

Canadian Ecology Centre FOREST & NATURE SCHOOL PROGRAMS



The Canadian Ecology Centre
Centre écologique du Canada



NORTH BAY-MATTAWA
CONSERVATION
AUTHORITY

PARENT HANDBOOK

2023



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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION



Vision

The Canadian Ecology Centre Forest & Nature School's vision is to provide opportunities for outdoor play and exploration to all children in our local community, helping them to take risks, experience personal growth, and create lasting connections with the land inspiring them to become a generation of humans who can offer great contributions to a more sustainable world.

About Us

The Canadian Ecology Centre (CEC) is a non-profit outdoor and environmental education and conference centre. Our headquarters are located on a leased parcel of land within Samuel de Champlain Provincial Park. We offer educational programs to groups of all ages through overnight and day trips, outreach programs, camps, and public events.

Our Partner

The North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority (NBMCA) is a community-based, environmental organization in Ontario's near north. The NBMCA is dedicated to conserving, restoring, developing, and managing renewable natural resources on a watershed basis. It is our mission to balance human and economic needs with the needs of the natural environment.

The NBMCA's area of jurisdiction equals over 2,900 square kilometers and is based on identified watersheds within the Lake Nipissing and the Ottawa River Basins. Highlights of the NBMCA's jurisdictional area include Lake Nipissing, Trout Lake, Wasi Lake, the Mattawa River, the North Bay Escarpment, and parts of Algonquin Park.

Forest & Nature School Location

We operate out of the Natural Classroom of the NBMCA main headquarters at 15 Janey Ave. The NBMCA maintains the designated Forest Classroom within the Laurentian Escarpment Conservation Area, as well as the network of trails.

What is Forest & Nature School

Forest & Nature School (FNS) is an educational approach that has existed worldwide since the late 1950s. FNS goes by many different names (i.e., Nature Kindergarten, Outdoor School, Waldkindergarten, etc.) and can take many different forms.

FNS programs can be offered just a half a day per week or full-time and can take place in many different climates and settings – urban or near-urban parks, natural spaces adjacent to or on schoolgrounds, natural playgrounds or outdoor classrooms, forests, meadows, or beaches – and with varying age groups.

The activities that happen in FNS also vary depending on the season, 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, various 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. FNS is frequently described as a ‘magical’ thing to witness, as it is often a microcosm of collaboration, communication, trust building, and a working model of consensus building. Despite all this variation, all FNS programs adhere to the following two principles, which also distinguish them from other outdoor and environmental education programs:

- regular and repeated access to a natural space, and;
- child-directed, emergent, and inquiry-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, to a dedicated educator, to one another, and to themselves.

Core Values & Principles

Forest & Nature School (FNS) is an educational ethos and practice that puts nature and the child at play at the centre of learning. Children and educators build a relationship with the land through regular and repeated access to the same natural space over an extended period. Learning is supported through a pedagogical framework that is rooted in place and play, directed, and inspired by the child, and driven by a process of inquiry.

According to the Child & Nature Alliance of Canada and Forest School Canada, Forest & Nature School:

1. Takes place in any outdoor space, including urban greenspace, playgrounds, forests, creeks, prairies, mountains, shoreline, and tundra.
2. Is a sustained process of regular and repeated sessions in the same outdoor space, supporting children to develop a reciprocal relationship with the Land, and an understanding of themselves as a part of the natural world.
3. Views children and youth as innately competent, curious, and capable learners.
4. Is led by educators who share power with learners through play-based, emergent, and inquiry-driven teaching and learning methods.
5. Values children’s play - self-directed, freely chosen, intrinsically motivated- in and of itself. FNS programs provide adequate time and space for children and youth to dive deeply into their play.
6. Views risky play as an integral part of children’s learning and healthy development, and is facilitated by knowledgeable, qualified educators who support children and youth to co-manage risk.
7. Relies on loose, natural materials to support open-ended, creative play and learning.
8. Values the process as much as the outcome.

9. Prioritizes building reciprocal relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, who have been learning from this Land since time immemorial.
10. Practices, policies, and programming reflect and prioritize the building of engaged, healthy, vibrant, and diverse communities through consideration of access and equity in our decisions and actions.

OUR PROGRAMS

Pre-School

- **Acorns:** Ages 3-4

Engaging children with nature through storytelling and exploration! Children will learn and play in the forest with our certified CEC education staff. Mornings from 9:15am – 11:15am.

