

## **TREE OF LIFE NATURE PLAYSCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK June 2024**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Thank you for your interest in Tree of Life Nature Playschool. I, Kate Lawes, owner/operator, am a graduate from the West Coast Institute in Early Childhood Waldorf Education. I also have my BC Early Childhood Education Certificate from Pacific Rim Early Childhood Institute and my Forest Nature School Practitioners Certificate from Child and Nature Alliance of Canada.

My licensed Group Childcare Facility will allow for a total of 20 children at the Silver Bow Studio located on the unceded lək'wəŋən territory in Esquimalt, BC.

This Parent Handbook was prepared to provide you with basic information to help you learn a little about the program and the care that we are providing for your child. A complete Policy and Procedures Manual will also be provided

We look forward to the day when we can welcome you and your child to Tree of Life Nature Playschool.

Warmly,  
Kate Lawes

We would like to acknowledge and thank the lək'wəŋən Peoples (Esquimalt and Songhees), for allowing us to live, work and play on their lands. We also give thanks to the ancestors, supernatural ones, hereditary leaders and matriarchs, creatures big and small for looking after the rich resources and cultural teachings of this beautiful land.

### **PHILOSOPHY, IDEAS AND IDEALS**

We choose to take care of children as my job for a myriad of reasons ... foremost, because we believe in the precious and magical time that is childhood and find great joy in being part of nourishing their growth and development through Nature based education. The well being of your children is at the heart of my business and service.

Pedagogies used to create the Tree of Life program are Waldorf Early Childhood Education, Forest Nature School, Place Based Education and Bioregionalism.

### **CAREGIVER TO CHILD RATIO**

At Tree of Life we maintain a high caregiver to child ratio - 2 to 8. This allows our team to give your child the time and attention needed. It also allows us, even when one of our staff is sick, to provide consistency of care as then we do not have to bring in a substitute that does not know your child or the program we are delivering.

## HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday to Friday 9:00 to 3:00

### DAILY RHYTHM (this is a guideline)

8:45 - 9:00 Children arrive/good morning circle

9:15 Go to morning park location - We go outside to a local park everyday. We get to the parks by walking, by bus or organized field trips where parents will drop off and pick up.

9:30 Free Play

10:00 Morning Snack

10:20 Free Play

11:30 Circle

12:00 Lunch

12:30 Free Play and Art Activities

1:30 Puppet play and Rest Time

2:15 Afternoon Snack, stories and games

3:00 - 3:15 Pick Up

### WEEKLY RHYTHM

Monday (The Studio) - Baking

Tuesday (Field Trip to local park) - Sewing

Wednesday (Field Trip to local park) - Woodworking

Thursday (Field Trip to local park) - Felting

Friday (The Studio) - Painting

Drop off for field trips will be at parks like Saxe Pt, Macaulay Park, Highrock Park, Gorge Park Esquimalt. We will plan to visit these parks on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. On Monday and Friday we will often walk from Silver Bow studio to visit [Lugrin Place Park](#).

### FOOD and DRINK

**Lunches and snacks must be provided by the parents each day.** Lunch kits should be small and easy to open. Compartmentalized lunch boxes that the children can open work well. Limited use of pre packaged snacks are encouraged. Monday and Friday we make or bake inspired snacks or make food to celebrate special events or mark special days. Food, when ever provided by Tree of Life, is balanced and wholesome, often organically grown, low in sugar and refined products and is acquired Zero Waste when ever possible. **Water bottles are to be provided by the family and sent every day.** Water is always available and accessible. The Canadian Food Guide is followed.

### TOYS

**There will be NO special toys coming to Playschool.** Toys, stuffed animals and treasures sometimes come to Playschool. They are better kept at home since they may become lost or damaged and are often hard to share. If a special toy would like to be shared that is something we can talk about and arrange.

## **DRESS CODE**

In the interest of providing an environment that most supports the young child's development and growing imagination, we adopted the following dress code to the best of your ability. Clothing should be:

- free of media characters or caricatures, advertisements and writing.
- no lights on shoes.
- indoor shoes must be supplied that can be left at Playschool

## **OUTDOOR CLOTHING**

**We play outdoors every day** except in extreme wind or rainstorms. Proper dress is essential and warmth is of utmost importance. Please supply a layering of complete body covering from head to toe, with consideration to waterproofing and mud-proofing. From April to October hats and sunscreen must also accompany your child. From November to March send mittens, warm hat and warm socks. **Please label ALL your child's clothing.**

## **PARKING and ENTRANCES**

When at Tree of Life Nature Playschool's indoor space, The Studio #15-1182 Colville Rd, there is a great amount of on street parking. Please do not allow your children to play on the side walk out front of the studio as it is a high traffic area and not a safe place to roam. Always cross the road at the cross walk!

