



## THE DOGWOOD DIGEST

*A weekly highlight of what our forest schoolers explored, learned, played, created, & so much more!*

### **Spring Term: Week 1 – March 18 – 24, 2024**

Spring is here! Or so the groundhog said. In our opinion, we think he may have been a little confused. This week was cooler with more snow than we were expecting, but for us, it was an opportunity! The environment set the perfect backdrop for new projects big and small, and allowed us to explore how our forest has changed in the time that we have been away.

#### **Seeds (5-7 years)**

- Created nature viewers to use on our hikes and painted them with our homemade watercolour paints
- Explored the Forest on the “safari train”, searching for signs of spring with our nature viewers
- Built a home, food, and a bed for our Monday Mascot: Beaver!
- Played Owl and Hare by the pond, Fire in the Forest and had a mitten puzzle scavenger hunt
- Climbed on logs at big stump and at the Den play structure
- Learned each other's names and practiced writing and drawing them on the ground using sticks
- Worked on wind proofing a fort to stay warm inside, with a focus on entrance locations, tying down tarps and decor

#### **Sprouts (7-10 years)**

- Field tested our gear against the cool waters, and experimented with different ways to get dry and feel more comfortable when wet in cold weather
- Began creating sling shots, working with leather and the perfect ‘Y’ stick
- Discussed community building and how we can respect others, ourselves, and the forest while creating Community Standards for the spring term
- Explored the Nest space, adding onto the village of forts with a tunnel to connect them and protect from the snow and rain
- Explored water and ice, watching as supercooled water in a water bottle that was left outside, immediately turned to ice once it was disturbed
- Hiked a big loop of the forest and saw fox tracks near an old fox's den
- Practiced mindfulness in a 5 minute sit spot overlooking the fox's den, listening and looking for signs of other animals in our forest
- Created a handle for flint and steel, using a saw, drill, c-clamp and a knife
- Played a game called Fire in the Forest - paying attention to the animal's physical characteristics, behaviours, adaptations, diet and environment

#### **Forest Rangers (11-14 years)**

- Created a ‘Living Things Journal’ to document new and inspirational living things as the spring takes its course of growth and change
- Got our bodies moving with a hike and games
- Enjoyed spending time together playing strategy games, crafting and telling stories in the Tipi
- Played around with old nostalgic circle games that tested our senses and agility
- Rolled around on barrels with one goal in mind - to have fun! (a reminder that we are never too old to play or test out our abilities)

#### **Roots & Shoots (0-6 years)**

- Tested our balancing and climbing in an obstacle course and made a “nest” for a bird
- Hiked across cedar bridge and enjoyed snack at Key Hole and played Hide and Seek
- Played Owl, Owl, Up in the Tree at Big Stump
- Sang songs together and listened to a story
- Created yummy treats in the mud kitchen and climbed on tires and logs

#### **Monthly Sprouts (6-9 years)**

- Looked for signs of spring in the forest on a long hike, stopping along the way at High Point and Mushroom Valley to explore the creek
- Played Fire in the Forest and talked about animal adaptations, their diet, and where they live
- Built a brand new fort using a tarp, long poles and a rope - then continued to build on our Eagle's Nest fort from last term
- Began whittling projects
- Created a wood cookie store to “sell” wooden items to the villagers in the forts
- Chopped kindling to fill up under the den, fed birds by hand, and peeled birch bark for fire starters

#### **Monthly Saplings (9-13 years)**

- Created a big fort village together - taking into consideration direction our forts should face to avoid bad weather, and how to orient them to create a sense of community, including the addition of a sitting area and a central fire pit where everyone could gather together
- Played mancala, Chess and other board games in our forts and within our village
- Learned and practiced problem solving and communication skills especially when working together



### More Dogwood Events: Spring Staff Training

- Explored topics about emotional development and regulation, building relationships with students, families, and each other, and how to interact and play in nature in a way that does not negatively impact it
- Hiked, participated in sit spots and reflection, played games, and enjoyed group brainstorming
- Welcomed River (Thursday) and Dune (Monday/Wednesday) to our team

It is only the beginning of the term, and we are off to a great start! We are so excited to experience the forest transition from brown and snowy white, to deep greens, and vibrant colours, and watch as life returns to the forest. There is so much to do and explore and we can't wait to do that over the coming months. Thank you all for a wonderful first week back!



*First signs of Spring!*



*"Shoots" practicing their balance with the help of their "Root"*



*Water exploration and practicing balance – seasoned "Sprouts" collecting ice from the puddle*



*Using creativity, problem-solving, and strength to carry logs from one place to another*





*Practicing and developing agility to climb up and over a log pile, balance on logs, and weave around pylons*



*The Nature Viewers were fun tools to use to look closer at our nature finds and really “zoom in” on things*



*Practicing letters in the dirt – literacy in nature*



*What a fun find! Ice blocks spark play and imagination in many ways*





*Collaborating and brainstorming about the village forts*



*Lashing and frapping technique for effective fort building*



*Fort building underway!*



*The Nest Village – what an accomplishment for the community!*





*Roots & Shoots enjoying snack time at Key Hole*



*Loose parts + imagination = so many possibilities! A tire, a board, and wood cookie to create a teeter totter*



*Wood Chucks working together for their community – chopping firewood for the fire to stay warm and cook*



*Hiking across Cedar Bridge through the snowy forest*





*The Rangers having fun rolling on barrels – old school play and testing of agility and balance*



*Making and gathering kindling for the fire*



*As much as we may be ready for Spring...the snowy forest is beautiful!*



*Dogwood Educators hiking – exploring, learning, creating, and playing together during PD!*