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# Forest and Nature School

## Wildsight Kimberley/Cranbrook Parent Handbook



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**wildsight**  
Kimberley | Cranbrook

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## Introduction

*“Those who dwell among the beauties and mysteries of the Earth are never alone or weary of life.” – Rachel Carson*

The following handbook provides an overall guideline to Wildsight Kimberley/Cranbrook’s Forest and Nature School programs to ensure that you and your child get the most fun and excitement possible from the experience. Please read this information carefully so you and your child know what to expect and what to bring to programs.

### **What is Forest and Nature School?**

Forest and Nature School (FNS) is an educational approach that was established in Europe in the 1950’s. The primary goal is to provide *regular and repeated access to a natural space*, using 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 day immersed in an outdoor setting where time is unhurried and there is space for independent reflection, collaborative creation and risky play. Students enjoy the freedom to explore, build, play and engage with one another, throughout every season of the year.

There are ten principles of Forest and Nature School, as summarized here:

1. Takes place in any outdoor space
2. Regular and repeated sessions in the same outdoor space
3. Views children as competent, capable learners
4. Led by qualified educators familiar with play-based, emergent and inquiry-driven methods
5. Values play
6. Views risky play as integral to healthy development
7. Loose, natural materials are used to support open-ended learning
8. Values the process as much as the outcome
9. Seeks to build reciprocal relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, who have been learning from this Land since time immemorial
10. Builds community

The benefits of FNS are endless. It has been widely researched and documented that free play and repeated time outdoors helps develop the whole-child – socio-emotional, physical, and cognitive skills. It allows learning in a different context where children can carry out a range of practical, achievable activities with the freedom to explore, play, create and imagine. In addition to better physical literacy, play-based and outdoor education can improve mental health, attention, and reduce ADD/ADHD symptoms, as well as increase confidence, capacity to learn (motivation, understanding and concentration), communication, critical thinking, problem-solving and social skills. Learn more about forest schools at [Child and Nature Alliance of Canada \(childnature.ca\)](http://ChildandNatureAllianceofCanada.org)



## Our Classroom

Our classroom is the forest. We gather at one of two locations in what is now called Lois Creek, where we learn to appreciate all the wonders of our own backyards. Wildsight Kimberley/Cranbrook acknowledges that we work and play on ancestral Ktunaxa homeland. We are grateful for the opportunity to learn on and from this land, and we work to provide an open space for others to build relationships with this special place. We commit to working with partners and integrating the First Peoples Principles of Learning into our programs.

## Environmental Sustainability

*Be kind to yourself, others and nature: respect.*

That is our One Big Rule at Forest and Nature School. By returning to the same locations again and again, learners have the opportunity to make deep, lasting connections to our place across all four seasons. Through these deep, meaningful connections, learners become stewards of the land. We recognize that this repetitive use, however, can have an adverse impact on the environment. We teach respect of place as much as respect of self and others. We foster an ethic of care and stewardship of the land we spend time on. We minimize our impact by (among other things) rotating site locations, by returning insects to their habitats, and playing with loose parts. We leave the site as we found it and by packing out what we pack in.

## Registration and Attendance

*“What do parents owe their young that is more important than a warm and trusting connection to the Earth...” -Theodore Roszak*

Registration is to be completed online at [www.kimberleyoutdoors.ca](http://www.kimberleyoutdoors.ca) or at [www.wildsight.ca/forest](http://www.wildsight.ca/forest) for each term: Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer. Completed registrations will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis and as such, you may be put on a waiting list and/or asked to shift dates in order to stay within our adult-to-child ratios. Full payment and all required paperwork (waivers, medical release forms etc) is required before the start of each term.

## Program Fees and Payment

There are four Forest and Nature School programs to choose from, for ages 12 and under. All programs are subject to sufficient registration, and may change with short notice. Fees vary by term, program, and number of weeks. Visit our website for the most up to date program offerings and to register.

- **Snowshoe Hares Afterschool**
- **Ravens Full Days**
- **Wolf Cubs Unparented Play**
- **Deer & Fawns Parented Play**

## Refunds

Please consider your registration carefully. To withdraw a child from the program we must receive a written request (e.g. via email) with 14 days or more notice prior to the start of the program, in which case a full refund minus \$30 administrative fee will be granted. With less than 14 days before the program starts, no refund will be offered except in extreme circumstances determined on a case by case basis. If such a case is approved, a \$30 administrative fee will apply.

