

# Caregiver Handbook

Outdoor School 2024-25



Pine Project



Last updated: September 4th, 2024

# Welcome to the Pine Project!

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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 ‘Teiaiagon,’ once a village of the Seneca and later the Mississaugas of the Credit.

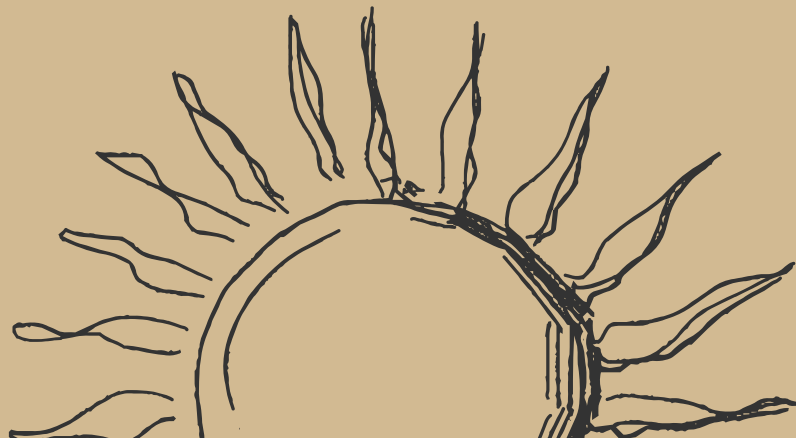
Today, Toronto is home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples from across Turtle Island. We acknowledge the history and ongoing process of colonization, and recognize that in order to realize the promise and challenge of reconciliation, acknowledgement must be coupled with action. We seek to 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.



# A Place to Belong

We are deeply committed to creating a community where everyone belongs. As is true in nature, we believe that diversity is essential for a strong and vibrant community. We aim to include and celebrate the many facets that contribute to our human identity, including gender identity, race, ability, and sexual orientation. Our goal is to craft a culture where people are seen and acknowledged for their shared humanity as well as their unique individuality. Our approach is grounded in acknowledgement of the long-standing and ongoing systems of racism, inequity, and injustice that prevent many from accessing and feeling welcome in the outdoors. We strive to promote inclusive policies and practices, including providing accommodations that promote equity and removing barriers to access wherever possible. Out at programs you will see us living these values by acknowledging the original stewards of this land, inviting participants to share their pronouns and other affirming practices, using child-centred approaches to create space for all voices, and addressing any oppressive behaviours that arise.



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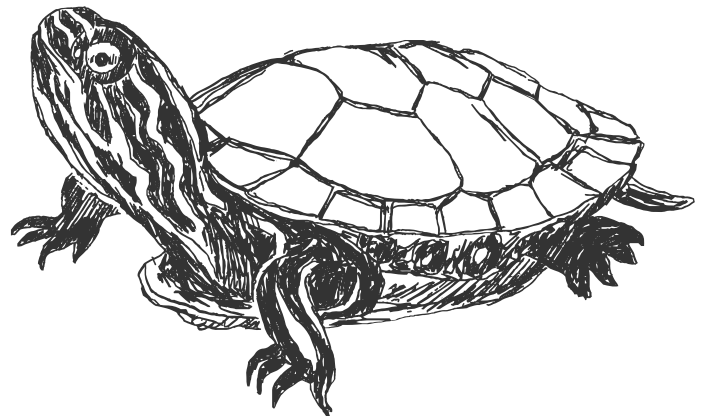
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Communication

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Directions

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All communications and information about our organization can be provided in accessible formats or with communication supports upon request.

# Program Logistics

## Program Dates

Sessions occur on a weekly or monthly basis between:

**Fall Season:** September 30 - December 6, 2024

**Winter Season:** January 6 - February 28, 2025

**Spring Season:** March 24 - June 6, 2025

Please note that programs do not run on Statutory Holidays.

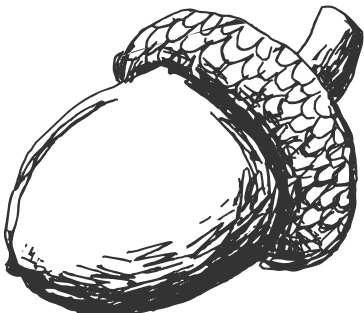


## Pick Up Procedure

We're excited to be able to welcome caregivers to Closing Circle! At the end of each program day, we close our time together in a Closing Circle. During this time, the group reflects on their learnings and adventures of the day. Please arrive 15 minutes before the program end time if you wish to participate in Closing Circle.

If you are not planning on attending Closing Circle, please arrive 5 minutes before the end of program.

If someone other than the listed guardians will be picking up the participant, you must complete the Pick-up Authorization form online.



## Running Early or Late

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. When you're on your way, we ask that you call/text the Field Phone number so that we can arrange for someone to meet you.

### Late pick-up:

If a caregiver is aware that they will be late, please contact instructors on the field phone.

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, our office team will be in touch to collect the fee electronically.

