



# 2023-24 FAMILY HANDBOOK

## Welcome to the feather and frond forest School Community!

This Family Handbook is designed to provide you with important information about all of our 2023-24 School Year Programs and our growing community of naturalists at Feather and Frond Forest School. We're honored to join you and your family on this learning adventure, and we're very excited to deepen our connections to each other and to the earth throughout this school year!

\*LAST UPDATED 6/27/23



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# ABOUT FEATHER AND FROND FOREST SCHOOL

## MISSION & VISION

Our mission is to inspire children and families to connect with themselves, their community, and the natural world.

We envision a world where humans coexist harmoniously with nature, and each individual fully embodies their unique gifts.

## VALUES

**Community:** It takes a village to raise healthy and resilient humans. As mentors, we feel honored to embrace the archetype of loving, kind, and firm "aunties and uncles" of the village.

**Respect & Reciprocity:** Respect and reciprocity for ourselves, for one another, and for nature is at the forefront of our teachings. We teach these values by leading by example. So if we're out harvesting Stinging Nettles together, don't be surprised when you see us gently yanking out a few strands of hair from our heads and offering them to the plants as a way of saying thanks and giving back!

**Gratitude & Appreciation:** All humans desire to be seen, heard, and authentically express who they are. We all have unique gifts to share. How can we dance together in a way that honors and respects each individual? How can we co-exist where everyone feels safe, seen, soothed, and secure? These questions are at the core of our learning journey with our students.

**Nature as Teacher:** Everything in nature has something to teach us. Even the ground-nesting wasps that leave a painful sting, the relentless rodents who wiggle their way into our homes, and the Devils' Club with unsavory spikes. What's the wisdom that we can learn from these creatures? What "superpowers" do they possess which allow them to survive in the wilderness? How can we demonstrate empathy towards these beings and learn from their resiliency?

**Diversity, Inclusivity & Equity:** We're committed to being allies to black, indigenous, and people of color. We honor, respect, and believe in equity for everyone regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, language, sexual orientation, national origin, and physical or cognitive abilities. We're committed to practicing self-awareness and self-reflection so that we may observe our own subconscious biases and prejudices and become more equitable educators.

## TERRITORIAL & CULTURAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that we teach and dwell on the ancestral homelands of the Coast Salish People—specifically, the Lummi, Nooksack, and Nuwaha, who've occupied these lands since time immemorial. We're committed to understanding the differences between cultural appreciation and appropriation by implementing teachings from the *Since Time Immemorial Tribal Sovereignty Curriculum* into our programs. We also pledge to donate a percentage of the proceeds from our programs to the Lhaq'temish Foundation Sharing Our Gifts Fund, which supports the cultural, social, and economic abundance of the Lummi Nation.



# PROGRAMS & LOGISTICS

## FOX WALKERS FOREST KINDERGARTEN (AGES 4-6)

**WEDNESDAYS** (One-Day Program)

**9:00 am - 2:00 pm**

FIRST DAY OF CLASS: 9/13/23

LAST DAY OF CLASS: 6/5/24

**TUESDAYS & THURSDAYS** (Two-Day Program)

**9:00 am - 1:00 pm**

FIRST DAY OF CLASS: 9/12/23

LAST DAY OF CLASS: 6/6/24

**TUESDAYS, WEDNESDAYS & THURSDAYS** (Three-Day Program)

**9:00 am - 1:00 pm on Tuesdays & Thursdays**

**9:00 am - 2:00 pm on Wednesdays**

FIRST DAY OF CLASS: 9/12/23

LAST DAY OF CLASS: 6/6/24

## FIRE KEEPERS HOMESCHOOL ENRICHMENT PROGRAM (AGES 7-11)

**MONDAYS**

**9:30 am - 3:30 pm**

FIRST DAY OF CLASS: 9/11/23

LAST DAY OF CLASS: 6/3/24

**FOREST SCHOOL IS OPEN  
ON THESE HOLIDAYS:**

October 9 (Indigenous People's Day)  
January 15 (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)  
February 19 (President's Day)  
May 27 (Memorial Day)

