

COULEE CRITTERS

— FOREST & NATURE SCHOOL —



Family Handbook 2023/2024

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PHILOSOPHY AND VISION

Mission Statement

Our mission is to instill a love of the natural world and foster the development of the whole child by providing children with opportunities to build an on-going relationship with the land, to a dedicated educator, to one another, and to themselves through regular and repeated access to the same natural space.



Philosophy & Vision

Coulee Critters is a place-based program where nature is the classroom. We strongly believe in child-led and play-based learning. We believe in the reciprocal relationship children have with the environment. Our philosophy is rooted in wise practices, deep listening, compassion and empathy. We foster children's growth and development in a holistic way through instilling a love of playing and learning in an outdoor environment while nurturing a deep sense of wonder about the natural world that surrounds us.

Children are intrinsically motivated to learn, and they do so by exploring the world around them. The goal is to provide children with repeated access to nature, give them time and space to investigate and foster a sense of wonder. Children will experience open and flexible environments where playful exploration, problem solving and creativity are encouraged and purposefully planned. We will encourage children to be curious, to explore their environment as a steward of the land while building upon their sense of discovery that allows for meaningful connections to self, others and community.

About Coulee Critters

Founded in 2021, by Kelsey Boulton, Coulee Critters Forest & Nature school is an entirely outdoor, nature-based program for children ages 3-10 yrs where the premise for the day-to-day activities is play and exploration. The program is play-based, child-led, and experiential. Children will be given time and space to develop their interests, skills and understanding through valuable unstructured, free play. We will meet, play and explore in Indian Battle Park.

Founder/Executive Director

Kelsey Boulton



Kelsey holds a Bachelor of Education/Bachelor of Science from the University of Lethbridge, is a Level 3 Early Childhood Educator and is a certified Forest School Practitioner from the Child and Nature Alliance of Canada.

Kelsey grew up on a farm in the County of Lethbridge. It was here that her connection with nature really began to take root. Kelsey spent her early years playing, exploring and discovering all of the wonders on the farm. And quite often she did it barefooted!

Kelsey always knew that she wanted to work with children. Kelsey's first job was working evenings and weekends at the Gold's Gym childcare centre. After completing a B.Sc. Exercise Science degree at the University of Lethbridge, Kelsey travelled to New Zealand where she spent a year working as an au pair and childcare teacher. When Kelsey returned home, she went back to the U of L and completed her B.Sc. Education degree. Since receiving her teaching certification, Kelsey has had the opportunity to teach at a number of different schools and grade levels.

While in New Zealand, Kelsey met her husband, Henry. Together they have 3 beautiful children, Tova (4) and twins, Piper & Ellie (2). Since becoming a mom, Kelsey has been very intentional about giving her children the freedom, time and space to play freely, discover and explore natural environments and make connections with the land. Kelsey hopes to provide these same opportunities to children in the Lethbridge community through the Coulee Critters Forest & Nature School program.

About Forest & Nature Schools

Forest and Nature School (FNS) is an educational approach that has existed worldwide since the 1950's. It made its way to Canada in 2012 with the establishment of Forest and Nature School Canada. The primary goal is to provide children with regular and repeated access to a natural space, with a largely emergent, student-led and play-based curriculum. At FNS, children are understood as competent learners that help forge their own program. Children spend the majority of the session immersed in various outdoor settings where time is unhurried and there is space for independent reflection, collaborative creation and risky play. They enjoy the freedom to explore, build, play and engage with one another. The settings can vary - urban parks, forested areas, riverbeds and more - with various age groups interacting together throughout every season of the year. Activities are guided by a number of things and are as varied as the children who attend them and their environments in which they are rooted. (Adapted from Forest and Nature School Canada)

Our Classroom

We acknowledge that we are gathered on the lands of the Blackfoot people of the Canadian Plains and we give thanks for the ability to explore and play on their native lands. [Our classroom is located in Indian Battle Park.](#)

