

Hillside House

Parent and Volunteer Handbook

Revised August 2025



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Introduction and Land Acknowledgement

Hillside House is a play based learning community inspired by the outdoors. Activities take place on the property and land that surround our home in the countryside of Pembroke Ontario. Influenced by the natural environment and the changing seasons, we choose to live and play in a way that connects us to the land and creates community with other people.

Nestled on a little hillside outside of Pembroke, we acknowledge that the area where we live is the unceded traditional land of the Algonquin-Anishinaabe, as is the rest of the Ottawa Valley. We are grateful for the privilege to explore this land and care for it. Indigenous People have come before us on this land (the Pembroke area) and are still here. Their ways of living and being on the land inspire and inform our work and play.



Our Purpose and Vision

Hillside House purposes to use our property and our resources to create opportunities for children, youth, and their families to develop community through outdoor play.

Hillside House offers inclusive, play-based programs that support child-led, inquiry driven, facilitator supported learning where each person can contribute, belong, and build connections through regular access to outdoor play and natural spaces.

Meet the Educator

Bonjour! My name is Vikki Bartlett (she/her). I am blessed to be mommy to two curious, creative children who teach me about perspective, compassion and wonder every day. My husband and I have the honour of accompanying our two wonderful neurodivergent boys on this daily adventure of learning and making sense of the world.

I am a Registered Early Childhood Educator who graduated from Vanier College in Montreal in 2002. I worked in daycare, preschool, and summer programs for a decade before putting my profession on hold to serve in the Canadian Armed Forces as a medical technician for 8 years. I am proud of the way that I served in the military. And I am delighted to be back to early childhood education again! What a wild ride it has been!

Building community is a way of life that motivates my goals and plans. I have had the privilege of being involved with Girl Guides, supporting missionary outreach, training and volunteering as an Outdoor Adventure & Expeditions Guide, and serving as a civilian ground SAR Tech. I am currently involved with the Family and Children's Ministries at our local church where I advocate for and support children with special needs.

Since 2019 my focus has been on caring for my children while also preparing our home and property to be a welcoming, inclusive space. We have been working diligently to plant dozens of trees, shrubs and native plants so that our little property contributes to a healthy local ecosystem. In 2021, I joined the growing Forest and Nature School movement and enrolled in the Outdoor Practitioners Course with CNAC. What a wonderful and inspiring adventure! It has been an honor to support children's play as certified FNS Practitioner with the Child and Nature alliance of Canada.

I am beginning my journey of learning more about the Algonquin-Anishinaabe people on who's unceded land our home sits. I have much to be grateful for! And I have much to learn. Our "homesteading" story is about connections; getting to know this land, discovering the native plants and wildlife, and learning how we can invest in the land in a way that includes others and builds relationships. I look forward to playing, connecting, creating and learning outdoors with you!



Hillside House Programs

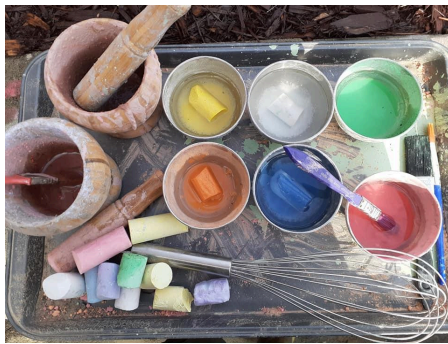
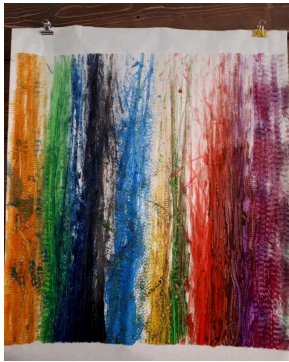
Participants are asked to complete individual and family registration forms before signing up for programs. The forms provide valuable information on participants' needs and abilities so that programs and specific activities can be inclusive and accessible. We are a community of kindness!

Family Programming:

These outdoor activities welcome children accompanied by parents, guardians and siblings. They include activities such as free play, organized activities, community gardening, campfires and cookouts, field and forest sessions, bushcraft, art and creative expression, board game meets, loose parts play, and special events. Our programs vary throughout the year and include our outdoor learning co-op, music and movement sessions, art workshops, book fairs, and more.

Parents or guardians are responsible for the safety and supervision of their children while they participate in these facilitator supported activities.

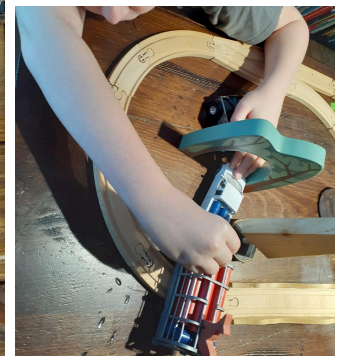




Recreation and Day Camp Programming:

Scheduled drop-off sessions for school aged children (ages 4-12+). Meaningful opportunities for outdoor play, exploration, and learning are provided by outdoor educators, special needs support staff, and qualified facilitators. Activities will be prompted by emerging themes, changing seasons, natural materials, and the children's interests and development.

