other items with all proceeds going directly back into the classrooms for desired purchases.
- Children's Annual Art Show is hosted at the Nature School once a year. Children work hard creating Artwork and other creations which families are then invited to attend and purchase their child's work. All profits made are returned back to the classrooms for desired purchases. Also, tea and small treats will be provided during the event.
- Annual Book Sale – Parents/guardians and staff members are encouraged to participate in our book sale. Parents and the public are invited to purchase the book, and it is up to you to decide how much you would like to pay for a book then the money goes directly back into the classrooms for desired purchases.
- Other fundraisers happen throughout the year.

Fundraising is important for the Nature School because it allows the children to have the extras which make the School exciting. Events such as family suppers/barbeques, visits from Santa and holiday/occasion parties are all extras that fundraising covers. The fundraising earnings are also put towards renovations and up-keeps which are expected by the staff and Director.

# Guidance Strategies and Documentation

## From Assessment and Reporting to Documentation

Photos, videos, and written notes are also used to (co)construct (with colleagues, parents/caregivers, community members and participants themselves) a theory of the learning taking place therein. In other words, educators (and others) work together 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 Nature School, and one that itself engenders further and deeper learning for both participants and educators.

## Documentation

At Fern Flower - Nature School we have an everyday communication book. All people are welcome to write in it. It is only for educators to read. Please, write all good and bad, accidents, fire drills, questions, and concerns.

### Documentation of Accidents/Incidents:

Staff members shall document accidents and incidents that occur at FFNS using an Accident/Incident Report. Please document all biting incidents as accidents. If a biter breaks the skin of another child, an accident/incident report needs to be completed for the biter as well as the child who was bitten. Use detail when explaining events, but never include other children’s names. If the injury is serious, a parent needs to be contacted before pick-up. The parents shall sign the report on the same day as the incident. A copy may be given to the parents. All Accident/Incident Reports must be given to the Director and/or Manager to be placed in the child’s permanent file.

### Documentation of Health Incidents:

Each time a parent is contacted regarding an ill child or symptoms of illness, staff members should complete a Health Incident Form. A copy of the form should be given to the parent and the original to the Director and/or Manager to be placed in the child’s permanent file. All parents will be notified of any communicable illnesses present in the Nature School via a sign posted on the classroom door explaining the illness.

### **Documentation of Allergies:**

A child with allergies must have an Allergy Action Plan posted in a visible location in the classroom. If the allergy is food related, an Allergy Action Plan must also be posted in the kitchen area. All staff working in the classroom of a child with allergies must review the Allergy Action Plan to ensure an understanding of emergency procedures should the child have an allergic reaction. All allergic reactions must be documented with a Health Incident Form.

### **Documentation of Special Health Care Needs:**

An Emergency Care Plan will be on file for any child or staff member with special health care needs (seizures, etc.). A copy of the Emergency Care Plan must be kept in the classroom emergency binder. All staff working in the classroom must familiarize themselves with this plan, should an emergency arise. If necessary, staff will receive training regarding a child's or staff member's specific healthcare needs.

## **Assessments**

*Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3)* is the assessment tool used by the programs to evaluate and track each child's individual development during their time at Fern Flower - Nature School. It is an ongoing assessment system, meaning that teachers are continually watching, observing, and documenting each child's development. The same tool is used from birth through kindergarten, to allow a more complete picture of your child's development.

<https://www.michaeltaymormd.com/storage/app/media/forms/master-set-asq.pdf>

### **Parents-Teachers Conferences:**

Lead Teachers are expected to offer a minimum of one parent-teacher conference per year and must make every effort to meet with each family. A copy of the parent-teacher conference form and child development summary must be placed in the child's permanent file after conferences. The Lead Teacher should discuss suitable times to hold conferences with the Director and/or Manager.

### **Assessment Portfolios:**

A permanent assessment portfolio will be kept for each child and passed to the next teacher when a child transitions. These portfolios will not be released to anyone outside Fern Flower - Nature School. Assessment portfolios will contain a variety of items, including photographs, examples of artwork, assessment profiles, and parent-teacher conference forms.

## **Guidance Strategies**

Every adult who cares for children has a responsibility to guide, correct and socialize children toward appropriate Behaviors. These adult actions often are called child guidance and discipline. Positive guidance and discipline are crucial because they promote children's self-control, teach children responsibility and help children make thoughtful choices. The more effective caregivers

are at encouraging appropriate child Behavior, the less time and effort adults will spend correcting children's misbehavior.

Effective guidance and discipline focus on the development of the child. They also preserve the child's self-esteem and dignity. Actions that insult or belittle are likely to cause children to view their caregivers negatively, which can inhibit learning and can teach the child to be unkind to others. However, actions that acknowledge the child's efforts and progress, no matter how slow or small, are likely to encourage healthy development. Teaching children self-discipline is a demanding task. It requires patience, thoughtful attention, cooperation, and a good understanding of the child. Fern Flower - Nature School staff will use only positive guidance techniques.

When interacting with young children, staff should ask themselves the following questions: "Am I..."

- Validating feelings?
- Asking open-ended questions?
- Encouraging problem-solving?
- Respecting children's choices?
- Using praise and positive reinforcement?
- Talking with children – not at them?
- Circulating throughout the classroom?
- At the child's eye level?

### **Reasons for Misbehavior:**

If caregivers understand why children misbehave, they can be more successful at reducing Behavior problems. Listed here are some of the possible reasons why children misbehave.

- Children want to test whether caregivers will enforce rules.
- They experience different sets of expectations between school and home.
- A child does not understand the rules or are held to expectations that are beyond their developmental levels.
- They want to assert themselves and their independence.
- They feel ill, bored, hungry, or sleepy.
- They lack accurate information and prior experience.
- They have been previously "rewarded" for their misbehavior with adult attention.