Our Programs (Programs are subject to change - refer to website for up to date information)

Daily Duration	½ day program - Morning (9 am-12 pm) or Afternoon (1-4 pm)
Days offered	Monday to Friday - Price below is for one day/week
Ages	3-10 (children must be fully potty trained)
Session Options	Fall Program: Sept. 19 - Nov. 24, 2023 (10 weeks) - \$350 Winter Program: Jan. 8 - Mar. 18, 2024 (10 weeks) - \$350 Spring Program: Apr. 8 - Jun. 17, 2023 (10 weeks) - \$350 Summer Program: Dates TBA

Please note: We require a \$25 non-refundable registration fee, per child, to secure your child's spot in Forest & Nature School. Payment can be sent to billing@couleecritters.com

Registration

If you are interested in enrolling your child into one of our programs, please visit our website (www.couleecritters.com) to submit the online registration form. Spaces in all Coulee Critters programs will be given out on a first come first serve basis. We will contact you by email once you have submitted your registration form to confirm your child's spot in the desired program or whether you have been placed on a waitlist. If your child has received a spot, we will send you all the necessary registration forms to fill out and the fee structure, including a non-refundable registration fee, to secure your spot. Your registration is complete once the deposit is paid and all the forms are filled out and received. We will notify you by email that your registration is complete.

Payment

Payment can be made by cash, cheque or e-transfer:

- Please make **cheque payable to Coulee Critters Forest & Nature School Ltd**
- Please send **e-transfers to billing@couleecritters.com**

Payment is due prior to program start date. Late payments will not be tolerated, however please contact us directly if you require an alternative payment plan. Coulee Critters would like to accommodate families as best we can but if an alternative payment plan is not agreed upon and we do not receive payment on or before its due date, your child's spot will be given to another family. Email reminders will be sent out prior to fee due dates to help avoid that from happening.

Please note: No refunds will be given for days missed due to illness, vacation, inclement weather, or emergency closures.

Withdrawal

Coulee Critters understands that life happens and circumstances change so we have broken down the Forest & Nature School year into three seasonal sessions to accommodate this. Should you wish to withdraw your child from one of the Forest & Nature School programs prior to the session's start date, a full refund minus the \$25 non-refundable registration fee will be given. Should you wish to withdraw your child from one of the Forest & Nature School programs after the session's start date, no refund will be given unless we can secure another child to fill your child's spot. If we fill your child's spot, you will receive a prorated refund.

Waitlist

If our programs are full and your child does not have a spot, you will automatically be put on our waitlist, which will be communicated to you by email. If a spot opens up and your child is next on the waitlist, you will be contacted to let you know a spot has become available and whether you are still interested in it. You will have 3 days (72 hours) to respond with the completed registration forms and the \$25 non-refundable registration fee to secure your spot, otherwise, it will be offered to the next family on the waitlist.

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES



Privacy Policy

Coulee Critters Forest and Nature School takes the privacy of its clients and visitors seriously, and we have taken steps to protect it. Any personal data shared with us, including photographic images, will be processed strictly in accordance with privacy legislation and will be used for the purposes that you have consented to. We will not share details with third parties without consent, except where we are legally compelled or obligated to do so. Please note that where consent is given to share images on the internet, they can be viewed worldwide including countries where Canadian data protection law does not apply.

Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns about protecting the privacy of the information you provide.

Illness Policy

In the following cases, we ask that participants (including students, teachers, and accompanying volunteers) stay home from Forest & Nature School for at least 24 hours after their last symptom has subsided:

- Temperature over 101 degrees F or 38.3 degrees C
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea (watery, profuse stools)
- Significant cough

Should the above-mentioned situations arise while at Forest & Nature School, the affected participants will be asked to return home. Keeping in mind that, while experiencing these symptoms or even mild cold symptoms, being outside in the elements is likely quite uncomfortable and unpleasant for children.

