

 **The Wolf Pack Wilderness School**

 "*Children cannot bounce off the walls if you take away the walls*."

 -Erin Kenny

**Our Program**

Welcome to The Wolf Pack, where we thrive on co-raising respectfully wild, independent and compassionate children by connecting them to the great outdoors. Our program is an outdoor nature based child care program that allows the children to learn outside the box in their own way without the limits of a modern day classroom environment. Our days are structured, child-led and play & inquiry based. We are so lucky to have been inspired by so many wonderful programs including Lisa Lockerbie's Nature Kindergarten program at Sangster, Walderkindergarten programs in Germany, UK's Forest Kindergarten programs, and both Montessori & Reggio Emilia approaches.

**Our Mission**

Through modern day technology and lifestyles, we have begun to lose touch with how important nature and fresh air is for our bodies and minds. We recognize the necessity for learning opportunities for all kinds of learning styles to prepare the children for kindergarten. Our program intends to reconnect children with nature, fueling a love and respect for the natural world around us which we are confident will stick with them as they continue on their journey into youth & adulthood. Our Pack practices kindness and respect to ourselves, each other and all living things around us.

**Our Environment**

Our program is located at 3595 Royston rd at the Fallen Alders Community Hall. We are so lucky to have 7 acres to adventure with lovely forested areas, a huge field, and a garden to explore. Our sensory bins do not have walls, we run our fingers through many textures - fine sand, soft mosses, dewey grass, rough bark, mud, and sticky sap. Learning in the wilderness, the children develop a pride and accomplishment that simply can not be gained in a typical classroom environment.

**Hours of Operation & Spaces**

We are open year round from 8:30am-4:30pm Monday through Friday except Statutory Holidays, rain or shine. At this time our program only has full-time spaces available. We are closed for two weeks in the summer and one week in-between Christmas break.

**Curriculum**

"How can my child learn to be ready to excel in kindergarten next year from playing in the forest all day?”

Wonderful question. From working in a kindergarten class, our Wolf Pack leader has the experience with and exposure to the expectations and curriculum that a kindergarten class implements and integrates it into our program. Our numeracy and literacy practice is entangled in our exciting days exploring the forest. Our Pack travels through their day in the forest and beaches with a cart full of materials to have the opportunity to bring our curriculum outside. We use natural materials and learn how to sort and make patterns, a first step to numeracy. Our curriculum is almost entirely emergent and is based on the children’s interests that spark during exploring our diverse environment during our changing seasons. We have learned that some of the children’s best learning is done during play and exploring what they are most excited about. We sit in the dirt and collect different numbers of natural items, we write letters in the dirt with sticks, we play games to enhance cooperation and social skills. We refer to our guide books and use our nature detective kits often to practice letter recognition and our fine motor skills. Homeschoolers & distance learners are welcome to join our days. They are welcome to bring any school work they’d like to work on with them each day, or your child can follow along with the flow of our emergent curriculum.

**Safety in the Forest**

Here comes the grand question. "Is the forest safe to play in?" To be honest, no, it is not entirely safe. There is always a risk to playing in an outdoor environment, and risk taking is a huge part of our learning process. We are so thankful to have such an extensive lush environment full of materials and textures for children to take risks and learn their physical and emotional limits through true free exploration, unlike the modern classroom & backyard environment. That being said, our Pack leader takes great care to complete a safety check list of each area daily. Our Pack Leader always carries an overstocked first aid kit, emergency kits, air horns, hand warmers, and safety cones to allow our children to have a regulated safe area to play in without the restriction of walls or fences. We spend our first few weeks practicing safety games in small regulated areas to ensure all the children are comfortable with our emergency procedures and how to respect the boundaries. See Emergency Plans & Procedures for more details on our emergency procedures. We check weather warnings on a daily basis and arrange to be inside during severe weather warnings, for example wind warnings to avoid falling limbs, or unbearably hot or cold weather. During these days, our main camp shelter provides more than adequate protection from the sun and rain and allows us to have a safe dry place for circle, lunch, and quiet activities.