Programs will meet the Ontario requirements for unlicensed recreation, childcare, or day camp as applicable.



Hillside House Setting, Location, and Directions

The house sits on a one acre property that offers a large grassy play area dotted with trees. A pavilion offers shelter and a gathering place for groups activities. At the front of the property you will find a fire pit, a small pond and rain garden, a pergola, a young food forest trail with pear and plum trees, and chicken and turkey enclosures. Handwashing stations and outhouses are located behind the pavilion building. The back yard is fully fenced with an open sloped play area, native plants and flowers for pollinators, a sandbox, play structures and swings, a playhouse cabin in the trees, and a short woodland trail.

The property is bordered by hay fields and woods that our neighbors have graciously granted us permission to access during scheduled Field and Forest activities.

Directions:

Hillside House is 20 minutes from either downtown Pembroke or Petawawa and is easily accessible by car.

From Petawawa, take Doran across Highway 17 and continue Xkm past Round Lake Road. Turn right onto Round Lake Road. We are on the right at the bottom of the small hill.

From Pembroke and Ottawa, at the intersection of Highway 17 and Paul Martin Drive, take Highway 41 south for Xkm. Turn right onto Sandy Beach Road. Travel Xkm. We are the first house on the right after the intersection of Doran road.

Address and Contact Information

Hillside House
1444 Sandy Beach Road
Pembroke, Ontario
K8A 6W8

(613) 635-3907
manage.hillsidehouse@gmail.com



Learning and Development

The Hillside House Approach to Learning

We view each child as a unique, competent and capable agent in their learning. Motivated by their own interests and innate curiosity, they naturally play, move, and learn in ways that are meaningful to them. Even young children are capable of constructing knowledge through play by pursuing their interests, asking questions, reflecting, and expressing themselves. Conversation, community, and culture also scaffold learning. Hillside House programs support inquiry based, emergent and experiential learning.



Play

Play is a catalyst for learning! At Hillside House we know that unstructured, free play is fundamental to healthy physical, emotional, social, and mental development. It affords children the time and space to discover meaning in the world around them. Play takes many forms. Symbolic play might transform an acorn into a fairy table, or pebbles into coins for imaginary play. Constructive play might result in children building structures out

of sticks or creating art sculptures with ice. Physical play such as jumping over a stream, crawling through the bushes while playing hide and seek, or investigating the snow tunnels left by mice and moles allow children to experience the world through their senses. There may be calm moments of solitary play and reflection, or energized competitive running and climbing. Children might share riddles and tell stories. Social play develops collaboration, communication and perspective taking. Free play fuels holistic development for every child in a natural way.

Structured play is also valuable for providing children with meaningful opportunities offered by the educator, a parent, guest, or elder. These include safe access to tools, introduction to new skills, interactions during gatherings and campfires, investigating specific topics of interest, and exploring materials in a designated area. We provide space and resources for self directed play as well as facilitator designed play provocations. Invitations with a literacy, academic, or specific skills component will be presented in a manner that allows new skills and knowledge to be applied and explored in a safe open-ended context.

Play weaves a web of subject matter knowledge, skills and dispositions that further more inquiry. Children learn by doing, exploring and asking questions about their experiences. The beautiful outcome of play is the process itself. This approach models that learning is an adventure, and fuels a passion that can last a lifetime.

Community

Every child and family who comes to Hillside House brings with them a rich heritage as well as personal attributes and interests which help us connect and build community. Families are invited to contribute to the programs in ways that feel relevant to them. Families can offer time, skills, knowledge, abilities, expertise, or resources. etc. Not only

does this reduce operating costs, making it more accessible, contributions also create meaningful programs that reflect the diversity and strengths of our community.



Place Based Learning

Place based learning is firmly rooted in the act of connecting children to a particular place through direct experiential contact. The ability to know a place intimately and to return to a natural space again and again, provides children with familiarity while honing their ability to recognize and understand processes of change. With connection to place comes a desire and sense of responsibility for caretaking and protecting. Frequent encounters lead to an increased sense of belonging and, ultimately, to a sense of stewardship for that place, for the broader community, and beyond.¹

Hillside House Field and Forest Activities follow the Forest and Nature School (FNS) model as we let place-based play lead our learning journey.

What is Forest and Nature School?

