

Caregiver Handbook

Outdoor School 2021/22



Pine Project



Last updated: September 9th, 2021

Welcome to the Pine Project!

The Pine Project fosters confidence, competence, resilience and connection to nature through transformative outdoor experiences for people of all ages in Toronto and beyond.

Our work inspires a vital re-connection between people and nature, community and oneself. We work primarily with children and families in the urban context, delivering innovative year-round outdoor programming.



Our goal is to inspire nature connection in childhood, supporting children to grow into healthy, active, and resilient people.



We extend our deep gratitude to the generations of People – past and present – who have tended this land, the Dish with One Spoon Territory. We acknowledge the abiding wisdom of the Dish with One Spoon treaty between the Anishnabeg and Haudenosaunee that bound them to share the territory and protect the land. The ‘Dish’ represents what is now known as southern Ontario; we all eat out of the dish with only one spoon, ensuring that our dish is never empty. This symbolizes our ongoing roles and responsibilities of sustaining the land and treating each other and all living things with equity and respect.

The Pine Project operates on the land we now call Toronto, which has been a site of human activity for thousands of years. ‘Toronto’ or ‘Tkaronto’, a Mohawk word meaning “where the trees stand in the water,”* is part of the traditional territory of many Nations, including the Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Haudenosaunee, and most recently the Mississaugas of the Credit (of the Anishnabeg Peoples).

We are so fortunate to learn and play in two historically significant Valleys of the city:

- The Lower Don also known as ‘Wonscotonach’, translating to “burning bright point” or “black burnt country”, may refer to the practice of torchlight salmon spearing on the river, or to the impact of fire on the landscape.* The Mississaugas of the Credit had a seasonal settlement here and fished and hunted the marshlands for muskrat, duck and deer.
- The Humber, also known as ‘Niwa’ah Onega’gaih’ih’ or “little thundering waters.”* For at least 12,000 years an Indigenous trail followed the edge of the bluffs along this section of the Humber River valley. Just up river from where we gather weekly is Baby’s Point, a neighbourhood built on the same spot as ‘Teiaiaagon,’ once a village of the Seneca and later the Mississaugas of the Credit.

Today, Toronto is home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples from across Turtle Island. We acknowledge the history and ongoing process of colonization, and recognize that in order to realize the promise and challenge of reconciliation, acknowledgement must be coupled with action. We seek to move forward with humility, respect, gratitude and meaningful relationship building.*We respectfully acknowledge the many histories and several translations associated with the history of this land.



Contents

This package contains information on the following topics:

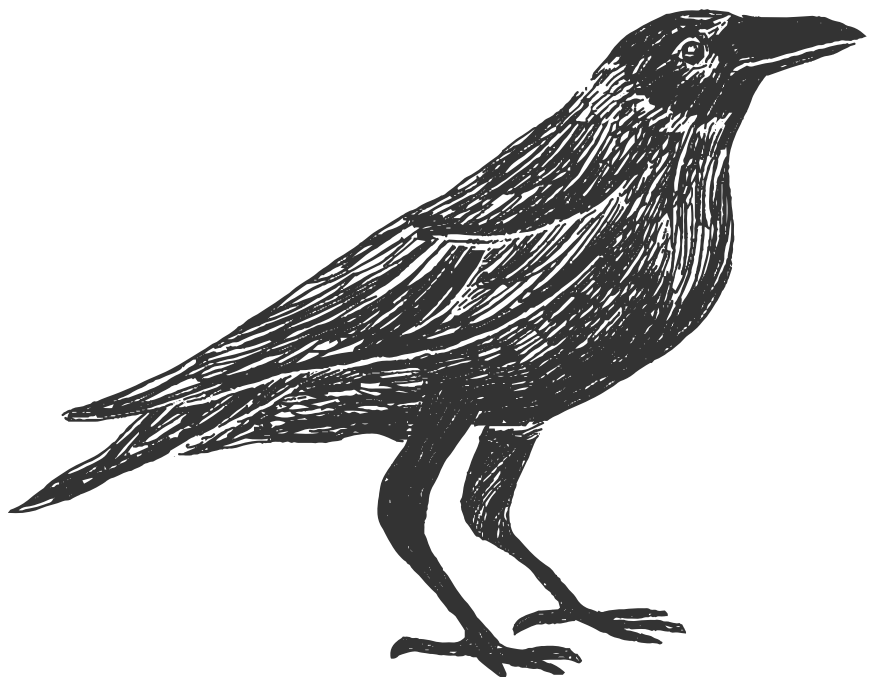
Health & Safety

What to Bring Checklist

Behaviour & Expectations

Communication

Directions



Health and Safety

We're committed to providing a safe environment for participants, staff and families.

