

# FORTWHYTE ALIVE FOREST SCHOOL HANDBOOK



## *Land Acknowledgement:*

*FortWhyte Alive is located on Treaty 1 Territory, on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Ininew (Cree), Oji-Cree, Dene, and Dakota peoples, as well as the National Homeland of the Red River Métis.*

*FortWhyte Alive chooses to be guided by Respect: for the land, for all living things, and for all people and our future generations. As a non-Indigenous organisation, we came to this land as part of the process of colonisation which has greatly benefited us, and due to this, we strive to better understand the history that has brought us here, and to recognize the truth of harms done to Indigenous communities.*

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# Welcome to FortWhyte Alive Forest School!

## Our Story

The story of FortWhyte Alive (FWA) spans generations. Situated on a reclaimed clay mine and a cement factory, it's an example of how we can change the landscape of our planet through sustainable development. FWA takes its name from the surrounding neighbourhood. Our evolution continues upon the shoulders of many visionaries who led the way and our growing community who propel us into the future. In 2016, FWA ran its first Forest School program, and has since grown to become an important and appreciated part of FWA programming.

## Our Team

Forest School Manager - Leah Smith With 20 years of experience and an honours diploma in Early Childhood Education, and 10 of them as a Forest School Practitioner, Leah has found inspiration in many settings of early learning. Leading the team and providing workshops, locally and nationally on the Forest School Ethos for independent childcare centres and professional development conferences is one of her main roles and passions.

Forest School Facilitator - Breanne Reinfort has been working in the Forest School program since 2021. She has both a Bachelor of Science (Honours Zoology) degree and a Master of Environment degree from the University of Manitoba and has worked as a natural sciences interpreter and paddling instructor at FWA before joining the Forest School Team.

Forest School Practitioner - David Seburn has worked for 15 years as an educational assistant supporting students and their teachers in the Winnipeg School Division as well as being a direct support service worker for the Government of Manitoba working with children and teens with disabilities. David is a certified Forest School Practitioner and has planned and facilitated outdoor summer day camp programs with Momenta before joining the FWA Forest School Team.

Forest School Practitioner- Nadine Lidgett comes to us from Anola MB, where she lives with her husband and 3 teenage boys. She has an Honours Diploma in Early Childhood Education, a Certificate in Inclusion, and is a certified Forest School Practitioner. Nadine has operated her own licensed family child care, has worked in all ages of child care facilities, and most recently worked as an EA in an elementary school, infusing forest school values into all of them! With over 25 years experience, she is excited to move into a true forest school setting and continue her learning journey!

Forest School Practitioner - Meghan Duffield has been working with the Forest School community for many years and is passionate about the importance of following the 'Manitoba First Nations Guide to Support Early Learning. Meghan is a mother of two incredible daughters and grew up in the Whiteshell on the same land as her ancestors for over a century. Her connection to nature has also brought her to her herbalism studies with Hollow Reed Holistics and her role as a Birth Doula and educator.

## What is Forest School?

Forest Schools are educational programs that offer outdoor opportunities where children's interests and child-led play lay the foundation for learning. The land and nature play a crucial part in the inspiration of how children learn and develop.

Forest Schools use hands-on nature experiences to support an emergent curriculum that is, in part, derived from the daily and seasonal changes observed in nature. The children's curiosity is the driving force behind the direction and outcome of each day, with a flexible daily routine that includes a snack break, nature hikes, a significant amount of time for unstructured nature exploration, and two social group gatherings where we discuss plants, animals, weather, and more.

## Core Values

The aim of Forest School is to build a foundation for lifelong environmental stewardship by allowing unstructured outdoor play to bring the love of nature into the hearts and minds of young children. It gives preschoolers the opportunity to explore nature through experiential, inquiry-based, and play-based learning while positively affecting them physically, emotionally, socially, and cognitively. FWA Forest School operates under the Child and Nature Alliance of Canada umbrella and adheres to the [same basic principles](#). This educational approach provides children with opportunities to build an ongoing connection with the land, with dedicated educators, and with one another.

## Mission and Vision

Our mission is to foster rich outdoor learning experiences for preschool children where they explore, experience, and play while connecting to the natural world. With a whole-child approach, we learn about the world around us in an organic and natural way.

Our vision is to provide inclusive outdoor experiences for preschool children in a natural setting, which promotes wonder and learning opportunities and fosters a relationship with the land that sustains us. At Forest School, we strive to provide a safe, caring, learning environment for children, staff, and families. We believe in equality and respect diversity.

