

The background of the entire image is a lush, sunlit meadow. In the foreground, there are several white daisies with yellow centers scattered across green grass. To the right, a thick, dark tree trunk with rough bark is visible. The background is a soft-focus green field with sunlight filtering through the trees, creating a warm, golden glow.

WELCOME TO:


OUR NATURE KINDERGARTEN

OPEN HOUSE 2022/2023

FACILITATED BY STEPHANIE SPILCHAK



"We acknowledge that we are on the traditional land of Treaty No.6, and home of Métis Nation of Alberta Zone 4. We also acknowledge the Inuit and other diverse Indigenous peoples whose ancestors have marked their territory since time immemorial, a place that has welcomed many peoples from around the world to make their home here. "

The background of the image is a soft-focus photograph of a natural setting. On the right side, a dark, textured tree trunk is visible. The rest of the image is a bright, sunlit meadow with green grass and small white daisies. A semi-transparent green rectangular box with a thin brown border is centered over the image, containing the text.

OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IS INDIGENOUS. IT WAS HERE BEFORE US, IT PROVIDES US WITH WHAT WE NEED TO SURVIVE, IT DESERVES OUR RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING.

IN NATURE KINDERGARTEN WE CONNECT WITH OUR NATURAL SPACES IN A WAY THAT BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE LAND. WE OBSERVE THINGS LIKE

- THE BEAUTY OF THE CHANGING SEASONS
- HOW THINGS GROW AND WHY
- RELATIONSHIPS OCCURRING IN NATURE
- OUR ECOLOGICAL IMPACT

WE DRAW PARALLELS FROM WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED FROM OUR INDIGENOUS TEACHERS AND WHAT OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT TEACHES US, ON A REGULAR BASIS. OUR STUDENTS LEAVE THE PROGRAM UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND CONTINUE TO BE ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDS THROUGHOUT THEIR SCHOOL YEARS. OUR GOAL IS THAT THEY CARRY THIS SKILL THROUGH THEIR LIFE AND PASS IT ON TO THEIR CHILDREN.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT...

If we want our children
to move mountains,
we first have to let them
get out of their chairs.

-Nicolette Fowler



WHY NATURE KINDERGARTEN?

- Children have a natural curiosity about the world around them. Letting them explore their capabilities and taking risks helps them evolve into strong, capable, resilient autonomous citizens.
- Connecting children to nature fosters rich learning experiences, ecological literacy and healthy living. This supports their executive functioning skills, builds strong brain functioning, self regulation and life skills.



WHO WILL FACILITATE THE PROGRAM?



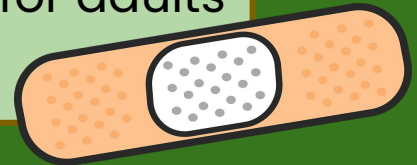
- Stephanie Spilchak is a qualified teacher and certified Forest School Practitioner through the Child and Nature Alliance of Canada.
- A Program Assistant has been developing this program alongside Stephanie for the last 3 years. With a Bachelor of Science in Biology and environmental consulting background, the program is immersed in science based inquiry and play.



RISK AND SAFETY ASSESSMENT

The teacher and assistants are trained in first aid and will take appropriate measures to ensure your child is safe everyday!

- Risk- The experience and management of it- is an inherent and integral part of Nature Kindergarten, and indeed of healthy child development.
- Nature kindergarten teachers endeavour to co-assess and co-manage risk with participants. We believe this is an essential skill for children to acquire and for adults to support.



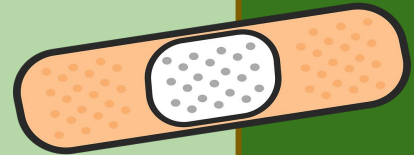




RISK AND SAFETY ASSESSMENT

Some of the risks inherent to Nature Kindergarten and outdoor play include, but are not limited to:

- Injuries from executing physical activities, uneven ground in the forest or climbing trees
- Injuries from failing to properly use tools
- Injuries resulting from fire hazards
- Outdoor allergens
- The presence of wild animals / ticks
- Inclement weather



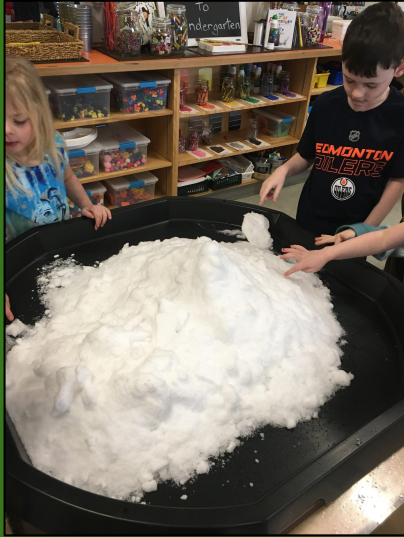
WHAT ABOUT WHEN ITS REALLY COLD?!

We live in Alberta. It gets cold. Thankfully we have an established indoor space that we can utilize when we need it. But we still go outside, even just for a few minutes. There is so much to experience! "There is no bad weather, just inappropriate clothing"

- Our students understand how to dress for the weather and how to tell us when something is cold or wet.
- Our students learn resiliency playing outside even when the weather or conditions are not optimal.
- We get to practice risk assessment with changing environmental conditions

WHAT ABOUT WHEN ITS REALLY COLD?!

When we need an inside break
(to warm up or dry off)
we can always bring some nature
inside with us!