Participants affected by communicable diseases such as measles, chicken pox, mumps, flu, strep throat, viral pneumonia, conjunctivitis (pink-eye), etc., are asked to stay home from Forest School until their health care provider (i.e. naturopath, doctor, nurse, etc.) has communicated that it is safe for them to attend.

Food/Allergy Policy

Children are required to bring their own snacks and water bottles. We encourage children to try and bring a **garbage-less** snack. During winter months, consider thermoses for hot snacks and beverages. Children **may not share or trade** snacks. We recommend children bring healthy, wholesome energising food and a full water bottle. Please consider the size/weight/safety of the containers in which your child's snacks are packed.



Nut-Free Zone

We will assess on a term to term basis whether we have any children with nut allergies. If we have any children with a nut allergy we will adhere to a strict nut-free zone. Parents will be informed of this topic via email prior to the start of the program.

Toileting and Handwashing

While groups will sometimes be within walking distance of a toilet, we will not always have access to an indoor bathroom. Children must be comfortable using the “washroom” outdoors, with minimal “coaching” from an educator. All educators will carry appropriate toileting and hand washing tools such as toilet paper, wipes, hand sanitizer, water and soap.

Educators will provide children with hand washing opportunities before snacks and after washroom breaks.. The educators will carry water and hand soap and hand sanitizer for this purpose. Please send your child with a small hand towel for drying their hands, to be kept in their backpack each day.

Risk Management

At Coulee Critters Forest & Nature School, we believe that there is an inherent value to risk and learning how to assess and navigate it is an important part of healthy child development and a fundamental practice within Forest & Nature School. For this reason Coulee Critters educators co-assess and co-manage risk with students on a daily basis, so that students learn to acknowledge, manage and overcome risks, in order to be exposed to the benefits of risk, rather than the hazards. Coulee Critters educators conduct daily and seasonal site risk assessments on site, as well as dynamic activity-based assessments. All activities that our students partake in are subject to an experience risk/benefit assessment.

Emergency Procedures and First Aid

Coulee Critters Forest and Nature School has written emergency procedures with which all FMS educators and volunteers are familiar. A copy of the procedures, including emergency phone numbers, is carried by an FNS educator/volunteer at all times in the emergency/first aid backpack.

In the case of a serious accident or emergency the staff at Coulee Critters will follow this procedure:

ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURE

1. Establish the nature and extent of the emergency. The lead educator will take the lead responding and administering first aid.
2. Make sure the area and all other members of the group are accounted for, safe, adequately supervised. This means they fully understand what they must do to remain safe e.g. stop all activities.
3. Assess the casualty and ask another adult to call 911, emergency services, while you administer appropriate first aid. The person phoning will need to respond to the following questions:
 - Nature of emergency
 - Injured party details: age, gender, medical history (see 'Emergency: Medical Form in first aid backpack)
 - **Location: Indian Battle Park, 200 Indian Battle Road South, Lethbridge, AB**
 - First aid administered
4. Send another adult to meet the ambulance at the car park and direct them to the injured party. In case there is no other adult on site, stay with the injured party.
5. Ensure that an appropriate adult attends the receiving hospital, taking with them any medical information available for the injured party.

6. Ensure the rest of the group:
 - a. Is adequately supervised throughout
 - b. Is returned as early as possible to the drop off/pick up area
 - c. Receives appropriate support and reassurance
7. As soon as reasonably possible after the event, the accident will be reported using an Incident Report Form.

Staff: Participant Ratios

Our maximum FNS educator to participant ratio is 1 educator to 8 children (1:8). These small ratios are important to the success of the program, the safety of the children, and the ability to facilitate the child-led learning approach in an outdoor environment.

