

# THE NEST FOREST SCHOOL

2021/2022



FAMILY HANDBOOK

# The Nest Forest School

The Nest Forest School is an initiative that launched in January 2020. The intention of the program is to provide Whitehorse with an outdoor preschool for children ages 3-5 years, focused on building empathy, developing awareness and fostering community through experiential learning in the natural outdoor environment.

This information booklet provides important information specifically regarding The Nest Forest School. This information is of particular value to families who:

- have enrolled and registered their child in The Nest
- are curious about The Nest and want to learn more

We are committed to the environmental and social mission of building thriving communities by fostering deep relationships with the land. For additional details on our programming and other initiatives please visit [www.riverstoridges.org](http://www.riverstoridges.org).

Thank-you for your interest in The Nest Forest School!

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# Reconciliation & Anti-Oppression + The Nest Forest School

In 2009, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established and mandated to record and address the legacy of Indian residential schools and advance reconciliation in Canada. It published its final report on December 15, 2015.

The education and early childcare professions are addressed specifically in a number of the Legacy Calls to Action. The actions call on governments and educational institutions to ensure that educators have an understanding of Aboriginal people and the law, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. They also call for educators to be trained in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and antiracism.

The TRC Report states that reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people must inform every aspect of our relationship with each other, and that it requires transformative action on the part of all Canadians - “Reconciliation begins with each and every one of us” (Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future, p. 185).

The Nest Forest School is an outdoor and land-based education program. Our mission is to empower a diverse range of Northerners to spend more time connecting meaningfully with the land, and developing a deeper sense of empathy, awareness and community. As settlers on this land, we acknowledge that there are an incredible amount of people who have been delivering and supporting land-based learning in the Yukon for many, many years. Personally and professionally, we aim to listen to, learn from, and support the work of Indigenous Knowledge Holders, Elders, governments, youth and organizations on this land. We believe that the goal of reconciliation must infuse every aspect of our operations. To further the goal of reconciliation, The Nest Forest School has created a Reconciliation Action Plan. This ongoing work is part of a continual journey to honour the traditional territories on which we work and live.

In addition to this work, The Nest Forest School is committed to working with local leaders to better welcome, support and center the BIPOC (Black and Indigenous People of Colour) community within our work. Black lives matter. BIPOC lives matter. All children deserve to feel safe and welcome in the outdoors.

*\* Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*

[http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Executive\\_Summary\\_English\\_Web.pdf](http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf)

## The Nest Forest School

Reconciliation & Anti-Oppression + The Nest Forest School	3
How to Pre-register for the Waitlist	6
Program Information	7
Days in the Nest	7
Curriculum and Learning Expectations	8
Family Volunteers	10
Core Routines	11
Outdoor Preparation	13
Family Inclusivity and Celebration	14
Elders, Knowledge Holders, Visitors & Guests	14
The Nest Policies	15
Behaviour Management Policy	15
Termination of Services	17
Electronics, Toys & Valuables from Home	17
Transportation/Field Trips	17
Sibling Involvement	17
Commitment to the Land	18
Risk Management	19
Supporting Risky Play	20
Attendance and Security	20
Pick Up Policy	21
Media Policy	21
Evacuation Procedures	22
<b>Health and Wellness</b>	<b>22</b>
Sick Policy	22
Communicable Disease Policy	23
COVID-19 Policy	24
Medication Policy	25
Allergies	25
Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect	26
<b>Communications</b>	<b>27</b>
General Communication	27
Emergency Communication	27
Questions and Concerns	27
Grievance Policy	27

<b>The Nest Forest School</b>	<b>28</b>
Our Vision	28
Our Mission	28
Our Philosophy	28
Our Team	29
Contact Information	32

## Frequently Asked Questions

Find answers to some of the most commonly asked questions:

[www.riverstoridges.org/registration-information](http://www.riverstoridges.org/registration-information)

## How to Pre-register for the Waitlist

Please follow these four steps to provide yourself and your family with sufficient information on The Nest enrollment and registration process.

### **Step 1: Review the Family Handbook + Waivers + Releases**

Review the complete Family Handbook, as well as all risk waivers and media releases.

### **Step 2: Pre-register for a spot at the The Nest Forest School**

Head to [www.riverstoridges.org/forest-school](http://www.riverstoridges.org/forest-school) and click the link to access ACTIVE (our registration system). Complete all forms to pre-register for a spot. We will notify you if your child is selected by lottery for a spot at The Nest Forest School. You will then have 48 hours to confirm your registration. Your spot is only fully confirmed when payment has been processed!

### **Step 3: Receive Confirmation Email**

Additional information will be provided to you once you have submitted your completed documentation, and signed up for a payment plan and/or applied to the Strong Roots Bursary Fund.

### **Fees and Payment Methods**

We accept online payment through ACTIVE (our online registration system), and there will be an option upon payment to sign up for a payment plan. Fees are equally distributed over the program duration, with no reduction of fees in March, when we have closures for holidays.