**FOREST SCHOOL IS CLOSED  
ON THESE DATES:**

November 20 - 24  
December 18 - January 5  
April 1 - 5

## ADDRESS, DIRECTIONS & MAP

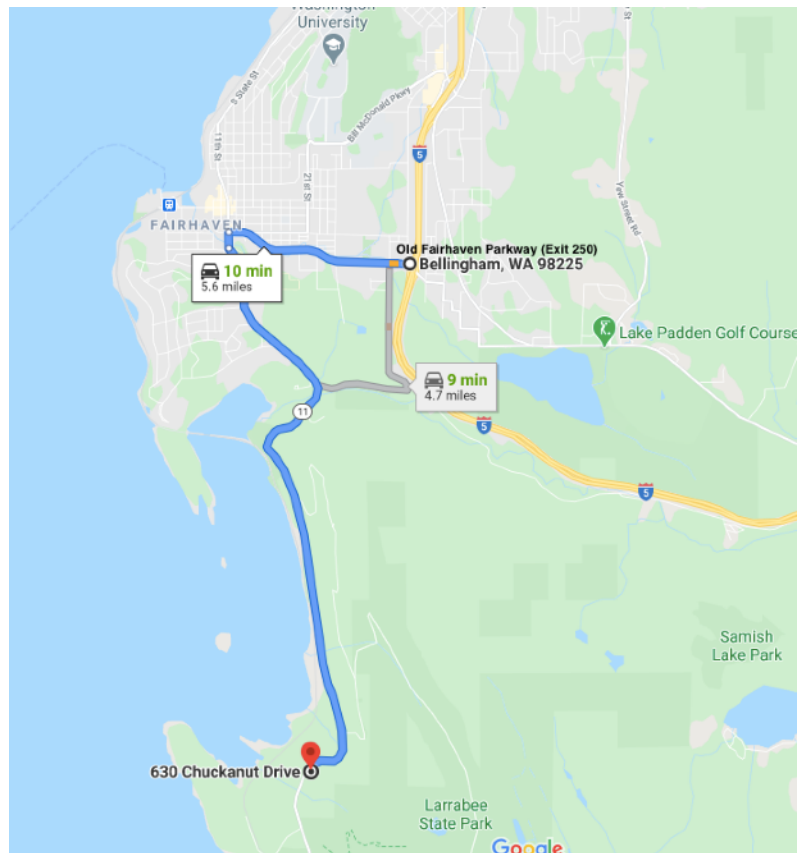
We've been blessed with the opportunity to steward a beautiful 11-acre piece of land. It's been quite the journey, and it's still a work in progress. We're delighted to share this land with our forest school students. Out of respect for the privacy of the humans who live on this land, we ask that you refrain from visiting outside of school hours.

The physical address of the land, "Moon Bird Retreat" is **630 Chuckanut Drive, Bellingham, WA 98229**

**Please Note:** Google Maps often directs people to another location with the same address on North Chuckanut Drive, much closer to Fairhaven Park. Don't head there! Please follow our directions below:

### Directions from Bellingham:

1. Take the Old Fairhaven Parkway exit from I-5 (Exit 250)
2. From Old Fairhaven Parkway, head south on Chuckanut Drive/ SR-11 towards Larrabee State Park.
3. Drive approximately 4 miles.
4. After you pass the Fire Station on your left, the road will curve to the right and then to the left.
5. 630 Chuckanut Drive is after the curve on the LEFT side of the road, across from Chuckanut Point Rd.
6. **Note: the driveway is very steep- PLEASE stay on the right side of the road to accommodate two-way traffic. The driveway crosses over the Interurban Trail, so PLEASE yield to bikers/ pedestrians!!**
7. The parking area for drop-off/pick-up will be on your right.



**Please do not proceed up the hill past the parking area, as there are private residences up there.**

## CONTACT INFO

Please keep in mind that being present with the kids is our number one priority during our programs. If you attempt to contact us while we're teaching in the field, we'll do our best to respond to your call or text as soon as possible. Leaving a clear text message is the preferred way to get in touch with us during the day. **PLEASE use a group text format which includes both Melissa's and Patrick's cell phone numbers.**

E-mail is a good way to reach us for less urgent business. We don't check e-mail during our programs. **Please e-mail [contact@featherandfrond.org](mailto:contact@featherandfrond.org) for general inquiries.**

We can be reached at the following cell phone numbers during class time and beyond:

*MELISSA:* (631) 258-2412  
*melissa@featherandfrond.org*

*PATRICK:* (609) 519-0988  
*pat@featherandfrond.org*

## GEAR LIST

**WHAT YOUR CHILD SHOULD WEAR EACH DAY:** Comfortable, weather appropriate clothes that can get very dirty. (If it's cold or raining, please avoid cotton clothing. Fleece, wool or synthetic fibers can stay warm when wet.)

### HEAD:

- Hat (in colder weather, one that covers the ears. In warmer weather, one that offers sun protection)
- Scarf or neck gaiter (for colder weather)

### LEGS:

- Base layer (wool or synthetic recommended)
- Middle layer (wool or fleece recommended for insulation in colder weather)
- Outer waterproof pants ("Muddy Buddy" rain suits are great!)