Staff Responsibilities

The responsibilities of an FNS educator/volunteer are wide-ranging and include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ensuring the physical safety of participants, including Coulee Critters students and accompanying 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 endeavouring to foster a caring and respectful community so that the risk taking and question posing necessary for deep, inquiry-based learning can occur
- modelling care and respect for the natural world, as well as safe use of the tools and supplies at Forest & Nature School
- playing with and closely observing students - the trajectory of their play, the evolution of their interests, their questions and struggles - in order to support teachers in using their experience at FNS as a “launching pad” into a deep, lively, and meaningful exploration of the curriculum
- ensuring all forms (and fees if applicable) are collected prior to the class’ attendance at FNS
- ensuring students’ families understand how to equip students with the proper clothing, outerwear, and other supplies according to the season and duration of visit to FNS (please share with the parents the Supply List that follows)
- supporting students 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

Child Protection Policy

Coulee Critters Forest & Nature School is committed to taking a proactive position regarding child protection. In accordance with the Child, Family, and Community Services Act, we are required to immediately report if we suspect that child abuse has occurred or if a child is at risk of abuse.

Incident Weather/Closure Policy

In the event of extreme weather (blizzard, severe storm, high winds etc.) Coulee Critters Forest & Nature School reserves the right to cancel the program until it can safely be resumed. If a session is cancelled, parents/guardians will be notified by phone and/or email by a Coulee Critters educator.

Extreme Weather Policy

Coulee Forest & Nature School educators consult the forecast regularly, and weather-related safety is considered in all decision-making (i.e. how far to venture away from shelter, how long to be outside). In the case of predicted thunder and lightning or high-winds, FNS educators will ensure participants are close to shelter so that it may be sought quickly should thunder and lightning or high-winds occur. During thunder and lightning and high winds, participants will stay under shelter (in the Nature Centre, or under a picnic shelter, for example). In the case of extreme cold (-22C or below) or extreme heat (30C), FNS educators 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.

Procedures for Tool Use

Coulee Critters Forest & Nature School believes there is great value in providing children with opportunities to use real tools in a supervised and supportive environment. Research in the field of child development has demonstrated that by empowering children with these responsibilities and valuable life skills, they learn about their own limitations and the importance of caution, and it builds self-confidence and feelings of meaningful accomplishment.



Tool Use

- FNS educator will check all tools prior to use
- Correct and safe use of sharp tools will be demonstrated prior to use
- Tools will be counted when handed out and again when collected
- All children are to be supervised closely, one-on-one, until deemed competent to work with limited supervision
- All safety guards of tools will be replaced immediately after use

Preparing for Forest & Nature School: Clothing & Equipment

When everyone is dressed properly, the barrier of discomfort is removed, allowing everyone to freely enjoy the outdoor experience. Part of the learning experience at Forest & Nature School is assessing weather and properly dressing for it. Invest in some quality gear for the success and joy of your child during their Forest & Nature School days.

**** LABELLING:** Please label all items of clothing, bags, and backpacks. Our staff are not responsible for any lost or stolen items while on site.

All Seasons

- **Backpack**
 - With a front chest clip (helps the pack stay comfortably on the child's shoulders)
 - Big enough to fit; 1 fleece sweater, 1 pair of socks, 1 pair of extra mittens, water bottle and snacks
- **Snacks**
- **Water Bottle** and/or thermos for warm drink
- **Ziplock bag of spare clothes**
 - In a labelled, ziplock bag please pack a full change of clothes for your child; underwear, wool socks, long sleeved shirt, long pants

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

- 1) **Insulation:** Natural fabrics such as wool or silk work well as an inner layer, as does fleece. Polyester pyjamas are another good option. The key for this layer is to wick moisture away from the skin and insulate it with a breathable layer.
- 2) **Middle Layer:** This is another insulation layer that creates 'dead-air space' between skin and the elements. This airspace helps in keeping warm. Wool sweaters (Merino wool is exceptionally warm and soft on sensitive skin) and fleece tend to work well.
- 3) **Outer Shell:** This layer should be waterproof and windproof, as well as breathable.