**Campfire Policy**

At one of our field trip areas, we have a propane fireplace which is a lovely way to bring our little community together on the chilly winter mornings where we are outside. We wait until the children are seated on their stumps, before bringing the propane bottle over to the area. The propane bottle sits beside the Leader, and before lighting the fire we discuss our expected behaviors with the fire place – we don’t throw things in the fire, we don’t touch the rocks in the fire, we don’t stand up and go play unless the leader says so, we don’t run by the fire, etc. The fireplace is only left on while the leader is sitting beside the fire in arms reach of the off button.

**Outdoor Play Policies**

We have a great half fenced play area that we use during our outdoor play time, which is a half fenced playing field and boundaried by brightly coloured cones.. During our field trip visits around the property, our Leader has the children sit in a circle and partake in an activity. The Leader then takes great care to scan the area thoroughly, complete a safety check, where we then talk about the expectations and practice our safety games. The boundaries are discussed with every new child that enters and are taken seriously and the child must prove they can respect boundaries before finishing their probation period. If a child crosses over the boundaries, the families are notified and given a warning. If the child continues to cross the boundaries and does not stop immediately when the Leader says ‘red light’ or does the warning call and is not proving to be aware of the safety congeners, case depending the family of the child will be called and the child’s care will be terminated.

**Safety Games**

All of our games are practiced on a daily basis and our boundary cones are never extended until all children have proven they can respect the boundaries. Though our safety games are called ‘games’ and are made fun for the children to practice, we take these games seriously and require all children to participate when needed.

1. Scatter! - This game practices our recall. Our ‘safety call’ mimics the sound of an owl, ‘hoo hoo- hoo hoo’. We practice this call in small boundaries and open areas at first. The Leader says ‘Scatter!’ and the children run in every direction. When they hear the call, they run back to the circle as fast as they can. We explain that this ‘hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo’ call is only a teacher job, and is very important and means that there could be a dangerous animal, person, injured friend, or other emergency.
2. Red light, Green light / go, go, stop - this game is used to strengthen our self regulation skills. It is used daily during our play. We play this game and see who can stop the fastest when the Leader says ‘red light’. When a child is using unsafe behavior, the Leader uses the term ‘red light’ to get them to stop and think about what they are doing.
3. Spot the Cougar/Bear – the teacher gets the children to hide their eyes and the teacher hides a large laminated picture of a cougar/bear somewhere in the play area. The teacher releases the children to go play. When the cougar is spotted, they point to it, yell ‘cougar!’ or ‘bear!’ loudly. They then put their hands up, sing jingle bells, and back up slowly towards the Leader. The leader gathers the children behind her, while still singing jingle bells loudly, and backs up as a group towards the safest building.
4. Not a stick – We play this game to learn different ways to use sticks and rocks as a safe tool. We pass different sizes of sticks around in a circle and pretend that it is something different, eg. A witches broom, a mustache, a pencil. We all take turns trying out different things, and each friend thinks of ways that it could be unsafe. We then create a list of rules on how to safely use sticks and act out safe vs unsafe ways to use them.
5. Spot the Hazard. Every day after the Leader has set up the safety cone boundaries and done a safety check, the children line up behind the Leader and do a march around the play area. We brainstorm anything (large sticks, rocks, plants) they might see that may be unsafe and decide as a group (leader guided) on which items to remove from the area.
6. I’m lost – This game mimics procedure of what to do when a child is lost. The Leader allows the children to find a ‘hiding spot’ in the play area boundaries. The leader yells ‘1, 2, 3, where are you?’ and the children blow their whistle loudly and yell ‘1, 2, 3 I’m over here!’. We practice this repeatedly, encouraging the children to stay in one spot, yell as loudly as they can, and practice getting out their emergency kits and getting familiar with what is in them. The children are never permitted to play hiding games at any other times during our program.