The Forest School movement began in the 1950's in Denmark and Sweden and has expanded to influence programs around the world. It is an educational approach and program model that remains relevant in varying contexts, environments, climates and groups of learners. It can be a few hours once a week or a full time program. The key features to FNS are regular and repeated access to the same natural space, as well as emergent, experiential, inquiry-based, play-based, and place-based learning.² Children have opportunities to develop relationships with the land, with themselves, with others, and with a dedicated educator.³

¹ Forest and Nature School in Canada: A Head, Heart, Hands Approach to Outdoor Learning

² MacEachren, 2013

³ Forest and Nature School in Canada: A Head, Heart, Hands Approach to Outdoor Learning



While Forest and Nature School is still young in Canada, Aboriginal people have been offering land-based education to their children on this land for a long time.⁴ FNS is uniquely influenced, not only by the climate, flora, and fauna of this land, but by the knowledge and perspectives of Indigenous People who have lived in connection to this land long before this movement began. Listening and Storytelling are regular practices in Forest School and are one of the ways that we can invite and incorporate Algonquin-Anishinaabe voices into our programs.

At Hillside House we know that Forest & Nature School pedagogy nourishes a sense of wonder, belonging, stewardship, self-esteem, problem solving, and resilience.

“Observers of the FNS approach often described the play as magical because of the organic authentic collaboration, communication, creativity, trust, and joy that they see.” —Ottawa Forest and Nature School Handbook 2020/21

⁴ Forest and Nature School in Canada: A Head, Heart, Hands Approach to Outdoor Learning

The Role of the Educator/Facilitators

“Unlike teachers in conventional school settings, the FNS facilitator’s role is not to be the expert who has all the right answers. Instead, the educator seeks to be a co-learner with participants. As a facilitator, they focus on sparking engagement then stepping back to observe the children’s exploration. Educators closely observe participants, intervening with open-ended invitations and provocations. They explore alongside the children cultivating wonder and adventure. FNS educators record their observations by documenting with photos, videos or written notes which are then used to extend learning, refocus it, or redirect it. They aim to prompt questions and extend and deepen participants’ thinking about and compassion for the world around them by themselves. posing questions, or by using or introducing loose parts and supplies that change the learning environment and therefore elicit a change in the learner.” -OFNS Handbook

All the while, the educator will assess the site for risks, for ecological impact, as well as for the play value through changing weather and seasons. They will reflect, adjust and plan to offer a safe, caring, empowering and engaging environment for the children and their families. Together they build connection, confidence, and community. ⁵

The Role of the Parents and Volunteers

While children lead their learning through play, adults can offer support by observing, being attentive, and being available to respond to the children. Adults can model enthusiasm, creativity, and curiosity. Parents are invited to explore, get dirty, create, and celebrate alongside their children. Adults can respond to children by asking questions, accessing materials, offering perspective and sharing stories. By listening and trying to understand others, adults provide models of empathy, flexibility, and compassion that are vital to building relationships. It is meaningful to both the adult and the child when parents find ways to engage, use their skills or share knowledge with the group. This helps everyone feel connected. Parents too get to develop connection to themselves, the land, and others. Adults are responsible for supervising their own children during family activities so they are key players in maintaining health and safety! All parents and volunteers will have the opportunity to learn about supporting risky play for their children. As a community, each of us can reach out to offer or ask for assistance in supporting the children. Adults also help children navigate conflict and engage in problem solving. Everyone gets to be a caretaker of the land and practice environmental stewardship.

Preparing for Outdoor Play

Are you ready for some fun?! Being dressed appropriately for movement, messy play, and weather conditions can be key to having the best experiences. Checking the weather the day before will help you predict the proper attire. This is the suggested supply list for your child and it's a good list for adults too! Bring or wear items that apply each day. (For childcare programs please label all items with your child's name.)

Supply List

Spring and Fall

- Long sleeved shirt *
 - Long pants*
 - Long socks- pull up over pant cuffs for bug protection*
 - Running or hiking shoes (no sandals or open toed shoes, please)
 - Sun Hat
 - Rain gear (waterproof boots, pants, jacket)
 - Bug Jacket (optional)
 - 1 extra changes of clothes (including underwear and socks)
- *There are ticks and poison ivy in the area - see additional details below
- Sunscreen
 - Bug spray in the Spring and Fall months
 - 1 backpack containing their lunch, snacks and full water bottle.
 - 1 bag containing an extra changes of clothes (including socks and underwear),

Winter

- Base layers – synthetic or wool long underwear/top
- Insulating layer of warm pants and sweater/fleece
- Snow pants and jacket or snowsuit
- 2+ pairs mittens (mitts are so much warmer than gloves)
- Warm hat
- Boots

It's not necessary to invest in expensive brand names. Thrift stores are great places to find reasonable prices. MEC and Canadian Tire have excellent children's outdoor wear for all seasons. If your child is missing a mitten or their socks get soaked, we may be able to lend them supplies from our gear library.