**Terms:** Please note that monthly fees are not adjusted for child absences or statutory holidays. If payment is not received on the payment plan due dates, a late payment fee of \$50.00 may be applied to your account. After 30 days of non-payment of an account, your child may be suspended until fees are paid in full. Any NSF or returned cheques are subject to a \$45.00 administration fee, which will be added onto your account.

## Program Information



### Days in the Nest

Our programs are carefully designed to deepen ecological awareness through creative problem solving, team and personal challenges, and exploratory play. We aim to foster and deepen a sense of wonder and curiosity within each child through extended periods of time interacting with the land. We weave together instructional time for outdoor skills (e.g. wildlife tracking, age appropriate fire-making, natural shelter-building, harvesting and working with local plants), facilitated activities to awaken and train our awareness skills, and open play.

We use specific core routines including gratitude circles, sit spots, nature journaling, singing songs, creative storytelling, and the art of questioning. Each of these routines uniquely contributes to an overall sense of community and meaning for each learner over time. We aim to inspire confidence, resilience and community interacting with the natural world.

**Location:** The Nest program is based out of 509 Alexander Street, and most days will run in the trees along the clay cliffs and in Teegatha 'Oh Zheh Park.

**Days of Operation:** Monday to Friday

**Program Hours:** 8:30 am - 3:30 pm

**Start and End Dates:** Can be found online at [www.riverstoridges.org/forest-school](http://www.riverstoridges.org/forest-school)

**Days Closed:**

- All Yukon school holidays (excluding PD days) and Canadian statutory holidays.
- Two weeks over Christmas break (as per the school calendar)
- Two weeks in March (as per the school calendar)
- Summer holidays (as per the school calendar)
- Up to 3 PD days a year
- Up to 7 days a year for sick/emergency closures

**Class Size:** 14 full-time positions are available

**General Daily Routine**

Actual days often vary, depending on the weather and needs of the children on a specific day.

8:30 - 8:45 am	Drop off
8:30 - 9:30 am	Soft start - Trickle-in activities
9:30 - 10:00 am	Gratitude circle + Morning routines (song, story, question of the day)
10:00 - 10:30 am	Snack & Story (indoor or outdoor depending on weather)
10:30 - 11:00 am	Group activity
11:00 - 12:00 pm	Core Outdoor Routine + Exploratory Play
12:00 - 12:45 pm	Lunch + Quiet time
12:45 - 2:15 pm	Core Outdoor Routine + Exploratory Play
2:15 - 2:45 pm	Snack & Story (indoor or outdoor depending on weather)
2:45 - 3:15 pm	Closing circle + Goodbye (Sharing treasures, sing a song, Story of the Day)
3:15 - 3:30 pm	Family Pick up

## Curriculum and Learning Expectations

At The Nest, we uphold the values of empathy, awareness and community. This includes respecting all people, regardless of age, ability level, interests and cultures. We speak and act with care towards ourselves, others and the natural world. We build these values into curriculum by respectfully using materials from the land, sharing information and stories, being and learning together in the natural world.



The learning and exploration at the Nest is fluid, sparked by the interests of the participants and shaped by our environment each day (eg. following fresh tracks in the snow, exploring bountiful puddles, discovering fallen trees or branches, etc.). Below are some examples of the type of activities that can unfold at the Nest.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SCIENCE</b></p> <p>Identify similarities and differences in materials/places</p> <p>Build outdoor homes for animals</p> <p>Noticing the seasonal changes in the forest</p> <p>Design waterways</p> <p>Explore different states of water</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>LITERACY &amp; LANGUAGE</b></p> <p>Tell a story-of-the-day</p> <p>Read books exploring topics of empathy, land, community etc.</p> <p>Build connections by listening to visiting Elders sharing stories</p> <p>Explore nature-inspired alphabets</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MATH</b></p> <p>Recognize and create patterns (spirals, branching, circles, waves, lobes, nets etc)</p> <p>Count wildlife tracks</p> <p>Measure and build with items of similar and varying lengths</p> <p>Compare &amp; measure natural materials with other natural materials</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MOTOR SKILLS (fine &amp; large)</b></p> <p>Make cordage</p> <p>Weaving and twineing with willow or spruce roots</p> <p>Build mini animal/fairy homes</p> <p>Plant seedlings</p> <p>Climb trees and slopes (and slide down!)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SENSORY PLAY</b></p> <p>Play in the mud/snow/leaves</p> <p>Listen to the sounds in the forest</p> <p>Walk silently through the forest</p> <p>Smell the soil, plants and flowers</p> <p>Enjoy touch table items (fur, feathers, bone, stones, cones etc.)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SOCIAL SKILLS</b></p> <p>Make group plans</p> <p>Enter imaginary worlds with friends</p> <p>Connect with others by listening to and sharing stories during circle</p> <p>Collaborate to build shelters etc.</p> <p>Play group games &amp; sing songs</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MUSIC</b></p> <p>Sing songs - exploring beats, rhymes, repetition, etc.</p> <p>Create musical instruments with natural objects</p> <p>Design objects that make sound in the wind</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ART</b></p> <p>Paint with forest pigments</p> <p>Press flowers</p> <p>Create natural sculptures (snow, sticks, mud, etc.)</p> <p>Draw a picture of surroundings</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>REFLECTION &amp; IMAGINATION</b></p> <p>Sit spots - quiet moments for reflection</p> <p>Look for animal tracks and signs</p> <p>Notice animal homes</p> <p>Practice yoga, guided visualizations</p>