### **Preventing Misbehavior:**

Child misbehavior is impossible to prevent completely. Children, usually curious and endlessly creative, are likely to do things parents and other caregivers have not expected. However, there are many positive steps caregivers can take to help prevent misbehavior.

- Set clear, consistent rules. (e.g., walking feet; gentle touches)
- Make certain the environment is safe and worry-free.
- Show interest in the child's activities. (e.g., participating in activities with the children so they stay interested in longer periods)
- Encourage self-control and independence by providing meaningful choices. (e.g., "You may pick up the blocks or art Nature School.")

- Focus on the desired Behavior, rather than the one to be avoided. (e.g., “Ashley, please use gentle touches with your friends.”)
- Build children’s images of themselves as trustworthy, responsible and cooperative.
- Give clear directions, one at a time.
- Say "Yes" whenever possible.
- Notice and pay attention to children when they do things right. (e.g., “Joey is playing so nicely. I like it when you keep the blocks on the table.”)
- Encourage children often and generously.
- Set a good example. (e.g., using a quiet voice when children should be quiet)
- Help children see how their actions affect others.

### Reporting Misbehavior:

Below is strategies Fern Flower - Nature School staff will use to respond to child misbehavior. Remember, however, that it's always a good idea if rules are explained fully and clearly understood before misbehavior occurs. Whenever possible, involve children in making the rules for the classroom.

- *Redirection*: This strategy should be used most frequently when working with young children. If a child is not following the rules or being uncooperative, quickly get the child's attention and introduce another activity. For example, "Kate, please help me water the flowers now. You've been riding the bike for a long time and it's now Logan's turn."
- *Logical consequences*: These are structured consequences that follow specific misbehaviors. The child should be able to see how the Behavior and the consequence are directly related. For example, Andrew is standing on his chair at lunch. His teacher should remind him that if he stands on his chair, he could fall and get hurt; this will make him sad.
- *Participate in the solution*: If a child damages something, he/she needs help in fixing it or in cleaning up. If a child causes someone distress, he/she should help in relieving that. For example, "It made Brandon very sad when you told him he wasn't your friend anymore. Please come apologize and help me make him feel better."
- *Natural consequences*: Allowing children to experience the consequences of their Behavior is also called learning the hard way. For example, Laura does not put her books back in her school bag after she finishes reading. One day she loses a book and therefore must find a way to replace it. Only use natural consequences when they will not endanger the child's health or safety.
- *“Take a break” or “Calm down corner/area”*: In some instances, a child may need to be removed from a particular situation in which he/she has become overwhelmed or violent. The child should be directed to “take a break” or sit in the “calm down corner/area.” This strategy gives the child a chance to calm down, regain control, and reflect quietly on her or his Behavior away from others. Once the child has calmed down, the staff should talk with the child about the actions that led up to and resulted in needing a break or being sent to the calm down corner/chair. For example, "Hannah, we have talked often about how hitting

is not acceptable. But because you hit John, please leave the blocks Nature School and go to the calm down corner/chair. I will talk to you when you are ready."

If these actions do not help in reducing or changing Behavior the following will take place:

1. Staff will report Behavior and what strategies have been attempted to the Director and/or Manager(s).
2. The Director and/or Manager will observe the child and meet with the Lead Teacher to develop a Behavior management plan.
3. The Behavior management plan will be discussed with the parent and then put into practice.
4. The Director and/or Manager, Lead Teacher and Assistant Teachers, and parents will evaluate the Behavior management plan. If needed, adjustments will be made.

\*\* If a child's Behavior becomes threatening to themselves, other children, staff or teachers, the child will be removed from the classroom and possibly the program for a period of time.

### Useful Phrases:

The following phrases are useful when problem-solving with children.

Instead of ...	Say ...
"No" or "Don't"	"Please stop", "I don't like that", "That's not OK", or "That is not a choice"
"That's not nice"	"That's not OK", "Please use gentle touches", or "That hurts Jordan"
"No running"	"I need you to use your walking feet" or "You may run when we go outside"
"Stop crying"	"I need you to use your words to tell me what is wrong"
"Can you put away your toys?" (If it is not a choice, do not pose it as a question)	"You may help me pick up the blocks, or help Alyssa pick up the puzzles"
"I said yes" (When a child tells you "No")	"No is not a choice, I need you to..."

## Behavior Management

At Fern Flower - Nature School, we manage Behavior proactively by engaging in developmentally appropriate activities, and by nurturing a positive physical and social/emotional space. In general, our Behavior management will:

- Consider the child's developmental level and needs.

- Make expectations clear and provide scaffolding to help students participate positively.
- Focus on the Behavior rather than the child.
- Be implemented in a positive and consistent manner.
- Be designed to help the child to learn appropriate Behavior and techniques.
- Involve consulting with parents/guardians/teachers to include their input on successful approaches with a child, as well as to keep them informed of issues/concerns as they arise.
- Help children to develop self-control, self-confidence, decision-making skills, and the ability to communicate effectively and sensitively in their interactions with others.

At Fern Flower - Nature School inappropriate Behavior is defined as using actions or words that make other students or staff members feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Unsafe Behavior is defined as any Behavior that puts a child or staff member at risk. This includes not responding when called, running, hiding, taking risks without consulting staff, and not following guidelines so that Behavior becomes potentially dangerous to the child or others.

