



# Contact Us

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Wildwood Forest & Nature EarlyON Program

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# Wildwood Parent Handbook

2025



EarlyON  
Child and Family Centre



# Land Acknowledgement <sup>01</sup>

At Family Space Quinte, we understand that land acknowledgment is an essential step towards reconciliation. We honor and respect the First Peoples of this land, which encompasses the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe, Huron-Wendat, and Haudenosaunee nations.

We also recognize the traditional and unceded territories of the Mohawk and Algonquin nations where we gather today.

Hastings County, rich in Indigenous history, is home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

In our work with families, children, and educators, we are dedicated to listening to, learning from, and collaborating with Indigenous communities and partners.

We are grateful for the land where we live, work, and play. Each day, we express our appreciation to the Peoples who have long cared for the land we now stand on. We honor the profound connection Indigenous Peoples have with Mother Earth and respect their stewardship. This relationship teaches us about sustainability and the importance of working together for a future that respects and preserves this land, not only now but also into the future.

This statement represents Family Space's initial step in affirming our ongoing commitment to reconciliation and strengthening our partnerships with Indigenous communities



## *Calls To Action*

*62. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:*  
*i. Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.*

Wildwood Forest & Nature  
EarlyON programs honour the Land, and all those who took care of it since time immemorial. Our partners at Kahwa:tsire pass on Indigenous teachings through songs and stories throughout the programs.

# First Aid & Emergency Procedures <sup>10</sup>

## First Aid

A first aid kit is available at the greeting area for each program. Parents and caregivers can access the kit to administer first aid as needed. EarlyON educators are trained in CPR & First Aid and carry a first aid kit and whistle.

In the event of Poison Ivy or Wild Parsnip exposure, we encourage parents to wash the affected area of the skin with soap and water found at our first aid kit.

We recommend parents do a thorough tick check at the end of program and again at bath time. In the event of tick exposure, we suggest that parents brush the tick off. If the tick is attached, the parent can remove it using the tick key or tweezers found in the first aid kit.

**For more information please refer to our Resource Binder at the greeting area.**

## Emergency Procedures

All Wildwood sites have a designated greeting area where a map of the Wildwood site is available.

In case of emergency, you will hear **three sharp loud blows of a whistle**. Proceed to the greeting area immediately in a safe manner.

Educators will provide details of the emergency.

Site evacuation: proceed to exit immediately

Missing child: educators form a search party

Injury: educators call 911, lead educator starts first aid



# Policies

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**Forest school takes place outdoors in ALL kinds of weather.**

In the interest of keeping everyone safe, Wildwood WILL be cancelled when the threshold criteria is forecasted during program hours

Check Wildwood Forest & Nature EarlyON Facebook page for cancellations in extreme conditions!



## Cold Warning

Temperature of -23°C OR wind chill is below -23°C

Keep your toddler indoors when temperatures are below -23°C, or if the wind chill is -23°C or colder. Moving through snow is challenging and can hinder the movement of young children. THERE ARE NO WARM SHELTERS AVAILABLE AT ANY OF OUR LOCATIONS!

## Heat Warning

Temperature 30°C and higher AND/OR Humidex value 36 and higher

In the case of extreme heat (30°C+), FNS educators will limit participants' length of exposure by ending the program at 11am or earlier. FNS educators 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. Most sites do not have shelters!

## Air Quality Index

Air Quality: Air Quality Health Index High Risk (7-10)

Health Canada advises to reduce or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors. Children and the elderly should also take it easy when the Air Quality Health Index is at High Risk (7-10).

## Severe Storm Warning

When there is evidence based on radar, satellite pictures, or from a reliable spotter that any one or more of the following three weather conditions is imminent or occurring:

Hail of any size

Heavy rainfall of 50 mm or more is expected within one hour.

Thunderstorm warnings – when there is an 80% or greater.

Wind rating of 7 or higher on Beaufort Wind Scale

# The Forest & Nature School Difference

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*Little nature lovers grow to be Big Nature Lovers*

## The Forest and Nature School Difference (FNS)

FNS is an educational ethos and practice that centers the Land and the child-at-play.

