Tofino Nature Kids

Safety Handbook

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**Tofino Nature Kids (TNK) Code of Conduct**

1. **Tofino Botanical Gardens (TBG) Etiquette**

The TBG has agreed to host TNK and we are very grateful to have such an incredible venue to run our programs. It is essential that we respect the plants, animals and people we share the TBG with. We do not pick any green leaves or flowers in the TBG. We respect that we are in the animals’ home and we do not chase or taunt the chickens, goats, ducks, dogs, or rabbits. We recognize that the Darwin Cafe is a business and we use quiet voices, wear shoes and use our manners if we enter the building. We always close and latch gates after we pass through them unless they were already open. We care for the TBG by picking up trash if we find any and by always taking our garbage and compost with us to dispose of properly. Thank you for helping us have a positive presence in the TBG!

1. **Entering the Forest**

We will enter the forest respectfully and know that when at TNK, specific expectations are in place. We will explore, investigate, learn and play in a manner that will not damage our forest environment. We understand that we share the forest with plants and animals.

1. **Boundaries**

Before each session begins children are made aware of how far that they can explore and of any fixed boundary markers. If children move to explore hidden areas an adult should also move into the cover deep enough to be able to see the children but allowing the children the freedom to explore independently. If you lose sight of a child shout ‘1,2,3, (child’s name) where are you?’ The children have been taught to respond ‘1,2,3, I’m here’ through classroom games that are practised regularly.

1. **Hiking**

On hikes or when in the forest or other cougar, bear, wolf territory, children must always be in an adult sandwich with all the children in view of at least one of the adults. \*Children are never more than 20ft away from an adult. \*

1. **Lighting a Fire**

When lighting a fire the TNK leader will take control of the operation and all accompanying adults will be briefed before we start. A lit fire will not be left unattended at any point. A fire may not be lit until it has been confirmed to all that our fire safety equipment is in place. Open fires will be built within a fire square. \*Fires will only be lit in areas free from fire bans.

1. **At the Fire Circle**

An open fire will be lit within a fire square. A fire circle using log sitting stools may be established around the perimeter. No one may enter the fire circle perimeter unless invited to do so by an adult. There may be no running past the fire circle. No items must be carried and placed within the fire circle unless by an adult. If you wish to move around the fire to a new stool you must step out of the circle and walk around the outside of the log circle. Even when the fire is unlit we will treat it as if it is lit.

1. **Using Tools**

All tools have their own clear code of conduct for correct use which will include consideration of specific personal protective equipment, correct use of a specific body posture, and consideration of the appropriate types of activity that each tool may be used for.

1. **Picking up and Playing with Sticks**

Children can carry sticks shorter than their arm’s length but are encouraged to think about how close they are to other children. Longer sticks may be dragged or carried with the help of another person when each person is at either end. Sticks must not be thrown. Sticks must not be pulled from living trees.

1. **Picking up and Playing with Stones**

Stones may be picked up and transported. Children often like to make patterns and pictures with them. Stones may only be thrown *near the water. When we throw stones, we look around and check to make sure that no one is close to us, in our personal bubble* (the area 3 meters around our body). *Stones may be thrown that are as large as the palms of our hands.* They may be dropped but thought must be given to whether it is safe to do so, i.e. what is beneath where I am dropping it?

1. **Digging**

Digging large holes in the forest is not encouraged. Children may carefully move soil to look for insects and their habitats using fingers or small sticks found within the forest but deep holes should not be made unless approved by a facilitator.

1. **Collecting Wood**

Wood is collected for fire lighting purposes. It is collected in four thicknesses – matchstick sized (tinder), pencil sized(kindling), thumb sized and wrist sized. This is a good mathematical activity involving sorting and matching. Sticks may be collected for creating pictures and patterns but should be collected sparingly so as not to disrupt creature habitats.