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

1. Staff will remove the child from the proximity of the group and the two will work together to define the inappropriate/unsafe Behaviors and create a plan to modify them.
2. Staff will confer with other Nature School staff to be consistent with expectations and to agree on the best approach for the student.
3. Parents/guardians/teachers will be informed (by phone or at the end of the day face-to-face) of the Behavior and consulted to discover the cause.
4. Staff and parents/guardians/teachers will, together, develop strategies to adjust and eliminate inappropriate Behavior. These strategies will be implemented with the child at home and at Nature School to offer a consistent approach. Staff and guardians will stay in contact to keep each other informed of the child's progress with regard to the Behavior in question.
5. Staff will follow up with the child to be consistent with expectations and approach as well as to offer feedback and positive reinforcement,
6. In the extreme case that a child's Behaviors are consistently inappropriate or unsafe for the child or others, and after the above process has been implemented, the child may be asked to leave the program for a short term or permanently.

## **Prohibited Behavior Management Practices**

- Corporal punishment, sexual abuse and harassment are strictly always prohibited. This includes hitting, spanking, pushing, shaking, pinching, biting, grabbing, slapping, etc.
- NS mandates zero tolerance for sexual abuse, harassment, molestation, corporal punishment, or neglect of any child. There must be always a safe environment for each child and all employees and volunteers are expected to ensure that no harm comes to any child at any time. A child must not be humiliated, either physically or verbally, through sarcasm, taunting, teasing, degrading, etc. Deliberately harsh or degrading measures that would humiliate a child or undermine a child's self-respect are not acceptable.

- A child must not be confined or locked in any room or area.
- A child must not be deprived of basic needs for food, clothing, or shelter. Food must not be used as a punishment or threat at lunch or snack. Access to liquids (water, juice, etc.) must always be available for the child.

## Dealing with allegations against Staff & Volunteers

It is important to deal with any allegations by children, young people, or their parents/carers straight away.

- Any allegation must be taken seriously and reported to Social Services, who will investigate.
- Any member of staff, the management committee or a volunteer should be offered support from another member of the organization.
- Any member of staff or volunteer who has an allegation made against them should be suspended immediately and remain suspended until the allegations have been investigated.
- Ensure as much confidentiality as possible.
- If Social Services investigate the allegations, decide how this affects Forest School's disciplinary procedure.

## Guidelines on the Behavior and Roles of the Staff and Volunteers

The aim of these guidelines is to identify appropriate Behaviors to protect children and young people and to safeguard adults.

- Physical punishment in any form is not acceptable.
- Activities involving close contact should take place in a group situation.
- Keep everything public – a hug in the group is different from a hug behind closed doors.
- Touch should be related to the child's needs and not the workers.
- Avoid sexually stimulating physical activity.
- Children and young people have the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others.
- Adults should monitor each other in the area of physical contact. They should be free to help each other by pointing out anything that can be misunderstood.
- Minimize time spent alone with children and young people and tell other adults if this does happen.
- Don't give lifts to children or young people if they are alone, unless not doing so puts them at risk.

*NOTE: It is important to publicize this policy and to ensure that children and young people are aware of its existence. All Volunteers and Educators should receive a copy of this policy.*



## Challenge by Choice

At Fern Flower - Nature School, we believe in the concept of Challenge by Choice, where students are presented with an opportunity (or challenge) and they are empowered to decide how they will participate or engage in the activity. We encourage students to challenge themselves and participate fully in the experience at hand; however, fully respect the decision of the child and their personalized level of engagement. All students are asked to add value to the experience by finding a way to contribute to the group's efforts in a way that is meaningful and authentic for them. Creating a space that reflects a Challenge by Choice environment enables students to feel comfortable expanding their comfort zone by moving into their growth zone, without stepping into their panic zone. We believe that this is the zone of optimal development, where great opportunities for growth and learning exist.



Getting comfortable getting uncomfortable: We encourage regular small steps into the growth zone – that's where the learning happens. But not so big as to trigger the panic zone!

## Removing the Child from the Classroom

Children cannot be removed from the classroom as we do not have extra staff available to correct ratios. In rare instances, children may be brought to the main office and the Director and/or Manager will assist the child in calming down and/or help staff manage the classroom. Teachers must call the office and speak to the Director and/or Manager before removing a child from the classroom.

If at any time a child's Behavior becomes threatening to themselves, other children, staff or teachers, the Director and/or Manager should be immediately notified.

## Biting Policy

Biting is a Behavior that usually appears between the ages of one and three years. While biting is an age-appropriate Behavior, it is important to remember it is also an unacceptable Behavior in a childcare environment. Children bite for a variety of reasons: teething, sensory exploration, cause and effect, imitation, crowding, seeking attention, frustration, and stress. Biting is not something to blame on children, their parents, or their teachers. There are a variety of strategies we implement at Fern Flower - Nature School to prevent and stop biting. This is the process followed when a child bites:

1. 1 bite (in one day) – child gets a warning, also parent gets immediately notified.
2. 2 bites (in one day) – after 2nd time child will be sent HOME.
3. 3+ bites – if child has a tendency of biting other children, they can be terminating the care at FFNS.

- The biting child is stopped and told, “Stop biting. Biting hurts” in a firm voice. Teachers should remain calm, being careful not to show anger or frustration towards the child.
- The biting child is removed from the situation. Depending upon the observed motive for the bite, the separation may include re-direction or meeting the child’s needs. As little attention as possible will be placed on the biting child, to avoid reinforcing the Behavior.
- Appropriate first aid will be provided to the child who was bitten. The bite will be washed with soap and water; a cold compress will be applied to reduce pain and swelling. A bandage will be applied if necessary.