Refunds will not be issued for the following:

- Cancelled programs due to extreme weather. In such cases, we will attempt to reschedule missed days.
- A child who is absent or leaves for a portion of the day due to illness, injury, or any other reason
- If the child is asked not to return for the remainder of the semester for any reason, includes those outlined in the [Behaviour Management Approach](#) below.

To withdraw a child from the program we must receive a written request (e.g. via email). With 14 days or more notice prior to the start of the program, a full refund minus \$30 administrative fee will be granted. With less than 14 days before the program starts, no refund will be offered.

## Attendance

If your child is sick, or will be absent or late, please let your lead instructor know as soon as possible via text or phone call; instructor phone numbers will be shared in the parent welcome package. We do not receive emails the mornings of Forest School. If we don't hear from you, and your child is absent, we will call you to check in. See our Refund Policy for more information.

## Health and Safety Policies

*“Children still need a childhood with dirt, mud, puddles, trees, sticks, and tadpoles.” -Brooke Hampton*

## Privacy Policy

Your family's privacy policy is very important to us. Personal data held by us, including photographic images and videos, will be processed in accordance with privacy legislation and be used for the purposes that you have consented to. We will not share details with third parties without your consent, except where legally required 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.

## Illness Policy

Wildsight Kimberley/Cranbrook will adhere to all BC Government and WorkSafeBC Public Health Orders regarding communicable diseases.

In the following cases, we ask that participants (including children, parents, staff, guest speakers, and volunteers) stay home for at least 24 hours after their last symptom has subsided:

- Temperature of 38.3 degrees C or above (101 degrees F or above)
- Extreme common cold symptoms
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea (watery, profuse stools)

Should the above-mentioned situations arise while at any Wildsight Kimberley/Cranbrook program, the affected participants will be required to return home.

Participants affected by communicable diseases including but not limited to measles, chicken pox, mumps, flu, COVID-19, strep throat, viral pneumonia, conjunctivitis (pink-eye), etc., are required to stay home until symptoms are resolved, or until their health care provider (i.e. naturopath, doctor, nurse, etc.) has communicated that it is safe for them to attend.

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

## Medication Administration Policy

Parents/guardians are to indicate any and all necessary medications in the registration package. Parents/guardians must ensure any medications required during the program are brought with the child. Epi-pens and inhalers may stay with the child, while all other medicines are to be carried by staff, unless the child is pre-approved to carry their own by the parent/guardian and instructor.

Children should be able to administer medications themselves with staff supervision. Staff will not administer drugs or medications to any child while in their care with the exception of an Epi-Pen for severe allergic reactions or inhalers. A 'consent to handle and administer medication' form must be completed by a parent/guardian and kept on file for any pre-known cases, and medications stored in a container with the child's name.

## Child Protection Policy

Wildsight Kimberley/Cranbrook is committed to taking preventative measures against child abuse. This includes, but is not limited to requiring all staff and volunteers to hold a clear Criminal Record check.

Our staff understands and recognizes that we are required to report suspected child abuse immediately in accordance with the Child, Family and Community Services Act. In the circumstance of a disclosure, we must:

- never promise to keep a disclosure a secret;
- listen to the child but never ask leading questions; and
- report the disclosure as soon as possible and within 24 hours.



## Food Policy

Participants are required to bring their own snack(s), lunch and water bottles. We encourage families to consider packing healthy, energizing food that is easy to carry in a backpack. During the winter months, consider thermoses for hot snacks and beverages such as tea.

## Nut-Free Zone

All Forest and Nature School sessions are nut-free zones due to the potential for life-threatening allergies. However, given that our programs take place in public environments, we are unable to guarantee a fully nut-free environment. Please inform us if there are any other food allergies we should be aware of.

## Snack-Sharing

Students are not allowed to share or trade food with other students. However, on special circumstances such as firepit cooking, snacks may be provided by instructors KOLS or parents. In these cases, all allergies, intolerances, and food preferences will be considered.

## Litter-Less Lunches and Snacks

We encourage participants to bring litter-less lunches and litter-less snacks. Garbage/waste facilities are not available and all litter must be carried out. Remember: pack it in, pack it out. Also, please consider the size and weight of your participant's snacks, as we empower all children to carry, open and pack away their own food and drinks. A water refill station may be available during warmer months.