Policies and Procedures

Registration and Payment

- In order to participate in Hillside House activities, families/child must be registered and each participant's file must be complete. This includes the personal information, medical, informed consent, and photo consent forms.
- Children must be registered for specific programs before arrival or participation.
- Activity fees will be set per session or per season as indicated on the description.
- Registration fees must be paid before participating unless you have made a deferred payment plan with the program coordinator in writing.
- Applicable discounts and coupon codes must be used online at the time of registration as they cannot be applied after registration has been processed.
- If you are unable to afford program costs, please contact the program coordinator to discuss options or a discount code.
- Payments should be made through the website or by e-transfer to manage.hillsidehouse@gmail.com . (No more website after September 10, 2025)

Refund Policy:

- Registration fees are non-refundable.
(Refunds may be granted on a case by case basis at the owner's discretion)
- If a child is withdrawn from programs due to illness, injury, or any other reason, a program refund will not be issued.
- Refunds will not be given if a day's program must be cancelled due to inclement weather. (Please see our Inclement Weather Policy/Closure Policy).
- Exception: Programs may be cancelled if there is insufficient registration, if the facilitator becomes sick, or if there is a situation beyond our control. In these events, a prorated refund will be issued.

Privacy Policy

Hillside House takes the privacy of participants seriously, and we have taken steps to protect it. Any personal data shared with us, including photographic images, will be processed strictly in accordance with privacy legislation, and will be used for the purposes that you have consented to. All families communicate their wishes regarding photo consent during registration. Your consent can be withdrawn at any time through written communication to manage.hillsidehouse@gmail.com .

We will not share details with third parties without consent, except where we are legally

compelled or obligated to do so. Please note that where consent is given to share images on the internet, they can be viewed worldwide including countries where Canadian data protection law does not apply.

Social Media Policy

Hillside House has a Facebook group where photos and stories will be posted to keep members updated on the activities and to get a glimpse of the wonder and ways that children are playing, connecting, creating and learning outdoors. Our photo consent policy is in effect on our social media platforms. Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns about photo consent or protecting the privacy of the information you provide.



Risky Play and Risk Management

Risk - the experience and management of it - is an inherent and integral part of Forest School practice and play, and indeed, of healthy child development. Hillside House conducts seasonal and daily site risk assessments, activity risk assessments as well as individual risk assessments on an ongoing basis - always considering the balance between risks and benefits and taking reasonable steps to limit harm. We endeavor to co-assess and co-manage risk with children because we believe this to be an essential skill for them to acquire and essential for adults to support. Parents and volunteers will be provided information on how they too can support risky play.

Before participation, all children, parents or guardians, as well as volunteers are required to sign the **Assumption of Risk Informed Consent** document. Some of the risks inherent to outdoor play include, but are not limited to:

- Injuries from executing strenuous and demanding physical activities, possibly on uneven ground and terrain in the forest
- Contracting poison ivy
- The presence of wild animals and ticks
- Inclement weather

Health and Safety Policies

In order to safeguard the health of all families in our learning community, we will follow the recommendations from the Renfrew County Health Unit. These recommendations change as medical protocols and health directives change. We want families to feel comfortable knowing that Hillside House prioritizes health and safety for each and all participants.

Standard Illness Protocol

In the following cases, we ask that participants stay home from programs:

- Temperature over 100 degrees F or 37.8 degrees C
- Severe chest cough
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea (watery, profuse stools)

Participants affected by communicable diseases such as measles, chicken pox, mumps, flu, strep throat, viral pneumonia, conjunctivitis (pink-eye), etc., are asked to stay home until their health care provider has communicated that it is safe for them to attend.

Head Lice

While head lice is not considered a communicable disease, it is an annoying condition which spreads rapidly. If head lice or nits are present we ask that you:

- Contact Hillside House by email so that other families can be informed. (The affected individuals will remain anonymous)
- Follow an appropriate treatment as suggested by your pharmacist.

Children must be nit free in order to participate in childcare programs.

Toileting and Handwashing Procedures

Children and Families participating in Hillside House activities are invited to use the outhouses and handwashing stations that are behind the pavilion building. These quaint structures have all the basic items that you might need. Water, a small sink, liquid soap, paper towel and a waste paper basket. Here you will also find facial tissue and hand sanitizer. Inside there is a “dry toilet”, toilet paper, a garbage, a baby changing station, and cleaning supplies.

During field and forest sessions participants will be instructed on how to select an appropriate spot to urinate outdoors. A luggable loo can be carried with the group for bowel movements and for anyone who is more comfortable sitting to urinate. We have a pop up toilet tent set up in the main forest play area. Toilet paper, hand sanitizer, soap and water will also accompany the group. Everyone should clean their hands after toileting. No garbage will be left on the forest floor.

Food Policies

Handwashing and Drinking Water

Participants will be asked to wash their hands with soap and water before eating and after using the bathroom. These will be carried with the educator during field and forest activities- as will hand sanitizer. There will be potable water available on site. Please bring a reusable water bottle for each person so that you can stay hydrated.

Litter-Less Lunches

We encourage participants to bring a litter-less lunch. When in the woods, participants are asked to pack their garbage home with them. Children tend to eat more over a day of outdoor play, so you may want to keep that in mind when packing lunches.

