

Out and About Forest and Nature School Inc.  
Play, Explore, Inquire

# Out and About Forest and Nature School Inc. Program Handbook

2023/2024



EMBRACING AND IGNIGHTING THE MAGIC OF CHILDHOOD THROUGH PLAY,  
EXPLORATION, AND INQUIRY

## Our Work

Each morning we say good morning to each other and to the Land. Out and About FNS acknowledges that our space, play, and time is spent on the unceded and unsurrendered traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people. Our program is created through a settler colonial way of being with the Land. We thank the Land and those who have played here before us, with us, and after us. We recognize that our space is colonized and we work towards building a relationship of respect and reconciliation with the First People and the Land, if they will allow us. We feel gratitude to have access to this Land, to be able to learn and play on it with children, families, and members of local communities.



Out and About is a Forest and Nature program offering children freedom to explore in a space that is child-centred, interest-led, inquiry-driven, and educator supported. We believe in creating connection through play on the land while developing holistic risk-assessment skills. Our educators are passionate and colearners, offering support, play, and guidance throughout the day.

## **WELCOME TO OUT AND ABOUT!**

We are grateful and excited to welcome you to our space and program! This handbook is designed to guide children, families and the community about our policies, procedures for our outdoor educational and recreational programs.

Out and About was created with the intention to encourage children to play, explore, and inquire in the outdoors. It was founded in order to share the importance of trusting in their child's capabilities and guiding them in play. Learning and trusting in the child's capabilities is an important aspect of Out and About.

The goal of our programs is to encourage the development of self-regulation, self-assurance, a valued relationship with nature, and problem-solving skills that will enhance their everyday lives. We share stories, foster a sense of achievement, self-confidence and well-being.

Please contact us with questions, comments or concerns  
[outandaboutinnature@gmail.com](mailto:outandaboutinnature@gmail.com)

This outdoor play-based program is for half-day and full-day programs, ranging between the ages of 1-15 years. Forest School is nature-based, child-centered, interest-led, inquiry-driven, educator-supported, and experimental. This time and space encourages children grow holistically and create connections.



## VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT



### BENEFITS AND MISSION:

- Children developing independence and individualism
- Children identifying and building empathy, thus encouraging communication and social skills.
- Building safe and healthy risk-assessment skills.
- Developing confidence and resilience.
- Establishing relationships and respect; with the land, themselves, friends, family and community.
- Environmentally sustainable behaviours and ecological literacy
- Fostering self-regulation, improved creativity and selfacceptance
- Enhancing problem solving skills
- Reduced stress, increased patience, recovery from mental fatigue

Through co-learning and collaboration, children, families, and educators have the opportunity to develop holistically in the outdoors utilizing their senses, healthy risk-assessment, and play-based learning.

At Out and About, we believe that all participants should have equal opportunity no matter your ethnic background, attainment, disability, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status or background. To provide this equal society for all participants, our site is physically accessible, welcoming, and safe to all.

### **HOW ARE WE PLANNING ON ACHIEVING THIS?**

Out and About is dedicated to provide all children and families space and time to create a connection with the land, themselves, and each other. Regular and repeated access to a natural space provides the time required to discover the wonder that nature offers and establish connections. By building a relationship with the land, peers, and educators, children understand empathy, as they recognize others connections.

Participating in risky play enables individuals to grow confidence in their choices and understanding of ones' capabilities. Our goal is to create an environment that strengthens the child's inquiry, embrace the magic of childhood, develop a strong sense of self, and to connect with other.

As an educator and guardian for the child, we develop trust in the child's unique ideas and support them through their thought process rather than intervening. This allows the students to trust in us to share their thoughts and wonder about their experience. This trust allows us to listen and learn from each other, building the child-led curriculum together.



**WHAT IS FOREST AND NATURE SCHOOL**



Forest and Nature School is a colonized practice that acknowledges the First Nations, Metis, and Inuit community's connection to the land. Their rich history and continual

practice provide knowledge and understanding of the importance of teaching skills associated with nature.