## Preparing for Forest School

At Forest School, we encourage the children to work on developing skills that will benefit their independence and confidence, such as putting on their mittens, opening their snack containers, carrying their backpacks on walks, etc. It will be helpful if parents and guardians encourage their children to do the same at home.



Please send your child in clothing suitable for outdoor play that you don't mind getting dirty. We will provide seasonal updates and guidance on how to dress the children in all types of weather. We ask that toys and stuffed animals are left at home or in the car.

Send a comfortable and child-sized backpack with:

- A litterless, nut-free, and pre-cut snack in a container that your child can open;
- A reusable water bottle;
- TWO extra full changes of clothes (pants, shirt, socks, and underwear).

## Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

- Ensure all forms and fees are submitted electronically prior to your child's attendance;
- Ensure your child is equipped with the proper clothing, outerwear, and other supplies for the season and length of the program;
  - If a child arrives with less than adequate clothing, they will be sent home
- Provide FWA Forest School educators with information that would assist us in meeting the needs of your child.

# LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

## Whole Child Approach

While academic achievements are important, there is more to a child's development than results. The whole child approach includes a holistic approach to learning where we learn with our mind, body, and senses. On a daily basis, we encourage the development of mindful awareness within our immediate surroundings using our senses within nature.

## The Art of Wondering

At FWA Forest School, there are certainly times for giving information, giving instruction, and sharing answers. However, our main goal is to ignite curiosity and we do this by asking questions!

Children ask questions all the time and can be very passionate about them. As Forest School educators, we remember that they may not be asking for an answer; rather, it is important for us to be genuinely curious alongside them. We have come to know that answers can sometimes bring an end to curiosity and even rob children of their experience to really understand what they are showing so much excitement over. Therefore, a well-timed question can go a long way and may even open up many other



questions to get enthusiastic about. In a nutshell, we start with children's natural curiosity and then try to extend the learning as far as we can or until they feel satisfied.

## How We Learn at Forest School

At Forest School we don't have a set curriculum to follow; instead, we learn through an emergent curriculum. This means the things we learn about come from the children's interests, discoveries, and ideas. Rather than impose certain outcomes, the Forest School curriculum is designed to pull or draw out learning experiences by recognizing the value and importance of the learning process. These include:

- Inquiry-Based, Emergent, and Experiential Learning
  - Children have an innate desire to explore and experience the world around them - this is a form of learning;
  - Build on their curiosities and observations of nature;
  - Use self-directed learning to promote engagement and motivate participation.
- Play-Based Learning
  - Takes place when children aren't told or shown how to play;
  - During play, children communicate, collaborate, solve problems, build skills, and use their imagination;
  - Play is a form of research, where children test their hypotheses.
- Place-Based Learning
  - Get to know their Forest School site as part of their life; becomes as comfortable as their backyard;
  - Childhood connections begin in specific places (think about your own childhood memories, many of them take place outside);
  - Repeated access to the same natural spaces leads to the development of reciprocal relationships to natural spaces.

## Planning and Observation

The educators use observation as a tool and will record their reflections and thoughts daily. Pedagogical documentation will make learning visible both to children and families via the Storypark platform. Educators will engage in a more formal assessment of the program, children's interests, and development throughout the sessions. We highly encourage families to look at Storypark together with their children to spark discussions about their day.

## A "Typical" Day

Every day at Forest School is different as our days are structured based on the children's interests, what is happening around us, the season/weather, and the loose parts and provocations set up by educators. Children can be sure that they will have the day to explore through free play. That might mean building snow structures or looking for bugs and creatures under rocks and logs or creating art with natural supplies available at our site.

## Risky Play

Outdoor play is a basic need for children, and inherent to play is the necessity of risk. The risky play takes many different shapes but always involves pushing limits and comfort zones in a thrilling and exciting way. It's about testing and getting to know oneself while building strength and resilience for trying new things.