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

In case of extreme weather days we would not go outside or one out designated field trips. This would include high winds, large amounts of snow and heavy rain fall. Families will be noticed in as much advanced notice as possible.

## **HOURS OF OPERATION, DROP OFF and PICK UP**

The facility is open from 9:00am to 3:00pm. Drop off is between 8:45 and 9:00 and pick up is between 3:00 and 3:15. If a child will be arriving later than 9:15 or will be picked up after 3:15 a text to both myself and my co-teacher is required. **Your child will experience a wonderful, secure feeling when you drop them off on time and are present at the end of the day.**

## **HOLIDAYS and IMPORTANT DATES:**

The facility will close on all statutory holidays and will be closed for 2 weeks at Christmas and one week in the summer months and one week at Spring Break.

## AGE

Tree of Life Nature Playschool is a program that is most suitable to children 3 years to 5 years old however children as young as 2.5 years have joined our program and those wishing to do their Kindergarten year with us may do so.

## TOILETING

We welcome children who are still potty training and will be happy to plan with you and your child on how best to work towards the goal of being diaper free. However it is strongly advised that your child be well on their way toward this goal before joining our program in order to make their experience a comfortable and enjoyable one.

## FEES

- Fees are due in full on the first of each month of care.
- Hours 9:00 to 3:00 Monday to Friday
- Fees cover the cost of homemade organic snacks on Mondays and Fridays afternoons
- Being a licensed facility families can also apply for the [Affordable Child Care Benefit](#)

Tree of Life Nature Playschool is part of the [Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative](#) (CCFR) helping reduce fees. I have used your monthly fees below **AND** the Fee Reduction Calculator to determine your fees: <https://mychildcareservices.gov.bc.ca/ccfri-estimator>

### 5 days a week

- 30 months rate \$1148 (CCFR reduction is \$900) - **Your Monthly Fee \$248**
- 3 - kindergarten rate \$1050 (CCFR reduction is \$545) - **Your Monthly Fee \$505**

### 4 days a week (only in special circumstances)

- 30 months rate 1088 (CCFR reduction is \$720) - **Your Monthly Fee \$368**
- 3 - kindergarten rate \$1020 (CCFR reduction is \$436) - **Your Monthly Fee \$584**

### 3 days a week

- 30 months rate \$940 (CCFR reduction is \$540) - **Your Monthly Fee \$400**
- 3 - kindergarten rate \$887 (CCFR reduction is \$327) - **Your Monthly Fee \$560**

### 2 days a week

- 30 months rate \$710 (CCFR reduction is \$360) - **Your Monthly Fee \$350**
- 3 - kindergarten rate \$670 (CCFR reduction is \$218) - **Your Monthly Fee \$452**

### 1 day a week (only in special circumstances)

- 30 months rate \$375 (CCFR reduction is \$185) - **Your Monthly Fee \$190**
- 3 - kindergarten rate \$376 (CCFR reduction is \$109) - **Your Monthly Fee \$267**

Fees are slightly higher some months (Dec, Jan, July and August) as the government only pays a portion of the new [Child Care Fee Reduction](#) (CCFR on these months). I will send you this fee amount for these months in advance.

A one time **Supply Fee** for artistic materials is \$210 (17.50 for 12 months) and a one time fee of \$100 for our 10 Parent Afternoons are due at the beginning of August. Total \$310

A one time processing fee of \$100 is due upon acceptance to the program. This is non refundable.

## **WITHDRAWAL/TERMINATION**

At least three months written notice is required for withdrawal of your child from Tree of Life Nature Playschool. If withdrawal is immediate, parents are responsible for payment of two month fees in lieu of notice. The centre reserves the right to terminate service at any time at the centre's sole discretion and fees for the month of termination will not be reimbursed.

## **REFUNDS**

- Refunds are not given unless there are extreme circumstances that prevent a child from participating in Tree of Life Nature School. Tree of Life Nature School reserves the right to determine and assess these circumstances on a case by case basis.
- Refunds will not be given if a day's program must be cancelled due to inclement weather.
- Any person who leaves during the middle of a program due to illness, injury, expulsion, or any other reason will not be refunded a one month portion of the program fees.

## **SUMMER ATTENDANCE**

Tree of Life is open in the summer to provide consistency of care and full-time work for our educators. Full fee amounts are due each month to hold your place at Tree of Life. Please let us know if and when you will be taking time away in the summer so we can plan our summer time activities accordingly.