Peanut Free Zone

Due to the prevalence of serious allergies, peanuts are not served during drop-off programs. Other allergens may be restricted as needed.

Allergies

Family activities outdoors may require an allergen restriction if participating families have a food allergy. We ask that you be vigilant and compassionate when eating snacks and meals outdoors. If you are eating in close proximity to others, we encourage you to talk about food allergies, dietary restrictions and food choices as you see fit. These kinds of conversations are wonderful ways to learn about different foods and different needs.

All food scraps and garbage are to be disposed of in garbage cans or a green bin when eating in the yards. The handwashing station is available for washing hands as often as needed.

If there are any food allergies identified in the group, all participants will be informed in writing so that they can adjust their food plan accordingly, or stay distanced during snack and meals. In the case of known anaphylaxis, some foods may be banned in order to include everyone safely. Parents are responsible for supervising their children.

Food Sharing During Family Programming

Sharing food is one way to experience and demonstrate gratitude and kindness as well as sharing resources. Parents and guardians should decide how and when this is appropriate for their family. Parents are responsible for supervising their children.

Hillside House will occasionally provide snacks or organize cookouts or potlucks as part of community building and food literacy programming. Harvesting fresh produce from the garden and foraging wild foods together make sharing even more delicious and meaningful. All menu items will be selected in accordance with the dietary needs and restrictions of participants (as outlined in their registration file). All families will be able to participate safely in organize snacks or meals.



During drop-off programs, children bringing their own meals and snacks will be asked not to share or trade food. Program facilitators will be responsible for food safety during these activities.



Child Entry and Release Policy for Child Care Programs

Parents must give Hillside House written authorization for the people who may have access to their children (i.e. a relative who picks up child, emergency contacts in cases where parents cannot be reached). Parents must notify Hillside House before changing the pick-up person. We always act in the best interests of the child if there is any confusion or uncertainty.



Unauthorized Pick-up Procedure for Childcare Programs

If someone, other than a parent/guardian or authorized alternate pick-up person, arrives to pick up a child and we haven't been notified in advance by these authorized persons we will:

- Call the parent/guardian
- If a parent/guardian cannot be located, the child is not allowed to leave Hillside House until a parent/guardian has been contacted.
- The program facilitator will remain with the child until an authorized pick-up person arrives.

Custody and Access to Children

According to the law, both parents of a child have equal access to a child and to the information about the child's development, health and welfare. The only time a staff member can deny access of a parent to a child is when there is a written separation agreement or a legal court order. Hillside House requires a copy of this document.

Alcohol and Other Substances

There is no smoking, vaping, or consumption of nicotine, cannabis, alcohol or other substances permitted during Hillside House Programming. Do not bring these with you.

Release of a Child to a Person Who Appears Intoxicated/Impaired:

Staff will not release a child from daycare to a person who appears intoxicated or impaired. In such cases, the program facilitator will assist in making other pick-up arrangements (i.e., a spouse or other authorized person). Staff are legally responsible to protect the children in their care from any perceived risk.



Policies Related to the Land and Play

Accessibility and Equity

At Hillside House we want to make our community accessible to a wide range of participants regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, language, physical ability, or socioeconomic status. We are an inclusive community that welcomes learners with varying skills and abilities, learning styles, and ways of knowing and being. We choose to make our community safe and welcoming as we address barriers to participation. We are working to make our site physically accessible for all participants.

Our program registration has different discount codes. Our “gear bank” of outerwear (snow pants, hats, mitts, shoes etc.) helps participants access the supplies needed to safely enjoy the outdoors with Hillside House. Please let us know if participation is a challenge for you. All our programs are adapted to support participants.

Poison Ivy Policy

Poison ivy is present in some areas around Hillside House. A site risk assessment is done each day. To limit exposure, we strongly recommend that all participants wear long pants, long socks, and closed-toed shoes while taking part in our programs. Washing affected skin within 15-60 minutes of exposure is likely to remove the oil that can lead to a reaction, so staff carry potable water and soap during field and forest activities. In the event of a participant coming in contact with poison ivy, we are able to wash the affected area immediately.

Tick Policy

Ticks may be present throughout the space from Spring until Fall (as long as the temperature is above freezing they may be active). To limit exposure, we strongly recommend that all participants wear:

- Long pants
- Long sleeved shirt
- Long socks
- Closed-toed shoes
- Hat

We suggest that participants tuck their pant legs into their socks and shirts into their pants to limit possible tick exposure. We recommend using insect repellent (with or without DEET, or other natural essential oil alternatives, depending on what feels appropriate for your family) to deter ticks,

If a tick is noticed on a participant, it is brushed off. If a tick is attached, we will remove the tick using a tick key or tweezers. Parents/guardians of children in drop-off programs will be informed if their child had a tick attached. After field and forest activities, we recommend that you do an all-body check upon arriving at home.