Out and About Inc. supports children's curiosity, sense of wonder, and self, while introducing children to risky-play and risk-assessment skills. Failing a task or skill enables children to develop self-regulation and problem-solving skills that allow them to approach the scenario in a different way. They discover what is within their capabilities, the opportunity to work through their fears, understand that failure is okay, and develop coping skills. Risky-play creates space for children to build resiliency, perseverance and acceptance that mistakes are going to be made.

Out and About Inc. follows the educational philosophy and practice that centers the Land and child-led activities. Nature and loose-parts are utilized as a tool for development, engaging in meaningful experiences and activities that pertain to emerging learning. Children develop social, emotional, physical, and self-resilient skills through play and guidance that will transition with them as they grow.



## PROGRAMS

Our programs are offered all over Renfrew County and the Whitewater Region. Below are our programs and locations. We offer full-day, half-day, specialized, skill-development, and family programs throughout the seasons. We offer Drop-in days, Pay What You Can, & 6-week programs to create accessible programs.

### **Wolf Program (Forester Falls and Petawawa Location)**

A full-day program from 9am-3pm directed to children ages 4-10. Children must be independently toileting.

### **Bear Program (Forester Falls and Petawawa Location)**

Our Outdoor Skill Development Program directed to children ages 7-12, from 9am-3pm. Children must be independently toileting.

### **Fox Program (Forester Falls, Petawawa, and Arnprior Location)**

A half-day program from 9am-12pm directed to pre-school children between ages 2.5-5. Children must be independently toileting.

### **Birch and Bud Program (Forester Falls, Petawawa, and Arnprior Location)**

A caregiver(s) and child program directed for families, from 9am-12pm, and to prepare for our Fox Program. Children are to be accompanied by a caregiver.

### **Loon Program (Renfrew Location)**

Our Renfrew family program that offers connection and growth on the land, while learning about child-led inquiry. From 9:30am-12pm directed for families with children of ALL AGES.

### **Hummingbird Program (Renfrew Location)**

An inclusive program for individuals with a special need who would benefit from a mid-week break from traditional school. 1:3 Ratio, 9am-3pm.

## **Family in Forestry: (Pembroke and Forester Falls Location)**

Experience the wonders of the “wood-wide web” in the spring as we adventure onto the land! Discover the web of life and your connection to the forest through interactive activities and child-led learning.

### **PD Day Registration**

Forest School during PA Days. Register for different seasons and take a break from the screen.

Alternative programs and events may have a different location that will be identified upon registration.

### **Do you need an early drop-off or late pick-up?**

Email us at [outandaboutinnature@gmail.com](mailto:outandaboutinnature@gmail.com)

\$15 for early drop-off @8:30am

\$25 for late pick up @1pm or 4pm

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## **DROP IN DAYS**

Full-Day: 9am-3pm

Half-Day: 9am-12pm

[www.outandaboutfns.com](http://www.outandaboutfns.com)

## **LOCATIONS:**

### **Forester Falls:**

503 Rafting Road, Forester Falls, ON **Petawawa:**

Our Urban Space: Jack Pine Park

### **Renfrew:**

1266 Fraser Road, Greater Madawaska.

**Arnprior:**

TBD

**Pembroke:**

Forest Lea Trails, Pembroke, ON

## FEES

Fees are calculated and charged per season

\*Please note that when you register,

**Fall Season:** September-December

**Winter:** December-March

**Spring:** April-June

**Summer:** July-August

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<https://www.outandaboutfns.com>

### LATE PICKUP FEE:

Parents picking children up after scheduled pick-up times are considered late and may be subject to late fees.

## REGISTRATION, PAYMENT AND REFUND POLICIES

- In order to participate, registration must be completed in full online.
- Financial packages are set up with OAFNS.
- Here at Out and About, we want to create programs that are accessible for all families. Please email or call to inquire about our payment options and plans so that your children can come and experience the outdoors.