Forest Day School

- **Seedlings:** SK – Grade 2
- **Saplings:** Grade 2 – 5

Designed to foster imagination, investigation, and exploration in nature. Students will spend time exploring the surrounding forest through play. The hands-on and experiential activities lead by our certified FNS teaching staff will focus on grade appropriate curriculum in science, math, and literacy. Ideal for children who are homeschooled or to enrich formal schooling. Full day from 9am – 3:15pm.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The CEC Forest & Nature School Programs take place in the NBMCA Laurentian Escarpment Conservation Area in the North Bay. North Bay sits on the territory of Nipissing First Nation, the territory of the Anishinabek, within lands protected by the Robinson Huron Treaty of 1850.

Our Commitment to centering and honouring Indigenous voices.

The CEC Forest & Nature School believes in helping our participants create a meaningful relationship with the Land, and this Land is Indigenous Land.

We acknowledge and thank the original and continuing caretakers of this land, the people of Nipissing First Nation, known as the Nibisiing Anishinaabeg, who are of Ojibway and Algonquin descent and have lived in the area of Lake Nipissing since time immemorial. We recognize their continuing connection to the land and pay our respects to elders, past, present, and emerging.

We acknowledge that experiential and land-based learning, which are part of our approach, are not new concepts and have always been integral to Indigenous ways of life and learning.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

A typical day

8:30am-9:00am	Day Program: Drop-off
9:00am-9:15am	Day Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening circle, planning our time together • Any new information (weather, hazards, other considerations) Pre-School Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drop off
9:15am-11:15am	Day Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning Hike (route decided by group votes on route) Pre-School Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story time and forest free play
11:15am-11:30am	Pre-School Program: Pick-up
11:15am-11:45am	Day Program: Lunch #1
11:45am-1:30pm	Day Program: Daily Lesson (curriculum focus)
1:30pm-2:00pm	Day Program: Lunch #2
2:00pm-3:15pm	Day Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of day Forest Classroom Play • Closing debrief and circle time. • Walk to pick up point/Return equipment to indoor classroom
3:15pm-4:00pm	Day Program: Pick-up

The CEC FNS Program is inquiry based and driven by the participants' interests and needs. While participants are given opportunities to vote on activities and play areas, facilitators may limit routes, sites, and activities by considering weather, site conditions and social dynamics. Facilitators observe the participants' interactions and activities throughout the day and when appropriate, document activities mentally or with photos. With this information, facilitators meet at the end of the day to reflect on the day, noting areas of concern, interests, growth and use this information to plan for the next day.



Play

End of day programs will consist of unstructured, free play time, which is fundamental to healthy child development. Through play, children make connections to the world around them. Social play teaches children how to effectively communicate, negotiate roles and responsibilities and share.

Much of the children's play in FNS is imaginative and uses natural objects (logs, water, leaves, etc.), or loose parts they choose from the equipment provided from the indoor classroom. Programs give multiple opportunities for the group to play as independently as possible. If invited to provide support by the children then facilitators will do so, otherwise they observe and ensure a safe play environment, allowing the experience to be as child-directed as possible.

Risky Play

With hopes that each child will learn how to navigate risk, our goal is not to keep participants from all risky situations but instead to teach them how to safely navigate the risks that they encounter in the forest. To do this, it is required that participants can respond to facilitators' voices (or animal calls!!). If a child has consistent difficulty listening, and it is posing a safety concern, the behaviour guidelines listed below will apply. We work to create an environment that is as safe as possible by being proactive and by using sensible, simple guidelines that the participants can remember.

Our safety principles include:

- Constantly assess risk as conditions change (dynamic risk assessment) and conduct regular risk/benefits assessments of site and activities.
 - Done daily and dynamically as the environment changes both with and without the participants.
- Set up a safe space with boundaries and safety guidelines.
 - Use visual markers to help reinforce boundaries (ex. high visibility vest in center of playing must always remain visible)

- Participants are made aware of safety guidelines regularly.
- Carefully observe the participants' interactions with each other and with nature.
- Spot the participants during more challenging physical activity ex. climbing.
- Gently guide the participants to safer activities if required.

If facilitators observe that the participant's play is becoming dangerous and/or not following our safety guidelines, the participant will be redirected and reminded of the safety guidelines established as a group.

The following guidelines and phrases are examples that facilitators will use with the participants as they are guided toward safe choices.