## **ORIENTATION AND GRADUAL ENTRY**

It is very important that you and your child feel comfortable at Playschool. It takes time to build trust in a new and unfamiliar setting. It may be necessary for your child to begin with half days or a shorter week depending on the child and the parents schedule. We are happy to accommodate a this gradual entry but please note full fees will be required.

## **PROBATIONARY PERIOD**

The first month of care is considered probationary, during which either the parent or the childcare provider may decide to terminate care. After the first month of care both the parent and the caregiver are required to give two calendar months notice to terminate care.

## **COMMUNICATION**

**Morning and afternoon connection** - We will endeavour to have a quick connection with you each morning and afternoon to hear how your weekend or evening was with your child and let you know a little about how are day went. It is best not to talk about sensitive issues at this time but happy to set up a time when we can.

**Weekly reminders** - We will send out weekly reminders of upcoming events if needed

**Monthly Newsletter** - We will be taking pictures of your children and our adventures indoors and out and will send you several of these in the Newsletter. I will also send out any

other interesting articles that I think you might enjoy that may or may not be connected to our Parent Afternoon topics.

**Joining us in the class room** - please feel free to join us in the classroom, indoors or out. Let us know what days and times work for you and we can arrange for you to join us.

## **FESTIVALS**

Festivals are an important part of building a community and celebrating the seasons. We will have several small festivals a year. A festival committee will help to prepare and organize these events. Parents and educators alike will gather once a month to prepare. Interested?! Tell Kate!

## **PARENT AFTERNOONS**

There will be 10 parent afternoon gatherings to discuss a variety of parenting topics. Dates for this will be discussed with parents but in the past have been held every 3rd Sunday from 9:30 to 11:30 at a local park unless otherwise indicated. Both parents are encouraged to come and a limited number of **free child care** spaces will be available.

## **PARENT - TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Conferences are held once a year in the Fall and are a wonderful way to get some one-on-one time. Dates tba. If however at any time throughout the year you have questions or concerns, a meeting can be scheduled. We value open, honest and ongoing communication and also appreciate hearing about any significant changes or circumstances that affect your child.

## **LIBRARY**

A lending library of books about Parenting, Waldorf Education, Early Childhood care giving and nature connection are available at Silver Bow Studio. Please remember to sign the books out and enjoy for no longer than one month.

## **CHILDREN and SCREEN USE**

There is never any television or screen time given to children at Playschool.

Children are encouraged to play at Playschool by acting out and exploring their own innate capacity for imaginative play. However a child who has been watching television, movies, playing on a computer or with video games on a regular basis will re-enact these experiences during playtime. This prevents the child from receiving the full benefit of the Playschool program.

**Please limit your child's exposure to media.** Resources about the topic of how media exposure impacts your child's growth and development are available upon request.

## **ACTIVE PLAY POLICY**

Children will receive a healthy amount of physical activity at Playschool. We believe strongly in the benefits of being outdoors and therefore are out of doors, at a minimum, in the morning

from 10:30 until 12:00 and at a maximum of 6 hrs on Field Trip days. While outside active games which will include exploring running, jumping and climbing. From 12:00 to 1:30 circle time, lunch, artistic activities, and a rest will take place. Circle time and artistic work will incorporate a variety of specific gross and fine motor skills. More active outside time takes place from 1:30 to the end of the day at 3:00. This gives the children approximately 4 hours of active playtime during the day sometimes more or sometimes less depending on the day.

### **BIRTHDAYS**

A child's birthday is a very special day and we honour it with a short but sweet little celebration, that includes the reading of their birthday story. We also ask that you bring a food treat to share with the children on this day and join us if you can!

### **FIRST NATIONS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

We acknowledge and thank the lək'wəŋən Peoples (Esquimalt and Songhees), for allowing us to live, work and play on their lands. We also give thanks to the ancestors, supernatural ones, hereditary leaders and matriarchs, creatures big and small for looking after the rich resources and cultural teachings of this beautiful land.

### **INCLUSION STATEMENT**

At Tree of Life we value diversity in our world. We are committed to creating an environment that embraces and celebrates people of all cultures, races, genders, and abilities. We strive to create a community that is safe and nurturing for all children and families. Our intention is to consciously work on transcending stereotypes and prejudices. We commit to continuously improve the ways in which our program incorporates greater diversity and overcomes barriers to inclusion. Deconstructing racial and gender narratives in ourselves and in our community is complex and challenging work, but it is a journey we are willing and eager to be on.

### **TREE OF LIFE CONTACT INFORMATION**

For a quick connection you can call me Kate Lawes, Director, at 250-813-3050 or email me at [kate@treeoflifeplayschool.ca](mailto:kate@treeoflifeplayschool.ca) anytime between Monday to Friday 7:00 to 7:00