## REFUND AND WITHDRAWAL POLICY

- Registration for programs is non-refundable.
- Deposits are non-refundable (\$150). Admin fees are non-refundable (\$60).
- If a child is unable to participate in the full-time program, refunds may be given after an assessment by Out and About Forest and Nature School. We ask that you give us at least three weeks' notice, otherwise, there will be no refund unless we can replace the students' space. However, deposits and admin fees per child will be non-refundable.
- If a child is withdrawn from programs due to illness, injury, expulsion, or any other reason a refund will not be issued for any portion of the program fees.
- Refunds will not be given if a day's program must be cancelled due to staff shortage/illness or inclement weather. Pay differences for alternative programs do not apply when a day is missed ie. a missed day payment cannot be applied to an alternative program. (Please see our Inclement Weather Policy/Closure Policy).

*Our policy is there to ensure that programs, staff and resources are still accommodated though the program does not run due to powers out of our control, ie: weather or illness. We do our best to make up for these days, however, we do not offer refunds or pay differences in alternative programs.*

- Programs may be cancelled if there is insufficient registration. In this event, a **partial** refund for the program will be returned. Admin and registration fees will not be returned.



## A DAY AT OUT AND ABOUT

An emergent approach to learning results in each Out and About feeling unique to educators and children alike. No day is the same and we embrace the wonder of childhood and the magic of being on the land.

### **Emergent Curriculum**

This curriculum follows the children's interests and discoveries and is not predetermined. The day is shaped by ideas, the Land, each-other, storytelling,

inquiries, interests, and play. At Out and About, educators co-learn with the children as we explore resources through literature, experiments and shared knowledge.

## **Storytelling**

The tradition of oral storytelling can be a way to teach, engage, and provoke thinking. Our stories are inspired by the play, seasons, Land, people, and other ideas that we observe in our programs and around us. It can also be a jumping off point for inquiry, a stimulation of the senses, a tuning into place, and even an elicitation of the imagination. We have adopted this practice as a way of frontloading our day, inspiring play, and sharing in the magic of the childhood and oral tradition.



## **Our Practice and Routine**

The day begins by greeting families and children in the outdoors, checking in and sharing any information needed. Drop-off is spent settling in, connecting and engaging in play!

With a howl or yip, our friends gather, giving educators and children the opportunity to say good morning to each other and the Land, communicate, and set intentions for the day. On our first day, we remind ourselves to Be Kind, Be Gentle and Be Safe. This includes with our friends, ourselves, educators, and the forest. Children have the opportunity to share ideas and goals.

We then settle in for a snack and story. After our snack and story, the children prepare their bags before heading into the forest. Once everyone has prepared themselves, we hike out onto the Land.

During the day, children's inquiries and play are observed, enhanced, and engaged with. As co-learners, educators provide guidance and tools for riskyplay and problem-solving scenarios. We work together to decide the best approaches and communication strategies. Our play can look like tree climbing, stick breaking, shelter building, colouring, sit-spots, jumping into mud puddles, investigating moss, searching for treasure, and so much more.

Observing the children's play allow educators to process and reflect what the children are learning and interested in. This enables us to provide safety, guidance, and tools to assist them in their ideas and perceptions.

At lunch, we read stories while we fuel our bodies, and share any ideas or messages. Children are free to have snacks whenever their bodies let them know they are hungry. We enjoy a snack and story together before heading into the forest, and join together for lunch. Water breaks will be encouraged frequently. Children are encouraged to develop independence in choosing when they are hungry and thirsty.

After lunch we continue our play until it is time to leave our space, when we gather together again with a yip or a howl. We ask each other what about our day we are grateful for, say thank you to the Land, followed by a howl or yip. Closing offers a chance to share joys, struggles, treasures that were noticed and exciting challenges that took place. Children and educators will then pack up and head back to the entrance.