1. **TBG Animals**

Many animals live at the TBG: ducks, chickens, goats, dogs, rabbits, etc. We must respect them in their home. Children are not permitted to chase the animals or enter their pens and may only feed or pet them if TBG staff has given approval.

1. **Collecting Flowers and Leaves**

We generally do not pick leaves or flowers from living plants. There may be the rare exception to this for a specific project or teaching. We do not pick any flowers found in the TBG but it is okay to collect ones that have fallen to the ground.

1. **Edible Plants**

Children do not eat any plants or berries before they first check with their facilitator. Children never eat mushrooms found in the forest and are advised not to even touch them.

1. **Eating and Drinking**

When having drinks and snacks children will use wipes & water to clean their hands before consumption.

1. **Rope and String Use**

We do not allow children to tie up each other. If a child has a good idea and wants to tie up something, for example a tarp or a swing, an adult should help them as needed, modelling appropriate knot tying and modelling how to talk through ideas and decisions.

1. **Carrying and Transporting Materials**

Children are encouraged to roll, lift, drag and to pull materials, either by using their hands or by using ropes. We encourage safe lifting by bending our knees and keeping our back straight. Safe lifting should always be modelled by adults. Heavier objects should be rolled, lifted or carried by more people working together.

1. **Going to the Bathroom**

Children are invited to use the toilets before we leave the TBG facilities. Children may go to the bathroom in a designated area behind bushes. They are supplied with toilet paper which will then be collected in a “doggie” bag and disposed of at the end of the session. Hands are sanitized with spray after.

1. **Tree Climbing**

An adult must be present when wanting to climb trees in the TNS. The ground cover should be checked for ‘sharp objects’ and the tree marked as suitable for climbing. A visual check must be made for loose and rotten branches. Adults should be near enough to catch if a child should fall but far enough away to not be invasive to the children’s exploration.

1. **Leaving the Site**

We work with a “leave no trace” approach. When we are ready to leave our nature sites, we check for any garbage or compost and bring it with us.

1. **Animal Encounters**

**21.1 Dogs**

It is possible that the group may encounter dogs (leashed or unleashed) while in the forest. While dogs are supposed to be “under control” even if off leash, some dogs are more excitable or aggressive than others. Games and discussions to stay safe around dogs will be practiced.

To help prevent children from being bitten by dogs, the following safety tips will be reviewed regularly:

* Do not approach an unfamiliar dog.
* Do not run from a dog or scream.
* Remain motionless (e.g., "be still like a tree") when approached by an unfamiliar dog.
* If knocked over by a dog, roll into a ball and lie still (e.g., "be still like a log").
* Do not play with a dog unless supervised by an adult.
* Immediately report stray dogs or dogs displaying unusual behavior to an adult.
* Avoid direct eye contact with a dog.
* Do not disturb a dog that is sleeping, eating, or caring for puppies.
* Do not pet a dog without allowing it to see and sniff you first (and without getting permission from the dog’s owner).
* If bitten, immediately report the bite to an adult.

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2009. Dog Bite Prevention. http://www.cdc.gov/ homeandrecreationalsafety/dog-bites/biteprevention.html

**21.2 Bears, Cougars and Wolves**

While we are in the forest it is very unlikely that we will encounter a bear, cougar of wolf. However, to be prepared for such an encounter we will practice the following safety protocols with the children regularly.

**Bear**

In the event that we see a bear, here are the procedures we will follow: If the bear has ***seen us***, we will:

STOP

Make ourselves big

Back away slowly

Speak in low tone and normal volume and say, "“Hello bear, we won’t run away. You can stay and play; we’ll come back another day.”

Let TBG staff know that there is a bear in the area.

If the bear has ***not seen us*,** we will:

Leave the area quietly and go to a more public place such as the Darwin Cafe. Let TBG staff know that there is a bear in the area.

**Cougars**

In the event that we see a cougar, here are the procedures we will follow:

STOP

Make ourselves big

Back away

If the cougar does not go away, keep eye contact with the cougar, show your teeth and make loud noise, blow whistle.