## Core Routines

Weekly, we focus on integrating specific practices to support emotional, physical and intellectual growth. These practices are typically done outside, but can be modified for indoor environments when necessary

Our focus on outdoor and land-based learning, nature mentorship, and sensory awareness informs the types of activities and routines we plan with our groups. There may be some new lingo that your child is using when they come home from The Nest, so we've listed some of the key terms you might want to know a little more about:

### SIT SPOTS

Imagine being able to find a spot in the forest (within eyesight of staff) that feels like your own special place. Every day you get to go there to sit quietly for some time (approx 5 minutes) and watch the environment around you change and move. You might be listening for bird calls, drawing a special plant in your nature journal, or simply sitting and letting your awareness open up when other distractions are removed. When you're called back to the group, you get to share something amazing you noticed while you were visiting your spot. Doing this over and over again allows you to get to know one place really well, and to process everything that's happened that day. It also allows quiet time to let the birds and animals get used to your presence. We could go on, but that's a Sit Spot in a nutshell!

### SENSORY AWARENESS (OWL EYES, DEER EARS)

Sensory awareness is the ability to receive finely tuned input from each of our five senses (and a whole range of others!). If you spend a lot of time in a city environment, your senses have probably been dulled down as certain survival-based pressures are removed. It's not true for everyone, but it may be true for you or your child.

Using animals as our guides, we will encourage your child to develop their senses, and challenge and test their awareness through activities like Owl Eyes (a group of challenges that use our peripheral vision) and Deer Ears (games and activities that test our sense of hearing, often by using blindfolds to dampen our, typically, dominant sense of sight).

### STALKING & SILENT FOX WALKING

Can you walk silently in the woods? Most of us think we can, but it's seldom true. Try sneaking up on someone in the woods to see for yourself. Fox Walking is the name we give to the practice of walking in silence through the forest, and it's an enjoyable challenge. Walking silently allows you to see more undisturbed wildlife and to be hyper aware of the land you're walking on. There are many games we use to practice this skill, and now you'll know what your child means when they say they were practicing their Fox Walk.



### BIRD LANGUAGE

Have you ever heard a bird and wondered what they're saying? Bird Language teachings allow us to notice the different calls that birds make for different reasons. If you know the four types of 'baseline' calls (adolescent begging calls, courtship calls or songs, companion calls, and territorial calls) that make up a typical forest soundscape, then you'll notice when their fifth call (an alarm call) is used. Once you start to notice alarm calls, you'll be 'in' on the forest signals letting you know that something of importance is going on. Maybe some chickadees found an owl, or a raven has noticed a fox walking by. If we listen to the birds, it's more likely that we'll see the owl and the fox. We will practice listening to the birds and trying to recognize their language.

### WILDCRAFTING/ EDIBLE & MEDICINAL PLANTS

Imagine knowing which plants make medicine or which ones are edible. Maybe you know a lot already but it seems that there's always more to know. In certain seasons, there are different plants available to work with as materials (for weaving or other crafts), as medicine (like salves or teas), and as food (like berries or leaves). We follow a careful routine of having children prove their ability to identify plants before ever consuming them, and we encourage in-depth curiosity about the special properties of many plants.

## EXPLORATORY PLAY

Do you ever just want some free time to explore the forest? We do too. It's crucial for children to have time to let their imagination run wild, and that's why we have exploratory play time. This allows children to work at their own natural pace, and fully explore their own interests. Your child may create their own games, sculpt with snow, or have an extended Sit Spot. All of it is valuable time spent in the natural world. We observe the children during their open play, noticing what they are interested in and how we can extend their learning.

## OPENING + CLOSING CIRCLE / STORY OF THE DAY

By opening and closing with group circles, children feel confident in what is going on for the day, heard when they share something that was a significant part of their 'story' for the day, and are sent off feeling great about returning the next day. The Story of the Day allows your child to integrate their learning in different ways, and is a time for your child to share their insights and discoveries with the group so that we can all deepen our understanding and curiosity.

### **Why does understanding these routines matter?**

When the families are able to connect with their child about their experiences on the land, the child is able to share more fully. We hope this information allows you to better understand some of the terminology they may be coming home with. Keep the conversation going at home, and watch your youngster flourish (they may even teach you a thing or two)!

## Outdoor Preparation

Your child will be spending a considerable amount of time outdoors in the natural world. They need to be dressed appropriately each day and have sufficient food and drinks sent to school with them each day. **Assume your child will be outside during inclement and/or very cold weather.** We will adapt programs as necessary based on the needs of the participants. The table below provides information on required outdoor gear.