At FWA Forest School, children can engage in the following eight categories of risky play:

- **Play with Great Heights** which includes climbing trees, logs, straw bales, etc.;
- **Rough and Tumble Play** can include play fighting, chasing, and tumbling;
- **Working with Tools** includes working with hand tools like loppers, hand drills, mallets, saws, etc.;
- **Play with the Chance of Getting Lost**, of which a perfect example is “hide and seek” as children get to experience the feeling of “being lost;”
- **Play at Great Speeds** includes running downhill and tobogganing;
- **Play near Dangerous Elements** which includes being around a fire or playing close to water.
- **Impact Play** which includes jumping/landing, stick whacking and being bumped
- **Vicarious Risky Play** which is the more passive act of watching risky play occur

### What Risky Play is not:

- Letting children do whatever they want;
- Ignoring children as they play in their environment;
- Being far away from the child;
- Not stepping in when a child is doing something that is not safe.

### How We Support Risky Play:

With ALL risky play, the children are closely supervised to make sure they are being ‘as safe as necessary’ rather than ‘as safe as possible.’ Educators provide guidance and hands-on tips to get through challenging situations.





# POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

## Terms and Conditions

In order to participate in pre-registered programs, registration must be completed in full online before attending the program (<https://www.fortwhyte.org/families/forest-school/>).

With a FortWhyte Alive membership, families get a 10% discount on the Forest School program fee. Please note that if you have selected a member discount, your membership status is subject to verification, and discounts may be reversed if your membership is not current.

Payments can be completed all at once or through our monthly payment plan. Refunds will be determined on a case-by-case basis and are not given unless there are extreme circumstances that prevent a child from participating in FWA Forest School.

- The \$100 deposit is non-refundable.
- Refunds will not be given if a day's program is cancelled due to inclement weather.
- A child who is absent or leaves for a portion of the day due to illness, injury, expulsion, or any other reason will not be refunded any portion of that day's program fees. If the child is unable to return for the remainder of the program term, a refund may be granted for the remaining days.
- If a refund is issued, it may be subject to a \$50 administrative fee. In some cases, refunds can be used toward a future session.
- 14 days notice is required if you decide to leave the program. You may be refunded the remaining balance, minus any administrative fees. If you are in the year-long program, you will be retroactively charged the regular day rate for the number of days attended up until that point.

## Child Privacy Policy

We will never ask for more information than what is necessary. In accordance with the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, names, addresses, or other personal information collected by FWA will only be used for internal purposes such as informational mailings, membership renewals, and other communications. You have the right to request that your name and other information not be used for any internal FWA purposes. We will not share details with anyone else without consent, except when we are legally obligated to do so.

## Child Protection Policy

Preventative measures against child abuse will be taken at all times, and FWA Forest School staff understand and recognize their duty to report suspected child abuse immediately in accordance with the [Child and Family Services Act](#).

## Program Withdrawal Policy

FWA Forest School requires an email or paper notice from a parent/guardian if the family needs withdrawal from the program. A minimum of two weeks notice is required. If the child is unable to attend within that time frame enrollment fees will still be applied.

## Drop-off and Pick-Up

FWA Forest School requires written or verbal authorization from a parent/guardian for other people who may pick up their child or be contacted in case of an emergency. Parents and guardians must notify FWA Forest School before changing the usual pick-up routine. If there is a new person picking up your child that is not on the pick-up list, please inform the educators so they know to expect them. Also, make them aware that educators will need to see ID.

Drop-off is no earlier than 5 minutes before your program starts. If you will be dropping your child off more than 15 minutes after the program begins, there is no guarantee that we will be at the main site to greet you. We request that you text or call the **Forest School Phone at 204-391-2936** to let us know that you are running late.

Children must be picked up promptly at the end of the program. If you are running late, please text or call the Forest School Phone to let us know. If your child is picked up after the set pick-up time, you will be **charged a late fee** of \$10 for each 10-minute increment. You will be notified if a fee is due. Cash will be accepted and given directly to the staff who stayed overtime with the waiting child.

## Toileting Procedures

Children will use the indoor bathroom facilities before the group goes out to the forest. If a child has to go to the bathroom, an educator will accompany them. All program participants must be able to use the washroom independently and are required to always bring an extra change of clothes.

## Hand Washing and Drinking Water

All program participants will wash their hands with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer, prior to eating and after using the washroom at FWA Forest School. Children will be able to refill their water bottles on site.



## How We Keep Your Child Safe

### First Aid and Criminal Records Check

Educators are trained in Emergency First Aid and carry First Aid kits during the program. All FWA prospective employees and volunteers, who will be counted in the staff-to-child ratio, must have a clear criminal record check and child abuse registry check.

### Ratios

The Aspen Blooms, ages 3-6, has a maximum group size of 12 children and 2 qualified Forest School educators. The ratio of child-to-educator is 6:1. We also have 1 FWA volunteer per group.

