



THE DOGWOOD DIGEST

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

Winter Term: Week 5 – February 5 – February 11, 2024

What's that saying again? When life gives you warm February's, make maple syrup! Or something like that. Our trees are tapped, the buckets are ready, and the sap is drip, drip, dripping! We have been embracing the warmer weather here at Dogwood. This past week has been the warmest since the start of our Winter term and each week seems to be a new opportunity for discovery.

Seeds (5-7 years)

- Observed photos of nature as inspiration to share memories of times that made us feel happy
- Hiked to the Berry Patch and Marsh Trails to uncover the snowy boardwalk and search for owls
- Used a long stick and mallet to test how deep the muddy water was along the boardwalk trail, then compared it against our boots to figure out if it was shallow enough to step in
- Created new wooden swords using saws, chisels and mallets, and completed ongoing projects from previous weeks
- Practiced using tools by making wooden mallets, and string instruments
- Learned how to braid and practiced our new skill by making necklaces and bracelets for friends, and scarves for our stuffies
- Played a "trash" card game tournament with our friends where we practiced counting, skip counting and number recognition
- Splashed around in "Maple Sap Pond"

Sprouts (7-10 years)

- Learned about maple trees, and discussed the process of making maple syrup, what sap is for, how it flows and what side of a tree is best for tapping.
- Boiled sap over the fire until all the water evaporated and the leftover sugars turned into maple syrup
- Melted the frozen sap water over the fire to fill our "Maple Sap Pond"
- Built a wooden sailboat, complete with a retractable sail, and tested out its ability to float in the mini pond, and built a mini table using a hand drill to drill holes and a saw and knife to cut and whittle peg legs
- Created new forts and a bird feeder/bird sanctuary, and began new sewing projects
- Explored animal ID cards, and took turns teaching each other about our animal's behaviours and diets

- Discussed different animal diets - including herbivore, carnivore and omnivore - and sorted animals based on their respective diets
- Played Open Season and Sardines

Forest Rangers (11-14 years)

- Learned about maple tapping, concentration, location, and tree root location
- Gathered with the Sprouts to teach them about maple trees and how to tap them for sap
- Boiled sap with the purpose of making maple syrup
- Slipped around on the swing
- Moved and stacked wood into the brand new woodshed at the Nest
- Created, set up and played a new game called Fowl Play where we were hunters and ducks
- Made bannock bread and cinnamon apples with our maple glaze over the fire
- Took on larger independent responsibilities

Monthly Seeds (5-7 years)

- Talked about how we know that there are animals in the forest and the signs they leave behind
- Created a list of animal signs we already know of, then went on a hike to find and document even more! We found nests, hives, tracks and 27 piles of deer scat along the way
- Discovered a pile of feathers on the ground, where we deduced an animal (perhaps a fox) must have had a meal. We felt sad for the bird, but happy the fox could eat.
- Learned the difference between similar looking scat - deer are oval and rabbit are circular
- Discussed the process of collecting sap, then by boiling it and watching the water evaporate to leave behind delicious maple syrup
- Explored how thermometers works and when/why we would want to use them
- Created a river to drain the fire circle from all the snow and ice that was melting and pooling
- Explored the volume of a bowl versus a mug at the mud kitchen

There is no doubt about it, we love nature! Whether it's cold, warm, wet, or dry - we manage to find something or somewhere new to explore, learn, create and play. As much as we love the warm weather and sunshine, we know there is still some cold left this winter so don't put away those winter clothes yet! Will we see snow again next week, or will the ice completely melt exposing last fall's decomposing leaves? Find out with us! See you all again very soon.



Spring weather has arrived early aka maple syrup season is here!



We enjoyed sunny skies this week and ice mining!



The Rangers enjoying a "sit spot" in the Marsh



Swinging is a favourite thing of many



The Rangers worked with the Sprouts teaching them about maple syrup and tapping maple trees



Drilling a hole into a maple tree for the tap



The buckets hang on a hook under the tap and a lid covers the bucket – we check the buckets every day!



We boiled a small amount of sap down to create an even smaller amount of syrup; the ratio is 40:1



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



Of course we need a shed of firewood for all of the cooking of lunches and now maple sap we have – great start Rangers!



“Maple Sap Pond” – provides space for many inquiries and lots of play!



Another view of “Maple Sap Pond” – the sailboat works!



Apple cinnamon sourdough bannock with maple glaze – the Rangers called this the best thing they have cooked to date (droooooo emoji)



Most of our forest schoolers love cooking over the fire – plus it supports skill building and a joy for cooking/food



Melting more snow for kitchen play



The Sprouts made a mini table



Climbing – one aspect of “risky play”



Building forts will always be a favourite activity – can you remember the last time you built a fort?



Forest schooler observations



Exploring animal diets and teaching each other about the animal card we had



Becoming more and more comfortable using different types of tools for woodworking projects



Blue skies and sunny days – it's great to hang outside all day!



Learning and practicing the skill of braiding



Teamwork makes the dreamwork!