**Fees and Returns**

Our fulltime monthly fees are $705/month including taxes which covers all of their supplies and random snacks and treats provided. Our part time spaces are pending upon interest. A $200 deposit is required at registration, which is refundable at the end of the child’s care term as long as proper notice is given with withdrawal. One months’ notice is required when withdrawing your child from the program and any remaining postdated cheques will be returned to you at the time of your notice. Unless we can find a child to take your child’s spot in the program, there are no refunds for early withdrawal. If your Child Care Fee is not received, your child may lose his/her space. In the event of your child being away for any reason (including but not limited to holidays or maternity leave) your regular monthly fee will still be charged to keep your space in the program. In the event our program has to close due to reasons beyond our control (including but not limited to snow days, earthquakes, fire, flood or health emergencies) you will be contacted to pick up your child immediately. There will be no refunds for Emergency Closures. However, in the event that our program is closed for more than 5 business days for emergency closure, fee credits will be calculated and applied and adjusted to your next monthly fee. Fee reimbursement for the entire closure cannot be given due to ongoing operating expenses.

**Food & Drink Policy**

We thrive to promote healthy eating and nutritional habits to fuel our bodies for busy days outside. Please discuss with our Pack leader if there are any allergy concerns. You will need to provide a morning snack, lunch and an afternoon snack. We will often be enjoying our meals outside so we are unable to do re-heats, but thermoses are welcome. Fresh drinking water is accessible at all times from the sink in our building and from the taps located around the property. We ask that you do not send chocolate, chips, candy, juice or pop.

**Clothing Policy**

Attached to the registration Package you will see a list of suggested and essential items to have for your child to ensure they are warm, dry and comfortable in all weather. Your child will be asked to wear rain pants almost daily to ensure they can comfortably play in the dirt. There are many more affordable options of different brands available than the suggested items on the list. You are responsible for ensuring your child has the weather appropriate gear daily as we are outside in rain, snow or sun. If your child is not dressed appropriately and we have run out of spare layers, you may be asked to pick your child up or drop off appropriate layers.

**Screen Time Policy**

Our program has a no screen time policy. We do not have iPads or TV usage during our program. Our Pack leader carries a phone for parent & emergency contact at all times.

**Active Play Policy**

As per licensing regulations, we are required to have a minimum of 1.5 hours of active outdoor play in the morning and afternoon. Our program exceeds these required hours. We play in all types of weather unless it is unsafe for children and staff. On days where we are unable to be outside due to safety concerns, we have a large space indoors where we can set up gross motor games to ensure we are still getting plenty of active time. Our gross motor play is teacher guided when needed to assure the children are safely and adequately strengthening their gross motor skills.

**Probationary Period**

As this is a unique program and may not be a good fit for some children, each new child is accepted on a one month trial probationary period. Our program will work co-operatively with families to provide children with a positive experience away from home. We encourage families to ensure your child has a basic understanding of what boundaries are, following a group plan and how to play safely with sticks and rocks before enrolling in our program. If agreed after the month period that our program does not fit your child's needs and we have exhausted all resources with no improvement, we reserve the right to terminate care. During the entire period of your child’s enrollment, including during or after the probationary period, if your child is unable to stay in our boundaries, the parents will have one warning. If your child continues to not respect the boundaries or their behavior is affecting the safety of the program, the parents will be contacted immediately and the child’s care will be terminated.

**Safe Release of The Children**

Any child registered in our program will need to be picked up prior to our closing time. No child shall be released from our care to anyone other than the parents or persons authorized on the consent form & pickup list. If an authorized person is unrecognized by a staff, he/she will be asked to show photo identification eg drivers license. If an authorized person comes to pick up a child and appears to be incapable of doing so, eg. intoxication, an alternate person on the pickup list will be contacted. Our staff are obligated to consider the health and safety of all involved and if a staff member feels this is at risk they may contact the police or contact the Ministry for Children & Families. Please advise in writing of any custody agreements that pertain to the child and submit a photocopy of any Court Orders. Late pickups will result in a charge of $10/15 minutes. Consistent late pickups will result in the release of your family from the program.

**Behavioural Guidance Policy**

Our program practices respect to others, the environment and ourselves. All of our children are treated with respect. If a conflict between children occurs, the children are adult assisted to deal with conflicts with friendships. We use lots of positive reinforcement and re-direction when dealing with negative behaviour. We do not use time outs, but as a last resort if the child is showing potential to hurt someone, themselves or toys, they will be asked to take a break from the area and come back to fix the problem after a period of time once emotions are back to a controlled level. Only if the child is showing potential harm to themselves or others, or the program is being disrupted, the parent be contacted for immediate pickup.