## Toileting and Hand Washing Policy

At this point in time, we do not have access to an indoor washroom or outhouse. Please ensure you/your child uses the toilet before leaving home/school, since all toileting for the time being will be "bush bathrooms". If you need additional information or tips on bush bathrooms, please contact us directly.



Instructors will carry toilet paper, a hand trowel for digging holes and covering up waste, and hand sanitizer. A biodegradable soap and water hand washing station may also be available at some programs. Please consider packing a small hand towel for drying hands.

Everyone - children, parents, staff, volunteers - will be required to clean their hands at the washing station or with hand sanitizer after a bush bathroom and before and after eating.



## Risk Management Policies and Procedures

### Value of Risky Play

Healthy child development is many-faceted, and includes learning to recognize and take risks. Forest and Nature School fundamentally supports children's active play in the outdoors and therefore involves a certain level of inherent risk. Risky play encourages children to learn their limits, which leads to better self-regulation, decision making, and risk management as they grow. Forest and Nature School instructors support children as they learn to recognize and assess their own risk-taking.

It is important to note there is a difference between a risk and a hazard. We do not remove risks, rather we teach how to assess them. We do seek to remove hazards.

A **Risk** is an activity with the possibility of injury. Potential risks at Forest and Nature School include running through uneven forest ground, playing with sticks, using tools, and tree climbing.

A **Hazard** is something potentially causing harm. This might include scrap metal, wild animals, or ice on the hill.

To do so, instructors are continually assessing potential hazards and the associated risks. If risks are too high, we mitigate to the best of our abilities with different activities and/or locations. We determine this through:

- seasonal and daily site risk assessments at program locations
- activity/experience risk assessments
- implementing safety guidelines including:
  - play area boundaries
  - using a call-back, eg. wolf howl
  - observing interactions between participants
  - dynamically assessing as play naturally changes

- spotting and offering tips during more challenging physical activities (e.g. tree climbing)
- redirecting when necessary

## Emergency Procedures and First Aid Policies

A copy of the Emergency Response Plan and Procedures which includes emergency phone numbers, is carried by the lead instructor at all times. All instructors are First Aid certified and always carry a first aid kit (see below), bear spray, and cell phone. All incidents must be reported including near misses.

In the case of a serious accident or emergency, the following procedure will be followed:

1. Stop all activities and have all participants sit together with an adult to avoid any further emergency situations
2. Lead Instructor will take the lead, and determine the nature and extent of the emergency. If the Lead Instructor is the injured individual, the Assistant Instructor will take the lead
3. Make sure all members of the group are accounted for and safe
4. Assistant Instructor or another adult will call 911 and relay the nature of the emergency
  - a. Nature of emergency and first aid administered
  - b. Details of injured person(s)
  - c. Current location in Lois Creek, either:
    - i. 8th Ave and Trail Street Entrance, or
    - ii. 8th Ave and Fernie Street Entrance, or
5. If the area is remote or hard to find, send an adult to meet the ambulance and direct them to the specific location
6. Inform emergency contact(s) of person
7. Ensure an appropriate adult attends the hospital with them, taking any relevant medical documentation (e.g. Health Card, Allergies)
8. Liaise with emergency services until incident is over
9. Inform all other families of the incident, arrange for pick up, and encourage reaching out for support
10. As soon as reasonably possible, fill out Incident Report Form

## First Aid Equipment

Equipment for First Aid:

- Mobile phone
- All emergency contact details and medical information for all participants
- Medication for individuals attending the session (to be handed back to parent at the end of session)
- First Aid kit
- Bear Spray
- Burns kit
- Emergency Blanket

- Wipes and/or hand sanitizer
- Lighter
- Flashlight
- Glucose Tablets
- Benadryl
- Bug repellent without DEET
- Tick remover / tweezers
- Spare mittens/socks/hats depending on the season
- Four plastic bags
- Sun screen (spray on)
- Tissues
- Incident report form
- Emergency Procedures



## Extreme Weather Policy

As an outdoor program, our goal is to run in all types of weather. There is a difference between unpleasant and unsafe weather, however, and this may not always be possible. Wildsight Kimberley/Cranbrook instructors consult the weather forecast regularly, and make adjustments to program sites, activities, and length if necessary. We do not have a backup indoor space for Forest and Nature School, but a canvas tent will be available as an alternative for inclement weather days.