Arm yourself with sticks and rocks.

If the cougar does attack, fight back: focus on the nose and face area. Use sticks and rocks as weapons.

**Wolf**

If a wolf appears and acts unafraid or aggressive, we will take the following action as soon as we notice the animal:

Do not allow the wolf to approach any closer than 100 metres.

Raise your arms and wave them in the air to make yourself appear larger.

Blow whistle.

When in a group, act in unison to send a clear message to the wolves they are not welcome.

Back away slowly, do not turn your back on the wolf.

Make noise, throw sticks, rocks and sand at the wolf.

We will also remind children of the importance of staying with the group to help avoid these encounters.

2 *Safety procedures based on:* BC Parks. 2002. Bears and Cougars. Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection. Available online: http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/conserve/bearsandcougars.pdf

**21.3 Wasp**

If a wasp lands on you wait for it to fly off or brush gently off with like a mitten (do not brush it with your hand).

If you are faced with a wasp don’t challenge it - it is far better for you to leave the area until the wasp has gone. Do not run or thrash or swat. If there is only one wasp, then keep still and, when safe, move to shade or away from what is attracting the wasp. If stinging seems inevitable, then cover your face with hands or clothing or get face-down on the ground. If there are multiple wasps then your removal to safety is urgent.

If you find what appears to be an old and seemingly inactive wasp nest do not disturb it, there may still be living wasps inside.

1. **Tsunami Warning**

If we are ordered to evacuate, we plan to go to the Tofino Community Center. However, the facilitator may decide that the safest option is to go to the closest point of high ground. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

1. **Power Outage**

Tofino Nature School programs **will** run during a power outage.

1. **Clothing**

No person will be permitted to go to TNS without appropriate clothing that will protect them from extremes of heat or cold, keep them covered to reduce the likelihood of cuts and scrapes and that fits appropriately for comfort.

Children and parents are encouraged to think about the usefulness of their clothing for outdoor activities, and to be aware they are likely to take some of our mud home with them after a session. In the forest it can often be cooler than expected under the shade of the trees.

We work on the principle that “there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing”.

**Clothing List:**

**Cold / Wet days (fall, winter and spring):**

• Body layer 1: Long underwear, top and bottom \*no cotton please!

• Body layer 2: Wool or fleece sweater and pants to wear under rain gear

• Head: Toque

• Hands: Waterproof mittens or gloves

• Neck: Scarf or neck warmer

• Feet: Wool socks

• Full set of waterproof gear; jacket, pants and boots (sturdy, lined, flexible boots with rugged soles for climbing and hiking). If child wears “gum boots” they must wear thick wool socks.

**Warm and Dry days (summer):**

• Torso: Short sleeve, long sleeve and jacket

• Legs: Long pants (to protect legs from scratches during play and hiking)

• Head: Sunhat

• Feet: Closed toed, sturdy shoes

• Sunscreen on

**Clothing to be kept at home (unsafe to wear while hiking through the forest, climbing and running):**

• Dresses, skirts, tank tops and shorts

• Open toed sandals and flip flops

1. **Equipment for TNS Leaders**

In addition to tools suited to the planned for activities, the TNS Leader will always take an emergency bag with them. The contents of the emergency bag will vary depending on the time of year and weather conditions, the site being used, and the planned for activities according to the relevant risk assessments and daily risk assessment. There are of course also essential items that should be carried out for every session.