For more information about supporting children's play during tick season, visit a blog post written by a staff member at Child and Nature Alliance of Canada:

<https://childnature.ca/what-can-we-do-about-ticks/>

Inclement Weather Policy

In the event that the weather/road conditions make travel to/from Hillside House unsafe, and we need to cancel programs for that day, we will contact families by email to inform them. These canceled days will be rescheduled to later in the week, later in the month, or later in the season if possible. In the event that a mutually agreeable date cannot be found, the day will remain canceled altogether. These sessions will not be reimbursed.

Extreme Weather Policy

Hillside House consults the forecast regularly, and weather-related safety is considered in all decision-making. If the program facilitator assesses the forecast and deems that it will be unsafe for space, shelter, or accessibility, programs will be cancelled for that day and participants will be notified.

During thunder and lightning, participants will stay sheltered in the pavilion. Field and forest activities will not be scheduled during predicted lightning storms or high wind. Activities can be planned to ensure the participants are close to shelter for quick access should either occur

In the case of extreme heat (30C+) Hillside House will limit the duration of Field and Forest activities based on participants' length of exposure, age, and outerwear. The facilitator will continually assess participants' comfort and safety, watching for signs of heat exhaustion, as well as offering ways to cool off using water and time in the shade.

In very cold weather (-15C and colder) only part day programs will run. Periods of time will be spent warming up in the shelter. Children will be supported in keeping their skin covered and staying warm and comfortable. We are building a backup gear library to insure that we have warm clothing to lend to children who need more warm dry layers or alternatives. When the weather forecast predicts extreme cold (below -20C) outdoor children's programs will be cancelled.



Emergency Procedures and First Aid

Hillside House has written emergency procedures. All program facilitators are required to be familiar with them. A copy is carried at all times in the emergency/first aid backpack and with the First Aid box. All activities will have a designated trained and certified First Aider.

Accident and Emergency Procedure

In a severe accident or emergency, Hillside House program facilitators will follow this procedure:

1. Establish the nature and extent of the emergency. The educator, or designated First Aider, will take the lead responding and administering first aid.
2. Make sure the area and all other members of the group are accounted for, safe, and adequately supervised by facilitators or volunteers .
3. Assess the casualty and ask another adult to call 911, emergency services, while the First Aider administers appropriate first aid. The person phoning will need to respond to the following questions:
 - Nature of emergency
 - Injured party details: age, gender, medical history
(see Emergency Medical Form in first aid backpack)
 - Location: 1444 Sandy Beach Road, Pembroke Ontario K8A 6W8
 - First aid administered
4. The person making the phone call will direct the ambulance to the driveway where they (or another available adult) will lead paramedics to the casualty. If no one can meet the ambulance, instructions will be given to dispatch over the phone describing the location of the group and casualty.
5. Inform the child's emergency contact, as well as the Hillside House program coordinator, of the injury as soon as possible.
6. Ensure that an appropriate adult attends the receiving hospital with the casualty, taking with them any available medical information.

7. Ensure the remainder of the group:
 - a) Is adequately supervised throughout the emergency
 - b) Returns from field & forest activities to the Hillside House yard as early as possible.
 - c) Receives appropriate support and reassurance
8. The activity facilitator will continue to liaise with the emergency services until the incident is over.
9. As soon as reasonably possible after the event, the accident will be reported using an Accident Report Form.





About Risk in Play

Access to active play in nature and outdoors—with its risks—is essential for healthy child development. But in play, risk doesn't mean courting danger—like skating on a half-frozen lake or sending a preschooler to the park alone. It means the types of play children see as thrilling and exciting, where the possibility of physical injury may exist, but they can recognize and evaluate challenges according to their own ability. It means giving children the freedom to decide how high to climb, to explore the woods, get dirty, play hide 'n seek, balance, tumble and rough-house, especially outdoors, so they can be active, build confidence, autonomy and resilience, develop skills, solve problems and learn their own limits. It's letting kids be kids—healthier, more active kids.

Embrace the outdoors for learning, socialization and physical activity opportunities, in various weather conditions—including rain and snow. Risky active play is an important part of childhood and should not be eliminated from childcare. Risk plays an important function in healthy childhood development. Children need to experience appropriate levels of risk in their play in order to feel challenged, learn, test their limits, and set boundaries for themselves and others.

Extracts from "Risk-Benefit Assessment for Outdoor Play: A Canadian Toolkit"



Hillside House Program Ratios and Facilitators

We maintain low ratios as it helps to more deeply support children's play and development. Small groups also allow children and families to get to know each other better while building community.

For Drop-Off programs, the facilitator:child ratio will not exceed 1:5. There must always be two responsible adults on site during programming or the program will be cancelled.

Ratio may increase to 1:3 or 1:1 to provide adequate support for children with special needs. Program costs for participants will reflect the required support ratio.

For Family Programs, children will be accompanied by their own parents or guardians (at least 16 years old) who will be responsible for their care and safety during activities. This must be a registered guardian who is familiar with the Hillside House Handbook and the Assumption of Risk Informed Consent.