Winter:

Base Layer (the layer closest to the body)

- **Thermal long underwear and shirt** - Wool fibres are best for staying warm and keeping moisture away from the body but they can be expensive. Synthetics are readily available and more affordable and work well too. Avoid cotton as it retains moisture and makes us feel cold.
- **Wool or wool-blend socks**

Middle Layer

- **Fleece pants** (fleece is very cosy, quick to dry, and warm)
- **Fleece or wool top** - hoodie, pull-over or zip-up

Outer Layer

- **Warm, waterproof snowsuit** - waterproof snow pants with a bib work nicely to keep the upper body insulated along with a waterproof snow jacket
- **Winter boots** - warm, waterproof boots with removable liner. Recommended brands - Sorel or Columbia
- **2 wool toques or hats** that fit snugly and cover the ears
- **2 pairs of insulated, waterproof gloves or mittens** (2 pairs needed every day)
- **Wool/fleece neck warmer or balaclava** (much safer than scarves)
- **Sunblock** (optional)
- *Reusable hand/foot warmers are great if your child gets cold hands and feet easily*

Early Spring/Fall (cooler weather)

- Thermal long underwear and shirt (see winter wear)
- Fleece pants
- Fleece or wool top (hoody, pull over, zipup)
- Waterproof rain pants and jacket/Muddy Buddy
- Closed-toe hiking shoe and/or comfortable insulate rubber boots
- Thinner toque or hat
- Light knitted gloves
- Wool or wool-blend socks (can be thinner)
- Sunblock (optional)

Late Spring/Summer (warmer weather)

- Closed-toe supportive shoes/rubber boots
- **Long pants and long-sleeved shirt** (this will help protect from scratches, ticks, and insect bites)
- Waterproof pants & jacket
- Sun hat
- Sunblock

A note to parents/guardians: There is no need to go with expensive gear – check out the **local thrift shops** for good quality items at a fraction of the cost! If you are looking for a regular store to purchase outdoor clothing, Mountain Equipment Coop (MEC) has excellent children’s outdoor wear for all seasons.

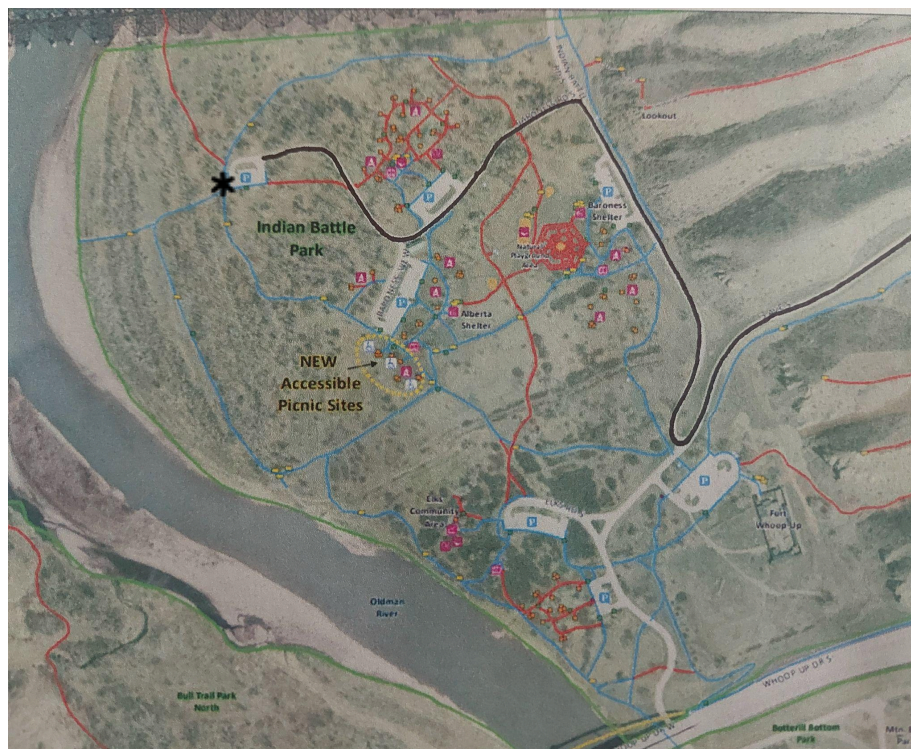
In terms of boots, we recommend purchasing boots that are one size larger than your child’s foot. Again, this creates dead-air space to assist in insulation. Socks help to wick moisture away from the skin, (please note: cotton tends to sweat and doesn't do a great job at wicking moisture). The best foot insulator would be two pairs of wool socks with waterproof boots that have wiggle room.

