



THE DOGWOOD DIGEST

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

Winter Term: Week 3 - January 22 - 28, 2024

It was a very wet week in the forest - even when it wasn't raining, the snow was melting off the tree branches, making it feel like it was raining. The snow was wet and heavy, and we learned that "waterproof" doesn't always mean ENTIRELY waterproof. But with all that said, we still had a blast. Wet and melting snow meant an opportunity to explore new natural processes like how the shape of the land can influence the flow of water, and how heat evaporates water into steam. Of course, wet snow means packing snow, and packing snow means snowball fights, and that was NOT something we were going to miss out on.

Seeds (5-7 years)

- Played a matching/memory game, identifying various animal footprints and matching them to their correct animal names
- Learned how to identify small differences between similar looking footprints, like retractable claws
- Explored adaptations on animals like growing fur between toes to act as snowshoes while walking in the snow, and growing thicker coats, that have changed colours to camouflage into the changing environment
- Played a game called "Master Tracker" where students practiced their tracking skills while others practiced hiding
- Practiced stillness in the forest and listened to the different sounds around us as we hid
- Chiseled ice/snow blocks out of the snow mountain using wooden chisels and mallets
- Built a fort out of long cedar logs and cedar boughs

Sprouts (7-10 years)

- Welcomed our new friend Hornet to the group
- Began building a brand new luge behind the Den - worked as a team and started an assembly line; collecting snow, melting it on the fire, straining dirt and slush, delivered the water, for it to then be pouring on the track to create an icy surface
- Talked about states of matter and surface area to volume ratio, like why some pans melted snow faster
- Listened to a story called "Bear's Winter Nap" and discussed different animal adaptations
- Played camouflage in the forest, created mini picture books about different animal adaptations, and flipped through other animal books - learning and sharing new information about our favourite animals
- Played a giant game of "Snow Toes" with the Rangers and Master Trackers to practice our tracking skills
- Built snow sculptures, snowmen, animals and hidden forts in the snow

Forest Rangers (11-14 years)

- Spent the morning continuing our creation of wooden snow machetes and then used them to clear the tipi of snow and ice built up - this helps the tipi function properly to draw the smoke out of the top
- Honed our tracking skills playing a large-scale version of manhunt - it got us thinking about how difficult it is for animals to cover their tracks in the snow
- Continued sewing our "mug snugs" in the tipi, focusing on embroidering decorations using the running stitch and the blanket stitch
- Played a few rounds of "Snow Toes" with the Sprouts around the pond

Wilderness Wolves (8 – 13 years)

- Discussed navigation and it was the perfect weather day for our winter gathering
- Followed Cairns and Blazes into the Den
- Chopped wood and created fire starting bundles
- Played a tracking game called "On the Run", which allowed us the opportunity to trick each other by figuring out which tracks to follow to locate our peers
- Learned about topographical maps and the easting/northing grid system
- Built a fire and cooked in pans at lunch
- Built a luge and experimented with various sled options

Winter PA Day (5 – 11 years)

- Explored different types of animal adaptations and what they help the animals do
- Drew and created our own animals by combining 2 or more adaptations or features from other animals - for ex. An animal with a hard turtle shell but big and strong elk antlers
- Hiked to the Nest and played checkpoint in the forest
- Explored drainage in the snow by creating rivers and dams - we directed pools of water from under the end of the melting roof, downhill to fill a new space we cleared for a pool
- Warmed up and dried our wet clothing by the fire in the Den



More Dogwood Visitors:

Travel Tots of Durham Mommy Connection

- Welcomed our youngest explorers yet and enjoyed navigating the forest by sled
- Sang songs, shared stories, and took a moment to breathe in the fresh air
- Wandered around the Den play area, taking a few steps, getting warm by the fire, and playing peek-a-boo!

More Dogwood Visitors:

Homeschool group

- Went on a scavenger hunt for clues, solving riddles and completing tasks as a team
- Met new friends and built on existing relationships
- Played games like “Owl and Hare” where we took on the characteristics of rabbits as they freeze at the sight of a predator

As week 3 ends, we find ourselves being extra thankful for our fires - giving us a cozy place to go when we need a moment to warm up or relax. It was a great opportunity to learn how to adapt to the ever-changing forest and have fun no matter what the weather may be!



Log cabin fort construction



Warming our feet by the fire – socks optional



Listening to a story about what animals do in winter



Practicing whittling skills – great form!