Pine programs will adhere to provincial and municipal public health guidelines as they continue to evolve, which means the details in this handbook may change. We're continuing to closely monitor for updates and we're dedicated to communicating any changes to families as quickly as possible. Our [Covid-19 webpage](#) will be updated regularly and registered families will be emailed directly.

We all play a role in limiting the virus' spread in our community. Please visit the [City of Toronto's Covid-19 webpage](#) for more information on how you can protect yourself and others, how to identify and respond to symptoms of Covid-19, and other resources.

Please read the following details carefully and reach out to our team with any questions or concerns.

Screening Procedures

At-home online screening:

- Each morning, take your child's temperature and complete our [online Covid-19 Screening Form](#).
- This form only allows for "No" answers to the screening questions. If your answer is "Yes" to any of the questions, please keep your child home and email our team at info@pineproject.org to notify us of the reason for their absence.
- Upon submitting the form, a confirmation email will be sent to the email you've provided. PLEASE BRING THIS CONFIRMATION EMAIL WITH YOU (ELECTRONIC OR PRINTED) TO PROGRAM FOR DROP OFF. Staff will confirm the date that the confirmation email was sent at drop-off (screening must be done the day of program).

If online screening is not possible:

- Any participants who arrive to program without a screening confirmation email will be screened on site upon arrival. Please see the sample screening form at the end of this welcome package for screening questions.

Drop Off Procedure

Caregivers* are required to bring their child's screening confirmation email with them to drop-off OR be prepared to participate in screening on-site.

***If someone other than the legal guardians will be dropping off your child, you must complete the Drop-off/Pick-up Authorization form online. Authorized drop-offs must bring the participant's screening confirmation email OR be able to screen the participant on site (must be 18+ yo & have knowledge of the participant's health).**

Pick Up Procedure

****Please arrive 5 minutes before the end of program.**** Caregivers* are asked to wait outside of the group's space until an instructor invites them to pick up. Please be sure to maintain physical distance at all times.

***If someone other than the legal guardians will be picking up the participant, you must complete the Drop-off/Pick-up Authorization form online.**

*****Caregivers are required to wear a mask at drop-off and pick-up.*****

Running Early or Late

Dropping off and picking up outside of the scheduled times will be especially challenging due to modified procedures. We ask that caregivers do their best to respect drop-off and pick-up times.

Late drop-off/ Early pick-up:

If you need to drop-off late or pick-up early, please let instructors know ahead of time if possible. Please stay in your vehicle and call the field phone to discuss the drop-off/pick-up logistics with the instructors.

Late pick-up:

A late fee of \$1/minute will be charged for any child who has not been picked up by the end of program. Upon a late pick-up, staff will inform families that a late fee will be charged and our office team will be in touch to collect the fee electronically.

Health and Safety

Special Needs

We do our very best to provide a positive environment for all of our participants. If a child requires special accommodations beyond what was described upon registration, please reach out to our team. Elaborating as much as possible allows us to understand how best to support youth's diverse needs.

While we may not be able to meet every participant's needs, we try our best to provide a wonderful experience for all.

Illness

If your child is ill or if you know of a planned absence from program, please keep them home and email info@pineproject.org.

We will be monitoring participants for signs and symptoms of Covid-19 throughout program.

If a participant falls ill with Covid-19 symptoms while at program, they will be isolated from the rest of the group. Caregivers will be contacted to pickup their child immediately. Please ensure that you've provided two emergency contacts who are able to pick up within 1 hour of being contacted, if needed.

We develop our policies and procedures based on guidance from Toronto Public Health. As guidance continues to change in response to the evolving Covid-19 situation in Ontario, our policies and procedures will be updated accordingly. Please see our ['Information for School Year Families' webpage](#) for the most up-to-date policies related to program screening, when participants can return to program after being ill, and more.