We live in the Yukon. When the weather is extremely cold we will adapt the program accordingly. We may shorten time outside, adapt routines, or work on relevant land-based activities indoors.

Gear	Winter	Spring & Fall
Backpack	✓	✓
One full, reusable water bottle with a secure lid	✓	✓
One full thermos with a hot beverage	✓	optional
Healthy nut-free snacks	✓	✓
Full snowsuit <b>OR</b> Warm winter jacket & snow pants	✓	
Warm, non-cotton winter hat	✓	✓
Insulated/water-resistant winter boots	✓	
Indoor shoes	✓	✓
2 pairs warm, non-cotton socks	✓	✓
Non-cotton scarf/buff/balaclava	✓	✓
2 pairs of warm mittens	✓	✓
Insulated/water-resistant boots <b>OR</b> full shoes/hikers		✓
Warm jacket & pants (depending on weather)		✓
Rain jacket and rain pants		✓
Sweater		✓

## Family Inclusivity and Celebration

Families are an integral part of the Nest. We look forward to welcoming you to our family celebrations when possible. These gatherings are a way to bring our community together and to celebrate the learning at the Nest! Details will be shared closer to celebration time.

## Elders, Knowledge Holders, Visitors & Guests

We have a number of Elders and Knowledge Holders, guests and visitors who enrich our programs by coming to share their knowledge, skills and perspectives. As settlers on this land, we acknowledge that there are generations and generations of people who have been delivering and supporting land-based learning in the Yukon. We aim to listen to, learn from, and support the work of Indigenous Knowledge Holders, and Elders on this land and look forward to working alongside these guests to enrich the learning at The Nest.



## The Nest Policies

Below are the policies of our Forest School program. *If you have any questions on The Nest policies please do not hesitate to ask us.*

### Behaviour Management Policy

Gentle discipline and guidance at The Nest centers around respect and responsibility. Each child is expected to be a respectful, responsible member of our group. This ranges from children cleaning up after themselves to using manners and politeness when speaking with staff, families, and each other.

Your child is participating in a program that is challenging, active and fun. We recognize that a successful program requires everyone's cooperation to ensure positive social interactions. In order to ensure a safe, fun program for your child, educators carry out a set of behaviour management guidelines that promote inclusion and respect. Educators are committed to working with your child to ensure positive play experiences and interactions. Educators are well-trained and educated, and work effectively to apply empathetic discipline to help children be aware of how their behaviour affects The Nest community. Strong emphasis will be placed on promoting risk management in an environment free of bullying and violence.

Families can expect educators to:

- Supervise children responsibly
- Demonstrate appropriate, respectful behaviours at all times
- Encourage children to understand and follow rules and positive expectations
- Promote the development of positive social skills including self-esteem, self-control and risk management skills

The educators will strive to:

- establish clear, consistent and simple expectations and implement appropriate consequences, if required
- discourage aggressive play and assist children to learn and practice resolving conflict in non-violent ways
- acknowledge children's feelings and seek their input, offering choices that are developmentally appropriate
- provide verbal direction and redirection as the main way of guiding children.



If there is unacceptable behaviour, staff will use the A.C.T. model to move redirect the child in a positive way:

- **A → Acknowledge** the wants, feelings, and wishes of the child (e.g. I can see that you're upset that other people are playing near your fort...)
- **C → Communicate** the limit (e.g. ...but we don't throw sticks.)
- **T → Target** two reasonable alternatives (e.g. You can choose to find a way to play in your fort and share the space OR you can choose to go and play somewhere else for now).

The staff will take time to connect with the child and discern if there are any underlying factors leading to misbehaviour.

When a child's behaviour is inappropriate and interferes with the safety or rights of others, the following are guidelines to be followed:

1. A verbal reminder will be given to the child, including a discussion as to why the behaviour is inappropriate, and a discussion on what the child can do differently next time. If the behaviour is repeated:
2. A second verbal reminder and another discussion will occur. The child and staff member will work collaboratively to resolve the behaviour and determine a fair consequence for the repeated behaviour. The child will be redirected to another activity for a period of time. The behaviour will be documented and the family will be informed of the behaviour. If the behaviour is repeated:
3. A discussion with the family will take place to establish a team support network for the child in their efforts to change their behaviour. If the behaviour does not change:
4. Family members will be consulted as to whether or not outside resources may be sought to work with the child.

As a last resort, if the staff team determines that the behaviour is consistently and severely disruptive, and that the welfare of other children and program leaders is seriously jeopardized, a family member will be required to pick up the child.

