

Upstream Forest School

Trail Guide



We are so excited that you have chosen this adventure!
This guide will tell you everything you need to know for a
successful year at forest school:

School dates

Payment & Registration

What to Expect & How we learn together

Our Vision and Policies

What to wear/Gear

Safety Procedures

And more...

Welcome

Forest School is a unique place to play and explore the world.



Session Dates

September Session

Week of September 7 - October 2 (4 weeks)

No classes Wednesday September 30

Fall Session

Week of October 5 - December 4 (9 weeks)

Winter Session

Week of December 7 - February 19 (9 weeks)

No classes December 21-January 1 (Winter Break)

Spring Session

Week of February 22 – May 7 (9 weeks)

No classes between March 22 - 26 (Spring Break)

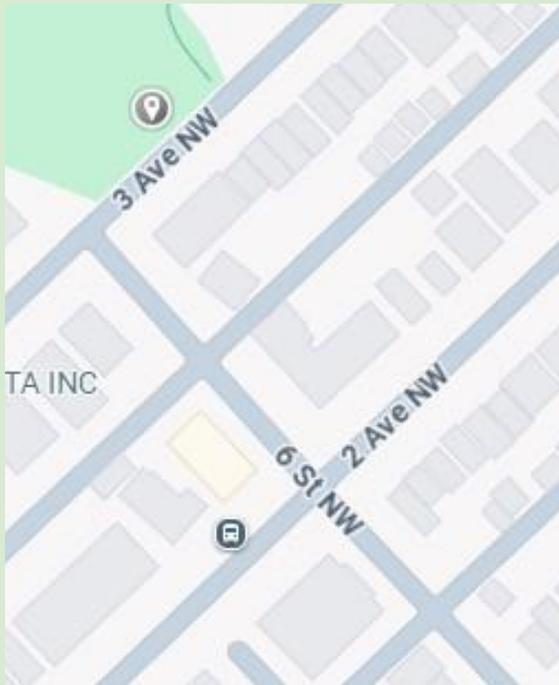
Late Spring Session

Week of May 10 - June 25 (7 weeks)

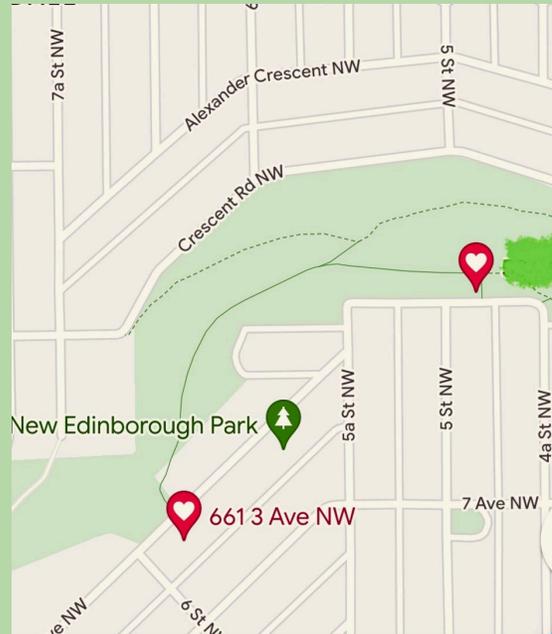


Where We Meet & Our Indoor Classroom

All classes meet at the entrance to McHugh Bluff on 3rd Ave NW in between 6th and 5A Street.



When the weather dictates and we need to be indoors, Upstream Forest School's indoor space is **661 3rd Avenue NW.**



"The Cabin" is a shared classroom and living space owned by Lea Komaromi.

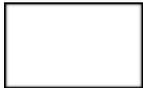


Ratios: The ratio of teachers to children is 1:5.



Fee Payment & Registration

The September Session (4 weeks) is paid for upon registration. For all other sessions, an invoice will be automatically issued and must be paid in full before the first day of classes. To withdraw, send us an email indicating your intentions 2 weeks prior to the last class of the current session. If you plan on missing a session but want to return for the next one, your name will be added to the waiting list.