### FEET:

- Socks (wool or synthetic recommended in colder weather )
- Boots (weather appropriate - insulated waterproof boots for wet conditions, including wet snow, are recommended.)

### TORSO:

- Base layer (wool or synthetic recommended )
- Middle layer shirt (wool or fleece recommended)
- Waterproof rain jacket
- Gloves / mittens (for colder, wetter weather - waterproof/wool recommended, with a backup pair or two ready to go in a ziplock or dry bag)

### WHAT YOUR CHILD SHOULD BRING EACH DAY:

- Backpack (should fit well, be easy to carry & big enough to hold everything!)
- WATER (full bottle)
- Snack
- Lunch
- Hand sanitizer
- Small notebook/sketchbook & a pen/pencil/crayon for drawing/writing
- Fixed blade knife\* **(FIRE KEEPERS ONLY)**

### FUN OPTIONAL EXTRAS:

- Favorite naturalist field guides (stored in ziplock baggie in case of rain)
- Bug catchers ("catch and release" only)
- Collecting bag
- Nature items for our Nature Museum
- Magnifying glass

### MAKE SURE YOUR CHILD DOESN'T BRING:

- Toys/"stuffies" from home
- Candy
- Non-locking folding knife\*
- Pokemon/sport's Card



### **\*AN IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT KNIVES! (for 7-11 year-old students)\***

Please send your child with a sharp, sheathed, fixed-blade knife.

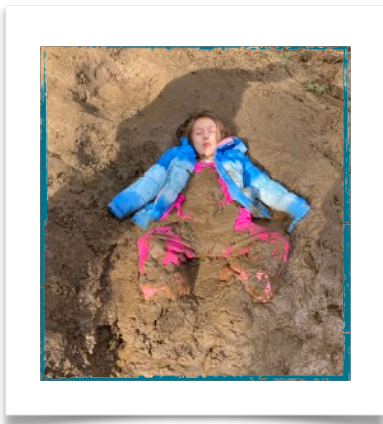
The blade should be 4" or shorter in length. NO SERRATION.

Serrated blades are not ideal for most of our carving projects, and can be difficult to sharpen.

Folding "pocket" knives that do not lock are discouraged at our programs.

Morakniv "Companion" and "Craftline" are two knives that we recommend.

If you pre-ordered a knife when you registered, we'll have it available on the first day of class.



### **A VERY SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT GETTING DIRTY:**

Our students are often extremely muddy by the end of the day. Children are naturally passionate about engaging in mud play, and we encourage them to do so! We believe that this type of play is core to the experience of connecting to the natural world. Please dress your child in clothes that you're okay with getting dirty, and let your child know that at forest school they have permission to get dirty! Please keep extra clothing layers in your child's backpack in a zip-locked bag. If you value having a clean vehicle, we suggest keeping some large garbage bags and/or a tarp in your car for transporting muddy gear home at the end of the day.

# PROGRAM INFORMATION

## CURRICULUM

Our curriculum is predominantly based on the 8 Shields philosophy, which can be found in Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature by Jon Young, Ellen Haas, and Evan McGown. This curriculum is organized around a medicine wheel, with each direction (shield) representing an area of study:



- **Birds:** The Messengers of the Wilderness [NE]
- **Hazards:** A Call to be Alert and Use Common Sense [E]
- **Motivating Species:** Things to Catch, Eat, Climb and Tend [SE]
- **Mammals:** And Other Hard to See, Yet Totally Trackable Critters [S]
- **Plants:** Nature's Grocery Store and Medicine Cabinet [SW]
- **Ecological Indicators:** How it All Works Together [W]
- **Heritage Species:** Wisdom of the Ancestors [NW]
- **Trees:** Tools of Human Survival [N]

## FLOW OF THE DAY/DAILY RHYTHM

We mentor students by carefully honoring of the development stages of each age group. We strike a balance between actively facilitating structured group educational activities and passively following these young explorers as they lead the way with their own interests and passions. We believe in the value of unstructured free play and we always give space for this type of learning at various times throughout each program day.

Each day is structured with a familiar pattern to support our students as they engage with the natural world and with one another. Thoughtful attention is paid to creating gentle transitions from one portion of the day to the next.

Our day often begins with games in the meadow. Usually a seasonal craft, wild food preparation, earth skill, or nature museum is also available for the children to engage in. Opening Circle follows and includes songs and animal movements which nourish and engage the physical body and cultivate neurological and sensory integration. Our gratitude circle, storytelling and snack take place underneath the boughs of Mama Maple. The group then sets off for an adventure to explore the woodland trails. Guided wanderings, games, awareness skills, improvisational play, movement, scavenger hunts, journaling, crafting, nature-based projects, foraging, and more help us to explore the theme of the day.