The Catkins, ages 5-10 has a maximum group size of 16 children and 2 qualified Forest School educators. The ratio of child-to-educator is 8:1. We also have 1 FWA volunteer per group

The reason we keep our child-to-educator ratio low is to ensure the deepest experience for the children to explore the environment, engage in various types of play, linger for extended periods of time in a chosen interest, learn about and use tools, ask questions, and look for answers, etc.

All of our volunteers have to go through the FWA volunteer recruitment process and complete our Forest School Volunteer Training before joining the program. Our educators and volunteers must have an acceptance of and commitment to our Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct for working with children.

### Educator and Volunteer Responsibilities

Educators are responsible for the delivery of the program and make sure it follows the guidelines of the Child and Nature Alliance of Canada. Volunteers are assisting educators during the program, they are never alone with a child.

The responsibilities of our educators and volunteers include, but are not limited to:

- Ensuring the physical and emotional safety of the children;
- Assessing and managing risk;
- Creating a positive, welcoming space and community where everyone feels safe, and a program that supports our core values, mission, and vision;
- Modeling good behaviour and respect for others and the natural world;
- Co-conspiring in play and observation with the children.

## Risk Management

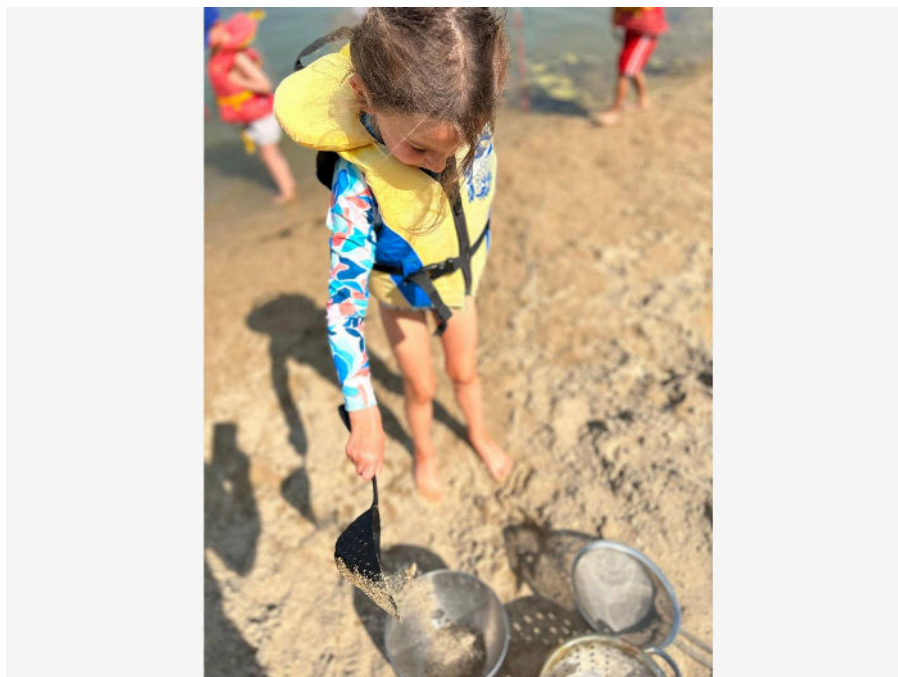
While a hazard is something a child does not see, a risk is a challenge that a child can see and choose to undertake or not. We believe that there is an inherent value to risk. Learning how to assess and navigate risk is an important part of healthy child development and a fundamental practice within FWA Forest School (see *Risky Play*). Children should have the opportunity to learn how to manage risk for themselves, as eliminating risk leads to a child's inability to assess danger. When children learn how to assess a risky situation, they will know/feel if a certain situation is safe for them or not. Furthermore, this gives them independence, competence, confidence, and ownership to trust themselves, while developing decision-making skills. Forest School educators' mission is to keep the children safe, but also to enable them to learn to manage appropriate risks for themselves.

## Risk Assessments

- **Daily Risk Assessments** are completed by educators on a daily basis to identify perceived and real risks around our sites and for the weather.
- **Seasonal Site Assessments** are completed by educators before each season for all of the sites that the group visits regularly.
- **Dynamic Risk Assessments** involve the children being a part of the risk assessments throughout our days.
- **Risk/Benefit Assessments** are completed by educators before activities like tool work, climbing, or tobogganing is introduced.