What to Expect in Forest School

Forest School is a unique place to play and explore the world. It also is an opportunity to have uninterrupted, unadulterated play time. This means that there are times during each day when the children are free to explore their own interests, ideas, curiosities and questions. As teachers, we try to observe and support without interfering. We have 'levels of intervention' that help us decide when to engage and interrupt the play, and when it's best to keep observing. Our first step is asking "Were we invited?" If not, we wait. Unless the children are in danger, emotionally or physically, we usually wait until there is a real need to interrupt their play.

Because of this philosophy, we encourage the children to have their secret places and personal nooks in the forest. Our rule is: you must be able to see the teacher, and she must be able to see you. If both parties can do this, then the play is within boundaries. Because of this freedom, your child will not be directly (within arm's length) supervised at all times. Within sight and hearing, yes. If we feel the play needs to be supervised more closely we will situate ourselves close to the play without being too obtrusive.

You will also notice that your child has scrapes and bruises that they may not know how they acquired. This is a normal part of the type of play we see; it is so active and engaging that the children sometimes don't notice that they are hurt!

If we see an injury or need to give a Band-Aid, we'll ask you to sign a quick form at the end of class. Thanks for your help with this!

Forest School presents your child with many unique challenges: the weather, the physical exertion used in play, the amount of independence they have, the responsibility of caring for their own things, and the intense social interactions.

The demands on your child, just by being outside and in charge of their play, are more than in other classroom environments. As a result, it is normal for any issues or areas of growth that your child is working through to increase in intensity for a time. We believe Forest School calls out to all of us our own areas of growth, and we look forward to helping your child on that journey!

We are always available to discuss any concerns or questions you may have. Please email, call, or chat with us after class. We love to engage with parents and believe the whole family is nurtured and changed by Forest School.

If you would like more detailed information regarding our approaches to playing, sharing, and roughhousing, our document *How We Play* is available by request.



Upstream Forest School Vision & Philosophies

At Upstream Forest School, we strive to:

- Foster and encourage the natural curiosity of children
- Observe the growth and challenges of the children while in self-directed play
- Provide opportunities for children to connect with nature in a meaningful and inspired way
- Encourage the personal growth of children through appropriate risks and challenges
- Offer unadulterated play space and time

We believe in the value of *Free Age Mixing* and encourage children of different ages and abilities to interact and engage with each other. Some of the many benefits are:

For younger children:

- Playing in the *zone of proximal development* (Vygotsky created this term to describe what children can accomplish when in collaboration with others who are more skilled than they)
- Learning by observation
- Receiving care and emotional support (it is freely given by older children and authentic, whereas with adults it is not always)

For older children:

- Learning to nurture and lead
- Learning through teaching
- Creativity-enhancing effects of younger children (older children join in with younger children in games they may have already stopped playing, and tend to add more creativity than they ordinarily would)

At Upstream Forest School we practice *Inquiry-Based Learning*, which is a dynamic process driven by the children's curiosity and wonder. It places the children's questions, ideas, and theories at the center of our ongoing activities. Children engage in multiple and diverse means of investigation where the end or final product is not known at the outset. The focus is on development of skills and critical thought, rather than content mastery. Teachers remain flexible and responsive to the children's ideas and needs, and facilitate learning through reflective discourse.



Welfare Requirements

Going to school outdoors presents unique challenges that require some creative solutions.

Hygiene

After toileting, when it's time to eat, or any time hands need cleaning, the children are given wet wipes to wash their hands. The wipes are packed out and disposed of later by the teacher.

Toileting

There are no toilets at our site, so children are educated about toileting in the wild:

- Using trees that we're not using
- Finding a private space
- Washing hands with wet wipe (if taking off mittens)

Teachers can help in dealing with outdoor wear and helping the children balance, but children are responsible for wiping themselves. In the winter when mittens are worn, no hand washing is performed. If the child defecates in the woods, wet wipes are used as toilet paper and both the feces and the wipes are buried under the ground or rocks, or packed out in a doggie bag when necessary.