**Health & Safety**

As part of our Health and Safety Plan we have implemented the following into our daily routine:

A) We are here to support and nurture your child, providing the highest quality care

B) We combine the forest and a preschool based curriculum to prepare your child for kindergarten in all areas in a natural environment to foster their emotional, cognitive and social development

 C) We have an open door policy with parents. Please feel free to visit, join us and participate.

D) All disruptive behavior will be documented by staff and the information gathered will be used when communicating with parents (and if necessary child care development consultants and/or the Ministry of Children and Families

Consistent negative behavior will result in the following;

- Strategies and a care plan will be discussed and developed between staff and parents

1. - Care Plan Action will be implemented
2. - If strategies do not show an improvement, then an observation will be done by a consultant from Supported Child Care or the Ministry of Families
3. - In the event that your child is uncontrollable, we will not physically restrain your child but if necessary we will call you or another authorized adult on your registration form to pick them up. As a last resort, in extreme cases, we may contact 911. This would include, but not be exclusive to, hurting themselves, others or toys and equipment.

**Repayment Agreements**

Fees are paid, in advance, on the 1st of each month. 2% interest will be charged on all overdue fees. If payment is not received, your child may lose his/her spot with the Pack. In the event of your child being away for any reason (including but not exclusive to holidays or maternity leave) your regular monthly fee will continue to be due to keep your child’s spot. If we are unable to care for your child in most situations, you will be given one month's notice. If there is a major behavioural problem e.g. endangerment to themselves or others, running away, etc, no notice will be given, you will be asked to pick up your child and you will be refunded the remaining of the unattended paid period.

**Illness policy**

We thrive to promote proper hand washing and hygiene practices to reduce the spread of germs, though all children get sick. If your child has a communicable disease or they are not able to participate in our daily program due to being sick, you will be asked to come pick up your child. They are welcome to return after 24 hours of being symptom free (green nasal discharge, fevers, spots, etc). Please do not medicate your child before sending them to prevent the medication wearing off halfway through the day. Please discuss with our Pack leader if you have medication you wish to administer during our program. If your child has an inhaler or epipen, it must be disclosed on their children's file and discussed at the time of registration so a Care Plan can be put in place.

**Emergency Closures**

 In the event that we have a large snowfall that causes the school buses and city buses to not run, it means that the Ministry of Highway Transportation has deemed that the roads are not safe for travel. We will not be open on these days. If the centre has to be closed on a temporary basis due to weather, fire, flood or power outage, fees will not be discounted. If the centre is out of power you cannot drop off your child. In the event that we lose power, we will contact BC Hydro obtain the estimated time of repair. If the repair time is more than 2 hours from the opening time of the centre the centre will close for the remainder of the day. If the centre loses power during hours of operation after the first two hours you will be called to come and pick up your child.

**Inclusion**

Our program works closely with support networks such as Queen Alexandra Centre for Children’s Health to include and support all children in our program. We include children and encourage participation whatever their ability or level may be. All children are treated equally, never isolated, and all activities will be altered to accommodate all abilities when necessary. Whether the extra support needs are physical, emotional, mental, behavioural or dietary, we strive for inclusion and integration of all children in our program. Upon registration there will need to be a Written Care Plan made and agreed upon by the Manager and parents. It will be complied of information from parents that is provided to the centre. Especially considering this program has no fenced boundaries and is different than the average program, we will need to consider whether we can staff this request, if we will require extra training or support, program and environment will be a good fit to provide safe and effective care. It is the responsibility of the parent to arrange the contract with Supported Child Care 1 month prior to your child starting in our program. Once the contract has been received by the Centre and funding is in place, the child will not be able to attend until a support staff has been hired for the child.