Family-Run programs require a registered volunteer to facilitate the program. This person will be familiar with the Hillside policies and procedures and will oversee health and safety for the duration of programming.

All program sessions require a qualified First Aider present.

The Owner/R.E.C.E./FNS Practitioner is available to consult with parents and staff in planning programming. She may drop in, supervise, co-host, make recommendations, amend, or suspend any program as she sees fit to uphold Hillside House's mission, values, policies, or procedures.

Who can volunteer or help facilitate program activities?

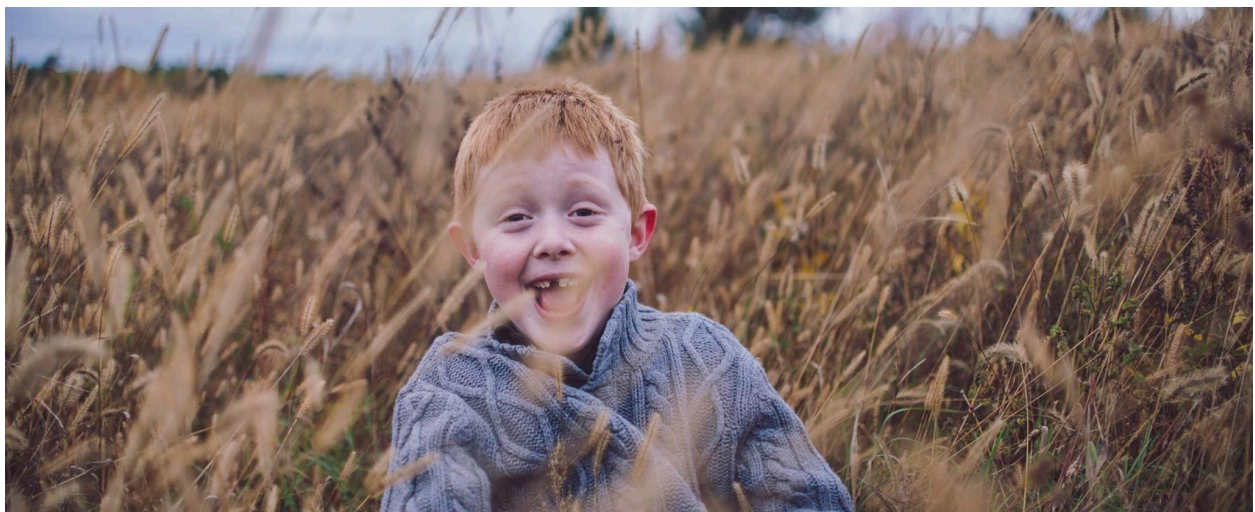
We invite families to get involved in the various activities and to take ownership in the programs. Maybe you would like to be a designated First Aider, or assist with campfires as the "Fire Watch" or you would like to lead homeschooling activities. If you wish to lead an activity or volunteer, please fill out a volunteer form and we will provide a letter for your application for a Vulnerable Sector Screening. We value your time and appreciate your dedication!



Child Protection Policy

Hillside House is committed to taking a proactive position regarding the prevention of child abuse. All volunteers and family members who are leading an activity will have passed a Vulnerable Sector Screening with the OPP.

In accordance with the Child and Family Services Act, it is the responsibility of every person in Ontario, including a person who performs professional or official duties with respect to children, to immediately report to a Children's Aid Society if they suspect that child abuse has occurred or if a child is at risk of abuse.



Prohibited Practices

The following practices are not permitted:

- Corporal punishment of the child (which may include but is not limited to hitting, spanking, slapping, pinching).
- Physical restraint of the child, such as confining the child to a chair, car seat, stroller or other device for the purpose of discipline, or in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child from hurting themselves or someone else, and is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent.
- Locking the exits of the premises for the purpose of confining the child or confining the child in an area or room without adult supervision, unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the agency's emergency management policies and procedures.

Behaviour Guidance

The well-being of children in our care is a priority at Hillside House. We choose positive forms of behavior guidance with emphasis on connection, communication, empowerment, and problem solving. We manage most behaviour proactively by using a developmentally appropriate lense for program and intervention planning - nurturing a responsive emotional climate and providing a safe, engaging, sensory appropriate space.



Guidance and discipline will:

- consider the child's developmental level and their needs
- value children's emotions and perspectives
- be implemented in a positive and consistent manner
- target the specific behaviour/choices without belittling the child
- make expectations clear and consistent
- empower and support children in developing appropriate behaviour and strategies
- work as a team with parents and address concerns as they arise
- incorporate therapeutic recommendations for specific behaviours if the child already has a professionally developed intervention plan
- support interoception, self-regulation, self-esteem, perspective taking, and communication
- safeguard the wellbeing of all participants and staff

At Hillside House **inappropriate behaviour** is defined as using actions or words that make others feel uncomfortable or unsafe. **Unsafe behaviour** is defined as any behaviour that puts a child or adult at risk. This includes not responding when called, running, hiding, taking risk without consulting staff, and not following guidelines so that behaviour becomes potentially dangerous to the child or others.