It is important to explore the reasons for biting when it occurs. Teachers need to work with parents to gather information about the child’s Behavior and begin observations to determine the reasons for biting. Examples of triggers would be: communication deficits, transitions, hunger, lack of sleep, need for oral stimulation or teething pain. Once triggers are identified, staff can work on prevention strategies and start teaching replacement skills. Below are the steps the teacher will take to identify triggers and replace the Behavior:

1. The teacher will examine the context in which the biting is occurring and look for patterns. The following questions should be asked:
  - Was the space too crowded?
  - Were there too few toys?
  - Was there too little to do or too much waiting?
  - Was the child who bit getting the attention and cares he/she deserved at other times?
2. The teacher will change the environment, routines or activities if necessary.
3. The teacher will work with the child who is biting to resolve conflicts and frustrations in more appropriate ways.
4. The teacher will observe the child, to get an idea of why and when they are likely to bite.
5. The teacher will identify children likely to be bitten and make special efforts to reduce their chance of being bitten.
6. The teacher, parent Director and/or Manager will meet regularly to regulate an action plan and measure outcomes.
7. If biting continues the teacher will observe the group more closely and work with the parents to seek out additional resources as necessary to shadow the child who is biting.

All information is confidential, and the names of the children involved in the incident are not shared between parents. In addition, biting is always documented on an Incident/Accident Report which is completed and signed by a teacher and parent. A copy is provided to the parent and the original is kept in the child’s permanent enrollment file in the office.

# Emergency and Closure Procedures

## Missing or Abducted Child

The following procedure should be instigated and followed by the Forest School Leader responsible for a group in the event of any person (adult or child) going missing from the Forest School group.

- Carry out 1, 2, 3 routines. This signals that everyone should move to the Forest School circle.
- Conduct a head count to check that all other members of the group are present.
- Have two members of staff or volunteers stay with the group at the Forest School circle and await further instructions.
- Send the remaining staff and volunteers to search the immediate area for an agreed length of time (e.g. 10 minutes). Arrange for them to return to the agreed meeting place at an agreed time.
- Ensure that each of the searchers has a mobile phone with sufficient credit and battery life. Searchers should stay within an area they know and be aware of their own safety.
- If the missing person is not found in the agreed length of time, everyone should walk to the school. Here the rest of the group can wait in safety and comfort.
- Alert school staff to the fact that there is a missing person.
- Organize a second search party. Any staff member who knows the site can be recruited to help with this second search. Searchers should work in pairs with at least one carrying a mobile phone with sufficient credit and battery life. Arrange for them to search for a specified length of time (e.g., 20 minutes) and return to reception at an agreed time.

If the missing person is not found by this second search, then contact the police.

The decision may be made to do this while the second search is in progress depending on circumstances.

At this point, a decision will need to be made regarding the rest of the group, it will be best for the children to return to normal lessons.

Areas for search:

- All outside fields and areas.
- The school car park
- Toilets within school
- All classrooms and cloakrooms in the school

After the incident is over, complete a full report using the Incident Report Form.

## Incident Weather Policy/Closure Policy

In the event that the weather makes it unsafe for travel and we need to cancel programs for that day, we will notify you by the shared teacher: website, email and telephone (if need be) at least one hour before the time the program would have started. If the weather makes it necessary for FFNS to close earlier than normal, every effort will be made to contact each parent/guardian by telephone. In the event parents/guardians cannot be contacted, emergency contact people will be called. Staff will always remain with children until they are picked up.

## Extreme Weather Policy

Educators and volunteers at Fern Flower - Nature School consult the forecast regularly, and weather-related safety is considered in all decision-making.

In the case of predicted thunder and lightning or high winds, NS educators/volunteers will ensure participants are close to shelter so that it may be sought quickly should thunder and lightning or high winds occur. During thunder, lightning and high winds, participants will stay under shelter.

In the case of extreme cold (-25C or below) or extreme heat (30C), NS educators/volunteers 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.

## Emergency Evacuation Policy

Safety is the most important aspect of the Fern Flower - Nature School. Having an evacuation plan is a strict requirement. All employees are fully trained for the procedures needed to be taken in the event of an emergency.

### General Policy:

Fern Flower - Nature School Evacuation procedures are in place and safety drills are conducted regularly. The current evacuation plan is easily accessible and clearly posted. The plan should include unobstructed escape routes. Employees/Children are expected to practice and participate in evacuation drills regularly. It is important to involve the children to ensure they will be calm in the event of a real emergency. After having drills, the children will not become as frightened, because the routine will be familiar.