## Termination of Services

We are committed to providing children and families with a positive program experience. If a conflict arises, it is our goal to resolve differences in a peaceful way and find solutions that everyone can accept. However, termination of services without refund may be required if:

- The family does not abide by The Nest expectations and policies and a successful resolution of differences is not achieved.
- The program is unable to satisfactorily resolve problems of late pick up with a family or the family has an overdue payment.
- A family member harasses, threatens abuse or commits a violent act toward a staff person, child or other participants (e.g. a family member, guest or Knowledge Holder).
- The child's behaviour is severely disruptive or physically threatening to the well-being and safety of other children or staff and additional avenues of support to accommodate the child are unavailable.

## Electronics, Toys & Valuables from Home

The policy of our programs is that NO ELECTRONICS, TOYS/VALUABLES/TOOLS are brought into the program from the children's homes. This includes phones, music devices, money, toys, special items and valuables, tools, etc. These items often become a distraction for the child and others.

## Transportation/Field Trips

The Nest program may include field trips to areas in the Whitehorse vicinity or periphery. Should this occur, families will be provided with full details in advance, given an opportunity to volunteer and accompany the children, and be asked to provide their written consent..

## Sibling Involvement

Due to insurance limitations unregistered siblings of a registered child are not able to attend the Nest program or on field trips. Siblings are encouraged to be with you when you drop off and pick up your child so that they can see the environment and the other children that your child is learning with at The Nest.

## Commitment to the Land

At The Nest Forest School we believe in supporting children to foster a deep and respectful relationship with the land they spend time on. While we do not aim to leave spaces untouched by program learning, we are aware that exploration and immersion, repetitive use of outdoor spaces can leave impacts such as plant trampling, removal of vegetation, disturbed soil, potential litter/left behind items, and more.

As part of this respectful relationship, The Nest Forest School staff will help participants to see how they can become stewards for the lands and waters they love and learn on. Staff will help minimize program impact on the land through ongoing ecological assessments, seasonal and sessional rotations of program spaces, and positive reminders to participants of how they can help minimize unnecessary impacts to the land (removing litter, gentle handling of plants not being harvested for a specific purpose, treating animals with respect, celebrating and respecting water, etc.).

## Risk Management

Due to the natural risk inherent in outdoor forest activities, The Nest program expects the following abilities and behaviour from children. It is vitally important that each child feels safe and risk is mitigated to the highest level necessary.

### **Ability**

Each child who participates at The Nest must be physically able to take part in activities and must be able to respond to a request to 'STOP'. This is important in the forest where we are close to bodies of water or steep cliffs. If you think that this might be a challenge for your child, please contact us to discuss your child's needs before you register for this program.

### **Additional Care and Support**

Your child may have some limitations that require additional hands-on support or care that our staff and/or volunteers are not able to provide. Some options to provide this may include:

- You can hire someone who will support your child every day that they attend
- You can attend yourself, or designate a friend or family member to attend to fully support your child

Anyone hired or volunteering to support a specific child must attend our standard volunteer orientation and submit a criminal record check.



## Supporting Risky Play

**"Bumps and scrapes are the vivid feedback you need to improve your judgement. Thankfully, you'll get better, and your brain will have developed from the experience."**

- Build Your Brain

Many of the activities that make up our programs have an element of risk. You could say the same about many of our everyday activities in the Yukon. We live in a beautiful part of the world, and the desire to explore and enjoy it is a big part of why people choose to live here. We believe that children who start developing their sense of risk awareness as young people are better equipped to make better choices about risk management as they grow older.

For this reason, our programs are as “safe as necessary”, rather than as “safe as possible”. This means that we engage in activities with certain levels of risk (e.g. running through the forest on uneven ground, carving, or spending time outdoors in the winter, etc.), and we encourage our participants to consider their roles in managing risk while outdoors. When participants are given the correct amount of autonomy to help make decisions, it leaves room for their brains to develop. **Participants learn to take responsibility for their part in risk management.**

The Nest Forest School supports risky play. This means that we are:

- always assessing level of risk and, when the level of risk is too high, mitigating the risk to an appropriate level (rather than remove/avoid the risk every time)
- supporting participants in becoming aware of and managing risk
- providing programs that are “as safe as necessary” rather than “as safe as possible”

**Hazard:** Something that can cause surprise and/or injury (e.g broken glass in the forest, a broken tree limb hanging in the tree canopy, or a patch of ice on the hill). These are things staff members will aim to remove from play space, as they do not add to children’s learning or growth.

**Risk:** An activity with the possibility of physical injury (e.g. tree climbing, hiking near a cliff, playing at speed, rough and tumble play, etc.) It is imperative that we don’t remove risk, since risk taking is crucial for healthy development. Instead, we coach children on how to navigate their risk taking in a safer way.

## Attendance and Security

Attendance is taken daily at The Nest. You will need to sign in your child and sign them out at the end of the day when you pick them up. This ensures that we have a record of their attendance and your signature that you brought them to the program each day.

Absences must be reported by phone call as soon as you are aware that your child will not be attending. Please make sure you contact The Nest no later than 8:00 am should your child not be attending that day. Please also share the reason to ensure that we are aware of potential communicable diseases.

If you have other people dropping off or picking up your child, please ensure we have their names. The person will also need to show a piece of photo ID and sign out in order to have your child released to them.

