

BUSHKIDS PARENT/GUARDIAN HANDBOOK

“We have lost the balance between short-term safety and long-term health. In outdoor play, risk doesn’t mean courting danger, but rather giving kids the freedom to assess their surroundings and make decisions, allowing them to build confidence, develop skills, solve problems and learn limits. Kids move more when they are outside, have some freedom to roam unsupervised and engage fully with their environments, which will set them up to be more resilient and less likely to develop chronic diseases in the long run.”

[Dr. Mark Tremblay](#), Chief Scientific Officer,
ParticipACTION Report Card, and Director of
HALO-CHEO



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VISION

All educators in the NWT spend time connecting with nature and community as a regular and integrated part of their practice. The Land guides learning for all in an ethical space that celebrates both Indigenous and Euro-western approaches to learning. This way of being supports healthy relationships with ourselves, each other and the Land.



MISSION

Based in Yellowknife, we provide training and mentorship to educators to bring their practice outdoors. We are grounded in a Land-based philosophy where Indigenous and Euro-western world views co-exist in a mutually respectful and welcoming space (i.e. “ethical space”). We practice play-based, inquiry-based, child-led and emergent learning approaches where safe risk taking is supported. Through our consulting practice we work with parents, educators and

decision-makers to integrate this way of learning at all levels.

What is Bushkids

Bushkids is an on-the-Land learning initiative based in Yellowknife, NWT. Developing healthy relationships with 'ourselves, each other, and the Land' is one of the primary principles of Bushkids. To support this, children learn in their natural environment using an inquiry and play-based approach. Emergent and holistic learning helps create space for creativity and safe risk-taking. Learning and playing outside can help to reduce stress and increase patience, confidence, capacity for attention, social skills and concentration. The Expert Statement from the 2018 Participaction Report Card on Physical Activity and Brain Health for Children and Youth says "*for better brain health, all children and youth should be physically active on a regular basis. In addition to physical health benefits, physical activity also improves cognition, brain function and mental health*".

Mentorship

Bushkids offers mentorships to teachers, with their students, to help them to feel comfortable implementing on-the-Land learning into their pedagogical approaches delivered in the public school system. The mentorship takes place once per week for six weeks at the outdoor site/wall tent near the museum. If this is not possible, the training can also happen at your school site.

Concepts we cover throughout the mentorship process: documentation, backwards planning, risk assessment, uncovering curriculum, how to support inquiry-based learning and how to continue the learning in the classroom.

Bushkids Program

From September to May, sixteen children aged 5-11 register to participate in Bushkids every Tuesday from 9am to 3pm. Educators, knowledge holders and Aurora College interns support land based learning for the children in an ethical space of engagement where the values of Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews are safely shared and expressed. See 'principles' to better understand the Bushkids philosophy.

Aurora College Partnership

The Aurora College Early Learning and Childcare Diploma is a two-year program that enrolls 20 residents from across the NWT. After a successful pilot program in 2019/2020, Bushkids will mentor interns for the next two years, until they graduate in 2022. In teams of 10, interns will join the Bushkids program, participating in our Tuesday sessions with the children. Every Thursday morning, the interns will be on the Land with Bushkids to participate in planning sessions and workshops. Topics include but are not limited to: ethical space, inquiry-based learning, risk management and assessment, site selection, Land leads learning, safe use of tools, wilderness skills, learning stories, backwards planning, writing learning stories and staying warm and comfortable on the land.

Educators

Chloe Dragon Smith

Chloe Dragon Smith was born and raised in Beghúledesche (Yellowknife), Denendeh (NWT). Of Métis, German, Dënesųłíné, and French heritage, her mother is Brenda Dragon and her father is Leonard Smith. Her maternal ancestors lived in relationship with caribou, travelling with the herds from areas around northern Saskatchewan and Alberta, through the NWT – Yellowknife and Fort Smith (where her mother and grandmother were raised). They thrived on the land now allocated as Wood Buffalo National Park, all the way up to the treeline and the tundra.

Chloe is passionate about relationships between Lands and peoples. She has a degree in Earth Science; however, she would say that she has learned most of what she knows from her family and her upbringing. Her work varies, from on-the-Land learning, to Indigenous-led conservation, to dealing with climate change. She is passionate about revitalizing Indigenous systems – self-determined systems of living, learning, management, economies, and governance. As a mixed blood person, she feels a constant responsibility to bridge barriers and help support balance however she can.