Hiking

When we walk through the forest, participants are allowed to lead and run ahead provided:

- They always have a line of site to a facilitator (if you cannot see me, I cannot see you)
- They STOP and wait for the entire group to catch up at each split in the trail, steep incline, or decline.
- They STOP and wait for the entire group to catch up when a facilitator yells RED LIGHT

This may be limited if participants are consistently not following the above procedures, there is an increased use of the trail by the public, there are safety concerns (i.e., weather etc.).

One facilitator will always be at the back of the group, ensuring that no child is left behind.

Boundaries

When we play in the forest we stay where we can see a facilitator OR the marker placed at the center of the play space (i.e., high vis. vest). When needed, boundaries are established with the input of the participants. Facilitators watch to ensure that the participants stay within the boundaries. Facilitators always remain near the participants. If groups are playing in different areas, there is a facilitator available for each small group.

Sticks

"Sticks need space, and when friends are around, we place them on the ground." Sticks are for building, digging, and imaginative play. They are not for hitting. When we run, we put the sticks down. We are aware of other's space. We keep sticks away from others' faces. Participants are taught to keep sticks down low when in a group and how to create a "safety bubble" when on their own. Participants are taught how to move large branches by using either a "forest drag" or a two person carry.

Rocks

When we are near the water, we may throw rocks. When we throw rocks, we look around and check to make sure that no one is close to us, in our safety bubble (the area a few meters around our body). We may throw rocks that are as large as the palms of our hands. We throw rocks only where they will not disturb others (animals, birds, people). We limit the number of rocks we pick up and throw, so we do not disturb the natural habitat. Participants love to throw natural objects and they will be given safety parameters on how to do this.

Climbing

We may climb as high as we are tall. We only climb as high as we can climb on our own. We only climb when an adult can safely spot us (watch us and keep us safe). Not all trees are safe to climb, let us learn which ones are safe. Facilitators are present only to spot a child and will not physically assist them to climb higher. If a facilitator cannot be present or cannot safely spot the child, they will not be able to climb.

Water

If you do not know, don't go! Groups primarily access shallow, slow-moving water bodies. Before a group visits a body of water, facilitators engage in a conversation with the participant about safety considerations while around the water. If a child cannot determine the depth of the water to be below their knee height, they generally will not access that water. Participants are taught to maintain at least one full adult body length of distance between themselves and deeper areas of water. When hiking along the trails, participants will be taught to stay on the trails as the edges of the river and ponds are changeable where plant life is growing.

Roles & Responsibilities:

CEC Forest & Nature School Facilitator Responsibilities

The responsibilities of a CEC FNS Facilitator are wide-ranging and include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Ensure the physical safety of the participants by co-assessing and co-managing risks on an on-going basis and make them feel comfortable in the natural environment.
- Consider the social and emotional safety of the participants and foster a caring and respectful community.
- Take primary responsibility in ensuring that policies and procedures, rules and guidelines are followed.
- Model care and respect for others, our shared community, supplies/equipment and for the natural world.
- Aim to connect with each participant to understand their questions and interests and will provide regular and repeated access to a natural outdoor space, so that they may build strong relationships with themselves, each other, and the land.
- Engage in open and clear communication with the participants, families, and among staff.
- Ensure parents are aware of any changes or adaptations to programming or policies and will update all families on a regular basis with such changes.
- Ensuring the participants families understand how to equip their children with proper clothing, outerwear, and other supplies according to the season.
- Must have up to date Standard First Aid and CPR

Parent/Caregiver Responsibilities

- Ensure that all CEC registration forms, and the information submitted therein are accurate and up to date.
- Provide staff with any additional information that would assist in meeting the needs of your child.
- Ensure your child is prepared for their adventures with appropriate clothing, outerwear, supplies for the weather and length of program, snacks, and reusable water bottle.
- Follow all policies and procedures outlined in this handbook.

Volunteer/Accompanying Adult Responsibilities

We welcome and value the support of volunteers. Volunteers will need to acquire a Current Criminal Record Check with a vulnerable sector check before helping. We encourage volunteers to become familiar with the FNS Program and the role of Facilitators in guiding learning. Volunteers will be responsible for helping to monitor and will be available to support participants during the program.

HEALTH & SAFETY



Privacy Policy

The CEC takes our families' and participants' privacy seriously. Personal information or medical data will be kept confidential by our staff.

