
Dear Parent/Guardian,

Thank you very much for your interest in Bushkids. We regret to inform you that there are no spots available for the next session. If you are already on our waitlist, we will be sure to contact you if a spot opens up. If you are not, please add yourself and your child - we will use the waitlist to communicate opportunities as they come up. While we are sad that we won't see you or your child this winter, there is a good reason why we are not expanding our private Bushkids programming.

We founded Bushkids with the intention of driving change so that on-the-Land learning would become accessible to everyone. We believe the opportunity to learn on the Land is essential to everyday life - not an add-on and certainly not a privilege. People in the NWT have been learning on and from the Land since time immemorial - it is ultimately what makes us peoples of this place. The Land is the foundation for our cultures, languages, and knowledge systems.

The Bushkids Program began as a training ground and demonstration site - a place to experiment and learn best practices and models. While we appreciate the positive impact our program has made on the children who have attended, private programming is simply not accessible to everyone. If there is going to be robust on-the-Land learning in the NWT, we believe it must be embedded into the community where children are learning - it must be embedded into public schools and with families.

That is why our focus is on working with decision-makers to support self-determined models of on the Land learning in the NWT. This means putting resources towards increased community capacity so that communities can develop their own initiatives. We want to share a vision of the future where experiential, place-based learning is supported in schools all across the territory, integrated as a regular and routine part of their curriculum. This, as opposed to a bigger private program, is where we are putting our energy and resources.

To learn more about our vision, read [“Creating Ethical Spaces: Opportunities to Connect with Land for Life and Learning in the NWT”](#) written by Bushkids co-founder Chloe Dragon Smith. This document serves as our roadmap for policy change in the NWT.

If you see the value of an on-the-Land model of learning and would like to see it accessible to every child in the NWT, help us achieve our goal! Together, we can ensure that the culturally and place-appropriate on-the-Land learning that we offer at Bushkids is embedded within our school system so that everyone can benefit long-term.

1. **Offer to volunteer at a school:** Some teachers and schools have strong Land-based programs in place. Some teachers have trained with us and are equipped to start their own outdoor practice, but don't have the people-power to get started. In both of these cases, teachers can use your support, but your support will make a special difference to those teachers who are just starting out. There are many ways you could help: share knowledge, acquire supplies, maintain a wall tent, repair equipment, or provide extra adult supervision. Every little bit helps!
2. **Donate or fundraise:** A little extra money can go a long way. Donating or fundraising can bring in needed supplies or additional support to help take a classroom outdoors. For example, you could raise money to help appropriately compensate a knowledge holder to work with the school or teacher in delivering on-the-Land learning year-round. There are many ways that outside money can help make things happen within schools and even spark systemic change.



3. **Share your ideas and expertise with Bushkids:** We at Bushkids are not experts, but we are doing our best to take advantage of our strengths and passion to make change. We will continue to do our piece as best we can, but we are always open to new ideas, additional support, new partners and new collaborations. Our strength comes from our relationships - with ourselves, others, and Land.

4. **Advocate to Local Decision Makers:**

We are already having positive conversations with various individuals and institutions about integrating on the Land learning into public school systems. But the more people make their voice heard, the more it will be prioritized.. Below we have listed a number of ways you can help us to advocate and add your voice:

- a. **Advocate to your MLA:** this can lead to funding and policy change to support these sorts of projects in our schools and to ensure that daily Land-based learning is accessible to everyone.
- b. **Advocate to ministers:** Contact the ministers of Education, Culture, and Employment (ECE), Environment and Natural Resources (ENR), and Health and Social Services (HSS). Each of these departments have been called on to support this movement, utilizing the recommendations made in Chloe's paper as a starting point.

[ECE – Minister R.J. Simpson](#)

[ENR – Minister Shane Thompson](#)

[HSS – Minister Julie Green](#)

- c. **Advocate to a school board or district education council:** The trustees at each school board and the board members at each district education authority are in charge of strategic planning and/or how budgets are spent at schools. School board staff and trustees are key people at this level who can help us on our journey. Write a letter to the trustees, the chair of the school board or DEA, a superintendent, and/or a board staff member, such as the Indigenous culture and language coordinators. Encourage them to support daily opportunities for Land-based learning for children in the NWT.
- d. **Advocate within a school (to a teacher/principal):** Some schools are aware that we offer training and support to teachers. Any additional push from parents will help to move this issue up their list of priorities! [Click here](#) to find information about our professional development and mentorship opportunities.

[Click here](#) and make a copy of this open template for yourself to make it easier to act. You can also find more wording and content on our new website, www.bushkids.ca. Together, we can ensure that the culturally and place appropriate on-the-Land learning that we offer at Bushkids is embedded within our education system so that all children and youth can benefit.

Feel free to contact us anytime. Thank you so much, we appreciate your help and support.

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