Wendy Lahey

Wendy Lahey was born and raised in Burlington, Ontario by her Polish mother and Cape Breton, Nova Scotia father. Her mother, Phyllis Bryk, grew up on a farm in Hamilton, Ontario and her father Sandy Lahey, grew up in the rural fishing village of Main-a-Dieu, Cape Breton. Wendy had two parents with large families with traditions that centred on fish, music and large quantities of food from the garden or the farm. She is grateful to have been raised simply with strong values of love and compassion. Being non-Indigenous, she feels very fortunate to live on Yellowknives

Dene Land, Chief Drygeese, Treaty 8 territory since 2004 with her husband where she is raising her two children.

Wendy worked as a teacher for many years and is now an instructor of adults at Aurora College. Wendy holds bachelor's degrees in science/math as well as physical and health education and holds a master's in adult education, Indigenous health, and community development. She is interested in supporting a holistic approach to learning where children and educators appreciate and experience the deep value of Land-based learning. Wendy advocates for a pedagogy that respects the local culture and language, that is emergent and inquiry based and can be made more accessible to children and youth in the NWT.

Brenda Dragon

Brenda Dragon is of Chipewyan/French descent, born and raised in a large family in Fort Smith, Northwest Territories. She lived most of her life in Yellowknife where she homeschooled both her children to Grade 4, primarily for the reasons of supporting child-led, nature-based learning and to foster a connection to her Indigenous culture. An avid volunteer, Brenda participated in leadership roles in many of the organizations she was involved in and became a strong advocate and supporter of Aboriginal Culture within the education system. She went to university at the age of 48 and began a career in Indigenous Tourism development. An entrepreneur, she is the President and Founder of her company Aurora Heat, Inc., specializing in designing and manufacturing all-natural fur products, specifically for warmth. Her role with Bush Kids is as a cultural advisor to the program and directly with the students on her visits to Yellowknife. She currently lives in Fort Smith, once again.

Knowledge Holders

Our paid knowledge holders help us with program philosophy and design as we learn and grow. They will come out to some sessions with us and help with facilitation and sharing cultural knowledge. We hope that our knowledge holders help us to develop a strong connection to the Yellowknives Dene Land, Treaty 8, Chief Drygeese Territory. We also see value in inviting elders from other communities to share their knowledge and stories with us to provide perspective on the diverse history and cultural significance of the land across the NWT.

Location

Bushkids is located in the forest behind Yellowknife's Fieldhouse. It's an accessible site in the center of Yellowknife, bordered by thick forest of jack pine, spruce, birch; a small hill of shield rock, and Kam Lake. The site is easily accessed by a 300 m ski-doo trail.

Bushkids will have a wall tent set up with a stove and a second structure to warm up in when the winter time comes. The Fieldhouse (lobby and washrooms) are available at any time during the day. The Fieldhouse is a 10 minute walk from our site.

What is Forest and Nature School?

Forest and Nature School (FNS) is a term that was coined in the late 1950s; although, the educational approach and many of the principles have existed for thousands of years with Indigenous peoples in Canada and around the world. Simply put, Forest and Nature School is an educational model that involves significant time outdoors.

Today, there are thousands of Forest School programs in Europe and over 100 known programs in Canada. FNS is known by many different names (i.e. Nature Kindergarten, Outdoor School, Waldkindergarten, etc.) and can take many different forms. Some programs are offered to participants half a day per week, for example, whereas other schools have embraced the FNS approach on a more full time basis, resulting in participants spending the majority of their days outdoors. Similarly, FNS can take place in many different climates and settings - urban or near-urban parks, natural spaces adjacent to or on school grounds, natural playgrounds or outdoor classrooms, forests, meadows, or beaches - and with varying age groups.

FNS is a community of collaboration and trust requiring strong communication skills where children navigate the importance of meeting their own needs and the needs of others. The activities that happen in FNS vary depending on the season, climate, landscape, animals that have visited the night before, trees that have blown down, provocations elicited by the educator, tools and loose parts for building and creating, the children who are in attendance, how long the group has been formed, and, most importantly, what interests the child. Sometimes children will work independently, finding comfort in their own world and creations. Other times children will work together to create something, problem solve, support one another or to imagine an entirely different world.