Photo/Video

Photo & Video Consent was given with the Assumption of Risk for completed upon registration, if you wish to withdraw your consent, please let us know via email to coral@canadianecology.ca.

Any photos that are taken will then be processed in accordance with privacy legislation and only used for the purpose to which you consented. Where consent is given to share images/video, this media is used in promotional marketing for our Forest & Nature School program and posted on our website, and Facebook/Instagram pages, these images can be viewed worldwide.

Illness Policy

We ask that participants stay home from the program for at least 48 hours after their last symptoms have subsided, for the following cases:

- Temperature (100.4°F or higher)
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Pink Eye
- Any contagious illnesses

Should the above-mentioned situations arise while at FNS, the parent/guardian will be contacted and asked to pick up their child immediately.

In the case of communicable diseases such as measles, pink eye, chickenpox, mumps, flu, strep throat, viral pneumonia, etc., a sick child may return to the program after their health care provider has communicated that it is safe for them to do so.

COVID Spread Prevention Policy and Procedure

The CEC follows all current protocols listed by the North Bay and Parry Sound Public Health Unit, which include cleaning of frequently touched surfaces, frequent hand washing/sanitizing (before and after meals, after washroom use, etc.), and self-screening using the Ontario School and Daycare screening tool prior to arrival.

Head Lice Policy

Head lice may affect participants at CEC FNS. Head lice is not considered a communicable disease but rather an annoying condition which spreads rapidly. If head lice or nits are present, we ask that you contact staff at CEC immediately so that other families can be informed (the affected individuals will remain anonymous)

Food/Allergy Policies

Allergy Policy

- To prevent life-threatening allergies, two epinephrine injectors and a liquid diphenhydramine will be carried by the lead facilitator.
- All participants with known anaphylactic allergies are also asked to have their own injector and let staff know where it can be found.

Food Policy

- Due to the above concern for Allergies (some of which are life-threatening), we ask that all families provide nut-free snack/meal options.
- We encourage parents to consider sending litterless snacks/meals, choosing reusable containers etc.
- Participants are required to bring reusable water bottles. Participants will be able to refill water bottles on site in the indoor classroom.
- Participants are asked not to trade or share food with each other.
- If food is provided by the FNS, staff will be sure it is nut-free or allergen-free for the participants.
- Participants are asked to wash their hands before and after eating, and hand sanitizer is available while out in the forest.

Toileting and Handwashing Procedures

Washrooms are always open and available inside the NBMCA.

All participants must be able to use the washroom independently prior to attending FNS programs. Facilitators provide frequent washroom breaks throughout the program and encourage all participants to use the washrooms prior to heading into the conservation area.

The participants will be taught Leave-No-Trace principles for toileting in nature on the first day of the program so that while out in the forest, if a participant is unable to return to the building to go to the washroom, due to distance away, or time, they will have several options:

- The participant can go to the washroom in the forest for a “nature pee”.
 - Facilitators will help the participant find a suitable location.
 - The participant can ask a friend or facilitator to ‘guard’ for them.

- If the participant asks a facilitator to assist, another facilitator will be asked to watch on (for protection purposes).
- If there is a greater need to return to the main indoor site, a facilitator will offer to take the participant (with another participant) back to the main building, if ratios allow.
- Facilitators will always carry a toileting kit when off site (biodegradable toilet paper, trowel, hand sanitizer).
- Facilitators will always carry a small hand-sanitizer in their First Aid kit to assist with hand washing needs while out in the forest. When participants return to the indoor classroom, and before they eat, they will be reminded to wash their hands thoroughly before beginning to eat.

Participant:Staff Ratios

The following ratios will be maintained for most of the program and especially during risky play and traveling to/through forested areas:

- Preschool-aged participants to staff ratio is 5:1.
- Kindergarten-aged participant to staff ratio is 8:1.
- School-aged participant to staff ratio is 10:1.

Reduced ratios can only be in effect when participants are arriving, leaving and during indoor periods. The reduced ratio cannot be less than two-thirds of the required ratio (except for mealtimes where one supervisor is present).

Child Safety and Protection Policy

Child Entry and Release Forms

Parents/guardians must give written or verbal authorization for any adults who may be picking up their child (this can be done at any time prior to pick up that day). In the case that staff do not have prior authorization for someone to pick up a child, staff will phone the parent/guardian to receive verbal authorization by phone for the new pick-up person.