For warmer weather we ask that your child has a light cotton/silk/hemp long sleeve shirt on for the day. Children are encouraged to wear a hat at all times. Our programs are altered slightly by following the position of the sun. It is amazing how cool it is when towering trees shade the walking paths.

Children will be encouraged to stay hydrated for both cold and warm weather as this will assist in regulating body temperatures. Please see us for further recommendations on staying comfortable throughout all weather conditions.

Child Entry and Release Policy

Our meeting spot is the signpost located by the southwest corner of the parking lot (see the map below). For safety purposes, an adult must sign the child in once the child has reached the meeting spot and is in care of our staff. At pick up time, a child will not be released into any adult’s care until the child has been signed out.



First Day of Forest & Nature School

On the first day of Forest & Nature School, we will spend time getting to know your child. We will talk about their ideas about safety and spend some time together developing safety rules and responsibilities for our group. We will introduce some of the daily activities such as a morning circle, storytelling, and sit spots, as well as sharing a snack together and hygiene habits. Much of the time will be spent with the educator observing the children's interests, conversations and learning preferences for developing pathways for the following weeks.

The first day can be a bit scary and children (and parents/guardians) are often a little nervous. We recommend you make a plan with your child in advance as to how and when you will be saying goodbye to them (ie: after a hug, a kiss, and a high five). This will help soothe their nerves (and yours!) and make the transition into our care easier.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT



A Typical Day

We strive to accomplish our core routines and reflections every day, but otherwise our days are anything but typical... One day we could be building shelters, another day could see us uncovering critters under the rocks by the river.. We may be rock climbing, or throwing rocks into the river, or jumping into the role of a busy bee pollinating flowers - our day follows student-led interests.

Students will be given large chunks of time necessary to really settle into the kind of play from which rich, deep learning can emerge. The FNS educator will use the students' experiences at FNS as a "launching pad" into a deep, lively, and meaningful exploration of the curriculum. Throughout the day, stories will be read and told by the FNS educator, and students will be encouraged to tell their own stories, perhaps based on their experiences at Forest & Nature School, perhaps based solely on imagination, or perhaps a mix of both! As the day comes to an end we will visit our sit spots and then share our highlights of the day before gathering our gear, heading down the path to the parking lot, and saying goodbye!

Emergent Learning

Learning at Forest & Nature School can and often does look very different than it does in a conventional school setting. At FNS, we are committed to student-led or emergent, and inquiry and play-based learning. This means that we believe that all students who come to FNS, including very young children, are capable of constructing important knowledge through pursuing their own interests, asking questions, and expressing themselves in multiple, complex, and interrelated ways. At FNS, each day differs dramatically from the last. Student's drive the learning process while educators support them. Thus, we uncover the curriculum as we go with student interests at the forefront. We value the process, not the product.

Play

At Coulee Critters we believe that unstructured, free play is fundamental to healthy development and learning. Play is the primary way through which children make meaning of the world around them, and this form of play is something that children get less of in our current society. Play at FNS can take many forms. For example, symbolic play involves the use of an object (or a sign or symbol) to "stand in for" or represent something else - at FNS, an acorn might become a person. Social play requires participants to effectively negotiate rules and procedures - this is a part of nearly all play at FNS. Regardless of the type, all play provides the building blocks for greater cognitive functioning and learning for children and adults alike.