FNS is different from other outdoor and environmental education programs because it involves regular *and repeated access to a natural space, and uses a child-directed, emergent and inquiry-based pedagogical approach*. A 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, to a dedicated educator, to one another, and to themselves.

Principles of Bushkids

Land-based learning: We recognize that the Land is our greatest teacher. Land in the NWT has shaped peoples, cultures, languages, and knowledge here since time immemorial. Building relationships with the Land is essential to healthy learning. Land, People, and relationships always come first.

Ethical space: Ethical space is a way of saying that we balance Indigenous worldviews with the mainstream system in the NWT – which is largely based in Euro-Western philosophies. Indigenous Peoples have been learning and teaching on this Land here since time immemorial. When working within a balanced frame, we can discover the best of both systems and how they can work together for optimal and appropriate place-based learning - for everyone.

Learning through these two principles means we often use the following tools when working with children:

- Play-based learning: learning through play allows children to meet the land on their own terms. This relationship, with ourselves, each other, and the Land, is what must be cultivated first and foremost. This emphasis on relationship is clear in Indigenous knowledge systems. Outdoor play ([link to statement on active outdoor play in resource section](#)) is proven to enhance learning, healthy child development, social skills, self-regulation, and environmental stewardship.
- Inquiry-based learning: As children are given space to discover their interests and curiosities through play, we begin the process of inquiry-based learning where the learning starts with authentic and relevant questions. The cycle of inquiry-based learning is dynamic: we tune in to what we already know, we are creative in how we find out what we don't know, we sort through our new knowledge to take a deeper dive, and then we make some conclusions before taking action. The learning is not linear and it is sometimes messy which makes reflection of our learning skills so important. We access the NWT formal curriculum and higher learning in this way.
- Spiral learning: we can also think of this as 'emergent learning', where instead of learning in set units, we draw out learning and schedules from what is happening on the Land and with all learners. Our curriculum often follows the seasons and it emerges through time, rather than dictating how we spend our time.
- Child-led learning: through play and inquiry-based learning, children are the center of all we do at Bushkids. The work we do is for future generations. The children and how their relationship with land unfolds are the essential factors in how we structure our days. We often refer to co-learning, where we learn and explore together and

where educators are not the experts but rather facilitators. We believe in the child's capabilities and competencies to lead learning together.

- Risky play: at Bushkids, we support healthy risk as an essential component to healthy childhood development, learning, and growth. This includes using tools, and exploring both physical and emotional risk-taking. We want to encourage learning how to self-regulate safely, in a variety of circumstance.. Children are capable, competent, and curious. Through healthy risk taking, they can discover and manage their own boundaries, strengths, and identities.

IN THE FIELD - Policies

Educator/Volunteer : Participant Ratios

The educator/volunteer : participant ratio for Bushkids (ages 5-11) is 1:8.

Essential Clothing and Supplies

Please consider dressing children in the following layers. Please note that cotton and jeans are not recommended.

Insulation: This layer should wick moisture away from the skin. Consider polyester, silk, wool and any natural fabrics. Long johns, polyester pajamas and fleece are good options.

Middle Layer: This is the "dead air" space that keeps the body warm and separated from the outside elements. Fleece, wool sweaters, merino wool (softer wool for sensitive skin) are best.

Outer Shell: This layer is waterproof (when needed), windproof and if possible, breathable. For winter, a down or insulated jacket with a good outer shell is best.

Winter (bring the second set of spare clothes each day)

- 2 warm winter hats (cover the ears)
- 2 neck warmers (no scarves please)
- 2 pairs of warm winter mitts
- 1 warm snowsuit
- 2 pairs wool/thermal socks
- 1 pair of warm winter boots
- 3 base layers under the jacket: thermal shirt/pants, middle layer, wool/fleece layer

Spring (2 sets because everything gets wet)

- 2 winter hats
- 2 pairs of water proof mitts
- rain gear (top and bottom)
- 1 snow suit (for beginning of spring)
- 2 pairs wool/thermal socks
- 1 pair waterproof boots
- 2-3 base layers under the jacket: thermal shirt/pants, middle layer, wool/fleece layer
- running shoes (please no open toed shoes)
- sunhat

Summer

- rain gear (top and bottom)
- waterproof boots
- sunhat
- running shoes (please no open toed shoes)
- bug jacket
- lightweight clothing – pants and long sleeves for bugs

Fall

- rain gear (top and bottom)
- waterproof boots
- sunhat
- running shoes (please no open toed shoes)
- bug jacket
- 2 base layers might be needed on cold days (thermal shirt/pants, middle layer)
- warm jacket (fleece or something breathable)

All Seasons

- small backpack
- water bottle (thermos in the winter if possible)
- lunch and snacks
- 2 extra changes of clothes (including underwear and socks)

Other considerations

- Please label all clothing.
- We will have a lost and found box that we will put out beside the sign in/out sheet.