As Nature is our first teacher, our day can often unfold in many unforeseen ways! Lunch happens on the trail or at one of our favorite spots, such as Coyote Woods, Flying Squirrel Slope, Great Horned Hill, or the Gnome Trail. We conclude our time together with Story of the Day, an opportunity to reflect upon our day and express gratitude through words, songs, movement or funny skits.



# POLICIES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

## REGISTRATION, WITHDRAWAL & REFUND POLICIES

For Fox Walkers Forest Kindergarten and Fire Keepers Homeschool Enrichment Program, a non-refundable deposit of 25% of the tuition is required at registration. If you decide to withdraw your child from a long-term program for whatever reason, our refund policy is as follows:

- Withdrawal up to the start of the program and within the first 30 calendar days of the program's start date: You're entitled to a refund for any payments in excess of 25% of course tuition.
- Withdrawal during the first 31-90 calendar days of the program: You're entitled to a refund for any payments in excess of 50% of course tuition.
- Withdrawal during the first 91-130 calendar days of the program: You're entitled to a refund for any payments in excess of 75% of course tuition.
- Withdrawal after 131 calendar days of the program: No refund given.

NOTE: If you have a payment plan set up, you will still be responsible for paying the remainder of your scheduled payments until your commitment has been met.

## WEATHER-RELATED CANCELLATIONS

If there's a need to cancel a program day due to extreme weather, etc. each family will be contacted by 7:30 a.m. While we intend to be out in most weather conditions, we certainly don't want to put your safety at risk when roads are bad.

### **Smoke/Air Quality Cancellation Policy**

As an entirely outdoor school, we cannot guarantee access to an indoor space. Due to the increased regularity of poor to hazardous air quality caused by wildfire smoke in the summer and early fall, our policy is as follows:

- We'll monitor updates on local air quality conditions from the Bellingham-Pacific St. Air Quality Monitoring Station run by the Washington Department of Ecology. This printable infographic from the WA Department of Health and the Department of Ecology offers guidance around activity and air quality levels:  
<https://www.featherandfrond.org/s/Air-Quality-Advisory.png>
- If conditions are "Moderate," we'll limit running games and strenuous activities at our programs.
- If conditions are "Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups" or worse, we may shorten or cancel programs for the day (According to the Washington Air Quality Advisory, children under 18 are considered a "Sensitive Group"). We'll send an e-mail to all families by 7:30am.

- If your child has additional health concerns or sensitivities and must remain indoors when air quality is at the "Moderate" level, please let us know. We're unable to offer a refund in this case.
- **If we must cancel two or more days of a program due to air-quality concerns, you may request a 50% refund per day for the total number of canceled days.**

## MISSED DAYS

If you know that your child will be absent, please call or text to let us know. If for some reason your child cannot attend a class, we're unable to reimburse you for that missed day.

## COMMUNICATION

Clear communication is extremely important to us. Personal information such as a child not eating breakfast in the morning, having a meltdown, staying up very late the night before, having a runny nose, etc. is important for us to know and is best communicated verbally at the start of the morning.

If you have any issues whatsoever about the program, the curriculum, or a more serious topic, please do not hesitate to address it with us right away. We're generally available before and after each school day and can also be contacted via phone or e-mail in the evenings. Please let us know what your needs are!

## CHILD SAFETY IN THE FIELD

We take safety very seriously at Feather and Frond Forest School. We follow safety protocols around the use of tools, tending to fire, harvesting and eating wild edibles, traveling through the forest, and exploring bodies of water. Practicing these protocols with our students is an integral part of our curriculum, which cultivates important lifelong skills and the tools necessary for resiliency, self-sufficiency, and confidence – not only in the wilderness but in everyday life.

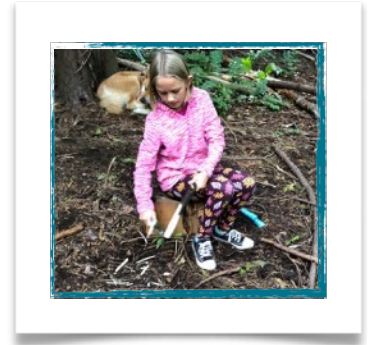
## KNIFE SAFETY PROTOCOLS / BASIC KNIFE SAFETY RULES (FOR 7-11 YEAR-OLDS)

Using a knife is a privilege, and each 7-11 year-old student at our programs must complete the safety training with an instructor before carving with us. We take any kind of horseplay or goofing around with knives very seriously. If any student threatens another with their knife (even "joking"), they will have their knife taken away for the day. If this were to continue, we reserve the right to take further action.