SOME TOPICS WE HAVE EXPLORED SO FAR IN NATURE KINDERGARTEN

Physics and angles – what objects roll best down the hill? Why? How?



Fire safety and building (done with our outdoor ed. students from Holy Redeemer)



Animals! We have learned about many animal species and their role in our natural spaces

Learning about **Indigenous families**, games and the many parallels in Indigenous teachings and Nature Kindergarten.

Learning how to use **tools** safely, including hammers and potato peelers. (good for making hot dog sticks).



WHEN DOES NATURE KINDERGARTEN TAKE PLACE?

Nature Kindergarten will take place on Mondays, Wednesdays and some Fridays. A full year calendar will be provided before the start of the year.

- Children should be enrolled in a Tuesday/ Thursday Kindergarten program to participate in Nature Kindergarten.
- Nature Kindergarten is an extension of your child's home Kindergarten Program.

WHERE WILL NATURE KINDERGARTEN TAKE PLACE?

Holy Redeemer Catholic School:

- Natural wetlands, treed areas for climbing and exploring, mud kitchen, obstacle courses set out by the children, hills to run and climb, gardening boxes, etc.
- Temperatures below -20 Degrees celsius, classes will be held indoors with the possibility of short outside experiences.

Strathcona Wilderness Centre:

- A variety of programming is set up with SWC. Including, cross country skiing, wilderness safety, snow shoeing, campfire safety and cooking, Indigenous cultural experiences.

EXAMPLES OF OUR SPACES



The courtyard is an outdoor space in the middle of the school. Protected by harsh winds this is a good option for us on cold/windy days and includes loose parts play and our mud kitchen!



We have 3 playgrounds at Holy Redeemer. Play time here means experiencing different structures and during recess they get the chance to collaborate with other students.



“The Wetland” and “Little Forest” provides us with a cool new ecosystem to explore!

“Creek Forest” is a good walk away from the school but provides us with more woodland areas including a creek area!



"FUN HILL"



Did you know that rolling down hills provides essential vestibular (balance) input that helps children know where their body is in space? It also helps with supporting and organizing all of the other senses (vision, hearing, etc.) for improved brain and body functioning. Let the children roll down hills!



HOW DOES MY CHILD GET TO THE PROGRAM?

- Holy Redeemer students will take their regular school bus.
- Students will be transported for field trips to the Strathcona Wilderness Centre by school bus.
- Students coming from other EICS schools will need to be dropped off and picked up on Nature Kinder days.



HOW WILL YOUR FEES SUPPORT THE PROGRAM?

Each month the program will require a \$425 fee. This fee can be paid online through your school engage account and will pay for your child's :

- All field trip fees
- Transportation to Field trips
- One year membership to the SWC
- Certified and professional staff
- Materials and resources used in the program
- An educational experience that will enrich their lives



PREPARING FOR NATURE KINDERGARTEN:

SUPPLY LIST (DETAILED IN THE PARENTS HANDBOOK)

- Backpack
- LARGE Lunch and two healthy snacks packed in reusable containers to support environmental literacy
- Water Bottle (Gatorade bottles are recommended)
- One complete extra change of clothes including undergarments, socks and outerwear
- Rain Gear and boots (ex. Oaki Brand, MEC, BOGS)
- Winter outerwear (See suggestions in Parent Handbook)



STRATHCONA WILDERNESS CENTRE

The Strathcona Wilderness Centre is a four season outdoor adventure centre located in the Beaver Hills Biosphere which is a UNESCO biosphere reserve. The hummocky “knob and kettle” terrain of the moraine forms a patchwork of depressional areas, which supports wetlands, small lakes and streams.

Both boreal and parkland animal and plant species can be found in the area.

A child's 'wanderland'!



OUR PARENT FEEDBACK

"The nature program allows a child to learn and explore the outdoors. My son is learning there is so much to explore right in our very backyard, interesting plants and bugs we can find and that we need to take care of our planet. Now when we go on walks we all pick up garbage. I also find we stop and "smell the roses". Enjoy the small things around us that maybe we used to walk right past. As a family we are going outside more on those not so nice days and learning to love all the seasons in Alberta. We now have new hobbies and activities we do as a family outside. I would highly recommend the Nature Program. Every child should be able to learn while exploring."

"SWC trips - free forest play - creative and flexible lessons plans that incorporate nature - amazing communication via seesaw app, love the pics - fostering a positive attitude and love towards the outdoors, regardless of the weather - creative play in the mud kitchen - risky play opportunities"

OUR PARENT FEEDBACK

“My daughter took me to Creek Forest the other day, a special place where the kids like to play on their morning outings. It was amazing to see her face light up as she told me all about the fun games and adventures she has there with her friends. Of course we had to re-enact a few of them.



“ I love that the kids are exposed to so many interesting activities that they might otherwise have never done at their age, such as orienteering, shelter building, snowshoeing and cross country skiing.”

“My daughter always reaches her activity goal (usually x2!!) on her vivofit watch on nature kindergarten days. It's great to see that she is being so active.”



THE POWER OF
UNSTRUCTURED PLAY:

**6-YEAR-OLDS
WHO SPEND MORE
TIME IN
UNSTRUCTURED
PLAY SHOW
GREATER SIGNS
OF EXECUTIVE
FUNCTIONING
AND DECISION-
MAKING SKILLS
WITH LINKS TO
ACADEMIC
SUCCESS.**





The more risks
you allow
children to take
the better they
learn to take care
of themselves.

-Roald Dahl

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**"you can't
fall if you
don't climb.
but there's
no joy in
living your
whole life
on the ground."**