We support learning that is rooted in place and play, inspired by the child, and built on relationships

Wildwood is a parent-child FNS model. In this approach:

- children play outdoors in all weather/seasons
- children play independently or in groups, developing their own theories and wonderings about the natural world
- learning happens in the moment and is inspired by the children's interests
- children develop a love of the land and an eco-identity
- children practice risk management through adventurous challenging play



# Wildwood Forest & Nature EarlyON Programs

03

**FREE**, outdoor play-based experiences to connect parents, caregivers and children (birth to six years) to the natural world. Wildwood follows guiding principles of Forest School Canada:

regular and repeated access to the same natural outdoor space, over an extended period of time

child-led, emergent, play and inquiry-based learning

Research indicates that engagement with nature in the outdoors is crucial to a child's healthy brain development, and is essential for overall health and well-being. "Children are provided with opportunities to build an on-going relationship with the land, to a dedicated educator, to one another, and to themselves through this educational approach." (Forest and Nature School in Canada: A Head, Heart, Hands Approach to Outdoor Learning)



Wildwood offers children an optimum learning environment, utilizing their innate curiosity in the natural world, supported by responsive educators

Wildwood promotes a reciprocal relationship with the land and an understanding of themselves as part of the natural world. We model respectful and caring attitudes & behaviour

# Clothing & Hygiene

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## Clothing

All participants (children and adults) are encouraged to dress for adventurous play, weather and prevention (poison ivy & ticks). We suggest the following:

**Winter-** warm waterproof boots, snowsuit, hat and mittens; wool socks; extra mittens

**Spring and Fall-** waterproof boots, pants and jacket; extra insulation and mittens on colder days; sun hat; bug jacket

**Summer-** waterproof boots; long light-coloured pants tucked into socks; sun hat; lightweight clothing; bug jacket; sunscreen; insect repellent

## Food

All Wildwood programs are offered in spaces with public access; therefore, we cannot guarantee a nut-free zone. Families provide their own snack and water (pack-in & pack-out).

## Hygiene

Toileting is typically a "port-a-potty". Families are asked to supply their own hand-washing materials.





# Outdoor Play!



## Adventurous Play

We recognize that for children's healthy development and learning, they need to experience risk. "Risky play is defined as thrilling and challenging forms of play that involve a risk of physical injury". (Sandseter, 2007) Studies show that "children gain other benefits as a side-effect of being given the chance to undertake activities with a degree of risk." (Gill, 2007). We offer play experiences that are "as safe as necessary, not as safe as possible", and support children to co-manage risks. Educators conduct daily site risk assessments, and encourage parents/caregivers to join them in making dynamic (in-the-moment) benefit-risk assessments during play.




## Learning & Development

As educators, we observe and connect our observations to the developmental domains (social, emotional, cognitive, physical, communication), with the intention of moving the learning forward. Responding to our observations, we encourage inquiry-driven, emergent play that supports a child's interests. We document the experiences we observe to help make the children's learning visible using photos and videos. Learning is shared with families and colleagues to better understand how children play and learn in natural settings outdoors.

# What To Expect when coming to Wildwood

## What to Expect

Regular and repeated visits are encouraged because:

-  The longer you linger, the more you learn
-  The more you visit, the deeper the learning
-  Children's competencies, capabilities and confidence will grow



## The Flow of the Day

Typical Wildwood Mornings:

**9:30** arrival, unstructured free play exploring the land, loose parts and re-purposed materials, guided hikes

**11:15** gathering, fairy fires, forest tea, campfire, stories & songs

***Seasons & weather may alter this schedule of invitations!***



TUESDAY



Batawa Dino Dig  
99 Ski Club Rd, Batawa

THURSDAY



H.R.Frink Conservation  
381 Thrasher Rd, Plainfield

FRIDAY



South Potter's Creek Conservation  
2061 Old Hwy 2, Belleville



# Parent & Educator Responsibilities

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## Parent/ Caregiver Responsibilities

- Monitor your child's safety (assessing risky play together)
- Follow your child's lead, offering time and space to explore
- Co-discover and learn together
- Support interests and connection to the land, each other, and self
- Model, and promote respect for all of nature.
- Familiarize yourself with the Wildwood Agreements
- Slow down! Be curious and wonder together. Ask questions!



## Educator Responsibilities

- Collaborate with families to ensure children's safety, on the land and with the use of tools
- Encourage slowing down, noticing, wondering, thinking and sharing of observations, thoughts and questions
- Listen to children's ideas/theories to strengthen our relationship and deepen our understanding of their learning
- Work in partnership with families to support children's investigations and build on children's natural curiosity
- Share power with learners through play-based, emergent and Inquiry-driven teaching and learning methods
- Make the learning visible by documenting children's experiences (pedagogical documentation)



# Wildwood Educators

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Sarah Bell

Sarah is a Registered Early Childhood Educator and a Certified Forest and Nature School Practitioner.



Rachal Renwick

Rachal is a Registered Early Childhood Educator and is the process of becoming a Certified Forest and Nature School Practitioner.



Talita Robbins

Talita is a Registered Early Childhood Educator and is the process of becoming a Certified Forest and Nature School Practitioner.



Rickie Smith

Rickie is a Registered Early Childhood Educator and will be starting the process of becoming a Certified Forest and Nature School Practitioner.