## Water Guidelines

When playing on the beach area and wading into the lake, the use of PFDs will be compulsory. Educators will also adhere to an arm's length policy. Additional staff and/or volunteers will be on-hand for planned water days. Have a 1:4 ratio of staff to children in the water. Weekly test the water's Ecoli levels and parents will be advised if at any time our testing indicates any concerns with water quality.





## Fire Use

When lighting a fire, the educator will ensure that all other adults are aware and that the weather conditions are suitable and safe. Fires cannot be lit until fire safety equipment is in place (i.e. safety circle rope barrier, fire extinguisher). A fire cannot be left unattended by an adult.

A safety circle is the 'safe zone' designated around a fire. Fire safety rules will be reviewed regularly: no running around the fire, children cannot go beyond the safety circle, children cannot carry items/equipment into the fire area, everyone must remain seated around the fire, and nothing can be thrown into the fire unless invited by an educator. The use of fire will not be implemented into a program until educators have deemed the children are ready.



## Tick Prevention

Tick season is from April to November with the nymphs being active in the late spring and early summer and the adults being active in the spring and fall. Ticks are active until the first permanent snowfall or when air temperatures are consistently below 4°C. To reduce the likelihood of your child getting bitten by ticks please tuck their pants into their socks and check for ticks by the end of the day.

## Poison Ivy

Although there is not a large amount of poison ivy near the site, it is still present so we show the children what poison ivy looks like and remind them that "leaves of three let it be." We also stay away from known poison ivy areas, and continuously remove it from our site.

## Food Policy

It will be stressed that children never put anything found in the forest in their mouths unless encouraged to do so by an educator. Wild edibles are a part of the Forest School program; however, this will not be implemented until it is deemed that the children are ready. As for snacks, children will only eat what they bring. On occasion we may have birthday celebrations or visits to and from FortWhyte Farms that can involve other snacks. Food Authorization forms will be provided during registration.

## Inclement Weather Policy

Because this is an outdoor program, weather and the elements will play a role in program planning and ensuring safety. The weather will be assessed by staff as part of the daily risk assessment and the program will be adjusted accordingly. The following weather measures will be followed:

### Sun/Heat

On warm and sunny days, we continuously remind the children to drink water and wear their sun hats. We also make sure to spend our time in shaded areas and playing with cool water in the mud kitchen or at the beach. We reapply sunscreen halfway through the program, and we take breaks during physical activities. If it is extremely hot, we take breaks in the cabins where the air is cooler.

### Smoke/Air Quality

Staff will check the projected air quality index prior to the program and will contact parents and guardians about adjustments to the schedule. If the projected air quality health risk is moderate (4-6), we will reduce the amount we walk and do quieter activities. Staff will watch children for signs of eye and throat irritation and call parents or guardians if necessary for an early pick-up. If the projected air quality health risk is high (7-9), we will follow the same procedures for moderate health risks, in addition to encouraging parents and guardians of children with specific health risks such as asthma to keep them home for that day. If the projected air quality health risk is very high (10-10+) we will cancel the program and families will be notified via Storypark and email no later than 7:15 am on the program day.

### Rain/Thunderstorm

Rain gear must be worn on rainy days. If children get wet, staff will make an effort to change them into dry clothes. If lightning is sighted, staff will bring the children to the closest indoor space and stay there until the lightning has passed.

### Cold

We may choose to cancel a day's program if there is a significant safety risk. In the case of extremely hazardous road conditions or if extreme weather would keep us inside 100% of the time, cancellation of the program would be considered, and families would be notified via Storypark and email no later than 7:15 am on the program day.

We look at each day individually when gauging how much time we spend outside. There are several factors that can affect the weather each day that we take into consideration when making decisions about where to play and for how long. During outdoor play in winter, staff



monitor the children for frostnip (early signs of frostbite) and any other signs of cold ailments such as cold hands or feet, and will venture indoors for warm-up breaks as needed.



## Illness Policy

### Absent/Sick Days

If your child is sick or absent for a day, please let Forest School staff know via StoryPark or texting the **Forest School Phone at 204-391-2936**. There will not be a refund for that day's programming.

## Emergency Procedures

FWA has identified four categories of situations that can happen and four different responses that should occur:

**Type 0 Situation:** Minor situations; all program participants can continue as planned with no variation from the schedule. *E.g. band-aid, stubbed toe, mild dehydration, scraped knee.*

- These can be handled quickly by one staff member.
- Incident reports might be needed to be completed.