In the case of inappropriate/unsafe behaviour the following steps will be taken:

- The caregiver or educator should remove the child from proximity of the group so that they can work together to define the inappropriate/unsafe behaviour and create a plan to modify it.
- Be consistent with expectations.

For drop-off programs the facilitators will inform parents/guardians (by phone or at the end of the day face-to-face) of the specific behaviour and consult to discover the cause. Together, the parent, facilitator, and the child (if appropriate) will develop strategies to support adaptive behaviour, or to meet the child's needs. Prioritize successful strategies and interventions that can consistently be used across multiple settings.

For more complex or sensitive situations, the program coordinator will address the concerns with parents. Consider how increased staff ratio might meet a child's individual needs. Is 1:1 support required/available? In the case that a child's behaviour is consistently inappropriate or unsafe for the child/others, and the above process has not resolved the concerning behaviour, program participation may be temporarily suspended or registration may be cancelled.

General Communication

Hillside House will communicate with families predominantly via email or facebook. To reach us in a timely manner, please send an email to manage.hillsidehouse@gmail.com. Please be sure to communicate the following:

- if you will be late/absent
- if your child is ill with a communicable disease
- if your child is being treated for lice

Emergency Communication

In the event of an emergency at Hillside House, parents/guardians will be contacted by telephone once the emergency personnel (if needed) have been contacted and/or the paramedics have taken over medical treatment.

There is a landline phone on site in the carport next to the first Aid Kit for emergency use. The phone number is (613) 635-3907. The educator/facilitator will carry a cell phone during field & forest activities for emergency communication.

Questions, Concerns and Grievances

Our goal is for every child and their family in the Hillside House community to feel comfortable and supported as they learn about the natural world, play, connect, create, and explore outdoors. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding your own or your child's activities at Hillside, please speak with the activity leader or program facilitator. If you or the facilitator feel that you require an extended or more focused conversation than can be had in the moment, plans can be made to have another conversation at a later moment.

Should you feel that your concerns have not been adequately addressed, please send an email to manage.hillsidehouse@gmail.com. Every attempt will be made to answer questions and to resolve matters in a fair and satisfactory manner. This handbook will serve as a reference for health, safety, procedure and protocol. The owner of Hillside House has the final say in decisions pertaining to programs, participant/staff dismissals, as well as to refunds or matters not included in this handbook.

Environmental Sustainability

One of the features of activities at Hillside house is that sessions are held in the same natural space over a period of time, allowing participants to become very comfortable in and knowledgeable about the area. We believe that it is only through a deep connection to place the children grow up to be stewards of the land. Although this is very positive for learning, it can have an adverse environmental effect due to overuse of an area. The fields and forests that we access do not belong to us and are used by others for farming, trapping, logging, and hunting in appropriate seasons. Consideration and planning allow us to find a balance whereby we promote children's connection to Nature through exposure and meaningful experience while at the same time fostering an ethic of care and sustainable use of the land we are connecting to. We minimize our ecological impact by rotating our sites for play, staying on trails where they exist and keeping activities with the highest impact in our main areas near our buildings.

At Hillside House environmental sustainability is at the heart of our motivation for running programs. We therefore conduct ongoing ecological impact assessment of our presence in the forest, as well as neighbouring farmer's fields, taking many factors into account.

As often as possible, when selecting materials for activities, we choose natural materials, renewable resources, reusable items or recyclable materials to decrease our ecological impact. Incorporating loose parts into our everyday programming not only contributes to more creative thinking and problem solving for children, but it supports sustainable practice and fosters environmental stewardship. Many of the structures around the yard were planned and built with locally sourced, repurposed, or recycled materials. We love finding creative ways to keep materials out of the landfill!

Our journey to sustainability and earth friendly programming is just beginning. Whether we are crafting with recycled materials, non toxic paints and recycled paper, or gardening with mulch that we chipped ourselves, using chicken scat as fertilizer and making compost from food scraps to grow our own food, or creating a lending library of second hand outdoor gear to share, there are certainly more ways that we can be ecologically and socially conscious in our use of resources. We hope that you will share your ideas and inspirations with us as we get acquainted with each other and with the land.

Handbook References and Gratitude

With much appreciation for the people and publications that influenced this document. A number of references and resources were consulted in developing the Hillside House handbook - in particular :

Child and Nature Alliance of Canada Outdoor Practitioners Course

Ottawa Forest and Nature School Handbook

Out and About Forest and Nature School Handbook 2022

Forest and Nature School Canada:

A Head, Heart, Hands On Approach to Outdoor Learning
(curriculum/resource guide)

Special thanks to the children whose pictures liven up this handbook and beckon us to join them in play.