Pick up is time to touch base about the day.



## HOW TO PREPARE FOR OUT AND ABOUT

What your child needs to bring each day changes as the seasons change. The year-round necessities include:

- 1 backpack they can carry themselves on a hike with one or two water bottles and their lunch.
- 1 separate bag containing 2 extra changes of clothes (including socks and underwear), plus extra outer layers if possible.
- Labelling everything will help us keep your child's belongings together.
- A willingness to be outside, respect for the land, and time to play.



- Appropriate attire. Checking the weather, the day before your child attends the program will be beneficial in order to predict what kind of clothing will be needed.
- Sunscreen
- Bug spray

Our supply list is a suggestion based, providing an idea of what your child may need for Forest School. We play in the mud, walk in the forest, play in the sun, explore in the shade, and get messy. When you register, we will send a recommended gear list.

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## FALL

- Fall weather can be unpredictable, but layers will help with the changing weather.
- We recommend wearing a base layer to wick away moisture, a fleece layer for warmth and a shell or outer layer to protect from the wind.
- Pack extra socks, fleece mittens and a hat. Please bring rain boots and rain gear for the soggy days. Fall is also the time that we begin to require more calories to burn as we play and the temperature changes.

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## WINTER

As temperatures drop children will require base layers and winter gear. Please avoid cotton, especially socks and against the skin.

- **Beware the cotton socks**—wool and other synthetics are best.
- Base layers – synthetic or wool long underwear/top
- Insulating layer of warm pants and sweater/fleece
- Snow pants and jacket or snowsuit
- 2+ pairs mittens (please avoid gloves, mitts are so much warmer)
- Warm hat
- Boots

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## SPRING

- It can still be quite chilly in the spring! Pack and wear enough layers for the everchanging weather.
  - In the spring, rain boots and rain gear with a full change of clothes. We like to jump in puddles, so extra socks are a must! See gear above.
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## SUMMER

In the summer, we request that students wear long pants and close toed shoes, a sunhat and sunscreen/bug spray if your family uses these items. Rain boots and rain gear are good things to throw into their extra clothing bag.

**A note on What to Wear/Pack** It sounds like a lot of gear! It's not necessary to invest in expensive brand names. On Facebook Marketplace, there are many Thrift stores are great places to find children's clothing at reasonable prices. Mountain Equipment Coop (MEC) and Canadian Tire have excellent children's outdoor wear for all seasons. If your child is missing a mitten or hat or their boots or socks get soaked, we will be happy to lend them supplies from our gear library.



## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



### PRIVACY

Out and About takes the privacy of participants 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. All families communicate their wishes regarding photo consent during registration. Your consent can be withdrawn at any time through written communication to the Head Educator.

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.

### BATHROOM POLICY

Children must be independent using the bathroom for our full-day and half-day programs without the accompany of a trusted grownup. We have access to washrooms at our Forester Falls location. All locations have access to a Lugaballoo.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

Out and About believes in consent in many different forms. After being granted permission from families and caregivers for utilizing their children's picture, we ask the children each day if they would like their picture taken. Social media can be utilized to share moments of play, inquiry, exploration, and wonderful experiments in the forest. This allows for learning to become visible, where children and families can re-visit their experiences. Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns about photo consent or protecting the privacy of the information you provide.

## **ILLNESS POLICY**

We, like all businesses, have had to adapt and develop our own safety and health protocols for illness. As with the seasons, the situation is ever-changing, and we will keep our families posted on any changes in protocol as we are informed by our local health unit. We ask that families do a self-wellness assessment before coming to Out and About Inc.

In the following cases, we ask that participants stay home from Out and About if they have received a positive COVID-19 test, or for at least 3 days after their last symptom have subsided:

- Temperature over 101 degrees F or 38.3 degrees C
- Severe chest cough
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea (watery, profuse stools) Should the above-mentioned situations arise while at Forest School, the affected participants will be asked to return home.