Physical Distancing

We will encourage physical distancing between participants, caregivers, and staff within a group whenever possible. However, physical distancing may not be possible in situations such as providing first aid, managing participant behaviour and emotions, during safety and emergency situations or inclement weather. In these cases, participants and staff are required to use face coverings.

Masks

Children must bring two clean masks to program each program day, as masks can become wet and soiled throughout program.

Participants will be required to wear masks if/when physical distancing cannot be maintained.* Children should bring paper bags, breathable cloth bags, or Ziploc bags to store clean and dirty masks (separately) when not wearing a mask (plastic bags are not recommended).

We recognize that this might be frustrating and difficult for some children. Our instructors will do their best to explain why we need to wear masks and manage the amount of time that masks are required during programs. Families can also help by talking to children about masks prior to program, and finding masks that are comfortable and breathable.

Participants are required to wear masks underneath their winter clothing. If your child is wearing a scarf, neck warmer, balaclava, etc. please note that they will still need to wear a mask underneath when unable to physically distance.

Thanks to the nature of our programming, there is often opportunity to physical distance. Our intention is to create space for mask-free outdoor experiences in every session.

Please refer to [Public Health Ontario](#) and [Public Health Toronto's](#) recommendations on how to choose and properly use face coverings.



Participants who do not pass the Covid-19 screening will not be permitted to attend program.



Health & Safety

Hygiene and Sanitation

We are enhancing all hygiene and sanitation practices, including:

- Increasing the frequency of routine cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces and equipment.
- Requiring frequent hand washing/sanitizing. Hand sanitizer ($\geq 70\%$ alcohol) will be used when soap and water is not available.
- Enforcing strict no-sharing policies for food and personal items.
- Reminding participants and staff to practice proper respiratory etiquette, such as sneezing or coughing into a sleeve or elbow.

Ticks

Black legged ticks exist in Toronto city parks. We do our best to teach tick awareness in a positive and clear way. We suggest that you inform yourself on ticks, how to prevent and check for them, and options for their removal by reading the information sheet from the Ontario Government at:
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/lyme-disease>.

Washrooms

The parks are not equipped with washrooms or running water. There will be a private portable toilet available for the exclusive use of Pine Project participants and staff, which will be regularly cleaned and sanitized.

It is important that participants are able to use the washroom themselves to the extent possible, and to communicate their washroom needs.

If your child struggles with communicating their washroom needs or requires washroom assistance, please let us know. Hand sanitizer ($\geq 70\%$ alcohol) will be used when soap and water is not available.

Weather

We do not cancel programs due to weather. Programs will run consistently throughout the winter, in all weather conditions. We employ strategies to stay warm: keeping active, finding shelter, setting up a tent or tarps.

We have comprehensive emergency plans for all types of weather while at program, and our staff are trained in how to assess and manage risk. Please reach out to our office team if you're concerned and would like to know more.



Health & Safety

Supplemental Forms

In order to ensure a happy, healthy program culture we need to collect some important information from all families. Caregivers, please ensure that you fill out the following supplemental forms as they apply to your child. This year, it is especially critical that all families submit these forms.

Please note that there will be no hardcopy forms available for you to complete at program. If mandatory forms have not been completed online prior to the start of program, we may not be able to welcome the participant.

Please complete all registration and supplemental forms in detail.

- ☐ Secondary Guardian Waivers (Mandatory for ALL participants with 2 legal guardians)
- ☐ Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan (Mandatory for any participant with a known anaphylactic allergy)
- ☐ Permission to Administer Medication Form (Mandatory for any participant taking medication at program)
- ☐ Drop-off /Pick-up Authorization Form (Required if someone other than the listed guardians will be dropping off/picking-up)
- ☐ Self-Sign Out Form (Optional - if you would like your child to be able to sign themselves out)
- ☐ Friend Request Form (optional)



You can access all forms by logging into your account on our online registration system.

*****All supplemental forms must be submitted before you will be able to join us*****

Medications

Wherever possible, please administer medications for participants prior to coming to program.

If the participant requires medications at program, please complete the Permission to Administer Medication Form, available in the online registration system.

Please provide enough medication for the session, and ensure all medication is sent in the original container or pharmacy-issued blister pack. Non-prescription medications must also be in the original container with proper labeling. All medications must be turned over to the instructors upon arrival.

Any staff administering medication will be required to wear the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (i.e. goggles, face mask, gloves, etc).