We will notify parents/guardians by email should there be cancellations. There will be no refunds for closure on inclement weather days, but we will attempt to reschedule any programs cancelled for extreme weather.

The following weather situations may affect Forest and Nature School programs:

**Extreme Heat (30 °C, including humidex):** Instructors will constantly assess participants' comfort and safety, watching for signs of heat exhaustion, spending more time in shade/shelter, and modifying activities accordingly.

**Extreme Cold (-20 °C, including wind chill):** When temperatures drop below -20 °C, programs will be cancelled. In temperatures approaching -20 °C, instructors will constantly assess participants' comfort and safety, watching for signs of frostbite and hypothermia. We will stay closer to the drop-off/pick-up location and/or set up temporary shelter.

**Snow Days:** We will be adhering to the School District 6 snow days. If schools in Kimberley are closed, we will be too. However, we will continue to run during bus cancellations if it is deemed safe to do so.

**High Wind:** Our space is versatile and we have the ability to move into clear areas in the event of a high wind warning from Environment Canada. In persistent high winds, programs may end early.

**Thunder and Lightning:** Thunderstorms may also be a cause for cancellation unless an alternative indoor space is accessible. In case that a thunderstorm begins during a session, participants will be brought into an enclosed building if one is available, and remain there until the storm has passed. If no building is available, instructors will follow lightning safety, as outlined by Environment Canada, including:

- Avoid being the highest point in an open area, or holding the highest object in an area (e.g. umbrella)
- In a forest, seek shelter in a low-lying area under a thick growth of small trees or bushes; don't shelter under tall or isolated trees
- Stay away from water
- If in a group, spread out so that you increase the chances for survivors who could come to the aid of any victims from a lightning strike
- Stay away from objects that conduct electricity
- Keep alert for flash floods, sometimes caused by heavy rainfall, if seeking shelter in a ditch or low-lying area.

**Forest Fires/Smoke:** Forest fires in the immediate area as well as Environment Canada Air Quality Index of "Very High Risk (10+)" will be cause for cancellation of programs. Air quality from nearby or distant fires will be monitored closely. During Air Quality Indexes of "High (7-10)", staff will continually assess participant's comfort and safety levels and reduce strenuous activities (e.g. running games and distance travelled).

## Tool Use, Knife Readiness, and Fires

Forest and Nature School Principles encourage risky play and Wildsight Kimberley/Cranbrook does not shy away from using tools and having fires. Using tools and fire is an earned privilege and requires trust, confidence and a sense of responsibility. Your child will only be allowed to use tools and fire during programs when the instructors have deemed the child ready. The following procedures are in place to ensure everyone's safety during these activities.

### Tool Use

Participants are provided the opportunity to engage with various tools throughout the day, including, but not limited to: sandpaper, potato peelers, loppers, bow saws, ropes, hand planers, and sheath/locking knives. Tools will be kept by the instructors and only brought out at the discretion of the instructors. Students are not permitted to bring their own tools from home. The following procedures will be in place:

- Tools will be maintained by Wildsight Kimberley/Cranbrook instructors
- All instructors will be trained in the correct and safe use of all tools
- Instructors will inspect all equipment before and after each use. Any necessary cleaning and/or repairs will be done before the tool is used again



- Tools will be introduced to participants through a safety talk/orientation, with a focus on respect
- No running or pointing with tools
- Tools will be counted before and after use
- Participants will be supervised by adults whilst using tools. When students are deemed competent and confident they will be given permission from the facilitator to use the specific tools independently
- Proper protective equipment will be used when necessary
- Each participant must remain outside other people's "blood bubble" while using tools
- All tools will be checked and returned to the instructor's tool bag after use



## Knife Readiness

Forest and Nature School use Knife Readiness Cards to assess what stage of knife readiness each participant is at. This allows us to be fair, consistent, and clear with all participants and all instructors. In addition to the Tool Use procedures outlined above, these Knife Safety Rules apply:

1. **Sharp knives are safe knives.** Many people think duller knives are safer for younger/newer users, but this is not true. A sharp knife is more efficient, requires less force and doesn't fly out of control if it slips.
2. **Stay sitting.** Sitting makes a solid and steady foundation and removes the easy temptation to move around with open tools. Focus 100% on what you are doing.
3. **Create and maintain your "Blood Bubble".** A blood bubble is the space around you anywhere you can reach with the combined length of your arm and knife blade. Within this space, you could accidentally draw blood on someone else. Make sure no one is in your blood bubble when using a knife.
4. **Cut away from all body parts.** Notice where all your body parts are - not just your body, but both your arms, legs, and feet too. Watch what you're doing and stop cutting if you need to look away, even for a moment.
5. **Sheath and/or lock all knives not in use.** We use fixed blade knives with sheaths (covers) or knives that lock open and closed. Any blade not covered is a hazard. Anytime you stop using your knife, it needs to be put into its sheath or locked closed.

Additionally, Knife Readiness Cards are required by all Forest and Nature School children 16 years old and under, even if they carve at other programs or at home. Children are required to earn their way

towards independent knife use, by completing the following levels (in some cases, at the discretion of instructors, levels may be skipped):

**Level 1:**

- Recite the 5 knife rules
- Demonstrate both good and bad body position and tool positions (without knife in hand)

May use hand tools and potato peelers

**Level 2:**

- Be confident using potato peelers

May use sheath and/or locking knife with protective glove on non-dominant hand

**Level 3:**

- Sharpen 10 points on sticks with a protective glove on non-knife holding hand
- Be deemed responsible by an Instructor

May use sheath and/or locking knife without gloves

**Level 4:**

- Sharpen 10 points on sticks or pencils with their knife without glove
- Carve any shape other than a point on a stick

May have reduced levels of supervision while carving (i.e. no longer 1:1)

## Fires

Fires are risky but also mesmerizing, empowering, warming, and fun! When conditions allow, we may build and light fires together, with the following procedures:

- Fires may only occur if fire restrictions and regulations allow
- Fires will be lit only in designated fire areas
- A safety discussion will occur before any fires are built, including the demonstration of correct use of equipment
- Participants will be under direct supervision
- A burns kit and water will be present
- All fires must be fully extinguished at the end of the session



## Water Safety Policy

Forest and Nature School programs are based in Lois Creek Trails and will often be near Lois Creek. Creeks can be magical places, full of frogs, tadpoles and macro-invertebrates to observe. Visiting the creek is only done as a group, and when weather conditions allow. During high spring runoff and cold winter days, we play in other locations. When at the creek, we are wading/walking, not swimming, and children are always supervised closely.

## Tick Safety Policy

It is important to know that ticks are present in Lois Creek Trails, like in most areas in and around Kimberley. Tick bites can be the cause of Lyme Disease, which is serious and life-disrupting. Ticks are most commonly seen in the spring and early summer, and in areas of tall grass. To manage our exposure to ticks, we:

- Choose meadows, creeks, and forested sites more often during spring and early summer
- Recommend wearing long pants tucked into tall socks, and long sleeves for Forest School; Light coloured clothing is easier to spot ticks.
- Teach children how to do a head-to-toe tick check
- Do a tick check as a group if we go through tall grass
- Carry tweezers and/or tick removal kit
- Recommend doing a head-to-toe tick check after every Forest and Nature School program

## Preparing for Forest School

*“There is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing.” -Sir Ranulph Fiennes*

## Child Entry and Release Policy

Instructors will sign all children in and out of each program. Anyone picking up your child must be included on their registration form and must show photo ID until instructors get to know them/you.

Because our classroom is in the forest, a short walk from any available parking, it is very important that you drop your child off on time. If your child will be absent or late, please contact your lead instructor by phone/text prior to the start of the program (Instructor phone numbers can be found below, in the Communication section, or in your pre-program “details” email).

Our adventuring means that we will not return to our pick up location until the end of program time. If you need to pick your child up early, you will be required to meet the group where we are in the forest. A grace period of 15-minutes will be given for late pick ups. There will be a charge of \$10 for every 15 minutes after that. This charge will be sent to you by invoice and will be due within a month.

## A Typical Day - ish!

No two days/sessions are the same! We do have core routines but spending our days in the woods and creeks where children learn through their own developmentally-appropriate exploration makes every day a new adventure. We share songs, stories, games, or other provocations before beginning our exploration and play. Snack and/or lunch breaks allow a chance to re-gather and share about our

findings, before setting off again. Finally, each session will conclude with a quiet, reflective sit-spot and/or sharing.