Sign-In and Sign-Out Requirements

Staff will take attendance daily, and record participant drop off times. Please report any absences for your family by email.

Participants must be picked up/signed out by a person who is listed on the child's authorized pick-up list.

Unauthorized Pick-up Procedure

If someone other than a parent/authorized adult arrives to pick up a child and we have not been notified in advance by the authorized adult, staff will:

1. Call the parent/guardian for verbal authorization.
2. If the parent/guardian cannot be reached, the child must remain in the staff's care until the parent/guardian has been reached.
3. Staff will remain with the child until an authorized adult gives verbal consent or arrives (late pick-up policy will apply, see Terms & Conditions).

Child Protection Policy

The CEC 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 they suspect that child abuse has occurred or if a child is at risk of abuse.

Emergency Procedures and First Aid Policies

The CEC has detailed emergency procedures with which all facilitators are familiar and is reviewed regularly (see Accident & Emergency Procedures). A copy of these procedures is carried by facilitators, along with a First Aid Kit, whistle, emergency numbers, contact numbers, and medical information about all participants. First Aid Kits will be restocked as needed. All staff will carry a mobile phone in case of emergency and will be able to contact the director and/or emergency services. Please note that there is a potential risk that your child may be subject to small and minor injuries (i.e., bumps, bruises, scratches). Parents will be notified at the end of the day's program if these minor injuries occur. If participants experience a greater injury or an injury to the head, parents will be notified by phone immediately. If you require more information, please contact our camp lead. Additionally, each parent/guardian completes an Assumption of Risk and Informed Consent prior to the start of a CEC FNS Program.

Facilitators will all maintain the following certifications (at a minimum):

- Current Criminal Record Check with a vulnerable sector check
- Current Standard First Aid/CPR or greater (i.e., Wilderness First Aid)

Risk Management

Being able to recognize risk, experience risk and learn how to manage risk is an important part of healthy child development. Facilitators will aim to balance participants' desire to experience and navigate risk in the natural environment with a concrete safety plan that has clear boundaries, emergency procedures and maintains the required participant to adult ratio. Facilitators strive to co-assess risk alongside participants working together to formulate a plan. We believe this is an essential skill for children to acquire and for adults to support. Our facilitators conduct seasonal on-site risk assessments and activity risk assessments on an on-going basis, always considering the balance between risk and benefits when doing so.

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

- Injuries from executing strenuous and demanding physical activities (i.e., on uneven ground in the forest).
- Slivers, scrapes, bruises, blisters
- The presence of wild animals.
- Inclement weather.

FNS sites must be reasonably safe and easily accessible, so whenever possible we will visit and assess site areas before activities take place. During our assessment, we will seek to identify any significant hazards and take the necessary precautions to reduce the risk to an acceptably safe level. Due to changing weather conditions, wildlife, and visitors, we may be faced with new challenges, such as fallen branches, high water levels, the presence of wildlife, or even human litter. These risks will need to be assessed and may alter previously arranged activities. Where checks are not possible prior to the group's arrival, a site sweep and assessment will be made immediately upon the group's arrival. We pause our activities to articulate these assessments with participants at any point where there is a hazard or risk. Assessing and managing risk is an important skill for children to develop, and it can offer great learning opportunities.

Environmental Risk Policies and Procedures

Sunscreen & Bug Spray Policy

All participants are required to arrive with sunscreen and bug spray (seasonal) applied. Participants are required to bring extra as it will need to be re-applied later in the program. Facilitators will assist participants if re-application is needed.

Tick Policy

Ticks are rare but may be present at sites frequented during the program. To limit exposure, we require that all participants consider wearing long pants, long socks, and closed-toed footwear while at camp. We recommend using insect repellent to deter ticks. The NBMCA recommends the following precautions to aid in tick prevention:

- It is recommended to wear light colored clothing (easier to see ticks), long-sleeved shirt, pants, and closed-toe shoes. Pants should be tucked into socks and bug spray, or other insect repellents should be used on all exposed skin.
- After being outdoors, check yourself and those in your care, including pets for ticks. Ask for someone's help to check spots that you cannot see.
- Change your clothes and take a shower to help wash off ticks that have not yet attached themselves.

If a tick is seen on a participant, it is brushed off. If a tick is attached, we will remove it using tweezers and save it in a baggie. Parents/guardians will be informed at pick-up and given the opportunity to take the tick to the health unit for testing.