- It's not necessary to invest in expensive brand names of clothing. The flea market and the Salvation Army are good places to find wool clothing and base layers at cheaper prices.
- Consider having boots that are a half size or one size too big. This provides dead air space for insulation. Socks wick moisture from the skin but cotton socks don't do this well. One to two pairs of wools socks in a boot with wiggle room would be the best.
- In warmer weather, a long sleeve cotton/silk/hemp shirt is best. We encourage participants to wear a hat all day in the sun. The program will move with the position of the sun but it can be difficult to find shade with such small trees.
- We encourage participants to stay well hydrated in warm and cold weather to help regulate body temperatures.

Privacy Policy

Bushkids is asking permission from caregivers to use photos and videos to share updates with the Bushkids group internally and to share on the Bushkids website once it is developed. Bushkids is not currently using a social media platform.

Harassment Policy

Bushkids is an open environment that promotes equal opportunities and prohibits discrimination practices. Bushkids supports the rights of all its participants to participate in activities that are free from any forms of harassment or bullying. Bullying is expressing power through the humiliation of another. Relationships are built on trust and mutual respect to ensure the safety of all participants.

Payment, Refunds and Receipts

Full payment is due upon registration. Individual refund requests received in at least 2 weeks before the commencement of the program will result in a full refund with a 25% admin fee. No refunds are offered after the commencement of the program.

IN THE FIELD – PRACTICES

Illness - Excluding Sick Staff and Participants

Staff, parents or participants should not attend if they are sick.

-fever (> 37.5 degrees Celcius)	-generally feeling unwell
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -new or worsening cough -sore throat -shortness of breath (e.g. unable to finish sentences because of their breathing, short of breath at rest, unable to lie down because of difficulty breathing) -flu-like symptoms -loss of appetite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -muscle aches -runny nose -chest pain -having a hard time waking up -tiredness -headache -diarrhea -vomiting -loss of sense of smell/taste
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Parents and staff are asked to monitor daily for signs and symptoms of Covid 19 prior to drop-off. Educational information will be shared with parents at registration.

Each parent will be given a self-monitoring checklist to support them at home and to record any symptoms their child experiences.

Parents will verify that their child is well at drop-off.

If a participant gets sick at Bushkids, they will be isolated away from other participants. Parents will be notified to pick up their child immediately. If isolation is not possible, 2-metres between the participant and others will be maintained and PPE will be used while waiting to be transported.

Should a staff member get sick at work, the staff member should immediately isolate themselves from the group, notify their supervisor and go home.

If Bushkids is connected to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19, Bushkids will be required to close until approval to re-open is provided. An investigation into the exposure will be done and if it is a staff member, a report of worker injury/illness will be provided to the WSCC within 72 hours.

In the case of a communicable disease such as chicken pox, measles, flu, we ask that participants only return to Bushkids when the doctor indicates it is safe to do so. Any outbreak of communicable diseases will be shared with caregivers via email.

Head lice is not a communicable disease but it spreads rapidly. If your child has head lice or nits, please:

- contact educators at Bushkids so that other families can be informed
- follow the treatment suggestions provided by Health and Social Services (http://www.yhssa.hss.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/head_lice.pdf).

Enhanced Cleaning

Equipment/tools will be cleaned after use if gloves aren't worn.

Items used by a sick child will be disinfected and cleaned as soon as possible.

Staff should wash hands before and after touching any items used by children.

A cleaning log to track cleaning will be developed.

Packed lunches should stay with child's personal belongings.

Please clearly label all of the child's belongings.

See 'food' for important procedures.

Staggered meal times will be supported.

Physical distancing during meal times will be supported.

No sharing water bottles.

We will teach and good hand-washing practices.

Tables will be rarely used. When they are used, they will most often be used outdoors and the surface will be disinfected before and after each use.

Use what you touch and don't share craft materials. If material needs to be shared, gloves will be worn by users. Proper sanitization after use.