Participants affected by communicable diseases such as COVID-19, measles, chicken pox, mumps, flu, strep throat, viral pneumonia, conjunctivitis (pink-eye), etc., are asked to stay home from Out and About Inc. until their health care provider has communicated that it is safe for them to attend.

## **ILLNESS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

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### HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES

Families, children and staff are asked to do a self-assessment of their well-being each day before arriving to the program. Wearing a mask is your choice and we want to create a space that you feel safe and welcomed. Out and About FNS Inc. will continue a 1:8 ratio of students to staff until further notice. Frequent and proper handwashing will be performed by all participants and staff, especially before eating and after using the washroom. Hand sanitizer will also be available

for all participants. It is helpful if parents label their child's personal belongings (backpack, water bottle and lunch kit).

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### **MANAGEMENT OF PARTICIPANTS WITH ILLNESS SYMPTOMS**

If children are demonstrating symptoms at Out and About Inc. that are unmanageable, families will be called and asked to pick their child up promptly.



### **FOOD POLICIES**

#### **\*Allergies**

Nuts and nut products are welcome at Out and About. If and when we have a student and participant that is highly allergic, this policy will be altered. We ask that participants be prepared to substitute nuts upon this request. To ensure the safety of your child, we must be informed of any known allergies and any medications (ex: EpiPen) that your child may have.

#### **Snack-Sharing**

We ask that participants do not share nor trade snacks to ensure the health, safety, and happiness of the community. Snacks are often brought by the head educator via permission of families.

### **Litter-Less Lunches**

We encourage participants to try to bring a litter-less lunch. In the case of lunches with garbage, children will be asked to pack their garbage home with them. Please also keep in mind that children tend to eat more over a day of play in the Forest.

### **Handwashing and Drinking Water**

Participants will be asked to wash their hands with sanitizer, soap and water before eating and after using the bathroom. They will also be able to refill their water bottles on site with potable water. We have water cheers throughout the day! This is when we gather together and share our cheers while hydrating.

Ex: "Cheers to the forest and friend!"

### **POISON IVY POLICY**

Poison ivy is present in the forest at Out and About Forest and Nature School through the Spring and Fall. A risk assessment will be performed each day to locate poison ivy.

To limit exposure, we strongly recommend that all participants wear long pants, long socks, and closed-toed shoes while taking part in our programs in all seasons. Washing affected skin within 15-60 minutes of exposure is likely to remove the oil that can lead to a reaction, so staff carry potable water and soap at all times. In the event of a participant coming in contact with poison ivy, we are able to wash the affected area immediately.

### **TICK POLICY**

Ticks may be present throughout the space from Spring until Fall (as long as the temperature is above freezing they may be active). To limit exposure, we strongly recommend that all participants wear:

- Long pants
- Long sleeved shirt
- Long socks
- Closed-toed shoes
- Hat

We suggest that participants tuck their pant legs into their socks and shirts into their pants to also limit possible tick exposure. We recommend using natural insect repellent to deter ticks. If a tick is noticed on a participant, it is brushed off. If a tick is attached, we will remove the tick using a tick key or tweezers and educators will inform parents/guardians. After a day at Out and About Inc., we recommend you do an all-body check upon arriving at home.

For more information about supporting children's play during tick season, visit a blog post written by a staff member at Child and Nature Alliance of Canada:

<http://childnature.ca/what-can-we-do-about-ticks/>



### **INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY**

In the event that the weather/road conditions make travel to/from Out and About Forest and Nature School Inc. unsafe, and we need to cancel programs for that day, we will contact families by email to inform them of our closure for the day. Out and About will do their best to reschedule this missed day to later in the



week, later in the month, or later in the season. In the event that a mutually agreeable date cannot be found, the day will remain canceled altogether.