### What to Bring: Food

Being outside is a lot of work and we tend to eat more than when playing inside. Please pack a slightly larger snack and/or lunch than you would for a regular indoor activity day. Consider sending hot tea on cold winter days.

Snacks and lunches must be nut-free. If other food allergies are present in the group, you will be notified of that as well. We do not allow sharing of food between children. Additionally, you are encouraged to pack a litterless lunch, as all garbage must be packed out in your child's lunch bag: pack it in, pack it out.

### What to Bring: Clothing

Clothing can make or break an experience. We will be outside learning for the entire program, so please think this through carefully and check the weather forecast. Your child will be responsible for carrying their belongings, so please send only what they need in a sturdy backpack they can carry. Consider labelling your personal items; Wildsight is not responsible for any lost or stolen items during our programs.

### All Seasons

- Backpack
- Generous litter-less, nut-less snacks (+ lunch for full day programs)
- A ball-less whistle, attached to the child's jacket (not their backpack)
- Water bottle (refill station may or may not be available)
- One complete change of clothes, including wool socks, underwear, long sleeved shirt, long pants, gloves and hat in a labelled, waterproof bag

*\*Closed-toed footwear only. Open-toed sandals don't mix with roots, mulch and possibly thistles.*

#### Tips:

- Pack a rain jacket and rain pants when there's even a small chance of rain
- Sunglasses and sunscreen can be useful throughout the year for sunny high UV days
- Clothing will definitely get dirty, wet and might even get ripped. Please prepare yourselves for this and plan accordingly.

### Winter

Playing outdoors in winter can be safe and enjoyable when everyone is dressed warmly. Layering is the best way to stay warm and comfortable.

#### Tips:



- Think of the “rule of three” for winter clothing: 1-base layer, 2-mid layer, and 3-outer layer
- Avoid cotton. Cotton holds moisture and leads to sweaty, cold children
- Consider hot tea in a thermos instead/in addition to water
- Reusable hand/foot warmers can help particularly cold hands and feet
- Consider a base layer of mitts/gloves that fit inside a warmer, waterproof mitt/glove

### 1-Base (bottom) Layer

- Thermal long underwear and shirt - wool fibers are best for staying warm and wicking moisture away from our bodies. Synthetic materials (polyester) are good options too.
- Wool or wool-blend socks (thick but comfortable in the boot)

### 2-Mid Layer

- Fleece pants (warm and dries quickly)
- Long-sleeved fleece or wool top
- Additional hoody or sweater on colder days



### 3-Outer Layer

- Water-resistant snow suit (snow pants with a bib are recommended along with a snow jacket)
- Insulated winter boots (Bogs brand are NOT warm enough for the coldest part of winter)
- Wool toque or hat that covers ears
- 2 pairs of insulated waterproof gloves/mitts
- Wool/fleece neck warmer (much safer and easier to use than scarves)

## Early Spring/Late Fall (cooler days)

- Thermal long underwear and shirt
- Fleece pants
- Fleece or wool top, hoody or pull over
- Waterproof rain pants and jacket or one-piece rain suit (recommended)
- Warm, breathable jacket
- Closed-toe hiking shoe and/or comfy insulated rubber boots
- Wool or wool-blend socks
- Thin toque or hat and light knitted gloves

## Late Spring/Early Fall (warmer days)

- Spring and fall can be muddy and full of insects. Long layers are always recommended.
- Long pants and long-sleeved shirt (helps protect from ticks, other insect bites and scratches)
- Waterproof rain pants and jacket or one-piece rain suit

- Closed-toe hiking shoe and/or comfy insulated rubber boots
- Wool or wool-blend socks
- Sun hat
- Sunscreen

## Summer

- Close-toed supportive shoes
- Light long sleeve or short sleeve shirt
- Light pants (we always recommend long pants for bug and scratch protection)
- Tall, light coloured socks (help protect legs if wearing shorts)
- Sun hat and extra sunscreen (please do first application before program drop off)

## Personal Items and Valuables

Please keep all electronics, toys, tools, and valuables at home. The forest is our playground and offers plenty of loose parts to keep everyone engaged and learning, without risking the loss or damage of a favourite personal item.