**Type 1 Situation:** Moderate situation; participant needs non-urgent medical attention, or program schedule must be slightly modified for some/all participants. *E.g. Deep cuts, and head injuries.*

- These may require more than one staff member or one staff member for an extended period of time.
- Parents/guardians may need to be contacted during the incident.
- Parents/guardians have to be informed by the end of the day.
- Incident reports have to be completed.

**Type 2 Situation:** Major situation; the planned program must be halted/modified until the situation is rectified. *E.g. runaway child, a broken bone, mild anaphylaxis, suspicious public loitering too close, major weather events.*

- More than one staff member needed to provide care or attention.
- One or more participants are not able to resume planned activities after care.
- Parents/guardians must be contacted for pickup.
- FWA Forest School Manager [(204) 989-8355 x 209] and parent/guardian must be contacted right away.
- An incident report must be completed afterward.

**Type 3 Situation:** Urgent situation; all program activities at all sections must be halted. Emergency medical care is necessary or may be needed in the immediate future. *Eg. Missing child for an extended period of time, life-threatening injuries/ailments, major building fires.*

- These situations are characterized by one or more persons' life being in jeopardy.
- Trained Forest School staff or volunteers will contact EMS and provide care until EMS arrives to evacuate the patient by ambulance.
- The Forest School Manager will contact the front desk staff at FWA at (204) 989-8355 x 201.
- All FWA staff, including education/school programs, maintenance, etc., will be available to provide assistance if needed.
- The child's parents/guardians will be notified.
- An incident report must be completed afterward.

For details about our "Missing Person Protocol," please see the "Background Information" at the end of this handbook.



## Behaviour Policy

### Behaviour Guidance

At Forest School, we treat conflict as an *opportunity for learning*. By using this philosophy, we can see that the process of solving conflict is as important as the outcome. At FWA Forest School, we support behaviour proactively by engaging in developmentally appropriate activities, and by nurturing a positive physical, social, and emotional space.

In the case of inappropriate (exclusion, name calling, etc.) or unsafe (not responding when called, running, hiding, or actions that are deemed dangerous to the child or to others) behaviour, 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 behaviour and create a plan to modify it;
2. Staff will consult with other Forest School staff to be consistent with expectations and to discuss the best approach for the child;
3. Parents/guardians will be informed (face-to-face at the end of the day or by phone or private message) of the behaviour and consulted on solutions;
4. Staff will follow up with the child to be consistent with the expectations and approach as well as to offer feedback and positive reinforcement.

We believe providing a supportive environment and using positive guidance strategies help children learn how to respect, and develop positive, nurturing relationships with others. Our behaviour guide policy includes realistic expectations of children's abilities and natural, logical consequences for behaviour that help children grow. It is important for us to share this information with parents/guardians to help develop understanding and consistency between the child's home and Forest School.

We understand that all human actions are an attempt to have certain needs met. Our goal when addressing challenging behaviour is to get at the root of what the child needs at that moment and work with the child to find a healthy, appropriate way to fill that need. Conflict is growth trying to happen and we see challenging behaviours as a way to learn something about ourselves, each other, and how we relate to other people.

### Prohibited Behaviour

We have a zero-tolerance policy for any type of abuse (physical, verbal, sexual, neglect of a child, corporal punishment, etc.). We maintain a safe environment for each child at all times and all employees and volunteers are expected to ensure that no harm comes to any child. A child must not be humiliated, (physically or verbally, through sarcasm, taunting, teasing, etc.) at any time. Although we allow space for big feelings to be worked out, it has to be in a safe manner. There are occasions when a child may need to be sent home for the day due to unsafe behaviour. In the event that a child needs to be sent home, parents/guardians will be notified immediately and expected to come and pick up their child. There will not be a refund for that day's programming. This is rare and would only happen when all other ideas are exhausted.

# COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

## General Communication

### StoryPark

For those of you who are new to Forest School, you will receive an invitation to join Storypark, a secure, online communication platform we use to communicate with families. Through the Storypark website and smartphone app, we can share with you your child's activities, send important notifications, and network between families and educators. This is a great way to stay connected to your child's Forest School experience!