*Thank you for spending the time to get familiar with our program and policies. We look forward to new adventures with your child and family!*

**Emergency Plans & Procedures**

Fire Emergency Plan

1. Stop! Calmly gather the children in a line formation

2. Make sure all children in attendance are accounted for using the daily attendance forms

3. Leave the building in the safest exit marked on the posted emergency plan on wall by the door

4. Meet in the designated safe meeting spot in the parking lot

Earthquake Emergency Plan

1. Get all children in the safest duck and cover positions under a table or doorway.

2. Wait until the shaking stops

3. Count to 30 and wait to see if there is an aftershock

4. Assess the surroundings and account for all children in attendance

5. Leave the building by the safest exit.

6. Meet away from any fallen debris or wires, first option being the meeting place in the parking lot

7. All emergency supplies are located in the designated area

Bear or Cougar Sighting Plan

1. Point at the animal, yell ‘cougar’ or ‘bear’

2. Put your hands up, make yourself look big, sing jingle bells loudly

3. Have the children walk, not run, backwards towards the Pack leader

4. Leader gathers children behind them and backs up slowly as a group towards the nearest safe building & blows the air horn if required, sing ‘jingle bells’ loudly

5. Call our emergency contacts & CRD if needed

Missing Child Procedure

1. Safety call & get all children to line up behind the leader. Yell loudly ‘1, 2, 3, where are you?’ and blow whistle, walk with children behind in a line searching in areas safe to do so if the child responds or is visible.

2. Call 911 & Advise parents if no sign of child after 5 minutes

Injured Child Procedure

1. Safety call & get all children to sit in a circle and partake in an easily accessible activity together

2. Assist injured child with first aid

3. Call parents and 911 if needed

Recovery Plan

After any of the above emergencies, ensure incident reports are properly filled out and reported to authorities, all parents are informed of incidents, and any used supplies are restocked. Ensure any therapist contacts and resources are given to families if trauma or behaviors occur from the incident. Reassess all policies and plan how to prevent any future situations.

**Emergency Numbers**

Emergency : 911

Ambulance : 250-642-3734
Fire : 250-642-5422

Police : 250-642-5241

Jennine Prowse : 250-661-3529

Ministry of Children & Family Development : 250-953-3711

Help Line Children : 250-310-1234

Poison Control : 1-800-567-8911

**Wolf Pack Daily Schedule**

8:30 – Wolf Pack opens – free play & table activities

9:30 - Morning meeting, story, circle - drop off cut off time

9:40- Morning snack, wash hands & bathroom break

9:50– Pack our bags, forest walk

10:00 – Set up boundaries & practice safety games

10:15 – Free Exploration

11:45 - Wash hands, lunch, thankful for’s

12:25 - Bathroom break & Wash hands

12:30 – Rest time, quiet time bags

1:15 Story, word of the day, daily Focused Forest Job

1:30- Focused Activity

2:00 - Free Exploration & stations

3:30 – Afternoon Snack, wash hands & bathroom break

4:00- Program ends

Clothing List

These items are essential for your child to be comfortable during their time with the Wolf Pack rain or shine. MEC in downtown Victoria is recommended due to the durability of gear and their guaranteed return policy after waterproofing wears out. Other brands are absolutely acceptable as well. Unless your child is coming to the centre before 8:30am, please send your child fully dressed for outside with appropriate layers and rain pants on. We wear rain pants every day (except mid summer) to ensure your child can sit and play comfortably in the dirt. In the warmer weather, feel free to send your child with shorts underneath their rain pants and we will delayer as needed.

Daily :

* Waterproof backpack- 15L + – (recommended MEC Deuter Junior Daypack)
* Rain pants (recommended MEC)
* Water bottle
* BOGS boots (millstream village shoe company). Gumboots are fine too but BOGS are extremely durable and insulated for cold weather play and do not get sweaty in the warm weather.
* Reusable bag to bring home wet clothes
* Two full sets of dry clothes to stay in classroom (shirt, pants, underwear, socks x2)
* meals and snacks (thermoses welcome)

Winter :

* Thermal layers (recommended MEC or fleece leggings and longsleeve shirt)
* Fleece sweater
* Puffy coat (to layer under rain coat)
* Waterproof raincoat with hood
* Toque & waterproof gloves
* Optional – Snow pants, Hand warmers

Summer :

* Quick Dry shoulder coverage clothing
* Water shoes/natives
* Sunscreen
* Sun hat