Food and Drink

Because of allergies, food is never given to the children without checking with parents ahead of time. Food is never shared between the children for the same reason.

When we prepare food or drinks together, the teacher provides the plates/cups and takes them home for proper cleaning.

Parents will be told before classes begin if there are any foods that can't be brought to school (for example: in the case of a nut allergy).



What to Bring

“There is no poor weather, only poor clothing” is a commonly heard phrase in Forest Schools! Please assess the weather with your child and help them decide on the best gear for the day. Make sure they are equipped with the clothing and supplies they will need for a successful outing.

Each child is responsible for carrying their own backpack. The backpack must be big enough to carry their snack, water bottle, gear, and extra clothing. We have found that a backpack with a clip across the chest makes it easier for your child to carry on park days.

The following table outlines what your child will need to bring to Forest School, including items they will need to bring everyday, as well as season-specific clothing and gear.

In Your Child’s Backpack	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snack: Label containers & bottles. In cold weather, please pack snacks that are easy to eat with mittens on (muffins, fruit cups, opened granola bars, warm tea etc.) • Water bottle • Extra set of clean, dry clothing (pants, top, underwear, socks, mittens) in a plastic bag 	
How to Dress in the Winter (cold weather)	
To have an enjoyable winter experience, it’s important that the children are dressed to be outside. Layered clothing is the best option!	
Base layer (closest to the body)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thermal underwear and shirt <p>Wool or silk fibers are best for staying warm and keeping moisture away from the body, but they can be uncomfortable and expensive. Synthetics are readily available and more affordable and work well too. Avoid cotton as it retains moisture and makes us feel cold.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairly thick wool or wool-blend socks that are comfortable in the boot. Now is a good time to ask for ski socks for Christmas!
Middle layer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fleece pants (fleece is cozy, comfortable, and warm) • Long johns, wool leggings, or pajama pants

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fleece or wool top, hoodie or pull-over
Outer layer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water-resistant snow-suit for younger children. Water-resistant snow pants with a bib work nicely to keep the upper body insulated for older children along with a snow jacket. • Snow/winter boots (bog type boots are NOT insulated enough to keep feet warm on the coldest winter days) • Toque or hat that fits snugly and cover the ears • Insulated mitts or gloves with waterproof outer layers (reusable hand warmers are great if your child suffers from cold hands and feet). Also, a split-finger mitten as a base-layer helps keep hands warm when bulky mitts/gloves are taken off to perform tasks. • Neck warmer (much safer and easier than scarves) or balaclava • Sunblock and sunglasses (optional)
How to Dress Early Spring / Fall (cool weather)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thermal underwear and shirt (see winter wear) • Fleece pants • Fleece or wool top, hoodie or pull-over • Water-proof rain pants and jacket • Closed toe hiking shoe and/or rubber boots • Thinner toque or hat and light waterproof gloves • Wool or wool-blend socks/ski socks • Sunblock and sunglasses (optional)
How to Dress Late Spring / Summer (warm weather)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed-toe supportive shoes (we'll let you know when it's a sandals day!) • Water-proof pants & jacket (in backpack) • Rubber boots (if muddy and wet) • Sun hat • Sun block • Bug spray (optional)



Managing Risk

To ensure the safety of the children we practice two drills every season. The first drill is to practice the procedure if one of the teachers is hurt. The second drill is to practice the procedure if one of the children is hurt. Also, at one of the drills, we practice what to do if one of the children becomes lost. Please see: Appendix 1: Emergency Procedures for a more detailed explanation.

We also perform a Site Risk Assessment (we call it a Safety Check) at the beginning of every class to evaluate the safety of a specific site. We highlight any concerns we have about the area, and how we can minimize the risk. If we cannot, we leave the site.

Lea also performs a thorough Assessment for every site each season. For every activity, there is also an experience assessment completed which details how we minimize risk and educate the children about safety in the experience. If you would like to see these, let us know and we will email them to you.