### Forest School Phone: (204) 391-2936

This phone is carried by staff during program hours and is the fastest and most reliable method of contact. It will be used as follows:

- TEXT this number to notify us if your child will be late dropped off or picked up;
  - No voicemail option
  - Please share this phone number with others authorized to pick up your child
- For emergency outgoing calls by Forest School staff;
- Staff may not pick up a call immediately if busy with children during program times;
- Contact Forest School Manager at **[(204)989-8355 x 227]** for all other inquiries.

## Grievance Policy

All formal complaints and grievances will be taken seriously and, in most circumstances, will be the subject of some form of negotiation or investigation. Should a dispute come up, an effort shall be made to settle it. If nothing leads to the parties resolving a grievance through an informal discussion or in any other way that they deem appropriate, a formal grievance may be filed.



# INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY

## Equal Opportunity Policy

One of the primary goals of FWA Forest School is to make our programs accessible to a wide range of participants regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, language, physical/emotional/mental ability, or socioeconomic status. We seek to dismantle the barriers to participation in FWA Forest School by making our site physically accessible for everyone and our community safe and welcoming.

Our staff will ensure that children feel secure and understand that their contributions are valued. We want our program to have the feel of a 'family'. Children will be encouraged to appreciate and value differences in others. The curriculum will offer experiences that allow for a range of different learning styles. Forest School programs have been proven to be ideal learning situations for children who don't always succeed in the regular school system.

## Reconciliation Action Plan

At our Forest School, we discuss Indigenous perspectives and reciprocity with children in a way that makes sense to them, where the aim is to create a foundation that can carry truth and reconciliation forward. When talking about these matters we use sharing circles, books written by Indigenous authors, and resources from reliable sources regarding Indigenous perspectives. In addition to our land acknowledgment, our vision is for the children to develop a strong, respectful relationship with the people, plants, animals, and history of this land.

Forest School is deeply rooted in place and aims to instill a sense of belonging to nature so children understand that the land is the foundation for all life on Earth and must be treated respectfully to ensure its perpetuity.

Annual events of significance that we acknowledge throughout the year are:

- Orange Shirt Day (September 30)
- National Indigenous History Month (June)
- National Indigenous Peoples Day (June 21)



# ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

## Sustainability and Reciprocity

An inherent goal of our Forest School program is to bring awareness of the natural world and systems that sustain us and build a lasting connection to the Earth. This connection helps us understand that we are a part of nature and, therefore, that nature is our home. Just as nature provides for us, it is our responsibility to respect and care for natural systems and cycles to ensure our mutual health and well-being.

## Leave No Trace

The Forest School program follows the 'Rule of Respect' in that we will not disrupt the home of the plants and the animals who live at FWA to the best of our ability. The idea of 'taking only pictures and leaving only footprints' will be encouraged. The collecting of living things such as wildflowers will be done only under the supervision of an adult, or in some cases not at all. Trees and logs used for shelter building will be done with existing fallen trees or snags. Living trees will be respected and therefore not to be used for shelter building. Natural found materials are used for artistic creations and tool work. We compost our food waste and paper towels and pack out our garbage and recycling.

## Ecological Impact Assessment

FWA is fortunate to have a beautiful area to run Forest School programming. The impact that children have on a certain area is minimal due to the availability of space. However, to make sure that the impact of the program is as minimal as possible the Forest School educators complete an ecological site assessment before the program starts. Educators also utilize different areas in order to minimize the impact on the main Forest School site. A link to our Ecological Impact Assessment can be found in the "About" section in Storypark.





# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## Missing Person Protocol

### Volunteer or Staff

- Forest School leader or designate, identify type of emergency and location
- Stay with group
- Follow directions from staff in charge

### Forest School leader or Designate

- Contact FWA front desk **[(204)989-8355 x 201]**, identify type of emergency and location
- Ensure first aid supplies on hand
- Stay on scene; wait for plan from Program Director from FortWhyte Alive
- Begin incident report ensuring family's awareness of incident
- Follow up with child/family and volunteer/staff by next day

### Program Director from Fort Whyte Alive

- Organize staff (in pairs) who are familiar with property to begin the grounds search
- Organize staff (in pairs) to begin trail search
- After specific time call EMS
- Contact parents
- Inform staff that EMS has been dispatched
- Meet parents at Alloway Reception Centre (Main Building)
- Continue to fill out incident reports including info from medical facilities (cc. parent)

## Further Forest School Information

- Child and Nature Alliance of Canada: <https://childnature.ca/>