Dishes will be cleaned off site using recommended best practices (dishwasher or soap and bleach bath). Dishes will be washed and administered by staff only with gloves on. Participants will place dirty dishes in a bin and will not touch any other dishes but their own.

Physical Distancing

Children are not required to physical distance between each other, however, children and adults are required to physical distance 2 meters apart with each other.

Stay one caribou apart!

Avoid close greetings (i.e., hugs, high fives, handshakes, cheek kisses, etc.).
Encourage contact-free ways of greeting (i.e., air high five, waves, etc.).

A drop-off and pick-up process that promotes physical distancing will be made - children's belongings will be spread out on at least two tarps.

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Practices

Skip greetings that involve physical contact (shaking hands and hugging).

Proper hand washing will be taught to all participants.

Wash hands using a cooler with warm water and a spout. A bucket can be used to catch the water. Wipes can be used if this is not feasible and hand sanitizer can be used as an additional measure.

We will provide lots of opportunities for hand washing throughout the day, especially before eating or activities using equipment.

Cough into your elbow or into a tissue.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) will be available for parents, staff and participants.

Food

Food from the land will come from experienced hunters, trappers and fishermen/women.

Handwashing before preparation and eating. Prepared by small cooking groups. Staggered meal times. Food served by staff with masks and gloves on.

Due to the prevalence of life threatening allergies, Bushkids is a **nut-free** zone. Soy and sunflower seed butters are examples of alternatives.

We ask that participants don't share or trade snacks with each other to ensure everyone's safety.

We encourage participants to try to bring a garbage-less lunch and snacks. Participants will be asked to bring their own garbage home with them.

We ask that caregivers consider the size/weight/safety of the containers that lunches are packed in. Participants will be empowered to carry their backpack, snacks, water with them on our adventures, which is totally possible with small containers.

Consider sending participants with warm drinks in a thermos on very cold days so that their water bottles don't freeze.

Walltent

We will be outdoors as much as possible - the wall tent will be used minimally. Masks will be worn if unable to social distance. Bushkids can accommodate smaller groups of participants rotating into the walltent to avoid overcrowding. A maximum of seven people are permitted in the walltent if wearing no masks (when adults are present). An additional tarp structure will be set up outdoors over the fire pit for inclement weather.

Personal Protective Equipment

When social distancing is not possible, the use of a face covering or personal protective equipment (PPE) can be used in accordance with WSCC guidance based on your risk assessment.

Staff will be trained on how to appropriately put on and take off a mask/gloves, proper disposal of masks/gloves, including appropriate hand washing. Gloves will be disposed into a garbage can with a plastic bag. If there is suspected contamination, PPE will be put in a separate bag before they are placed in the bag in the garbage can.

Non-Medical Masks (NMM) are not shared between children or staff. Re-usable masks will be encouraged and washed after each use.

NMM are clearly labeled/decorated with each child's/staff's name.

Children are directed to put their NMM directly into a plastic or brown paper bag when it is not being used. Avoid having children put their used mask down on any surfaces.

Physical distancing will be the priority and personal protective equipment (masks) will be a secondary option.

Drop off/Pick up and Operational Hours

Operational hours for Bushkids are 9:00am – 3:00pm. Please call the Bushkids program if your child will be absent or late. A written note is requested for early departures so that educators can inform caregivers where the group might be at that time.

Participants can be dropped off at 9:00am and picked up at 3:00 pm. Please sign in/out with a staff member. Parents are asked not to enter the walltent.

Drop off/Pick up location will be at the Bushkids site behind the fieldhouse. Please social distance with other families and participants. Please confirm that you and your child have no COVID 19 symptoms at drop off.

There is a fee of \$25.00 for every 15 minutes that caregivers are late picking up their child.

Caregivers must give Bushkids written authorization for someone else to pick up their child. If this is not possible, please call Bushkids. If someone other than the caregiver/alternate pick up person arrives to pick up the child, Bushkids will call the caregiver. If caregivers cannot be reached, the participant will not be allowed to leave Bushkids until the caregivers are located. educators will stay with the participant until an authorized pick up person arrives.

Inclement Weather/Closure

Educators will be reviewing the weather forecast regularly. Weather safety will always be considered when determining how far to hike or how long to stay outside. In the case of extreme cold (-35 with the wind-chill), educators will limit participant's length of exposure based on age and clothing and will constantly assess the comfort and safety of the participants by watching for frost-nip and frostbite.