Physical and emotional safety for all of our students is of the utmost importance to us. We're grateful for the opportunity to use knives in a safe and empowering manner with your child.

While you may have different rules at home, our Basic Knife Safety Rules are as follows:

1. Ask an instructor for permission to carve (Yes, every single time!)
2. Once permission is granted, establish a "Blood Bubble" (aka "Circle of Safety")
3. Always carve off of and away from yourself
4. Pay attention to what you're carving at all times (If you need to stop to chat or look at a squirrel etc., the knife must be put back into its sheath!)
5. Always put the knife back into its sheath and keep it stored in a safe place (like your backpack) when you're not carving. (Don't run around playing games with your knife clipped to your belt, and don't leave your knife just laying around unattended)
6. Knives are tools – not toys or weapons!



## BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGES AND THE BRAIN-BODY APPROACH

We utilize a brain-body approach to understanding behavioral challenges. Using the Polyvagal theory paradigm, we view behaviors as adaptive responses to an individual's ever-changing nervous system. We ask what behaviors tell us about the child's neurophysiological processes instead of assuming that the child is being intentional. Many problematic behaviors merely reflect how a child's brain and body perceive stress.

Since children often don't have deliberate control over their emotions and behaviors, if a student engages in violent or harmful behaviors or ignores safety requests at forest school, we first seek to understand the underlying processes that cause these behaviors. As the physical and emotional safety of the entire learning community is our priority, we approach any behavioral challenges with intention and care and openly communicate with families. When behavior is viewed as the "tip of an iceberg," we may find residual trauma and stress, sensitivities to certain stimuli, faulty neuroception, or difficulties with self-regulation below the surface. With this lens in mind and considering the child's individual differences, we prioritize relational safety and emotional co-regulation to dissolve challenging behaviors.

Sometimes, we recommend that a family seek professional guidance to support the child's nervous system through neurofeedback, occupational therapy, somatic experiencing, or other brain-body-based therapeutic modalities.

Ultimately, building secure and attuned relationships is our first priority. From our experience, many positive shifts can occur when a child feels safe, seen, soothed, and secure.

## CONTINUED ENROLLMENT

We reserve the right to withdraw a student from forest school if they require intensive support beyond our expertise and capacity to maintain a physically and emotionally safe environment for all. Failure to meet financial obligations may also result in withdrawal.

# SONGS

## **Burn, Fire, Burn** by Karuna & CJ

Burn, fire, burn  
Stoke your inner fire  
Let the coal inside you rise  
And blow that flame to life

## **My Roots Go Down** by Sarah Pirtle

My roots go down, down to the earth.  
My roots go down, down to the earth.  
My roots go down, down to the earth  
My roots go down

I'm just a tree, swaying in the breeze  
I'm just a tree, swaying in the breeze  
I'm just a tree, swaying in the breeze  
My roots go down

\*Make up your own verses!\*

## **Home** by Helen Yeomans

Home, I'm going home  
I need a land to heal my soul  
Take me home,  
Take me home  
Over the green, green hills  
And far away. . .

## **They Will Remain** by Starhawk and Anne Hill

When we are gone  
They will remain  
The wind and rock,  
And the fire and rain

They will remain  
When we return  
The wind will blow,  
And the fire will burn

## **Your Heart Knows the Way Home** by Te Martin

Your heart knows the way home  
Listen, the birds are singing  
Singing their freedom  
The forest will speak to you in the silence



## **Wild One** by Sage Stanzler

Let the sun shine down and warm my bones  
Let the birds and the bees come and take my clothes  
Cause I'm a wild one now, made of wind and rain  
I'm wild and I ain't going back again

Let the moon shine down and cleanse my soul  
Let the wolves and the owls come and tend my coals  
Cause I'm a wild one now, made of stars and dreams  
I'm wild and I'm part of everything

## **Wood Stone Feather and Bone** by Joules Graves

Wood, stone, feather and bone  
Roaring of the ocean guide us home  
Wood, stone, feather and bone  
Roaring of the ocean guide us home  
Wolf and raven,  
Wolf and raven  
In my soul, in my soul - HUH!

River, sea, cedar tree  
Howling of the wind gonna set us free  
River, sea, cedar tree  
Howling of the wind gonna set us free  
Eagle and salmon,  
Eagle and salmon  
In my soul, in my soul - HUH!

Spirits dance, fires burn  
Glowing of the moon I'm not alone  
Spirits dance, fires burn  
Glowing of the moon I'm not alone  
Beaver and alder,  
Beaver and alder  
In my soul, in my soul - HUH!