Allergies

If the participant has any anaphylactic (life-threatening) allergies, please complete the Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan Form, available in the online registration system.

Please provide two epipens for your child, as well as a pouch/fanny pack so your child can carry one epipen with them at all times.

Please let your instructors know if your child suffers from seasonal allergies.



What to Bring Checklist

Each day we will have a new adventure in the park following our inspirations and our keen senses of exploration. It's hard to say where the trails might take us, so it's important to pack lightly in a single backpack!

Participants will generally be required to carry their own backpacks, with all their belongings, themselves throughout the day.

All personal belongings (including backpacks) must be clearly labeled with the participant's full name.

Please send your child with:

Clothing

☐ Weather Appropriate Clothing - REQUIRED

Make sure to dress for the weather. We are outdoors in all weather (rain, shine, cold and snow!)

Cold Weather: Insulated and waterproof boots, snowsuits, warm gloves or mitts, scarves, and hats.

Rainy Days: Rain boots and rain jackets.

Please ensure that your child arrives at program with sunscreen applied!

☐ Extra Clothing - REQUIRED

Please send an extra set of clothes in your child's backpack (labelled with their name). They'll need these in case of a puddle encounter!

Other

☐ Masks - REQUIRED

Participants must bring a clean non-medical mask each program day. Please refer to [Public Health Ontario](#) and [Public Health Toronto's](#) recommendations on how to choose and properly use masks, and talk to your child about how to properly wear their mask. (Please refer to the Health & Safety section of this Handbook for more info.)

☐ Hand Sanitizer - REQUIRED (if not allergic)

☐ Carving Tool - Recommended

We use the [MoraKniv](#) carving tool, but any fixed blade knife with a blade length of no more than 2.5 inches (63mm) is permitted. Please have your carving tool checked by a staff member.

☐ Nature Journal/Notebook & Pencil / Pencil Crayons - Recommended

☐ A favourite field guide - Recommended

Food & Drink

☐ Snacks

We will stop for snacks each program day. Please pack litter-free and nut-free food for your child to munch on.

Children should be able to open, eat, and pack up their snacks themselves. Please practice opening containers and water bottles with your child before program.

☐ Water - REQUIRED

Please send your child with all the drinking water they require for the duration of program. We will not be able to refill water on site.

Lost & Found

Given the circumstances this year, we will not be managing Lost & Found.

All belongings must be labeled!

Please DO NOT bring:



Anything valuable or electronic, or distracting toys.



Behaviour & Expectations

At Pine, we're committed to living our values of diversity, equity, inclusion and justice. It's important that all people at programs feel included, safe and free from discrimination. Any language or behaviour intended to make participants or staff feel unwelcome or uncomfortable based on identity or ability will not be tolerated, and may lead to the participant being asked to leave programs.

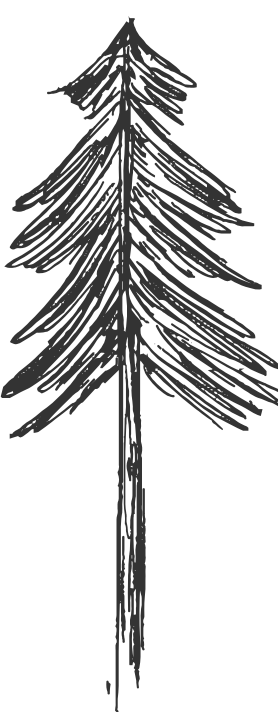
As always, we are committed to maintaining a safe and positive learning environment for participants and staff. Our programs aim to provide space and freedom to explore and learn, supported by clear agreements and expectations for participant behaviour. The reality of Covid-19 requires us all to be even more aware of how we are interconnected, and how our actions impact others.

To ensure everyone's health and safety at program, we are asking that participants honour some basic agreements and are outlining stricter consequences for behaviour that threatens the health and safety of others. Please read and talk about the Code of Conduct with your child.

Code of Conduct:

Our core agreements: Take care of 1) Self, 2) Others, 3) Nature.