1. **Essential Emergency Equipment:**

* First Aid Kit (contents list, contents review record)
* Emergency Procedures
* Medical information for each individual and Emergency contact details for every member of the group (adults & children)
* Risk Assessments
* Communication Devices (mobile phone and/or walkie talkie – checked for working order and signal strength)
* Clean Water
* Emergency whistle
* Emergency Blanket
* Accident forms
* Medication for individuals (if not appropriate for the individual to carry the medication for themselves it should be clearly labelled – staff must have been trained to administer it and parental consent must have been received)

1. **Other Possible Equipment:**

* Shovel
* Spare clothing
* Thermos of hot water
* Chocolate/sugary food
* Plastic bag
* Roll Mat and Blanket
* Wet wipes, hand gel
* Bathroom things
* Sun screen (parental permission required)
* Spare Clothing
* Thermos of hot water
* Fire blanket
* Flashlight
* Bucket
* Bottled water
* Emergency fire kit
* Knife
* Emergency shelter
* Burns kit
* Tick remover
* Back pack

1. **Using and Storing Tools**

All tools are counted out and back in at the beginning and end of each session in which they are used. When not in use in the forest they are kept secured away in a locked shed. Before each tool is to be used it will be checked for damage and working order.

Each tool type is kept in their own suitable containers, many of which are also lockable. Children must never be allowed to help themselves and will always have adult supervision when collecting, transporting and using tools.

Tools are only used for a specific purpose. All adults should model correct and safe tool use, storage and transportation at all times. When using a tool, they are used well away from others in the group, and ensuring that others are aware that a tool is in use. Only walking is permitted when transporting a tool.

Only wear a glove when using a bow saw and only on your bracing hand. No other tools may be used when the operator is wearing gloves.

1. **Potato Peelers and Knives – for peeling or sharpening sticks (whittling)**

A ratio of 1 adult to 2 children will be observed. This tool must be used seated on a log with elbows placed upon knees and using the tool in a downward motion between the legs. A ‘safety bubble’ space must be determined ensuring a safe distance away from others. If someone wished to pass through your bubble they must verbally ask and you must stop while they pass, Safe, very temporary, storage is to store the blade end of the peeler in the soil. When carrying peelers you must walk with them held down by your side. Once a child is deemed to be competent by the forest leader they may be allowed to use a fixed blade knife to whittle. The same rules as above still apply. When carrying a knife return it to its sheath and tie it in securely using the strings. Carry the knife either by your side or with the string around your neck. Tools must be returned to the storage container when no longer in use.

1. **Bow Saws – for cross cutting wood up to 12cm diameter**

Children may be taught how to use a bow saw with 1:1 supervision, or with a ‘buddy’ helping in a ‘push-pull’ fashion. Adults must always supervise closely and should place their hand (gloved) between the child’s hand and that of the saw blade. The safest method of use is to brace the wood through the bow saw itself. The saw blade must be covered when not in use. When being carried the bow saw blade (in its’ cover) should be pointing downwards, and to the back. When not in use (shed storage) blades should be loosen off by an adult.

1. **Palm Drills/Bit and Brace – for making holes**

The item to be drilled should be placed and held (by the adult) securely on a firm flat surface. Work in a safe space being aware of others moving around you, think ‘safety bubble’. Safe, very temporary, storage is to store the blade pushed downwards into the soil. Carry these tools by your side facing downwards and remember only to walk.

1. **Kelly Kettle**

The TNS leader may use this to heat water. Never leave the bung in while heating water. This is only to be in place during storage so as to keep the chamber clear from forest debris or insects and mini beasts. Once the fire is going in the Kelly Kettle base carefully add the chimney top to it by holding the handle parallel to the ground, and supported on each side by your hands. When lit, do not stand directly over, or look straight down the chimney. Never blow into the top. When pouring out the water support the base by holding the bung chain in one hand and the handle with the other. To put the fire out, pour the remaining water into the base. Older children (ages 7 and up) may be taught how to use the Kelly Kettle by themselves.

When not in use all tools will be securely locked away in the tool shed. Tools should be checked and cleaned before they are put away. Every two months the TNS Leader will ensure that each tool is thoroughly cleaned and oiled. Wear and tear will be monitored daily.

1. **Health and Safety Policies**

TNS sets out clear statements of intent regarding the School’s approach to the health and safety of its children, staff and visitors to the School and the School Site. Provided below is a list of additional points and measures which relate directly to our TNS sessions.