## **EXTREME WEATHER POLICY**

Out and About Forest and Nature School educators consult the forecast regularly, and weather-related safety is considered in all decision-making. Due to lack of enclosed shelter, in the case of predicted thunder and lightning or high winds, OAFNS will be cancelled. If educators assess the forecast and deem it unsafe for space, shelter, and accessibility, families will be notified that OAFNS is cancelled that day. In the case of extreme heat (30C+), OAFNS educators will limit participants' length of exposure based on age and outerwear, and will constantly assess participants' comfort and safety, watching for signs of heat exhaustion, as well as offering ways to cool off using water and time in the shade. In extreme cold (-15) programs will continue to run. Colder than (-15), full day programs will be closed, and half-day programs will continue. They support children in keeping skin covered and staying warm and comfortable.

We will do our best to make up these days, however it is possible that this will be a missed day. Out and About is working towards creating online profiles and videos for families that can bring the outside in to accommodate these days.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES AND FIRST AID**

Out and About Forest and Nature School has written emergency procedures which is carried at all times in the emergency/first aid backpack. Our staff are all First Aid trained and certified.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY**

We aim for all our participants and staff to engage in a high level of respect for the natural world and encourage all to be involved in decisions about their environment and safety. We aim to make children, parents and staff aware of health and safety issues and to minimize the hazards and risks to enable the children to thrive.

Hazards are dealt with accordingly and immediately. A first aid backpack is always kept and equipped. Our first aid kit is regularly checked by a designated member of staff and restocked as necessary. A mobile telephone will be carried by all practitioners when exploring the woods. At Forest school, employees are certified in Wilderness First Aid and/or Standard First Aid and CPR C.

Basic hygiene will be taught to children; hand washing, covering mouths when sneezing/coughing, using paper towels, disposing of tissues etc. There is a handwashing stations provided for children to wash hands after using the facility and sanitizer is carried by an educator. Children learn about health, safety and personal hygiene through the activities we provide and the routines we follow. All equipment is regularly checked for cleanliness and safety and any dangerous items are repaired or discarded. Children are taught to handle and store tools safely. All materials including paint and glue are non-toxic.



## RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk - the experience and management of it - is an inherent and integral part of Forest School practice and play, and indeed of healthy child development. Out and About educators' endeavor to co-assess and co-manage risk with participants. We believe this to be an essential skill for children to acquire and for adults to support. Forest School educators conduct seasonal and daily site risk assessments, as well as activity risk assessments and individual risk assessments on an ongoing basis - always considering the balance between risks and benefits when doing so. Before participation all children, volunteers and educators are required to sign the Assumption of Risk Informed Consent document. Some of the risks inherent to Forest School and outdoor play include, but are not limited to:

- Injuries from executing strenuous and demanding physical activities, possibly on uneven ground and terrain in the forest
- Contracting poison ivy
- The presence of wild animals and ticks
- Inclement weather



## RISKY PLAY AND RISK-ASSESSMENT

Risky play provides children with the opportunity to learn about their capabilities, limits, and appropriate risky-play. They understand which branches to grab because they have experience and understanding of the weak or dead branches. As Forest Practitioners, Facilitators and Educators, we encourage children to take risk in their play, while scaffolding and discussing their choices. Learning how to balance takes practice.

Risky-play provides children and educators an opportunity to learn more about themselves. It also provides guardians and caretakers to trust the child in making decisions. If we prevent our friends from climbing on structures, how will they learn how their muscles work? Or to discover their comfort levels? Or how will they develop coordination? Or confidence in themselves? Risky play provides space for failure to be normalized and overcome.

Risky-play creates space for children to build resiliency, perseverance, and acceptance that mistakes are going to be made. If we fall, we must try again and discover a new

method to be successful. If we fall and give up, then we will carry this attitude throughout life, expecting others to tear down the obstacle instead of facing it. Risk Benefit

Assessment for Outdoor Play: A Canadian Toolkit

<https://www.outdoorplaycanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/risk-benefit-assessment-foroutdoor-play-a-canadian-toolkit.pdf>

## OAFNS STAFF: PARTICIPANT RATIOS

The Out and About Forest and Nature School Inc. staff are experienced and qualified educators and facilitators with first aid training. We maintain a low ratio of 1:8 or 1:6 as it helps us to more deeply support the play.