Participants must be able to take care of themselves and others by:

- 
- ☐ Physical distancing: Staying at least 2m away from others and using masks when needed
 - ☐ Listening to and following staff instructions
 - ☐ Following and staying within their group
 - ☐ Not sharing items such as food and drinks
 - ☐ Practicing healthy personal hygiene, such as sneezing or coughing into their arm
 - ☐ Washing their hands themselves
 - ☐ Using the washroom themselves
 - ☐ Carrying all their items in their own backpack
 - ☐ Caring for their own personal needs, such as eating, staying hydrated, changing wet socks (with verbal help and encouragement from staff)

Communicating with staff:

- ☐ Letting staff know if they have a physical need (eg. washroom, feeling sick, thirsty)
- ☐ Letting staff know if something is bothering them

Treating everyone with respect.

- ☐ Bullying will not be tolerated.
- ☐ Respecting the personal space of other participants.
- ☐ Engaging in physical conflict with other participants will not be tolerated.
- ☐ Discrimination in any form will not be tolerated.

Participants must also take care of nature by respecting and caring for our natural surroundings.

Supporting participants as they learn to integrate these expectations is a priority for our staff. It is our intention to work with caregivers and participants to address behaviour challenges as they arise.

If these agreements are broken, staff will contact the participant's guardians to discuss strategies and align expectations. If the participant's behaviour does not improve and puts others at risk, the participant may be asked to leave the program.

Communication



If you're running early or late, or in case of emergency, you can contact the field staff (during program hours) at:

WEST Field Phone:
(437) 771 1176

EAST Field Phone:
(437) 771 3225

For all inquiries, please contact our administrative team:

Contact us by phone:

(416) 792 2772

Contact us by email:

info@pineproject.org

Providing Feedback

At the Pine Project, we believe that transparent communication is the best way to work through a problem. We are committed to gathering feedback and hearing all voices. If something comes up that makes you or your child uncomfortable, please let us know by taking the following steps:

1. Talk to a lead instructor in your program. Let them know you have some feedback you'd like to share, and ask when a good time would be to share it. They will bring the feedback to their team for discussion.
2. Ask lots of questions and be curious about the issue. Find out as much as you can before forming a conclusion or judgment.
3. If you feel as though your concern has not been addressed, contact our office team.

Program Dates

This is a year round program. Sessions occur on a weekly (or monthly Weekend Wanderers) basis between:

Fall season: October 4 - December 10, 2021

Winter season: January 4 - March 4, 2022

Spring season: March 28 - June 3, 2022

*Holidays excluded



Parent Participation



Our programs are one part of the bigger picture of your child's development. We've found that the more we support families to be involved, the richer the experience for the participant. This is why we love to include family members as much as possible. Here's how:

Collaborating With Staff

Our goal is to form a solid partnership with the parents of each child. We really value your input and aspire to support you in achieving your family's goals.

Take Home Challenges

Staff may provide kids and families with nature-related mysteries and questions to research at home. Please let us know when you've learned something new! We'll try to make time to share it with the group during our circle!

Supporting Your Child's Independence

One of the expectations in our programs is that your child takes care of themselves. When dropping off or picking up your child from our programs, please encourage them to do things for themselves. Doing up their backpack, zipping up their jacket, or putting on their shoes themselves are all steps towards independence. Although these seem like small tasks, doing them independently helps children take responsibility. As our relationship with them grows, they will have the opportunity to take on more tasks. Sometimes this can even serve to make them more helpful at home!