Poison Ivy Policy

Poison ivy has not yet been observed at sites frequented during our programs. Facilitators are trained to identify poison ivy and look for it during site assessments. In the event a participant does encounter poison ivy, washing affected skin within 15- 60 minutes of exposure is likely to remove the oil that can lead to a reaction.

Inclement Weather/Closure Policy

CEC FNS programs will occur outdoors rain/snow or shine when safe to do so (see Extreme weather policy below). We ask that parents/guardians please consult the weather forecast each morning, and dress/prepare their child appropriately for the forecasted weather.

In the event of extreme weather (see Extreme Weather Policy below), the CEC reserves the right to cancel programming until it can safely be resumed. Facilitators will monitor the weather and attempt to give 24 hours' notice, however, the weather in Ontario is difficult to forecast and a cancellation may occur within a shorter time frame. If a session is canceled, parents/guardians will be notified by phone and/or email by the CEC. If the decision to cancel is made while a program is in session, participants will be taken to a safe shelter and parents/guardians will be contacted to pick up participants. Facilitators will remain with the participants until they have all been picked up.

Extreme Weather Policy

To help minimize risk, facilitators check for weather updates throughout the day (at the start of the day, before heading into the forest, hourly), and consider these forecasts/updates when planning all activities each day. Facilitators will have the Environment Canada weather app downloaded on their cell phones to be able to keep track of weather alerts throughout the day. See Extreme Weather Procedures for more information.

Behaviour Management Policy

Behaviour Management

Our goal is to ensure that the CEC FNS Program is a positive experience for all our participants. Please inform staff ahead of time if your child has any special needs or considerations so that we can make your child's experience a positive one.

Behaviour Principles

To ensure a safe & positive experience for everyone, here are our Behaviour Principles:

- No violence
- Respect all living things.
- Respect all people – yourself, your peers, your facilitators.
- Respect diversity
- Respect the environment.
- Use things with care.
- Be prepared.
- Listen and respond to safety instructions/guidelines (i.e., coming back when called, staying within boundaries, etc.)

At the CEC FNS, facilitators work with a group of participants to develop a clear set of boundaries and guidelines. We aim to promote self-esteem, self-awareness of abilities and limitations, self-regulation and emotional intelligence, respect of self, cooperation and nonviolent communication, and risk management. We proactively set up the physical and social/emotional space to encourage positive behaviour.

We strives to:

- Focus on the behaviour rather than the participant.
- Consider the participants' development level and needs.
- Implement behaviour management in a positive and consistent manner.
- Assist the participant to learn appropriate behaviour and conflict management techniques.
- Help participants to develop self-control, self-confidence, decision-making skills, the ability to communicate effectively and sensitivity in their interactions with others.

The CEC prohibits:

- Sexual abuse, harassment, molestation, corporal punishment, bullying, neglect, humiliation, deprivation of basic needs, and confinement.

If a participant is exhibiting any inappropriate behaviours on a consistent basis, the participant may be required to have a support person in place or to temporarily leave the program.

The CEC reserves the right to suspend or expel a participant from the program should their behaviour be deemed unsafe. Decisions to re-enter the program and create a plan to return will be made on a case-by-case basis. At all times, the safety and learning environment of the group will be paramount. Facilitators also record inappropriate behaviour on Incident Reports which are to be reviewed by facilitators and parents/guardians at the end of the day.

Preparing For the program: Gear List

Spring/Summer (warmer weather)

- Closed-toed outdoor shoes with a good tread (sandals will not be permitted as we will be active outside and need footwear that protects our feet) ...running shoes are most appropriate.
- Shorts and T-shirt, Long-sleeve, or light sweater (check the weather with your child before getting ready for the day, consider layers for those days where it is cooler in the morning, but warm by the afternoon)
- Sunscreen - Please make sure that they come with sunscreen already applied for the start of the morning. Make sure that extra sunscreen is packed appropriately in a waterproof bag (to avoid leakage) with your child's name on it.
- Sun Hat
- Bug Spray or Bug jacket/Hat
- Rain Jacket and Rain Pants...watch the weather.
- Rubber boots

Winter (cooler weather/snow)

- Winter Boots
- Winter Jacket AND Snow Pants
- Hat, mitts, extra mitts, neck warmer

All Seasons:

- 1 Full Water Bottle – A MUST! (Please do not send high sugar drinks and/or pop) We will have access to water but will not have any cups.
- FOOD! Lunch (for full day programs) and Nutritious and NUT-FREE snacks.
- Any pertinent and required medication (i.e., Inhaler, epi-pen, etc....)
- A day pack to hold it all in.
- A full extra set of clothes

We will be going outside rain, snow, or shine (except for thunderstorms) ...Your child should come prepared to be outside in all kinds of weather.