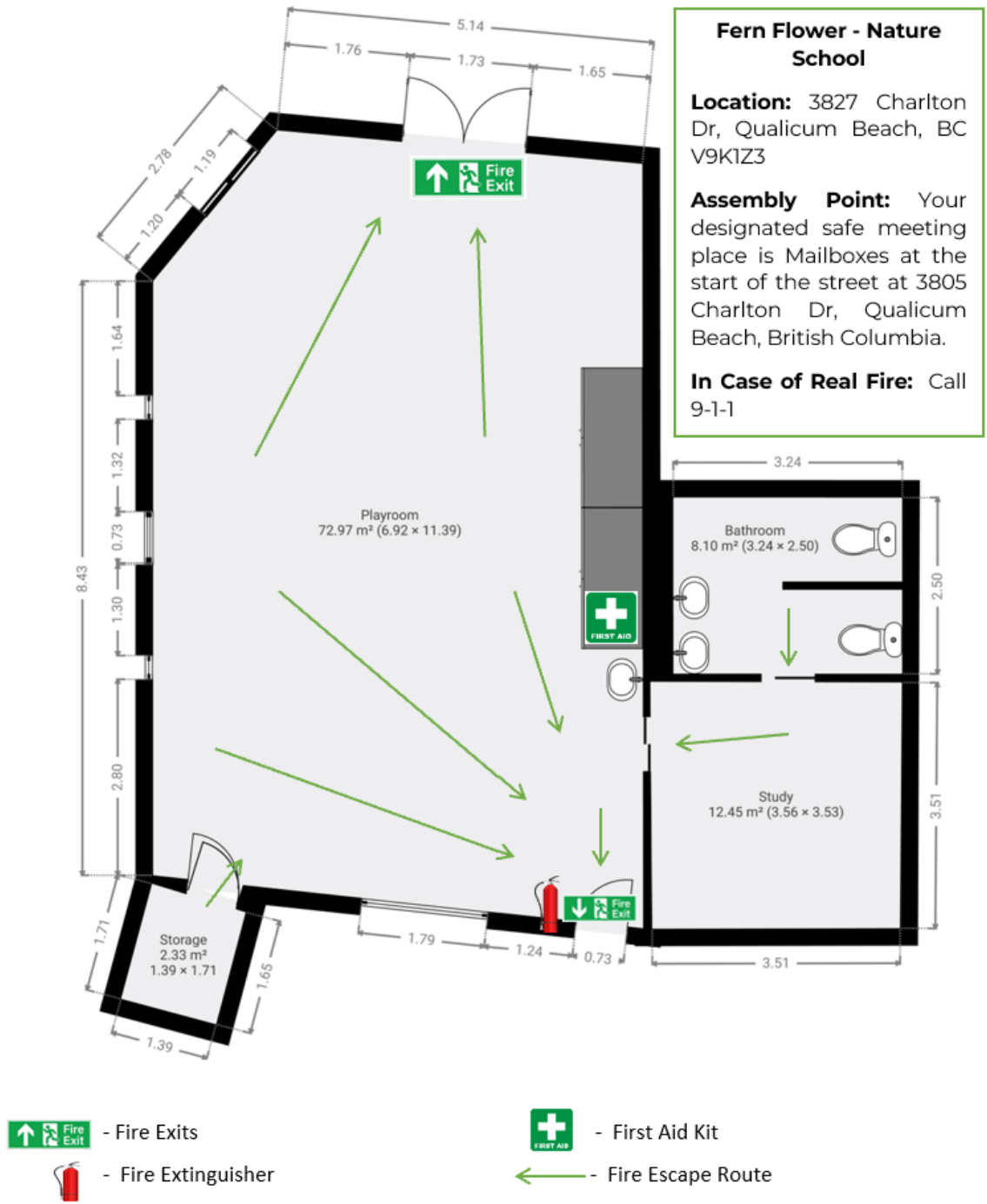
Employees must follow the general guidelines in the event that an evacuation is necessary:

- Calmly but quickly assist children to safe predetermined assembly areas.
- Account for all children as well as staff.
- Check for and triage injuries.
- Always leave a note detailing where you have gone if an area evacuation is necessary.
- Always bring emergency information along with you when evacuating.

**Emergency Exit Plan:**

In case of emergency, the children will be evacuated from the nearest and safest exit.

# Fire Escape Plan



- Emergency exit plans are posted in the FFNS building.
- Fern Flower - Nature School will host one (1) fire practices drills throughout the month. Any time there is an emergency drill, it's recorded and posted in the portable records located in the office.

**Emergency Evacuation/Designated Meeting:**

Places In the event of a fire or emergency evacuation at your unit, be familiar with the location of:

- The second you will encounter the danger; educators will try to navigate it but if it is out of control educators will do a "Fire Alarm Call". You will need to gather:

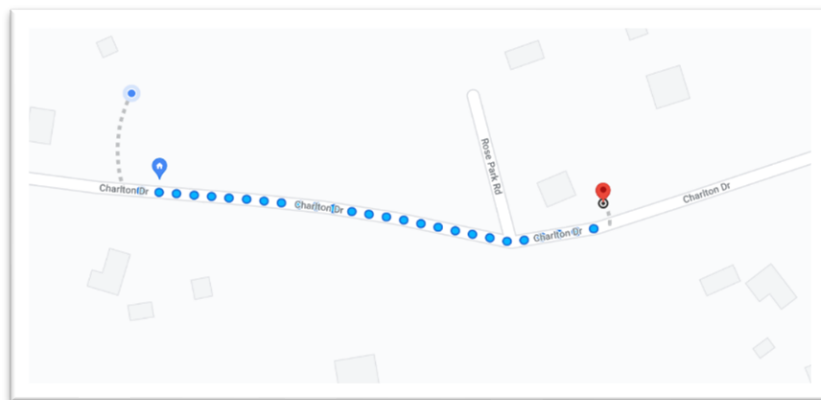
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|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children (count them) | <input type="checkbox"/> Cell Phone    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sign Out Sheet        | <input type="checkbox"/> All Educators |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Backpack    |  |

The forest school leader will lead the children to safety while other educators will do a perimeter check to make sure that all children are safe and with Forest Leader. Then when all people reach safety Forest School Leader will call out and mark each kid to make sure that everybody is safe.

Then, if it is a real emergency, one of the educators will call the authorities and then call the Director to inform them about what happened.

After, all parents/guardians will be contacted to pick up the children from the meeting spot ASAP.

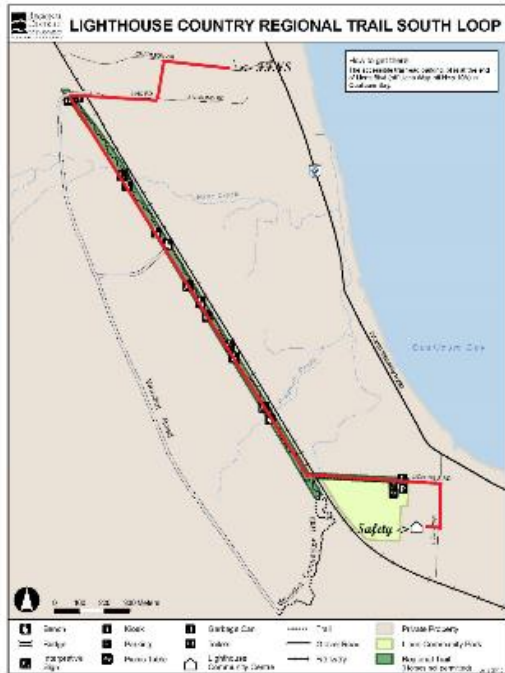
- Your designated safe meeting place is Mailboxes at the start of the street at 3805 Charlton Dr, Qualicum Beach, British Columbia.



