

Oaks & Acorns

Outdoor School 2026/27



Pine Project



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Land Acknowledgement



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).

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.

Welcome to the Pine Project!

The Pine Project fosters confidence, resilience, learning and connection to nature through transformative outdoor experiences for children and youth in Toronto and beyond. Our programs inspire a vital reconnection between people and nature, community, and oneself.

We work primarily with children and families in urban settings, delivering innovative year-round outdoor programming that blends hands-on learning, joyful exploration, and mentorship in the local natural environment. We support kids to grow into healthy, active, and resilient individuals who carry a love for the natural world throughout their lives.

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.



Program Overview

Oaks & Acorns

Location

Stan Wadlow (East) OR
King's Mill (West)

Timing

9:30am - 11:30am

Program Dates

Sessions occur on a weekly or monthly basis between:

Fall Season: September 29 - December 4, 2026

Winter Season: January 4 - March 5, 2027

Spring Season: March 30 - June 4, 2027

Please note that programs do not run on Statutory Holidays.

In Oaks and Acorns, we help caregivers integrate nature into their family's everyday life. As a group, we take short wanders in nature, share stories and songs, and get to know the plants and animals in our area. We actively teach caregivers mentoring techniques and naturalist knowledge, while children learn experientially. It's also a great chance to connect with a like-minded community, share experiences and advice, and build new friendships.

Program Content Highlights:

- Creating nature connection in your home and day to day life
- Storytelling and songs
- Adventures, wandering and tracking wildlife
- Wild edibles, medicinals, and hazard plants (identification and uses)
- Stewardship and taking care of the land
- Nature-based crafting

Flow of the day!

As the program is guided by natural curiosity and the changing needs of the group, a schedule is rarely followed exactly, but the below gives you a good idea of an average day at program.

9:30am	Sign-in & Opening Circle
9:45am - 11:15am	Nature Activities*
11:15am - 11:30pm	Closing Circle

*The group will stop for snacks at any time during this period depending on group needs.



What to Bring Checklist

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 bring an extra set of clothes in a waterproof bag your child's backpack. They'll need these in case of a puddle encounter!

Optional

☐ Hand Sanitizer

☐ Nature Journal/ Notebook & Pencil / Pencil Crayons

☐ A favourite field guide

Food & Drink

☐ Food

We will stop for snacks each program day. Please pack litter-free and nut-free food.

☐ Water

Please come with all the drinking water you and your child will 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 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.



Health & Safety



Managing Risk in the Woods

At Pine Outdoor School, **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 counsellors. 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.

Being Outdoors

At the Pine Project, we believe that meaningful outdoor experiences happen in all seasons and all kinds of weather. Our programs are designed to help participants build comfort, confidence, and resilience in nature — rain, snow, or shine.

Safety is always our top priority. Because we operate in City of Toronto parks without access to indoor program space, our teams plan carefully for weather variation. We have comprehensive safety plans in place, and staff are trained to assess conditions and manage risk in real time. Our approach focuses on identifying, evaluating, and reducing risk by implementing thoughtful mitigation strategies and modifications. Programs run as scheduled whenever possible to minimize disruption for families, and modifications may include:

- Air quality: When the Air Quality Health Index is high, public health recommends reducing or avoiding strenuous activities outdoors. We focus on quiet, low-intensity alternatives such as crafts, support mask use if desired, and monitor for symptoms.
- High winds: We modify programs by choosing areas that are open or have overhead shelter to avoid risk of falling branches, falling trees, and blowing debris.
- Thunderstorms: We move groups away from tall trees, open areas, and bodies of water, and take shelter under covered areas in the park or tarps in low, dry areas.
- Extreme cold: We keep participants moving to stay warm, and use tents or fires when appropriate. Staff monitor for early signs of cold-related illness and ensure everyone remains properly dressed and comfortable.
- Heavy rain or flooding: We avoid low-lying areas, use well-drained tarp sites, move to higher ground when needed, and have simple alternate exit routes if water blocks regular paths.

Dressing appropriately is an important part of managing risk outdoors. Families help keep participants safe by ensuring they're prepared for the day's weather - for more information on how to dress for the weather please see page 4.

We understand that some families may decide not to participate in programs on some days due to weather, and we encourage families to make decisions that feel right for them. We are unable to offer credits or refunds if your family does not participate. In rare cases where environmental hazards cannot be managed safely, the Pine Project may cancel or shorten a session. Because conditions can change quickly, cancellation decisions are sometimes made close to program time and not solely based on forecasts. Families will be informed by email and text (if opted-in) and, if necessary, phone call.

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about our safety and risk management practices, please reach out to our office team.

Health & Safety

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.

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.

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. Hand sanitizer will be used when soap and water is not available.



Ticks

Ticks exist in Toronto city parks. We do our best to teach tick awareness in a positive and clear way. We recommend that families change out of their clothes when they get home each day and conduct tick checks each night. If a tick is found at programs, 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>.



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

Communication & Feedback

We value respectful, constructive communication and believe it is the foundation for resolving concerns and supporting a positive experience for everyone. We are committed to listening and working collaboratively with families when challenges arise. If you have a question or concern about you and your child's experience, we ask that you:

1. Connect directly with a lead instructor in your group. Let them know you'd like to share feedback and arrange a time to talk.
2. Approach conversations with curiosity and openness. Asking questions and seeking context before forming conclusions helps us work together productively.
3. Reach out to our office team if you feel your concern has not been fully addressed.

We welcome feedback shared in a respectful and solution-oriented way. Communication that is abusive, threatening, or discriminatory toward staff or community members will not be tolerated.

Staying Involved

If your family is enjoying our programs, Pine offers additional opportunities for kids to continue their nature connection journey:

- **Soaring Hawks** - An adult 3-day nature skills and knowledge experience for ages 18+
- **March Break Day Camp** - Week-long camp in Toronto parks for ages 4-13
- **Summer Day Camps** - Week-long programs in Toronto parks for ages 4-16

To learn more visit pineproject.org or contact our team at info@pineproject.org.

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).