What's in the Teacher's Bag?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Aid Kit: as well as grab bag of band-aids, gloves, and wipes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical needs list for children in class
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Benadryl, Wasp-ease, and Sunscreen lotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spare clothes (hats, mitts, rain-pants, etc.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knives (2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Towel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilet Paper and trowel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tarp and rope 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flashlight
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency blanket 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sterile water and syringe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Procedure documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water drops to filter water
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Fire Kit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saw

The staff have current First Aid Qualifications and Police Checks.



Appendix 1: Emergency Procedures

Missing Child

- Teachers and children search the area as a group.
- If the child is not found within 5 minutes, call the Police (911). Notify the parent of the missing child.
- One teacher will manage the remaining children while the other teacher continues the search until the police arrive. If that teacher is unable to rejoin the class, the rest of the parents will be notified and the children will be sent home.

Bee Sting/Insect Bite

- Clean the area and treat with Benadryl Insect Bite liquid.
- Monitor for signs of allergic reaction, such as: difficulty breathing, swelling in face, rash.
- Call EMS (911) if these signs are noticed. Proceed to the nearest cross section/road to wait for an ambulance.
- Alert parent.

Injury

Child

- Treat injury according to First Aid training.
- If the teacher's attention will be needed for a while, have children proceed to circle to wait with the other teacher.
- If serious, contact the parent and have them come pick up the child. Proceed with all children to closest road access. If not serious (band aid only) inform parents after class. Fill out the incident report and have the parent sign by next class.

Teacher

- If the teacher needs first aid they can't administer it to themselves, the children will be called to a meeting spot. The other teacher will provide the care, while the children are engaged in a storytelling activity.
- If the teacher needs to be sent for emergency care, the children will be taken to the Cabin and parents will be asked to pick them up.

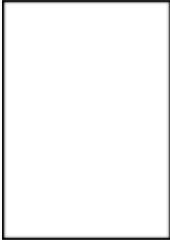
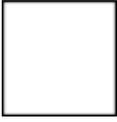
Suspicious Person in Area

- Move the children to a safer spot in a public area. Have a phone out and visible.
- Discuss with the children why we moved, and what to look for in a potential not-safe person.
- Inform parents after class of incident, as well as steps taken.

Environmental Emergency

- Move students to a safe location and call emergency responders/parents

Appendix 2: Tool Use and Safety Procedures

	Knife	Saw (Folding: F, Bow: B)	Hand Drill	Pruning Shears
How is the Tool:	 	  		 
Walked with	Knife is in sheath, hand on blade section.	F: fold blade, carry by side with arm down. B: carry with cover on, arm by the side.	At side, holding handle.	At side, safety lock on.
Passed	In sheath, handle towards receiver.	Handle out, blade in cover.	Handle toward receiver.	Handle towards receiver, safety lock on.
Placed	In sheath, above ground level on a stump or in the hanging storage basket, top shelf.	With cover on, off the ground. Against a tree or on stump.	Leaning against tree or on stump, off the ground.	On stump, or in storage basket, top shelf.
Used	Carving, whittling, using with mallet to cut wood pieces, cutting rope.	Cutting of branches or pieces off logs.	To make holes in wood.	Taking small branches off trees and logs.
Used with a PPE*	No glove on tool hand (weather permitting), glove on helping hand.	No glove on tool hand (weather permitting), glove on helping hand, no cutting above eye level.	Glove on helping hand.	
Maintained	Sharpen when needed. Run thumb over blade to catch grooves, check for sun reflection on dull blade.	Check for the V in the blade, replace blade when not cutting well.	Make sure drill opening is clear of debris and parts are oiled and functioning. Remove broken bits,	Sharpen when necessary by filing, or replace.
Cleaned	Wipe clean after use with cloth.	Remove rust when necessary using blade scraper and sand paper.	Wipe clean and keep openings free of debris.	Wipe after use with cloth.
Stored	In a dry place; in the top shelf of the hanging storage.	In dry place: F in top shelf of hanging storage, B at home.	Dry place, at home.	In dry place, in top shelf of hanging storage when using.

* PPE = Personal Protective Equipment

* A printable version of all tables are available by request.