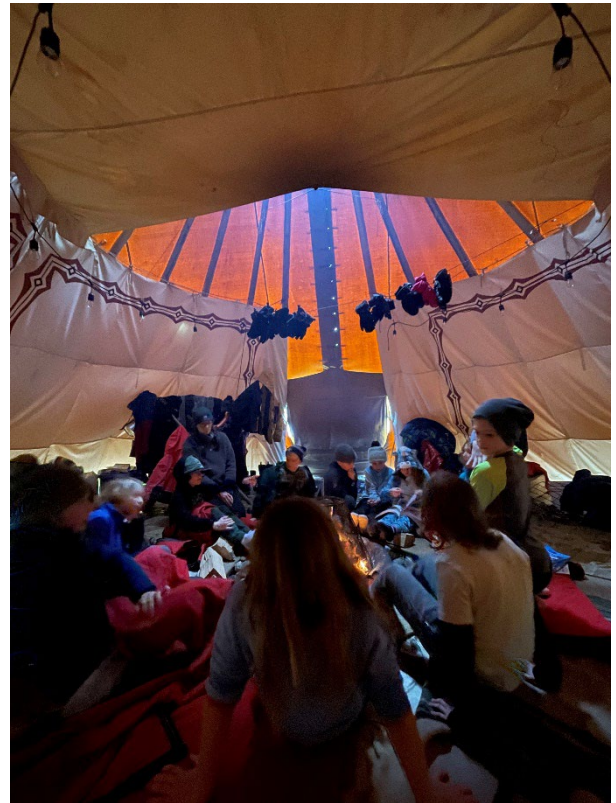
The chickadees have learned we are friendly – it's taken lots of time, patience, and of course sunflower seeds!



Working as a team to cross the "snow lava"



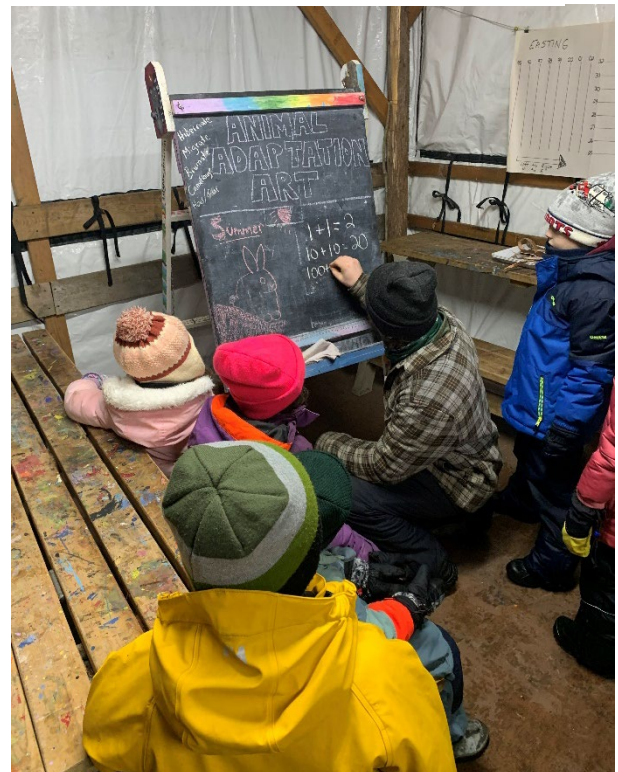
Digging a channel and exploring the flow of water and its relationship to the shape of the land



Warming up in the tipi with a story and great conversation



Can you guess who made these tracks? Ask your forest schooler!



Exploring animal adaptations, counting, and other conversations that naturally arise in the warmth of the den



Learning about why some pans of snow melt faster than others



One member of our "Travel Tots" sled team – we had a lot of fun exploring the forest!



Lunch time! Cooking over the campfire just makes everything taste better



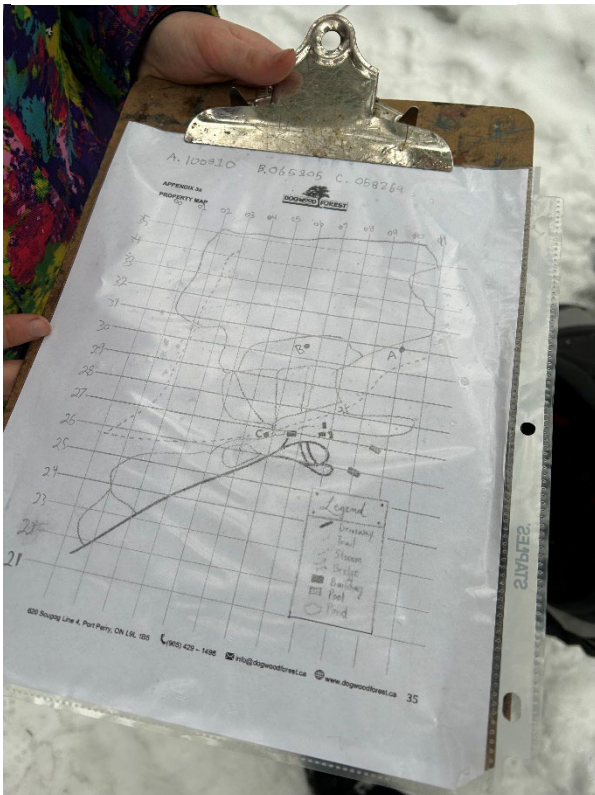
The snowslide continues to be a hit – great lessons on friction



Working on the water channel and finding its natural route



Practicing firebuilding skills – which includes perseverance and patience!



Spatial awareness, mapping skills, and team-work, required for this challenge!



Animal adaptation artists hard at work – a combination of real and imaginary adaptations