- In case of a fire 9-1-1.

Note: monthly fire drills are part of your FFNS requirements Emergency Procedures Look for the Emergency Procedure poster at your Nature School. Become familiar with the space and location of fire safety tools.

### Emergency Evacuation Drill:



It will be done once a year. All children and educators will take emergency survival gear and evacuate to Lighthouse Community Nature School.

Location: 240 Lions Way, Qualicum Beach, BC V9K 2E2

1. The Emergency Evacuation Drill will start with educators will do an “Emergency Evacuation Drill”. You will need to gather:

- Children (count them)
- Sign Out Sheet
- Emergency Backpack
- Emergency Evacuation Kit
- Cell Phone
- All Educators

2. The forest school leader will lead the children to safety while other educators will do a perimeter check to make sure that all children are safe and with Forest Leader.
3. Then when all people reach safety (Lighthouse Community Nature School) Forest School Leader will call out and mark each kid to make sure that everybody is safe.
4. Then, if it is a real emergency, one of the educators will call the authorities and then call the Director to inform them about what happened.
5. After, all parents/guardians will be contacted to pick up the children from the meeting spot ASAP.

### Lockdown Procedure:

In the case of an unidentified person, armed or threatening in any way (more likely a wild animal in the yard), entering the premises of Fern Flower - Nature School, the NS will follow the following lockdown procedure:

- The director will declare a lockdown; this will be done by intercom, by phone or verbally.
- Caregivers will perform an attendance check to ensure all children are accounted for.
- Then children and staff will go inside 3827 Charlton Drive. Due to NS doesn't have the building. All members will perform the lockdown procedures in Director's House.

- A red sign will be posted on the door. PARENTS if you are to ever come to the Nature School and a red sign is posted on the door, this is a rare declaration of being in lockdown.
- Cell phones if on hand will be turned to silent.
- All doors are to be shut and locked.
- Windows and blinds are to be shut and lowered.
- Staff and children are to move away from any entrances and try to remain as low and quiet as possible until a signal is given that it is safe to evacuate the building.
- Under no circumstances is the door opened to anyone if the all-clear signal has not been given.
- The Director will declare when the lockdown is over.

### **Natural Disaster Procedure:**

In the event of an emergency Natural Disaster, such as wildfire, flooding, tornados, etc. that would potentially put Children and Employees of Fern Flower - Nature School at risk, the following procedures will be taken:

#### Wildfire/Flooding:

- Directors will declare a Natural Disaster – Wild Fire or Flooding Emergency via intercom or verbally to notify staff
- Caregivers will perform an attendance check to ensure all children are accounted for
- Primary caregivers will use the nearest available phone (Nature School phone/personal cell phone) and children’s emergency contact form to notify parents of prompt pick-up if safe to do so. If parents/Guardians are unable to be reached the emergency contact will be called.
- Any children unable to be picked up in a timely manner in the state of an emergency evacuation, putting the child and employee at risk, will remain in the care of their Primary caregiver or the Director – joining together with the closest School to the board a School bus or any other vehicle that will transport the Children to a safe location while keeping constant contact and communication with Parent/Guardians to be reunited.

#### Tornados/Severe Weather Storms:

- Directors will declare a Natural Disaster – Tornado or Severe Weather Emergency via intercom to notify staff
- Caregivers will perform an attendance check to ensure all children are accounted for
- Children will then quickly be moved to the safest location in the room or building (basement or windowless room and below sturdy furniture) until safe to return to classrooms or normal daily activities

#### No Electricity Procedure:

- Power outages do not affect the flow of the Nature School because we are located outside and also, FFNS is planning to have power backups like flashlights and power generators.



### **Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations:**

a) Management:

- Follow all procedures of this Policy and ensure that all employees are well-trained on Emergency Evacuation Plans.
- Ensure that all emergency exits are clearly marked and that emergency evacuation plans are posted outside of each classroom.
- Ensure that the Nature School facility is clean and clear of refuse and that all hallways and all emergency exits are clean and clear of debris/furniture/etc.
- Ensure that employees and children are practicing emergency drills on a regular basis. At minimum four (4) times per calendar year.
- Ensure all parents and/or guardians are notified as soon as possible when an emergency situation has occurred.
- Document any situations experienced thoroughly.