Children will not be released to unauthorized individuals, or individuals who cannot show proof of identity.

## Pick Up Policy

Normal pick up time is 3:30 pm.

Please be aware of local traffic patterns around this time and plan accordingly.

If a family member is late to pick up their child (after 3:30 pm), a late fee charge of \$25 will be recorded. After 15 minutes (3:45 pm +), an additional \$25 will be charged. Families will be required to pay for any accumulated late fees, or services/service may be suspended for their child. We apologize in advance for any inconvenience and encourage families to make special arrangements if they know they will be unable to pick up their child on time.



## Media Policy

It is the policy of The Nest to have all families sign a media release form before their child is registered. Photos of children may be used in promotional materials, on our Facebook site, on the The Nest Forest School website or in reports or advertising.

A full copy of the media release form is available on our webpage and upon registration.

## Evacuation Procedures

In case of emergency (fire/flood/otherwise), children and staff will be evacuated to the Alpine Bakery (411 Alexander Street).

In the case of sudden inclement weather and we need to be inside, we will return indoors to 509 Alexander Street.

In the event the senior staff on duty determines that the building cannot be re-entered, all staff, volunteers and program participants will be evacuated to Northlight Innovation. This will occur by foot in the summer time or by transportation that will be arranged in the winter. Emergency contact information will always be carried by staff, so you will be contacted to pick up your child at the alternate location.

## Health and Wellness

### Sick Policy

If a child is sick or has any of the symptoms below, please keep them at home. There is no “sick room” at The Nest, and the best place for a child to be recuperating from an illness is at home. There are many symptoms that a child may have that may prevent them from being able to partake in outdoor activities.

If your child experiences any of the following please keep them home until they are well enough to participate in normal everyday activities:

- Fever of 101 degrees Fahrenheit or 38.5 degrees Celsius
- Diarrhea (two or more watery stools within 24 hours)
- Vomiting during the past 24 hours
- A weeping rash
- Eye discharge or pink eye
- Lice or nits
- Too tired or ill to participate in normal activities
- Coughing, sneezing, congestion or runny nose that requires close adult support
- Any symptoms of COVID-19 (see COVID-19 Policy)

If your child is sent to The Nest with any of the above listed symptoms, or should any of these symptoms develop during the day, family will be contacted to pick up their child immediately.

**Please Note:** Children should **never** be medicated to reduce existing symptoms in order to be brought to The Nest (e.g. given Tylenol to break fever).

### **Required Medication**

Families must provide written consent for ANY required medication(s) to be administered to their child. See details under *Medication Policy* below. *The Nest Forest School cannot administer any medication to a child without prior written consent from families.*

### **In Case of Emergency**

It is our policy that we notify an emergency contact when your child is ill or needs medical attention. Occasionally we cannot reach either emergency contact and we need to get immediate help for your child. Our procedure is to call Emergency Services (911). Families sign consent upon registration for their child, when ill/injured to be taken to the nearest emergency center by ambulance to receive treatment when the emergency contacts cannot be contacted.

## Communicable Disease Policy

In addition to our standard Sick Policy, outlined above, The Nest Forest School follows the guidelines for communicable disease outlined by Yukon Health and Social Services:

- All families must provide The Nest Forest School with current immunization records for each child in attendance.
- Children suffering from a communicable disease cannot attend Forest School during the phase in which the disease can be communicated. Medical advice is needed to determine when your child can return to the program.
- Families must notify The Nest Forest School should their child contract a communicable disease within 24 hours of contraction, in order for other families to be notified.
- If a communicable disease is discovered at The Nest Forest School, all families will be informed and a notice posted within 24 hours.
- Should the communicable disease present fall under the list of [Yukon's Reportable Diseases](#), The Nest Forest School will notify Yukon Communicable Disease Control within 24 hours of receiving word from the families involved.

Yukon Communicable Disease Control: 867-667-8323 or 1-800-661-0408 ext. 8323

**Please note:** Your child *cannot* attend The Nest Forest School if one or more of the following conditions exist:

1. The illness prevents your child from participating in the program activities
2. The illness results in greater need for care than staff at The Nest can provide without compromising the care of other children
3. Your child has any of the following conditions:
  - Head lice
  - Hepatitis A
  - Impetigo
  - Measles
  - Mumps
  - Conjunctivitis (pinkeye) with yellow/white discharge (pus)
  - Rash
  - Ringworm
  - Strep throat
  - Tuberculosis
  - COVID-19\*  
*\*See traffic light symptoms guide below*
  - Influenza
  - Rubella (German Measles)
  - Scabies
  - Shingles (uncovered lesions)
  - Vomiting
  - Whooping cough (pertussis)

*\*The Nest Forest School's COVID-19 Policies contain detailed steps The Nest is taking in addressing and mitigating potential spread of COVID-19 at Forest School, as well as important guidance for when to keep your child home.*

### **RASHES**

Generally itchy rashes are allergic in origin. A non itchy rash may be presumed infectious. Generally, if a fever accompanies a rash, the child should be sent home.