In the case of extreme cold weather in the forecast, Bushkids will be cancelled. Staff will contact caregivers as soon as possible, by email. If possible, the session will be rescheduled for an alternate Tuesday. No refunds will be given in the case of inclement weather and if we aren't able to reschedule the session.

Bathroom Use

Urination will be done in the forest when possible. Please encourage your child to use the washroom at home before leaving to ensure we can spend as much time in the bush as possible. Defecation can be done in the fieldhouse washroom. We will wash hands with soap and support staggered washroom use.

Fires and Stoves

- Fires will never be left unattended.
- Fires will not be lit on a windy day or during a fire ban.
- A fire blanket or water/snow will be available.
- A fire ring will be designated as a walking zone and cooking zone only (no running).

Participant Behaviour

Bushkids staff will approach behaviour with curiosity. Our behaviour management approach will:

- Consider the needs and developmental age of the participant.
- Make expectations clear and be consistent.
- Provide opportunities and prompts for the participant to engage positively.
- Focus on behaviour and choices rather than defining the child by the issue/concern.
- Support the participant to develop appropriate behaviour and strategies.
- Include feedback and ideas from the caregivers about what works well for their child.
- Inform caregivers of any issues or concerns.
- Support participants to develop self-awareness, communication skills, decision-making skills to effectively manage their relationships.

Inappropriate behaviour includes:

- actions or words that make staff or participants feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
- putting staff or participants at risk.
- not responding when called or hiding.
- taking risk without consulting staff.
- not following guidelines.

In the case of inappropriate behaviour, staff will:

1. Remove the participant from being close to the group. Work together to come back to a calm space, identify the inappropriate behaviour and make a plan to change this behaviour.
2. Staff will work together at Bushkids to select the best approach with the participant and communicate expectations clearly with each other to be consistent.
3. Caregivers will be informed the same day and will be asked for their thoughts on reasons for the behaviour. Strategies will be considered together to change the behaviour. Caregivers will be asked to follow the same strategies

at home to be consistent. Staff and caregivers will communicate regularly to share updates on the progress of the behaviour.

4. Staff will share clear expectations with the participant, check in when appropriate, provide positive feedback and be consistent.
5. After following the above steps, if the inappropriate behaviour continues, the participant will be asked to leave the program on a short term basis or permanently. Refunds will not be offered by Bushkids.

Prohibited behaviour

- Prohibited behaviour includes corporal punishment, sexual abuse, harassment, hitting, spanking, pushing, biting, pinching, slapping, shaking, grabbing.
- Bushkids has a zero tolerance policy for this behaviour. All employees and volunteers are expected to ensure that no harm comes to any participant.
- Participants must not be humiliated, verbally or physically. Examples include sarcasm, taunting, teasing, degrading behaviour, anything deliberate that would undermine a child's self respect.
- Participants must not be locked or confined in a room.
- Participants must not be deprived of food, water, clothing, shelter (basic needs). Food must not be withheld as punishment or used as a threat.

Risk Management

The management and experience of risk is an integral component of Bushkids and the healthy development of any child. Bushkids educators co-manage and co-assess risk with participants because it is an essential skill for children to develop. We encourage caregivers to support this process at home. Educators conduct seasonal risk-assessments of the site, dynamic risk assessments while programming and activity or individual risk assessments on an ongoing basis. Educators ensure there is a healthy balance between the risk and its benefits.

Some of the risks inherent to Bushkids are, but not limited to:

- Injuries from executing strenuous and demanding physical activities, possibly on uneven terrain
- Injuries from failing to properly use tools such as carving knives
- Injuries resulting from matches or fire
- Injuries resulting from cold weather

- The presence of wild animals or dogs
- Inclement weather

Use of Tools

The use of tools (hatchet axe or splitter, ropes, bow saw, fixed blade knife) gives participants a great sense of accomplishment and responsibility. Tool use can be done in an authentic manner and can develop confidence and self esteem. Educators will only introduce the use of tools when the group is ready (respectful of group agreement, confident, comfortable with group routine). Participants will manage tools that are age appropriate and learn how to care for, store and use each tool in a safe way.

General Procedures

- Activity and risk assessments will be completed before tools are introduced.
- Tools will be inspected and cleaned by educators.
- Tool training and/or assessment of individuals will take place before tool use.
- A maximum of 1:3 ratio will be used for tool activities but will begin with 1:1 for new tool users.