## Learning and development

*“Children learn as they play. More importantly, in play, children learn how to learn.” - O. Fred Donaldson*

## Staff Responsibilities

Working outdoors is our passion. Our team of instructors bring this passion from a variety of backgrounds and qualifications, including Forest School Practitioners Certification and 15+ years of environmental/outdoor education. All Wildsight Kimberley/Cranbrook instructors are First Aid/CPR certified.

Wildsight Kimberley/Cranbrook instructors allow the groups to play, learn and explore as independently as possible while keeping participants safe with daily routines and site/risk assessments. Forest and Nature School instructors are co-learners and guides, rather than “talking head” educators. We introduce prompts, stories, wonders, tools, loose parts, or other supplies to support the interest of participants, but let the students direct the activities. We model care for and of the natural world, while fostering an ethic of stewardship in participants.

## Behaviour Management Approach

A safe and successful program requires everyone's participation and respect. Developmentally appropriate activities, offering choices, and having children lead their own learning in a nurturing space, helps us manage behaviour proactively. We also use modelling and careful observation to encourage good behaviour. We encourage children to practice problem solving on their own, but will step in and assist if needed.

We carry out discipline (depending on circumstances) when a child is exhibiting behaviour that:

1. Puts themselves, another child, or staff in danger
2. Interferes with another child's play
3. Is disruptive to the group as a whole

The goal of the discipline is to help children develop self-control, self-confidence, decision-making skills, and communication skills. In the case of inappropriate or unsafe behaviour, the following guidelines will be followed:

1. Focussing on the behaviour rather than the child, provide age-appropriate, gentle, verbal clarification to discuss why that behaviour is not acceptable.
2. A second verbal warning will be given. The child will be redirected to another activity for a period of time, away from the original area.
3. Give a 'calm down break' alone and away from the original area. Again, discuss/clarify why the behaviour is not acceptable. The behaviour will be documented and a discussion with the family will take place to identify a consistent approach.
4. If behaviour continues to put themselves, another child, or staff in danger for an extended period of time, then a parent would be contacted to remove the child from school that day.
5. In extreme cases where a child's behaviour is being exhibited consistently through multiple sessions the child may be asked to leave the program for a short term or permanently. This is a last resort, as we desire all children to thrive at Forest and Nature School.

## Instructor Ratios

Instructor ratios vary according to the age of participants, as outlined below. There will be two trained instructors and/or volunteers at each un-parented program, in order to maintain appropriate adult-to-child ratios. Parented programs will have one instructor.

- 3-5 years olds = 6:1
- 5-18 years olds = 7:1
- Adult programs = 10:1

If your child requires one-on-one support in the classroom (e.g. the help of an EA or support staff), then parents/guardians will be responsible for providing the same level of support during Forest and Nature School programs, at their own expense. We are unable to provide 1:1 adult-to-child support at this time.

## **Inclusion and Accessibility**

Wildsight Kimberley/Cranbrook is open and welcoming to everyone in Kimberley, to the best of our abilities. We understand that we may not be able to meet everyone's needs or wishes, but please reach out if you have particular needs and so we can work together to accommodate them. Requests for modifications will be considered to the best of our abilities. We are still a new program and are working hard to make this a fun and safe place for all.

## **Communication Strategy**

*“Of all the paths you take in life, make sure a few of them are dirt.” -John Muir*

### **General Communication**

Generally, we communicate with families via email or phone. To reach us in a timely manner, please send an email to [info@kimberleyoutdoors.ca](mailto:info@kimberleyoutdoors.ca) or call/text the appropriate instructor. For any communication the day of a program, please phone or text as emails will not be read in the morning before programs.

Please communicate the following:

- if you will be late or absent (call/text only - do not email in this case, please)
- if any member of your group is ill with a communicable disease
- if any member of your group is being treated for lice

### **Emergency Communication**

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

If you need to reach instructors during your child's program, please phone or text your lead instructor as identified in your parent welcome package.

### **Grievance Policy**

Your concerns matter to us. If you have a complaint or concern that cannot be resolved directly with instructors, please bring your concern to the Wildsight Kimberley/Cranbrook Branch Manager by emailing [kimcran@wildsight.ca](mailto:kimcran@wildsight.ca).

*The more risks you allow your children to take, the better they learn to look after themselves. - Roald Dahl*