### **LICE**

A **No Nit Policy** is the best bet where children are not allowed back until treated and all the nits have gone. Nix is the preferred treatment. Vinegar helps to get rid of the eggs.

**Please note: Unfortunately, refunds cannot be offered for any absences due to illness.**

*\* If the illness/absence is related to COVID-19, please contact us directly.*

## COVID-19 Policy

*Parents/guardians will be required to read and sign off on The Nest's full COVID-19 policies. These can be found online @ [www.riverstoridges.org/forest-school](http://www.riverstoridges.org/forest-school)*



## Medication Policy

The Nest staff are not medical professionals and are not permitted to use their personal judgement to administer medication to children without written family consent, other than for life/death and emergency situations. (e.g. Staff are permitted to administer Epinephrine in case of anaphylaxis.)

If your child requires regular scheduled medication it is preferable to administer this at home before arrival. If this is not possible you must inform us in writing on the “Permission to Administer Medications Consent” form. A child’s medication must be hand-delivered and include instructions for administering. Medication must be in the original bottle, with original labels, including a list of possible side effects. The medication will be stored and locked appropriately.

For prescription medication, only the directions on the bottle will be accepted for administering the medication. And in all instances staff need to know when the child received his/her last dosage of the medication, to ensure medication is given at appropriate times consistently.

If the medication is to be administered “as necessary” (i.e. asthma medication), the family must state, on The Nest’s medication form, the types of symptoms/reactions to be observed when the medication is necessary.

## Allergies

We request that families send nut-free healthy snacks and lunch for their child. However, we cannot guarantee your child will not be exposed to nuts.

When registering your child, you are required to provide our staff with a list of your child's allergies, as well as a list of any existing health conditions/diagnoses that are necessary for the staff to be aware of (i.e., diabetes, asthma, ill-functioning organs, etc.). It is your responsibility to keep staff up to date with any changes in your child's medical conditions/diagnosis, and to provide the program with copies of on-going medical evaluations.

If necessary, staff will meet with you to develop a 'Care Plan' for your child based upon their specific health care needs, and the 'Care Plan' will be shared with all relevant program staff to protect confidentiality.

A note from your child's physician indicating the symptoms to be aware of, as well as the appropriate first aid protocol to follow, is also required if your child has an existing medical condition/diagnosis and/or life-threatening allergies. A list of all children's allergies, as well as the appropriate first aid protocol to follow, will be available for all relevant program staff.

If your child suffers from severe allergies (e.g. anaphylaxis), you are required to supply the program with an EpiPen and/or Ana-Kit (whichever your child's physician recommends). A "Permission to Administer Medication" form must be filled-out and signed by yourself and your physician BEFORE your child begins attending the program.

All allergies will be clearly posted in The Nest for staff to see and written on the child's emergency info/consent cards.



## Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect

The safety of the children in our care is our top priority.

We are required by law to report suspected abuse or neglect of a child to Child Protective Services. Mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect is required in the Yukon Child Care Act (Section 38(1), 38(2)). When your child is in our program we have a responsibility as child care providers to report any suspected child abuse. We do not need to prove that abuse or neglect has taken place, only that there is a suspicion. Yukon Family and Children's Services will do any investigation that is necessary.

For more information see Yukon Family and Children's Services guidelines at [www.hss.gov.yk.ca/childabuse.php](http://www.hss.gov.yk.ca/childabuse.php).

Children will not be released to an adult under the following conditions:

- To an adult who is visibly impaired (alcohol and/or drugs)
- Staff have witnessed abusive, violent, or harmful behaviour from the adult

## Communications

### General Communication

Generally, The Nest Forest School will communicate with families via email. To reach us in a timely manner, please send an email to [rosalind@riverstoridges.org](mailto:rosalind@riverstoridges.org). 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



### Emergency Communication

In the event of an emergency at The Nest, families will be contacted by telephone once emergency personnel (if needed) have been contacted.

### Questions and Concerns

Our goal is for all visitors to The Nest 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 time at The Nest, please do not hesitate to ask to speak with staff directly. If you or the The Nest Forest School 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.

## Grievance Policy

Your concerns matter to us. Should issues arise in your dealings with The Nest Forest School staff, please communicate your concerns with the staff in person, or via phone or email. We will make every effort to address and resolve these issues in a timely manner.

If you have a complaint or concern that cannot be resolved directly with The Nest Forest School staff, please bring that concern to Director Wren Nicolardi at [info@riverstoridges.org](mailto:info@riverstoridges.org)

In the unlikely event that the concern still cannot be resolved, a third party mediator can be brought in to support finding a resolution.

# The Nest Forest School

## Our Vision

When young people are supported in fostering a sense of empathy and self-awareness in relation to place and others, it builds the foundation for resilient and healthy communities. We believe that **deepening our relationship with the natural world** is crucial for healthy bodies, minds and hearts.