Lost Items Policy

The CEC is not responsible for any lost or stolen items while on site. We encourage parents to label everything coming with your child to help ensure it ends up back home. Any items left behind will be placed in a Lost & Found, which will be made available on request.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Cancellation Policy

- A 50% non-refundable deposit is due with registration with the balance due on the Monday the week before a session start date.
- If registering the week before a session starts, full payment with registration will be required.
- The 50% deposit made with registration is non refundable.
- Cancellations less than 2 weeks prior will receive no refund.
- Full refunds will be given if the CEC cancels a program due to low enrollment.
- In the event a program is fully cancelled mid-session, a partial refund will be given.
- If a day or partial day is cancelled due to severe weather or poor air quality, no refunds will be given for that day.
- No refunds will be made if a participant is sent home during the program.

Late Pick-up Policy

Parents must make alternate arrangements for pick up if they cannot pick their child up by the required time. A late fee charge of \$10.00 for every 10 minutes, or part thereof, will be charged for the aforementioned times. If there is an emergency and you are going to be late, we ask that you call the provided contact number for that camp session. It is important for parents to have an alternate person who can pick up their child when they are late. All available alternate pick-up persons must be on the registration form prior to the beginning of a CEC FNS program.

COMMUNICATION



General Communication

The CEC will communicate with participants and their parents/guardians via email. Email is also the best way to communicate with facilitators outside of camp hours. Prior to the start of each program, the main cell phone number for the lead of that program will be provided for communication during program hours.

Outside of program hours please be sure to communicate via email the following:

- If your child will be late/absent
- If you will be picking up your child early
- If someone other than you (or an already designated person) will be picking up your child
- If your child is ill with a communicable disease
- To communicate questions or concerns with program facilitators.

During program hours please be sure to communicate via phone call/text:

- If you will be picking up your child before the scheduled pick-up time.
- If there is a last-minute change to your child's designated pick-up person.
- If you arrive at the program late, and we are not in the indoor classroom, you need to find us.

Facilitators are also available for brief "check-ins" during pick-up/drop-off times and are happy to share the program'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 with facilitators, please do not hesitate to communicate via email, or to set up an in-person meeting time or phone call via email.

Emergency Communication

In the case of a significant incident (e.g., eye scratch/particles in eye, wounds, bleeding, potential fracture, suspected head injury), parents/guardians will be contacted before EMS and asked if they would like facilitators to call an ambulance or if they would like to take their child to the hospital themselves. FNS facilitators will not

transport participants in their vehicles. In case of a severe incident (major trauma and the child cannot be moved), EMS will be contacted, and parents/guardians will be notified as well of the situation.

Parents/Guardians must ensure that the Emergency Contact information provided during registration always remains current. If a change occurs, please contact us.

If the primary emergency contacts cannot be reached, we will contact the secondary emergency contacts.

Questions and Concerns

Should you have any questions or concerns, we encourage open communication. Facilitators are happy to speak with you in person at the start/end of the program, though their priority will always be on participants during that time. Facilitators may direct you to contact the education coordinator, Coral Bissett directly, depending on the nature of your question or concern. If you require an extended conversation or wish to set up a phone call, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Grievance Policy

We are always open to your concerns, questions, and feedback. Growth is important to us, and it is through this communication that we will continue to grow and build relationships with our community. If you have a concern, please let us know by email (coral@canadianecology.ca), phone (705-744-1715) or in person and we will be back in touch within 24-72 hours. If your concern is urgent, please indicate this and a response will be prioritized. All concerns will come directly to the education coordinator and consultation with facilitators will be a part of the next steps to finding a suitable resolution.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY



All CEC FNS Programs consider Nature Care. This term means participants are quickly made aware of the importance of their environment by learning they can ‘do’ Nature Care by helping instead of hurting the environment and the area around them. Through this small action, of seeing that they have an impact, our programs aim to encourage environmental sustainability and creating a reciprocal relationship with nature during each of its programs.