IN THE FIELD - PROCEDURES

Role of the Educator

Forest School educators/volunteers view participants as knowledge builders. Children make meaning of their world through play and self-directed activities. The position of power shifts from the educator/volunteer to the participant where the educator/volunteer becomes a co-learner and not the traditional teacher “expert”. They don’t have all the right answers and sometimes let the wrong answer stand so as not to squash the participant’s imagination and creativity. The educator/volunteer prompts questions and asks questions themselves to deepen the inquiry process. Tools, loose parts and supplies are introduced to change the learning environment or to supplement the learning that’s happening. The responsibilities of a Bushkids educator/volunteer are wide-ranging and include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Ensuring the physical safety of participants, educators, and volunteers, by co-assessing and co-managing risk with them on an ongoing basis such that

all participants feel connected to and comfortable in the natural world.

- Considering the social and emotional safety of participants, and endeavoring to foster a caring and respectful community so that the risk taking and question posing necessary for deep, inquiry-based learning can occur.
- Modeling care and respect for the natural world, as well as safe use of the tools and supplies at Bushkids.
- Playing with and closely observing participants - the trajectory of their play, the evolution of their interests, their questions and struggles - in order to support educators in using their experience as a “launching pad” into a deep, lively, and meaningful exploration of the curriculum.

Accompanying Volunteers

Accompanying volunteers are responsible for:

- supporting participants in their play and exploration of the natural world by both playing with and closely observing them, allowing that getting wet and dirty is part of healthy play, as is taking part in risky play.
- following all policies and procedures outlined in this handbook.

Communication

The best way to contact Bushkids staff (Wendy Lahey and Chloe Dragon Smith) is through email: bushkidsnwt@gmail.com or by phone during that day at 445-4994.

Please be sure to communicate via email if there is anything important to share with the educators, including the following:

- if you will be late/absent for a session
- if you/your child are ill with a communicable disease or have symptoms of COVID 19
- if you/your child are being treated for lice

Chloe and Wendy will also be available for brief “check-ins” during pick-up/drop-off times, and are happy to share the day’s highlights with you, though their priority will always be on participants during that time. If you would like to have a longer or more focused conversation, please do not hesitate to communicate via email, or to set up an in-person meeting time via email.

NB: Email will not be checked during the day by educators while at camp.

Accessibility

It's important to us that our programs are accessible to a wide range of participants regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, language or physical ability, or socioeconomic status. We seek to dismantle the barriers to participation in Bushkids as much as we possibly can. We hope to find ways to make Bushkids financially accessible for all children. We are developing a "gear library" that includes warm/waterproof clothing of all sizes that we can lend to families. We welcome your feedback and suggestions in the realization of those goals.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES AND FIRST AID

Educators have a minimum of Standard First Aid certification. A copy of emergency procedures, emergency phone numbers and a cell phone will be carried by an educator/volunteer at all times in the first aid backpack. The first aid backpack will contain a first aid kit and a complete list of participant's health information and emergency contacts.

An educator will take the lead in responding to an accident. The volunteer will support the educator.

Severe Accident/Incident or Emergency

1. Educator will take the lead in responding to the accident/incident. The educator will determine the nature of the accident and administer any necessary first aid.
2. All educators and volunteers will be made aware of the extent of the accident/incident. The group will be adequately supervised, accounted for and safe. All educators, volunteers and participants will know what is needed to be safe (ex. some activities might need to be stopped).
3. Another adult will be asked to call 911 and if this isn't available, Fire/Ambulance (873-2222) or Police (873-1111). The following information will be collected before calling Fire/Ambulance/Police: nature of the accident, age/gender/medical history of injured participant, location (Fieldhouse address: 45 Kam Lake Rd, back corner parking lot, entrance to healing camp), first aid administered.
4. Another adult will be asked to meet the ambulance/fire/police at the Fieldhouse parking lot. If possible, a Bushkids educator or volunteer will accompany the participant in the ambulance if ratios can be maintained.

5. The emergency contact of the injured participant will be called. As soon as possible, the emergency contact/guardian/caregiver/other will go to the hospital to meet the injured participant.
6. The remainder of the group will be supervised and will receive appropriate support and reassurance.
7. Bushkids educators will continue to communicate closely with emergency services until the emergency is ended.
8. As soon as possible, the accident will be recorded in an Accident/Incident Report Form.