Place-based Learning

Our program is rooted in what is local – our community, our unique history, geography and culture. This occurs anytime and anywhere that helps personalise learning for our students. This could be our sit spots, special areas of the forest we explore or while on a field trip to a familiar location. It happens in the form of repetitive visits to the same spaces, and develops deep connection with direct experiential contact.

Role of the Educator

- Sparking engagement - by modelling enthusiasm for nature play
- Observing - once the children are engaged in exploration, the educator steps back to give the children space to play and explore

- Learning alongside children - the educator gets dirty, explores, creates, builds, learns, gains knowledge and celebrates alongside the children
- Staying safe - the educator ensures the group is physically safe
- Creating connections - the educator works to create community with the children, and to help them through conflicts and discussions that arise

At FNS, children are viewed as competent and capable learners engaged in their own learning process. Thus, the traditional role of the teacher is re-written. This involves guidance and support and allows children the space, time and opportunity to explore their own interests. Teachers are not “experts” and learn alongside students with a strong emphasis on observation. In brief, the facilitator sparks engagement, keeps everyone safe, builds community, and draws out learning - but also knows when to just get out of the way and let it happen!

From Planning to Observation and Reflection

In order to truly follow the interests of FNS participants - to nurture emergent learning - FNS educators shift their emphasis from planning to observation and reflection. Instead of pre-determining the activities for the day, FNS educators closely observe participants, intervening with open-ended invitations and “provocations” like those described above. FNS educators support their observations by taking photos, videos, and written notes which are themselves used to extend learning, refocus it, or redirect it. For example, educators might show participants a photo of themselves engaged in an activity from the session before, and prompt them to revisit that activity by asking, “What were you doing there?” “What were you thinking about?” “Were you able to accomplish what you were trying to do?” “What if we tried... today?”

From Assessment and Reporting to Documentation

Photos, videos, and written notes are also used to (co)construct (with colleagues, parents/caregivers, community members and participants themselves) a theory of the learning taking place therein. In other words, educators (and others) work together to answer such questions as “What was really happening there?” “What was being learned/mastered/struggled with?” “What kind of change in the participants’ experience/understanding of the world took place?” We believe this kind of theorising to be a meaningful way to “take stock of” (or “assess”) the learning and development of participants at Forest & Nature School, and one that itself engenders further and deeper learning for both participants and educators.

Behaviour Management

At Coulee Critters Forest and Nature School we manage behaviour proactively by engaging in developmentally appropriate activities, and by nurturing a positive physical and social/emotional space. In general, our behaviour management will:

- Consider the child’s developmental level and needs
- Make expectations clear and provide scaffolding to help students participate positively
- Focus on the behaviour rather than the child

- Be implemented in a positive and consistent manner
- Be designed to help the child to learn appropriate behaviour and techniques
- Involve consulting with parents/guardians/teachers to include their input of successful approaches with a child, as well as to keep them informed of issues/concerns as they arise
- Help children to develop self-control, self-confidence, decision making skills, the ability to communicate effectively and sensitively in their interactions with others

At Coulee Critters Forest & Nature School **inappropriate behaviour** is defined as using actions or words that make other students or staff members feel uncomfortable or unsafe. **Unsafe behaviour** is defined as any behaviour that puts a child or staff member at risk. This includes not responding when called, running, hiding, taking risks without consulting staff, and not following guidelines so that behaviour becomes potentially dangerous to the child or others.