1) The trained and named TNS leader is always the person in charge of TNS sessions.

2) The TNS facilitators have overall duty of care for the children in their charge. However all adults involved in the TNS session are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure that children are safe.

3) All adult helpers MUST sign and date a form to show that they have read and understood this handbook and the risk assessments appropriate to the session in which they are helping. They must sign and date the form stating that they comply with the general operating procedures for TNS (code of conduct).

4) The TNS leader or assistant will always carry an emergency bag into the forest for every session.

The Emergency Bag contains:

* Essential survival and first aid equipment
* A contact list for each child undertaking the activities
* The School’s phone # (and location details for the emergency services)

5) The TNS leader will always carry a mobile phone and will ensure that there is easy access to a land line if the group is out of range.

* 6) In the event of an emergency, The TNS leader will ensure that the School
* contacts the emergency services. If contact with the TNS is lost the leader will
* contact the emergency services.
* 7) The TNS leader will review the risk assessments before every trip into the School’s Forest Site.
* 8) When tools are used the adult child ratio will be 1:1
* 9) There is one exception to this – when using peelers for whittling the ratio can be 1:2.
* 10) The TNS leader is responsible for the maintenance and checking of all tools and equipment to be used at Forest School, prior to their use.
* 11) The TNS leader is responsible in training the children in how to use the tools and equipment safely and appropriately.
* 12) The TNS leader will be responsible for the pre visit check of the Forest School site prior to a Forest School session.

**34. Emergency Procedures**

**Lost Child**

At least once per month, the facilitators will practice with the children what to do when they are lost or separated from the group:

• Stop. Hug a tree. Blow your whistle (or yell). Step back from any bodies of water or cliff edges.

• Sit by a tree in the open if possible.

• Call out or use the whistle on your jacket or pack to whistle for help.

• Respond to any noise with a noise.

• Use your emergency blanket to cover your body and your head if you get cold.

If a child is not present when we do a head count, we will:

• Stay on the site.

• Ask others to do a head count.

• Call the group together.

• Determine who saw the child last, where and when.

• Call for the child who is lost.

• Have one adult search around the boundaries of the site to find the child who is lost.

• Alert TBG staff to inform them that a child is lost.

• Call police if child is not found.

**Medical Emergencies**

Ensure that parents have signed the medical release form so that we have permission to perform the required first aid or transfer a child to a hospital if necessary.

**Minor emergency**

If a child falls and gets a cut, the lead facilitator will do first aid while the other facilitator or volunteer cares for the group. If a child gets a bump, scratch, or bruise, we will let the parent (or other pick- up person) know at the end of the session.

**Minor emergency requiring parents to be called**

If a child is ill, the lead facilitator will do first aid as required. The other facilitator or volunteer will care for the group. The lead facilitator will call the parent or other emergency contacts. The group will arrange to meet the parent in the drop-off and pick-up location. After pick-up, the group will continue with the day’s program.

**Emergency requiring external medical care**

In a serious emergency, the lead facilitator will do first aid while the other facilitator or volunteer calls 911. The assistant facilitator/volunteer then cares for the group. The facilitators will arrange with emergency staff what procedures work best for the transfer to medical care. In most cases ambulance service can be contacted by phone and when possible, injured person will transfered to closest point meeting point with emergency vehicle. At Tofino Botanical Gardens this is the main parking lot.

**35. Site Risk Assessment**

If the site as a whole is deemed too risky due to high winds or weather such as a thunderstorm, the lead facilitator will call all families to let them know that the program is cancelled for the day. If the program must be cancelled and families are already on their way, the facilitator will go to the location to meet families and let them know that the program is cancelled.

In case of early dismissal due to unsafe conditions, we will attempt to contact each child’s parent or caregiver. If we cannot contact a parent or caregiver, we will contact the next person listed on the family’s emergency contact list.

**Have Fun and Be Safe!!**