# Health & Safety

## Managing Risk in the Woods

At Pine programs, **we won't avoid all risks.** Taking on small, measured risks allows children to learn boundaries and experience natural consequences. We teach participants to manage risks and build skills to make good decisions.

Participants may have the opportunity to practice skills like carving or sawing, with support and supervision by our experienced instructors. With that being said, the responsibility of using carving tools also comes with the possibility of injury. All of these activities will be introduced in a progressive manner to ensure that your participant learns and grows while staying safe.

## Additional Support

We do our very best to provide a positive environment for all of our participants. If a child requires additional support 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 a 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.

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## 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.

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 will be used when soap and water is not available.

## Weather

Programs will run each day, in all weather conditions.

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.

We do not typically cancel programs due to weather. In the event that extreme weather jeopardizes the health and safety of participants and staff, the Pine Project may choose to cancel the session.

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## Sunscreen

**All participants must come with sunscreen pre-applied and their own bottle of sunscreen in their backpack.**

Participants should know how to reapply sunscreen themselves. Staff will encourage participants to reapply sunscreen as needed.

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## Illness

If a participant falls ill while at program, caregivers will be contacted to pickup their child. Please ensure that you've provided two emergency contacts who are able to pick up within 1 hour of being contacted, if needed.

 **If your child is experiencing any symptoms of communicable illness, please keep them home.** 

# Health & Safety

## Ticks

Ticks exist in Toronto city parks. We do our best to teach tick awareness in a positive and clear way. We recommend that kids change out of their clothes when they get home each day and conduct tick checks each night. If we find a tick embedded into your child's skin, we will phone home immediately. We do not remove the tick.

To inform yourself on ticks, how to prevent and check for them, and options for their removal, please see:  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/lyme-disease>.

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## Air Quality

We consistently monitor the air quality and follow public health recommendations from Environment Canada and Public Health to dictate the level of activity for our groups. As our programs operate entirely outdoors, we will adapt and modify our programs when air quality deteriorates to avoid physical activity and strenuous activities, support participants to wear masks if desired, and monitor for symptoms. The health of our community is of primary importance to us, and we understand that some families may decide not to participate in programs on days with poor air quality.

## 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. Please note that there will be no hardcopy forms available for you to complete at the program.

- 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)
- Pick-up Authorization Form (optional)
- Friend Request Form (optional) Our intention is to honour any friend requests, but we cannot make any guarantees.
- Self Sign Out Form (optional) If you would like your child to be able to sign themselves out

## 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. Please talk to your child's instructor about taking medications during program.

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## 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. The other will stay in their backpack.

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

Please clearly label all personal belongings (including backpacks).

## Clothing

- Weather Appropriate Clothing**  
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.

**Hot & Sunny Days:** Sunhat and sunscreen.

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

- Extra Clothing**  
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!

## Optional

- Hand Sanitizer**
- Nature Journal/ Notebook & Pencil / Pencil Crayons**
- A favourite field guide**
- Carving Tools - A fixed blade or locking knife (blade length of no more than 2.5 inches/ 63mm)**

\* Staff must approve all carving tools.

\* Participants must keep carving tools in their backpacks until they have asked for and been given permission to use them.

## Food & Drink

- Food**  
Please send your child with all of the food that they will require for the duration of program\*. We will stop for snack breaks each program day. Please pack **litter-free** and **nut-free** food for your child to munch on.

\*Full-day program participants should pack snacks and a lunch.

**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**  
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.

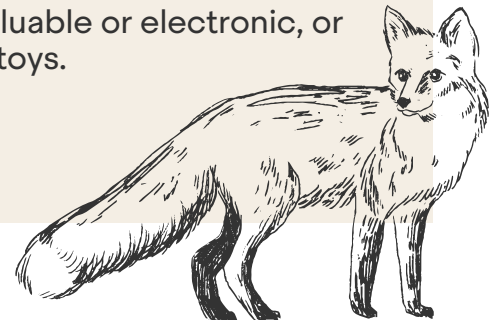
## Lost & Found

If an item is misplaced, you can contact our team at [info@pineproject.org](mailto:info@pineproject.org) or ask your instructors at your next program day.

The Pine Project does not take responsibility for any lost or damaged items.

\* **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.

To ensure everyone's health and safety at program, we are asking that participants honour some basic agreements. 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:

- 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 hand washing, sneezing or coughing into their arm
- 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

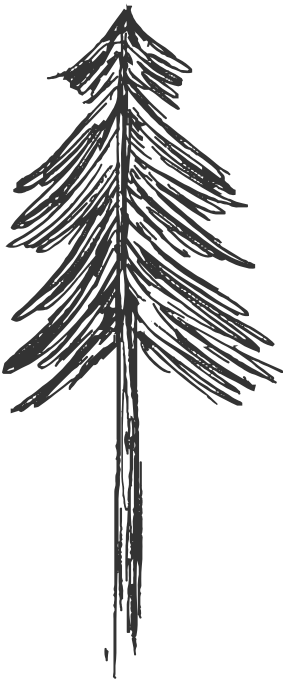
- Bullying will not be tolerated
- Respecting the personal space of other participants
- Engaging in physical conflict with other participants will not be tolerated
- Discrimination in any form will not be tolerated

#### Treating nature with respect

- Taking care of nature and 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.**



# Caregiver 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:

## Closing Circles

Caregivers and siblings are invited to join closing circles, 15 minutes before pick-up, at every session. This gives us a chance to celebrate and share stories about their daily adventures.

