

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

Spring Term: Week 5 – April 15 – 21, 2024

Water bugs, water filtrations, water in nature, water everywhere - this was the focus of our explorations this week! Of course, Mother Nature did her thing and gave us plenty of rain to help further our investigations.

Seeds (5-7 years)

- Collected water insects in the stream - a continuation of bugs from last week
- Found the largest Scuds we have ever seen in our streams - closely resembling freshwater shrimp
- Created a water filter using charcoal, sand and cedar leaves through a tripod catchment system
- Played in the sandbox and looked for bugs at the pond
- Experimented with ratios of soil and water to make muddy water for our water filter
- Collected rainwater to filter
- Created a terrarium for snails, spiders, beetles and other bugs we found - used natural materials to resemble the bugs' natural environment
- Played at the water table and created different water flow patterns
- Practiced the alphabet and spelling while playing Don't Draw Lumberjack Bob
- Played a game similar to our favourite Windy Day Leaf tag - but we called it Seed Survivor - where we discussed what a sprigtime seed needs to grow

Sprouts (7-10 years)

- Had a boat building challenge - wrote/drew out our plan, collected natural building materials like sticks and tree bark, and practiced lashing, knot tying, whittling and drilling holes for a mast
- Tested out our boats in different streams and raced them at mushroom valley - brought tubes and hoses for water play!
- Followed the creek to discover where the water was coming from, and explored under the beat bridge
- Played battleships/battlebugs in the Den and practiced our coordinate reading
- Discussed the importance of recognizing and reducing our impact especially on sensitive environments - specifically our riparian zones (areas surrounding bodies of water important for water filtration and the health of the environment as a whole)
- Explored water flow, how it carves out tunnels in the soft riverbank wall - sent a boat in a waited and watched for it to come out on the other side
- Saw a fisher climb up a tree and come down with its baby in its mouth - a rare experience as they are very elusive
- Played in the sandbox and built a long moat
- Found animal remains and looked closely at the fur and bones to determine it may have been a rabbit
- Experimented with magnifying glasses, holding them toward the sun to try and make burn holes on pieces of wood

Forest Rangers (11-14 years)

- Discussed different methods of water filtration: in the city and in rural settings as well as movement through the earth and diy filtration methods
- Explored layers of soil: humus, top soil, subsoil, rocks, and bedrock
- Observed our creeks, upstream and downstream, examining various substrates as we traveled searching for the cleanest water
- Rolled down hills, made grass rope, and enjoyed the light rain
- Warmed and dried by the fire in the tipi
- Gathered material to create and use our own filters to clean water before sterilizing it over a fire

Roots & Shoots (0-6 years)

- Explored a new trail, finding a turtle friend along the way
- Enjoyed snack and conversation at the Berry Patch
- Created snail habitats on trays using found loose nature materials on the ground and then Scooter gave us beautiful snails to put into our habitats and examine what they do
- Hiked through Cedar West, finding our way through the mud
- Played at the Nest site, taking turns on the swing, going into the forts, creating at the mud kitchen and climbing on stumps

Monthly Sprouts (6-8 years)

- Began our morning with a mindfulness moment and discussed the changes in the forest since we were together a month ago - We heard at least 4 different birds, saw buds on tree branches, and felt/smelled mud
- Built a "pirate ship" structure - it included a sail and pulley system with a bucket to collect water
- Learned about insects, then went on a bug hunt. The challenge was to find one bug that is classified as an insect and one that is not.
- Discovered a pair of salamanders living under a log
- Explored the creek and mushrooms at Mushroom Valley while being mindful of our impact/footprint on the space
- Played S-P-U-D (bugs version)



Monthly Saplings (9-12 years)

- Spent the morning returning to our fort village to make modifications, rebuild walls and reinforce structures, and build a fence by weaving cut fruit tree branches to create a backyard complete with a garden and teeter totter.
- Learned about insects - having 3 body parts, 2 antennae, 6 legs and sometimes 0-4 wings
- Discovered Rhonda Clickton - the "Rhonda" beetle (type of Click Beetle) who led us to a secret underground home full of beetles
- Started our morning fire using only flint and steel! We shaved bark for tinder, and transferred the embers to the fire bowl

Other Dogwood Activities

- Welcomed educators from YRDSB to explore, learn, create & play; a final gathering for educators who took part in a 2-part pilot of 1 school visit and 1 field trip to Dogwood, with opportunities for professional learning embedded throughout
- Began a 10-week mentorship program with DCDSB where Dragonfly will be working with a teacher and Grade 5 students weekly to bring outdoor learning support to their schoolyard

It was a full and fun week at forest school and every day it seems there are more Spring changes happening in the forest - a perfect time for practicing those observation skills! We encourage you to get outside and explore your area for signs of Spring!



A yellow daffodil



Hello! Exploring how water moves through the culvert tunnel



Testing out different water filtration methods



Creating snail habitats and watching them explore



Hiking through a wet and foggy forest



A bracelet made from cedar bark by twisting pieces of the bark together



Testing out our boats in the creek



Exploring the creek



A Click Beetle



Starting fire with flint and steel



Hello Snail! Thank you for coming out to play!



Fun at the water tables



A 3 tiered water filtration system using different loose parts



Hunting for aquatic bugs in the creek



A boat creation complete with pine sail



Making mud!



What a fun place to sit!



Harnessing the power of the sun to create art



A close up of the tiered filtration system



YRDSB Educators having some fun with loose parts



Tubes and water play



Forest Schoolers sitting on a log, pondering life, appreciating nature