One of the FNS Principles is that FNS is a sustained process of regular and repeated sessions in the same natural space, supporting participants to develop a sense of place, an ethic of care towards nature, and an understanding of themselves as a part of the natural world. Although this is incredibly positive for learning, it can have an adverse environmental effect due to the overuse of an area. We therefore strive to meet a delicate balance whereby we promote participants’ connection to nature through exposure and meaningful experience, while at the same time minimizing impact, and fostering an ethic of care and sustainable use of the land to which we are connecting. Ethic of care towards nature – this means working in relationship with our natural space, treating it with respect and care, to ensure it will remain a valuable learning site for years and generations to come. 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 to our main area/home base. We consult with the NBMCA regularly about sensitive areas, and whether our programs are having an impact on the local environment. It is important that everyone taking part in our programs models an ethic of care and responsibility for the property and takes pride in the local environment. Through modelling this ethic of care, we teach participants to care as well.

PROCEDURES

On the following pages, please find copies of any referenced documents from the above sections.

ACCIDENT & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In a severe accident or emergency, CEC Forest & Nature School staff will follow this procedure:

1. Establish the nature and extent of the emergency. Lead facilitator to take the lead responding and administering First Aid.
2. In consultation with other facilitators, make sure the area and all other members of the group are accounted for, safe, adequately supervised by co-facilitators or volunteers. This means that everyone fully understands what they must do to remain safe.
3. Assess the casualty and ask another adult to call 911, emergency services, while lead facilitator administers appropriate First Aid. The person phoning will need to respond to the following questions:
 - Nature of emergency
 - Injured party details: age, gender, medical history
 - Location: 15 Janey Ave, North Bay, ON
 - First Aid administered
4. Send another adult to meet the ambulance at the main entrance and direct them to the program site in use.
5. Inform the child's emergency contact of the injury as soon as possible.
6. Ensure that an appropriate adult attends the receiving hospital, taking with them any medical information available for the injured person.
7. Ensure that remainder of the party:
 - Is adequately supervised throughout
 - Is returned as early as possible to home base
 - Receives appropriate support and reassurance
8. Program staff 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 Incident/Accident Report Form.

If the casualty is a CEC FNS facilitator, other staff or present volunteers will phone emergency services immediately (911) and follow the above protocol.

EXTREME WEATHER PROCEDURES

Extreme Heat/Cold

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

Thunder/Lightning

When a thunderstorm is forecasted:

- If a **Thunderstorm Watch** has been issued by Environment Canada, camp programs will remain close to the indoor classroom until the thunderstorm watch is lifted.
- If a **Thunderstorm Warning** has been issued by Environment Canada, facilitators and participants will remain or proceed directly into the indoor classroom and remain there until the warning has been lifted.

If a thunderstorm develops unexpectedly:

- If facilitators/participants hear thunder, stop to look, and listen: To determine how far lightning is away from you, when you see a lightning flash start counting 1/1000, 2/1000, 3/1000 ...
- **If you do not make it to 30/1000** before you hear the crash of thunder, then the area you are in is at risk of a lightning strike. Move to the indoor classroom immediately. If the indoor space is not near, direct all persons to take immediate lightning position.
- **If you count to 30/1000 or more**, begin heading to the indoor classroom ensuring that you continue to look and listen.

Outdoor activities can resume when there is a minimum of 30 minutes after the last flash of lightning or crash of thunder.

High Winds

- If a **Tornado Watch** has been issued by Environment Canada, programs will remain close to the indoor classroom until the tornado watch is lifted.
- If a **Tornado Warning** has been issued by Environment Canada, facilitators and participants will head into the indoor classroom and remain there until the warning has been lifted.
- While outside facilitators will look and listen for extreme wind weather. (Conditions may include but are not limited to, leaves blowing off trees, falling branches, blowing sand, falling trees and/or loud wind that sounds like a roaring freight train).
- Following a High Winds event, a site risk assessment will be completed prior to returning to outdoor spaces.

This Parent Handbook is adapted from the ones available on <https://farmandforestschool.ca/> (Cambridge Farm & Forest School), <https://kingstonforestandnatureschool.ca/> (Kingston Forest and Nature School), <https://oromedonteforestschool.ca/> (Oro-Medonte Forest School) and www.naturalpathways.ca/ (Natural Pathways Forest and Nature School) , as well as the information provided on the childnature.ca (Child and Nature Alliance of Canada).

This is a living document that is being revised and updated regularly.

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