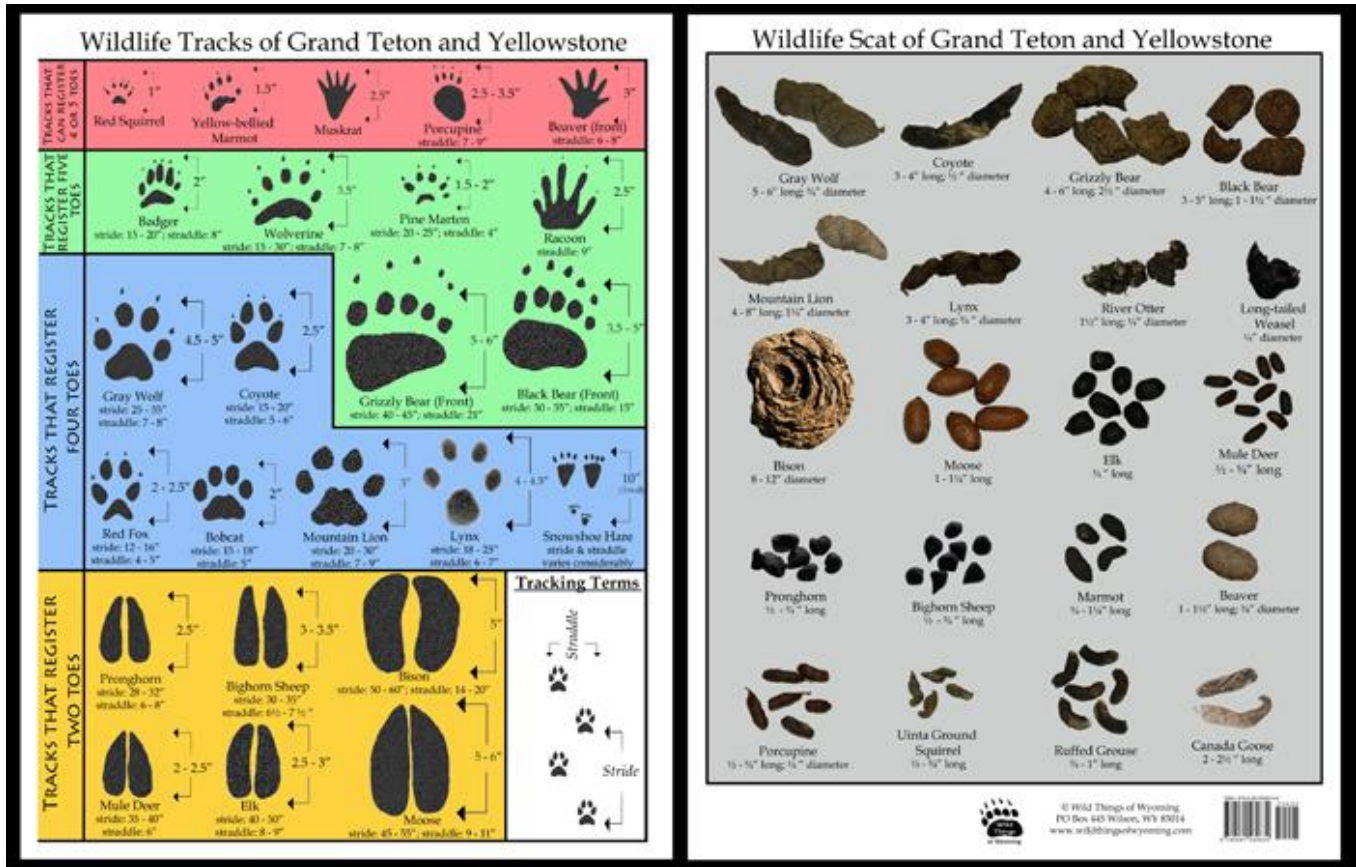
b) Employees:

- Must understand the policy procedures with regard to any emergency.
- Must ensure that you and your classroom are participating in the emergency drills.
- Must remain calm under pressure and ensure the safety of children in care. Ensure that children are spoken to in an informative and serious manner.
- Follow all procedures outlined in this policy.
- Report to the Director and/or Assistant Director with regard to violation of this policy.
- Assist Management with documentation of any situations and/or incidents.

c) Parents:

- Must understand these procedures and the importance of their severity in the event of an emergency.

## Wildlife Safety



Before starting the session, please check <https://warp.wildsafebc.com> to know if there are any wild animal reports around the area.

### Wildlife Guidelines:

- Secure your food and garbage at your "base" or during the forest outing to avoid any human-wildlife conflicts.
- Animals are most active at dawn/dusk and at night; try to plan your outing after breakfast and before dinner.
- Travel in groups and keep kids close to minimize dangerous encounters with wildlife.
- Keep pets on a leash and avoid bringing pets into sensitive wildlife habitats.
- Follow signs and park rules. Stay on trails to avoid trampling and damaging vegetation.

## **Bear Safety:**

### Before you go outside:

- ✦ Pack bear spray and learn how to use it.
- ✦ Check the park web page for any specific information about bears in the area.
- ✦ Look for notices about bears in the area when you arrive at a campground or trailhead.

### When on a trail:

- ✦ Make noise. Don't surprise a bear. Call, sing, clap or talk loudly especially near streams and in areas of low visibility.
- ✦ Be alert. Watch for bears or their scat and tracks, any strange smells or disturbed vegetation. Be aware of wind direction and speed. Extra caution is warranted when the wind is facing you.
- ✦ Stay together. Hike and bike in groups and don't let children wander. Larger groups (4 or more) are less likely to have a negative bear encounter.
- ✦ Watch your pets. Keep your dog on a leash at all times. Dogs can provoke defensive bear behavior.
- ✦ Use officially marked trails. Travel during daylight hours. Bears are most active at dawn and dusk.
- ✦ Carry bear spray and know how to use it.

### If you encounter a bear:

- ✦ Stay calm - If the bear sees you, talk in a low, calm voice and then regardless of if it has seen you or not.
- ✦ Back up slowly - Never turn your back on a bear or run. Running could trigger an attack.
- ✦ Do not stare - The bear will see a direct stare as a challenge.
- ✦ Give it space - Make sure it has a way to get away, and that you are not blocking access to a bear's cubs or its food.