## BEHAVIOUR POLICY

At Out and About FNS, we believe children excel when they know how they are expected to behave and when they are free to develop their play and learning without fear of being hurt or unfairly restricted by anyone else.

We are committed to establishing a learning environment in which children develop self-regulation, self-discipline and self-esteem as they take increasing responsibility for themselves and their actions, and as they consider the wellbeing of others. We actively promote positive behaviour, where children treat each other with care and respect.

Out and About FNS encourages positive behaviour by focusing on activities that require sharing, negotiation and co-operation. We encourage responsibility in caring for others and for the environment. Out and About FNS requires all staff, volunteers and students to provide a positive model of behaviour by treating children, parents and one another with friendliness, care, good manners and courtesy.

We require all staff and participants to use positive strategies for handling any conflict by helping children find solutions in ways which are appropriate for their ages and stages of development. For example; by distraction, praise and reward.

At Out and About FNS we praise and reward good behaviour such as kindness and willingness to share. When children behave in unacceptable ways, we help them to see how to cope more appropriately, bearing in mind their ages and stages of development. For example; by distraction or discussion.

We do not use techniques intended to single out and humiliate individual children. We do not shout or raise our voices in a threatening way to respond to children's behaviour. It will always be made clear to the child or children in question that it is the behaviour and not the child that is unwelcome. Recurring problems are undertaken in partnership with the child's parents

*If it becomes clear that the Out and About group program is not a fit for a child, Out and About will offer alternative programming or a refund, once the space has been filled.*

## **EDUCATOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

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

- Ensuring the physical safety of participants, by co-assessing and comanaging risk with them on an ongoing basis such that all participants feel connected to and comfortable in the natural world
- Considering the social and emotional safety of participants, and endeavoring to foster a caring and respectful community so that the risk

- taking and questioning necessary for deep, inquiry-based learning can occur
- Modeling care and respect for the natural world, as well as safe use of Loose Parts and found natural items during Forest 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 children and share meaningful feedback with school educators.

## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

Out and About FNS will not share any personal data that you give to us with third parties without your consent, unless we are legally compelled or obligated to do so. We are 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. Out and About staff, take this responsibility seriously. Reporting procedures and training are provided to all staff.

## **ACCESSIBILITY POLICY**

One of the primary goals of Out and About Forest and Nature School Inc. 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 School by making our site physically accessible for everyone and our community safe and welcoming. We currently have a “gear bank” or “lending library” of outerwear so that the supplies needed to safely enjoy Out and About are not themselves a barrier to participation. We welcome your feedback and suggestions in the realization of those goals.

## **CHILD ENTRY AND RELEASE POLICY**

Parents must give Out and About FNS authorization for the people who may have access to their children (i.e. a relative who picks up child, emergency contacts in cases where parents cannot be reached). Parents must notify OAFNS before changing the usual pick-up routine. We always act in the best interests of the child if there is any confusion or uncertainty.



## COMMUNICATIONS

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### GENERAL COMMUNICATION

Generally, Out and About Inc. will communicate with families, predominantly via email. To reach us in a timely manner, please send an email to [outandaboutinnature@gmail.com](mailto:outandaboutinnature@gmail.com) or text 613-293-3492. Please be sure to communicate the following:

- if you will be late/absent
  - if your child is ill with a communicable disease
  - if your child is being treated for lice
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## EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION

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

## QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

Our goal is for all visitors to OAFNS 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 have any questions or concerns regarding your own or your child's visit at OAFNS, please do not hesitate to ask to speak with OAFNS staff directly. If you or the OAFNS staff member feels that you require an extended or more focused conversation than can be had in the moment, plans can be made to do so.