## 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!

## 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.

# 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**

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For all inquiries, please contact our administrative team:

Contact us by phone:

**(416) 792 2772**

Contact us by email:

**[info@pineproject.org](mailto: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.



# Directions - WEST END

## King's Mill Park

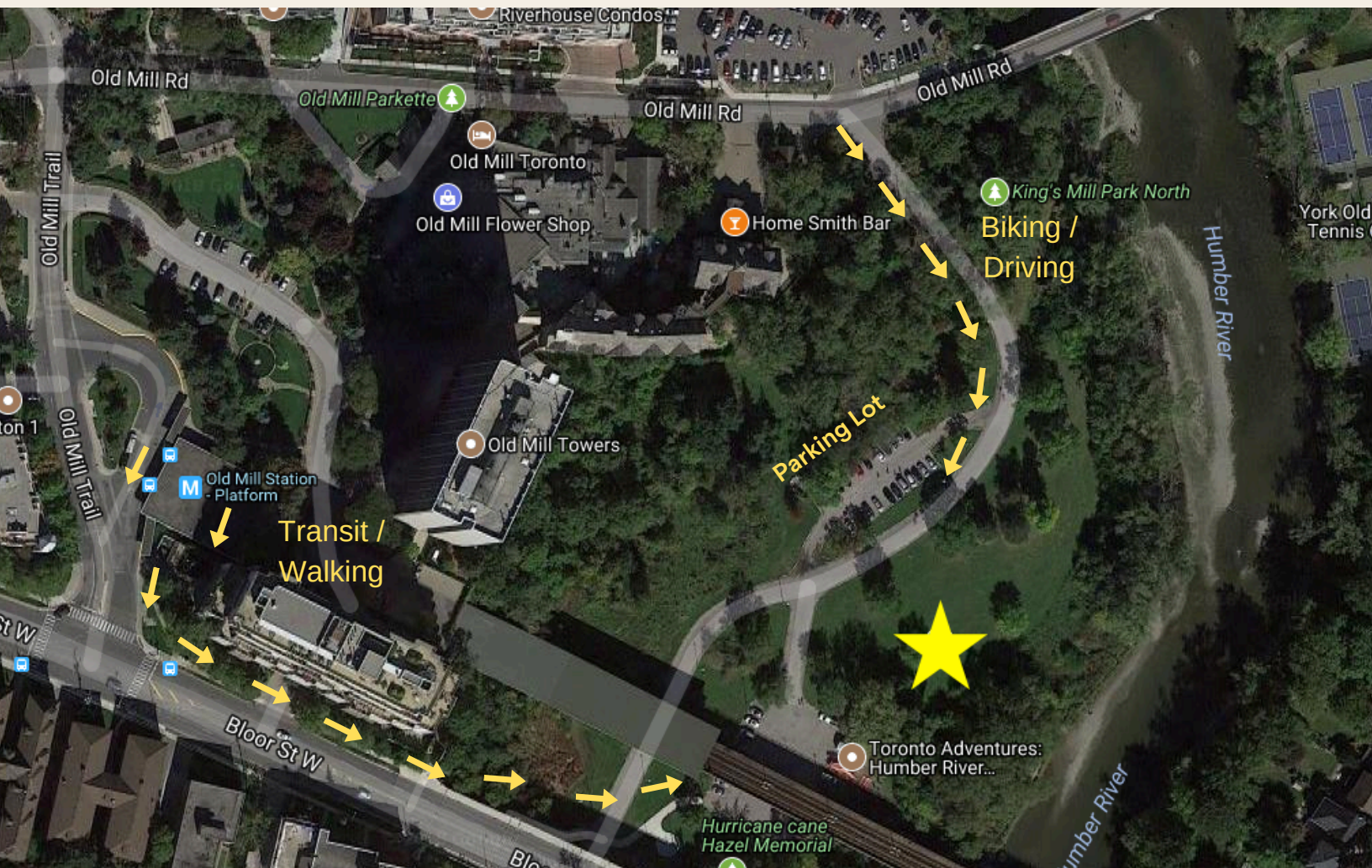
43.64958, -79.49202

### 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°41'58.4"N 79°18'43.5"W

### Transit/Walking Instructions

- Take the Line 2 (Bloor-Danforth) Subway to Main Street Station.
- At Main Street Station take either 87A or 87:
- 87A Cosburn bus towards Broadview Station Via East York Acres for 10 stops.
- Get off the bus at East York Acres and continue down Haldon Ave to the meeting location.
- 87 Cosburn bus towards Broadview Station for 9 stops.
- Get off the bus at Westlake Ave and walk one block west, then turn right onto Haldon ave and continue towards the meeting location.

### Biking/Driving Instructions

- Heading East on 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.