### If a bear approaches you or charges:

1. Do not run!
2. Use your bear spray as it approaches.
3. Play dead or fight back:
  - ✦ *Defensive attack* - Usually, bears charge or attack because they are feeling threatened. Use your bear spray. If you don't have bear spray and the bear contacts you – roll on your stomach, cover the back of your neck, remain still and play dead, they will lose interest and leave. Do NOT run!
  - ✦ *Predatory attack* - In rare cases, a bear may see a human as prey and stalk you along a trail. In these cases, try to escape into a building, car or up a tree. If you cannot escape and the bear charges, use your bear spray, lacking that, use anything at your disposal to fight off the bear (rocks, sticks, hiking poles).



## **Cougar/Mountain Lion/Puma/Panther Safety:**

Following general guidelines will reduce the risk of conflict with a mountain lion:

- ✿ Hike in groups and make enough noise to avoid surprising a cat.
- ✿ Carry a strong walking stick.
- ✿ Keep children close.
- ✿ Always take bear spray along and carry it on your belt.
- ✿ Be extremely careful when biking in cougar country.
- ✿ Watch for tracks and signs.
- ✿ Check with the local park office about sightings before your trip.
- ✿ If you stumble upon kittens, leave the area immediately as the female will be close and defend her young.



If you experience an Encounter:

1. Remain calm, you will survive!
2. Do NOT RUN!
3. Face the cougar and back away slowly. Sudden movement or flight may trigger an instinctive attack.
4. Try to make yourself look as big as possible. Hold a coat, your hiking stick or any other object over your head and wave it around.
5. Yell, speak loudly and firmly, and throw rocks. Convince the animal that you are a threat, not easy to prey.
6. Give him an avenue of escape.
7. If the cat attacks fight back. Many people have survived cougar attacks by fighting back with anything they had, including rocks, sticks, fists etc.
8. Seeing cougars should be an exciting and rewarding experience, with both you and the cougar coming away unharmed. Prevention is always better than confrontation, so prepare yourself before venturing into their habitat.

## Wolf Safety:

### Avoiding Encounters with Wolves:

It is extremely important to discourage wolves from approaching. Taking these proactive steps will prevent wolves and people from interacting.

- ✿ Keep a clean and orderly camp. Cook and store food away from sleeping areas. Suspend food, toiletries, garbage and other loose objects on a rope between trees, out of reach of wildlife. Securing food and kitchen items is important when the camp is unoccupied, even during the day. Wolves have been reported removing personal and other non-food items from campsites.
- ✿ Do not bury garbage. If you pack it in – pack it out!
- ✿ Always keep children nearby and in sight.
- ✿ Keep pets leashed and under control. If possible, keep pets at home.
- ✿ Choose a camp near toilet facilities.
- ✿ Do not camp anywhere near a carcass. Wolves are likely to scavenge on and protect this natural food source.
- ✿ Wash dishes in a container and dispose of grey water deep in a water body away from camp.
- ✿ Do not approach wolves ever. This practice gets wolves used to humans and their scents which results in human habituation.
- ✿ Remember, you are a guest in this environment. This is home to the animals that live here.

### What to do if a wolf approaches:

The greater the space between people and wolves, the safer it is for both. If a wolf appears and acts unafraid or aggressive, take the following action as soon as you notice the animal:

- ✿ Begin scare tactic immediately, well before the wolf is within 100 meters. Do not allow the wolf to approach any closer than 100 meters.
- ✿ Raise your arms and wave them in the air to make yourself appear larger. Use noisemakers (i.e. air horns), and throw sticks, rocks and sand at the wolf, to scare wolves away.
- ✿ When in a group, act in unison to send a clear message to the wolves they are not welcome.
- ✿ If the wolf displays aggressive behaviors, back away slowly, do not turn your back on the wolf.
- ✿ Use pepper spray if you have it and the skills to use it safely. Be aware of the range and operating conditions of the product you are using.



## **Coyote Safety:**

### What to do in a coyote encounter:

- ✿ If you encounter a coyote, make the experience unpleasant for the animal. Make it feel unwelcome in your neighborhood. Even if you are not concerned about problems with coyotes, they should not feel comfortable around us or our homes.
- ✿ Respond to their presence aggressively by making yourself appear larger. Wave your arms overhead or thrust long objects like a walking stick toward the coyote.
- ✿ Throw rocks, sticks or other objects toward the animal.
- ✿ Shout in a deep voice and maintain eye contact.
- ✿ If the coyote continues to approach, back away slowly and move toward buildings or human activity if the coyote continues to approach.
- ✿ Do not turn away or run. This will encourage the coyote to chase you.
- ✿ For situations involving aggressive encounters, phone the Report-A-Poacher number on 1-800-642-3800 and report the details.

### Coyotes and children:

- ✿ What to teach a child about coyotes:
  - If you see a coyote, never run, even if you are scared.
  - Yell at the coyote in an angry voice and make yourself look bigger by putting your arms in the air.
  - Never approach coyotes or any other wildlife.
  - Do not leave food for the coyotes.
  - Never litter. Keep your home yard, school yards and parks clean.
  - When walking the dog, always keep it on a leash. Pick up the dog feces to throw away in a garbage can.
  - Make sure that you do not let the cat out.



### **If wild Animal will approach FFNS (Yard/ "Home-Base")**

1. Educators must immediately perform safety tips while encountering the animal.
2. Gather all the children.
3. Go inside the CENTER space or even in Director's House (3827 Charlton Drive).
4. Inform Animal Control.
5. Inform Director and/or Manager.
6. Director or Manager or Leader Educator - If the animal doesn't leave in 15 minutes - Inform the Parents.

If the animal is still on the premises of Nature School. Children will be staying inside. Parents must remain inside the cars until the animal leaves the FFNS site and it is safe.

Contact the Conservation Officer Service: 1-877-952-7277 (RAPP) or #7277 on the TELUS Mobility Network, to report wildlife-human interactions where public safety may be at risk.