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EMAIL: [OUTANDABOUTINNATURE@GMAIL.COM](mailto:OUTANDABOUTINNATURE@GMAIL.COM)

## LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT





## ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR



Educators and facilitators provide guidance and view children as competent, curious, and capable individuals. Our responsibility resides in creating an inclusive and respectful environment in nature, and in the world. Risky-play is supported through open dialogue with the children as we process risk-benefits together. Our goals are to provide children with a connection and relationship with the land, their peers, and with their facilitators to create a sense of safety, allowing them to acknowledge and relish in their individual gifts.

Understanding participants at OAFNS as knowledge builders making meaning of the world through play, in its many varied ways of emerging, means that the role of an OAFNS educator is also quite different than the role a teacher may play in a more conventional setting. Instead of being an “expert” or the one who has all the “right answers” (and thereby perhaps being viewed as occupying a position of power above learners) OAFNS educators seek to be co-learners with participants. They aim to prompt questions and extend and deepen participants’ thinking about and compassion for the world around them by themselves posing

questions, or by using or introducing loose parts, and supplies that change the learning environment and therefore elicit a change in the learner.

We embrace each individual for their unique perspective and take time to listen. We continue to reflect and understand that we are always learning, and that the children have much to teach us. Our roles are to provide guidance and space when needed in a safe environment. Educators utilize their time to observe the children's play in order to provide them with tools and activities that will aid them in their continual learning. We also enjoy playing in the forest too!

## **ENVIROMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

One of the many special features of Out and About FNS is that sessions are held in the same natural space over a period of time, allowing participants to become very comfortable in and knowledgeable about the area. 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.

At Out and About FNS environmental sustainability is at the heart of our motivation for running programs. Our staff have a plan in place to conduct ongoing ecological impact assessments where we will monitor and manage factors including; erosion, pollution, compaction and corruption of species.





## THE OUT AND ABOUT FNS STORY AND DIRECTOR



My name is Arija Bunkis, and I am my mothers' daughter and my Vecsmaminas' (grandmother's) mischievous granddaughter. My pronouns are She/Her. I am a continual learner, and a supporter for learning and growing in the outdoors.

I am an outdoor enthusiast with a passion for education, child psychology, wellbeing and holistic development. I am a believer that nature provides deep insight into oneself and connection. My experience in the outdoors working with children and families is extensive. I have a degree in English and French from the University of Ottawa, I am a Registered Early Childhood Educator, a Forest and Nature School Practitioner Student, an outdoor educator and instructor, an explorer, and an advocate for inclusive environments. I am a fierce friend, a student, an educator, a listener, a story-teller, a rock collector, an avid reader, and continuously searching to enhance my knowledge and experience within education and pedagogy.

I am very excited to welcome children, families, and the community to our space where we will play, learn, and be outside. My goal is to work with the Indigenous community to provide guidance in creating space and time for children of all cultures, race, neurodiversity's, ages, abilities, and experiences to engage and develop holistically in nature. I want to create time and space for families and the community to share their stories, perspectives, and aid in ensuring my program

embraces all cultures, individuals, and experiences. I hope to continue to learn, support play and connection in this child-led curriculum, encouraging selfdiscovery and resiliency.

I am fortunate to have surrounded myself with incredible staff that share in my passion for outdoor education and view children as competent, capable, and curious individuals. Learn more about them by clicking the link below.

Every staff member is First Aid Certified, has their VSC, and is trained each season to deliver best practice policies with Out and About Inc.

[Out and About Staff](#)

### **HANDBOOK REFERENCES:**

With gratitude and thanks, this handbook referenced several documents, resources, and mentors. The handbooks that have aided greatly in continual learning and content go to:

1. Out to Play Forest and Nature Programs in Ottawa, ON <https://outtoplay.ca/>

Resources

Thank you for your dedication and participation in play!