In the case of inappropriate/unsafe 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. Parents/guardians/teachers will be informed (by phone or at the end of the day face-to-face) of the behaviour and consulted to discover the cause.
3. Staff and parents/guardians/teachers will, together, develop strategies to adjust and eliminate the inappropriate behaviour. These strategies will be implemented with the child at home and at Forest & Nature School to offer a consistent approach. Staff and guardians will stay in contact to keep each other informed of the child's progress with regard to the behaviour in question.
4. Staff will follow up with the child to be consistent with expectations and approach as well as to offer feedback and positive reinforcement,
5. In the extreme case that a child's behaviour is consistently inappropriate or unsafe for the child or others, and after the above process has been implemented, the child may be asked to leave the program for a short term or permanently

EQUALITY AT COULEE CRITTERS

Accessibility Policy

One of the primary goals of Coulee Critters Forest & Nature School is to make our programs accessible to a wide range of participants regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, language, physical ability, or socioeconomic status. We seek to dismantle the barriers to participation in Forest & Nature School by making our site physically accessible for everyone, and our community safe and welcoming. In the future, we hope to set registration fees on a sliding scale based on need, to establish a "gear bank" or "lending library" of outerwear (snow pants, hats, mitts, etc.) so that the supplies needed to safely enjoy FS are not themselves a barrier to participation. We welcome your feedback and suggestions in the realisation of those goals.

COMMUNICATION

General Communication

Generally, Coulee Critters staff will communicate with families via email or phone. To reach us in a timely manner, please send an email to info@couleecritters.com.

Please be sure to communicate the following:

- if you will be late/absent
- if any member of your group is ill with a communicable disease (ex: COVID-19)
- if any member of your group is being treated for lice

Emergency Communication

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

If an emergency occurs during a Coulee Critters Forest & Nature School program, The student's classroom teacher will contact parents/emergency contact by telephone once emergency personnel (if needed) have been contacted.

In the event that weather/road conditions make travel to/from FNS dangerous for staff/participants and FNS needs to cancel programs or close early for the day, parents/guardians will be notified via telephone.

Questions and Concerns

Our goal is for all visitors to Coulee Critters Forest & Nature School to feel comfortable and supported as they learn about the natural world, their students/children and themselves through outdoor and potentially risky play. Should you, as a potential parent, or accompanying volunteer, have any questions or concerns regarding your own or your child's visit to FNS, please do not hesitate to ask to speak with the executive director. If you or the FNS staff member feels that you require an extended or more focused conversation than can be had at the moment, plans can be made to do so.

Grievance Policy

Your happiness and satisfaction in our Coulee Critters Forest & Nature School Programs, as well as your child's, is extremely important to us. We want to have meaningful connections with all involved family members and maintain consistent open lines of communication. Please do not hesitate to communicate with Coulee Critters staff in person, by phone or email if you have any concerns, questions or issues with any part of the programs. We will make every effort to actively listen, address and resolve any grievances in a timely manner and in confidence.

We want to work together with you to make Coulee Critters the best it can possibly be and always welcome your feedback, whether it is complimentary or constructive!

Contact Us

Email: info@couleecritters.com

Website: www.couleecritters.com

Email and phone messages will be responded to within 24-72 hours on business days. Messages received on weekends may not be answered until Monday. Messages on holidays will be responded to upon reopening. If you do not receive a timely response, please resend your message as it may have been deleted due to sensitive spam filters.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY



One of the many special features of Forest & Nature School is that sessions are held in the same area of land over a period of time, allowing students to become very comfortable with and knowledgeable about the area. Indeed, we believe that it is only through a deep connection to place that children grow up to be stewards of the land. Although this is very positive for learning, it can have an adverse environmental effect due to overuse of an area. We therefore strive to meet a delicate balance whereby we promote children's connection to nature through exposure and meaningful experience, while at the same time fostering an ethic of care and sustainable use of

the land we are connecting to. We minimise our ecological impact by rotating our sites for play, staying on trails as much as possible.

At Coulee Critters Forest and Nature School, we recognize the importance of environmental sustainability. We conduct ongoing ecological impact assessments of our presence on the land, looking out for potential concerns and negative impacts such as; compaction, interference with local wildlife habitats, areas that are being overused, natural elements (like twigs and plants) being removed, and human-made materials being left behind. We have created a plan both for the monitoring, management and limitation of our potential negative impact and for the positive development and improvement of the ecology of our site. We discuss site maintenance with the children and are conscious of our ecological impact.