Directions - WEST END

King's Mill Park

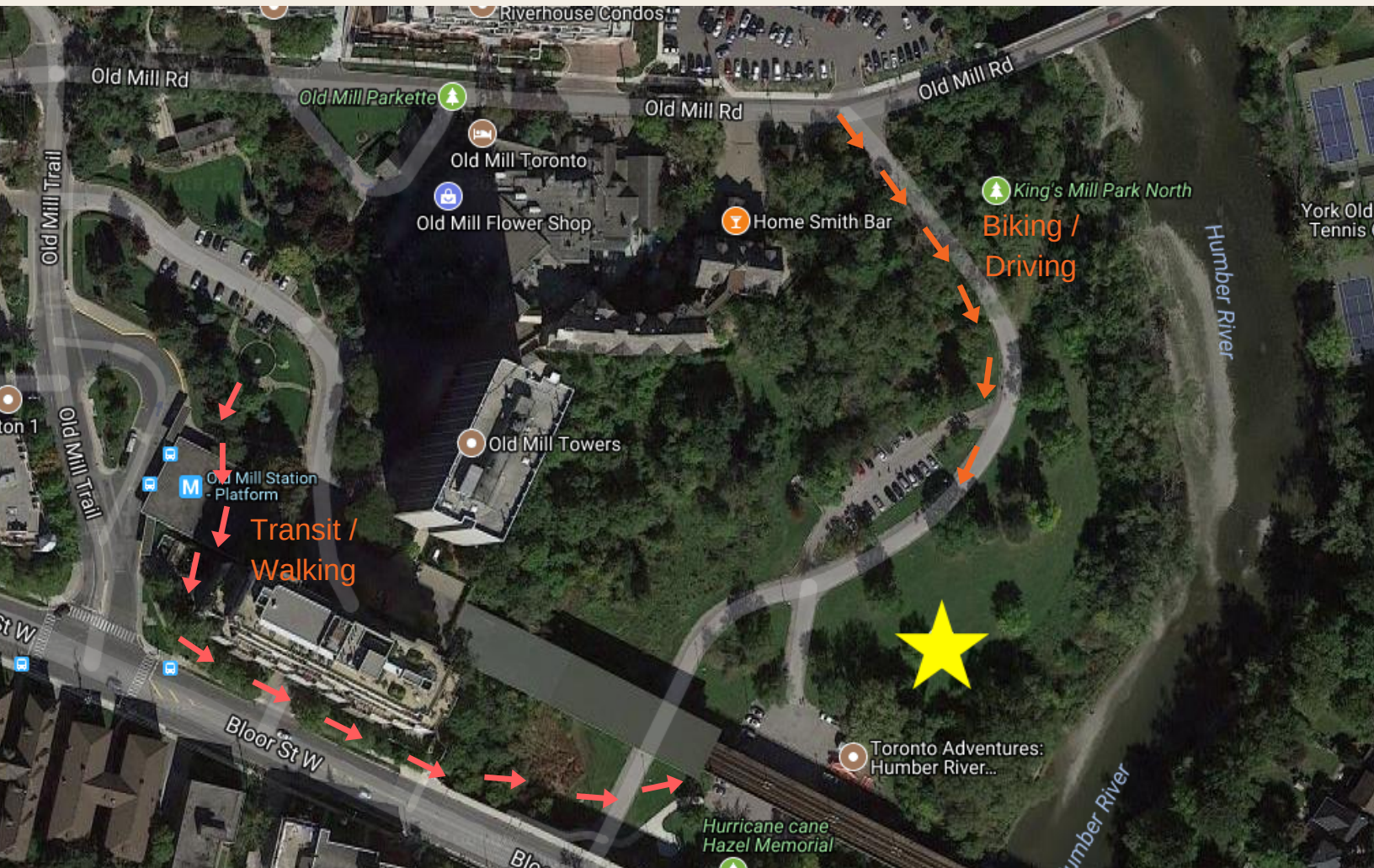
43.64958, -79.49202

Transit/Walking Instructions

- Take the subway to Old Mill Station.
- When you exit, turn left out of the station.
- Turn left again onto Bloor St. Stay on the North side as you walk East.
- When you approach the bridge you will see a set of stairs on your left side. If you cross over the Humber River you have gone too far.
- Take the stairs down and turn Left, walking Northeast, past the parking lot until you see us in the nearby field.

Biking/Driving Instructions

- Heading West on Bloor St, turn right on Old Mill Trail (where the subway station is) and then another right on Old Mill Rd. Off of Old Mill Rd. you will see an entrance to King's Mill Park on the right.
- Turn right into the park and follow this paved road, past the first parking lot on your right. You will see us in the big field to your left (just before the second parking lot).



Directions - EAST END

Stan Wadlow Park

43°42'00.1"N - 79°18'47.1"W

Central Meeting Location: Next to the parking lot

Transit/Walking Instructions

- Take the Line 2 (Bloor-Danforth towards Kennedy) Subway to Main Street Station
- At Main Street Station, take the 87A Cosburn to Broadview Station Via East York Acres bus for 10 stops
- Get off the bus at East York Acres Parking Lot At Haldon Ave
- Turn right onto Haldon ave and continue towards the meeting location

Biking/Driving Instructions

- Heading East on the Danforth, turn left onto Woodbine Avenue.
- Continue North and turn right onto Cosburn Avenue.
- Continue East and turn left onto Haldon Ave
- Continue until the designated parking lot