## Our Mission

Our mission is to empower a diverse range of Northerners to spend more time connecting meaningfully to the land, and developing a deeper sense of empathy, awareness and community.

Our aim is to foster these values through active mentoring relationships in the outdoors. We are a social enterprise that designs, supports and delivers outdoor and land-based programs for young people year-round.

The Nest Forest School is a new program launched in 2020 by Nestworks Learning Inc.

## Our Philosophy

Our educational philosophy is built on the concept of nature mentorship. We encourage learners to develop a deep sense of place through understanding their role in the natural world.

We believe that the more we get in touch with the natural rhythms of nature, the more we tune in with our own rhythms. By building trust, modelling positive behaviours, and inspiring deep connection to the land, our aim is to empower young learners to feel confident, aware, empathetic and connected to their community.

We are guided by the learners' passions, and we customize our programming around each unique group of students, based on their interests, needs and desires. We believe strongly in fostering curiosity and we strive to hold space for learners to come to answers at his or her own pace.

We are based out of Whitehorse, Yukon and also run programs across the Territory. We respectfully acknowledge that we live and work on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

## Our Team



### **Rosalind Crump**

#### **Forest School Educator**

Rosalind was born in Whitehorse, on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, and is thrilled to call the Yukon home again and to be joining the team. Growing up in Ontario and in Denmark, Rosalind has many memories of playing outside with her sisters, creating worlds in a cluster of flowering bushes or up in the branches of trees – and she cannot wait to explore the worlds that await The Nest Forest School.

She is a certified teacher with a B.Ed. from St. Thomas University, and a B.A. in Geography and Aboriginal Perspectives, and Drama from Mount Allison University. Following her time in New Brunswick, Rosalind spent time teaching English in France, baking in Ottawa, farming and teaching kindergarten in Inuvik, NWT. Rosalind helped launch the pilot for the Nest Forest School in January 2020, and thoroughly enjoyed spending the 2020 Summer Camp season in the forest with Rivers to Ridges!

Rosalind is passionate about play-based learning and the role it can play in helping children gain autonomy and responsibility. She thinks the learning journey is much like a seed as it grows - each child needs a nurturing environment to stretch their roots out into, in order to flourish. Beyond Forest School, Rosalind enjoys singing and playing music, growing veggies, and all aspects of theatre – from backstage production to performing in Shakespeare in the Park (and once appeared as a bilingual, talking broccoli!).

## **Kelly Scott**

### **Forest School Educator and Operations Manager**

Kelly was born in Guelph Ontario on the ancestral homelands of the Anishinaabek People, specifically the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. She moved to the Yukon in 2014 to pursue a career in teaching while increasing her naturalist knowledge found in this beautiful territory. Kelly holds a BA in Modern Languages (French and Spanish) and Sociology from Bishop's University in Sherbrooke, Quebec. In the summer of 2018 Kelly completed a course with National Geographic in Ottawa with a focus on Indigenous Studies and teaching Indigenous Perspectives. She also holds a certificate as a trained Montessori Elementary Teacher through the Association Montessori Internationale from Toronto, Ontario where she was guided down a path of mentoring the natural curiosity and deep sense of empathy that exists in children.



Kelly has been teaching in Montessori for 10 years in a few capacities: as a French Assistant in a preschool setting as well as in a lower elementary classroom and she has spent the last 6 years in Whitehorse teaching in a Montessori elementary classroom with grades 1, 2 and 3. Kelly is now excited to be bringing her passions forward with the team at The Nest Forest School.

Outside of work Kelly can be found writing music, playing guitar and ukulele, writing poetry and short stories, practicing yoga, reading, working in theatre productions, and on arts based volunteer boards. She enjoys handwork such as crocheting, sewing, beading, bookmaking and up-cycling or repurposing clothing. Kelly is most curious about plants life, the changing seasons, life in the Age of the Invertebrates (and beyond!), human interconnectedness and recognizing what binds us as a community.



## **Mariana Giaccaglia**

### **Forest School Educator**

Mariana is from Argentina, and is grateful to call the Yukon her second home. She has lived here for the last 17 years, where she has raised her two children. She has had the opportunity to run her own day-home for 7 years as well as work in a variety of daycares and kindergarten classes for the last 14 years in the Yukon. She loves helping the children to grow and become the best they can be, and is particularly passionate about the importance of early learning in the outdoor environment.

She decided to go into this field to be able to provide the best quality care for her own children and others. Mariana is trained in Early Childhood Education, First Aid and is always looking for opportunities for more learning and professional growth development. She loves dancing, creating art and being and playing outside.

## Contact Information

Phone: 867.334.6187

Kelly Scott (Operations Manager & Educator)  
[kelly@riverstoridges.org](mailto:kelly@riverstoridges.org)

Rosalind Crump (Educator)  
[rosalind@riversridges.org](mailto:rosalind@riversridges.org)

Mariana Giaccaglia (Educator)  
[mariana@riverstoridges.org](mailto:mariana@riverstoridges.org)

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