



## THE DOGWOOD DIGEST

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

### **Spring Term: Week 2 – March 25 – 31, 2024**

Spring has sprung and we began seeing definite signs of spring in the forest this week. Although we began the week with a thin layer of snow on the ground, it didn't stop little green sprouts from popping up, or the buds from growing on all the branches. We have been hearing birds returning and seeing evidence of animals waking up from their winter sleep. It's an exciting time, especially as the warmer weather slowly returns. We're also learning that the forest is a living space, recognizing the importance of asking permission before taking from it, taking with purpose, and thanking it for its gifts.

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

- Hiked through the forest, finding and following raccoon tracks, explored a new trail, as well as mossy tropical and coniferous miniature islands
- Tested out the depth of mud using sticks
- Practiced sustainable harvesting of tree buds - not taking everything from one tree, taking only what we need and leaving nodes intact for spring growth
- Peeled back the bark from different twigs, and looked at the different colours and textures - spongy piths, wet green wood & brittle brown wood
- Sketched plant & tree buds we found along the way
- Played games like soccer baseball, soccer, running races, Chickadee Tag and Guess the Animal
- Recreated the Dragon's Den/Eagle's Nest fort and built gnome homes and villages using sticks and other natural materials
- Created dragon soup at the mud kitchen
- Enjoyed the gift of maple taffy - collected, process and boiled from our very own maple trees
- Began creating a boundary for our riparian zone using fallen, dead trees, large branches and logs found around the property
- Made a slingshot, discussed safety while using it and had target practice
- Played games such as the Floor is Lava, Down or Out, Come Closer and Toro
- Acknowledged the importance of rough and tumble play, and co-created a "Down or Out" game for those who were interested, keeping in mind safety, respect for personal boundaries, and communication of needs and boundaries

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

- Explored what a bud is, what is inside, why tree buds can be delicious for grazing deer and why a leaf is an important energy collector for trees.
- Collected and examined different types of buds under a magnifying glass and cut them open to see what was inside
- Created a giant snowball and pushed it all the way from the nest to the pond where we rolled it into the water and then made smaller snowballs and hid them high up in a tree
- Created a sundial at 11 am, and placed a rock to mark its shadow location each hour, on the hour - we noticed that the rocks were evenly spaced and wondered if this changed in different seasons.
- Practiced tying knots that can be used for both bracelet making and for forts
- Learned how to lash and trap to secure poles

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

- Revisited tarpology skills to put up our backpack and main site tarp, and refined fire starting skills
- Worked collaboratively to assess risks of expanding manhunt game, including safety, boundaries, wildlife, sustainability, and community needs.
- Constructed a table and learned how to fit and install leg wedges
- Fashioned and installed ash pins for woodshed saddle wedge
- Engaged in leadership and mentorship with peers throughout many aspects of the day
- Analyzed and recorded observations about various buds under microscopes

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

- Explored the Forest for animal friends waking up for Spring
- Sang songs about frogs and horses and enjoyed riding the "Forest horse" log
- Created animal homes for the animals we found along our hike
- Played imaginative games in the village forts and at the mud kitchen
- Liked swinging and climbing on the play features at the nest

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

- Explored the Berry patch and Marsh Trail, admiring new growth, different tree buds and signs of spring
- Played at the forest schooler-built fort village at the nest, climbed on the log clusters and played on the swing
- Came up with a plan for a future playground extension and whittled the first posts to begin the process
- Created a "spider web" out of rope as an added climbing piece to our play structure
- Became "Forest Savers" in an imaginative play game, mining for sticks and assigning different roles
- Played checkers and practiced problem solving and communication skills, even in frustrating situations
- Played Fire in the Forest, learning about different animals, their characteristics, where they might live and what their diet is like





There is no doubt we got up to a lot this week. As educators and mentors, we always have a plan for the day, but we remember to keep an open mind and allow flexibility for whatever might come our way. This week was a perfect example of that. After all, our forest schoolers and the environment are the best teachers if we just open our eyes and listen!



*Our "Shoots" having fun riding the "Forest Horse" and singing songs with Scooter*



*Tracking raccoon prints through the snowy forest*



*Practicing knot skills to put up a tarp*



*The open-ended play structure that offers endless possibilities for children's creativity and interests*





*Exploring twigs and buds up close*



*Beauty is all around us*



*Exploring the concept of time using the sun to create a sundial and marking its shadow every hour*



*Refining those fire building skills*





*Roots & Shoots strolling through the forest searching for animal friends waking up for Spring*



*Slingshot projects complete!*



*Exploring ways to get across the muddy creek, practicing balance, strategy, and decision making*



*Twig and bud collection – sorting, comparing, practicing sustainable harvest with purpose and thanks in mind*





*A snowball's journey – rolled through the forest and into the pond*



*Dedication to make a table with leg wedges*



*“Shoots” making homes for the animals we found in the forest*



*Time to just be, in nature, together*





*Perspective is everything*



*The first buds are starting to pop!*



*Another dedicated table builder*



*Mud painting – mixing colourful washable paint, dish soap, and mud for some nature art*