Caregiver Handbook

March Break Day Camp 2026

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 is a Toronto-based charity that fosters confidence, competence, resilience, and connection to nature through transformative outdoor experiences for people of all ages. 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

March Break Day Camp

Location
Stan Wadlow Park

Timing
9:00am to 3:30pm

March Break falls in a magical time right before Spring Equinox when we are saying goodbye to the snow, watching things melt and welcoming the surge of life to come. Being outside through this Spring season of change can bring lots of mysteries to light - when is the red-winged black bird coming back? Are the woolly bear caterpillars awake from hibernation yet? What tree will unfurl its leaves first? By the end of the week, campers will return home bursting with excitement about new nature challenges, confident in their new skills and inspired to learn more about the natural world.

Camp activities may include:

- Plant identification and uses
- Wildlife tracking
- Birds and bird language
- Environmental stewardship
- Identifying natural and human-made hazards
- Storytelling, art and theatre
- Wandering adventures
- A variety of wilderness living and naturalist skills

Flow of the day!

Camp is guided by natural curiosity and the changing needs of the group, so schedules are rarely followed exactly! But here is an average day at camp:

9:00am Daily Sign-in* and Opening Circle	**12:45pm** Crafting, Journalling and Nature Missions
10:00am Games, Wanders and Exploration	**3:15pm** Closing Circle, Reflections and Songs
12:00pm Lunch	**3:25-3:30pm** Sign out

*Sign-in may take longer on the first day of camp.

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, we ask that they contact instructors at the field phone provided in their Welcome Email/Package. Due to the costs incurred when a caregiver is late and to respect the time of our instructors, a late fee of $1/minute will be charged for any child who has not been picked up by a program's end time.

Staff will inform families that a late fee will be charged and our office team will be in touch to collect the fee electronically.

End of Camp Celebration on Friday

Caregivers are welcome to join us at 3pm on Friday for a brief celebration to close out camp!

During this time, we'll honour each child's experience and growth. Children will receive a camp name inspired by elements of the natural world, reflecting qualities we've observed during our time together. These names are meant to celebrate their connection to nature and their unique contributions to the group.

If your camper will not be at camp on Friday, please let us know so that we can give them their camp name earlier in the week.

Caregivers are invited to arrive 15 minutes before the end of camp each day to participate in Closing Circle.

Program Overview

March Break Day Camp

Location
King's Mill Park

Timing
9:00am to 3:30pm

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What to Expect

The Pine experience is guided by seasonal rhythms, group energy, and curiosity. Through a nature-based curriculum and innovative program design, we create a child-centred program rooted in play, exploration, and skill-building. Participants can expect games, exploratory wanders, nature crafts, and survival skills, leading to a deep knowledge and relationship to our local environment.

We encourage participants to try hard things, take healthy risks, and direct their own learning at their own pace, while managing and mitigating larger risks. Parents play an important role in this process. Children often take emotional cues from the adults around them, especially during moments of challenge, uncertainty, or separation. We ask families to support their child's independence by staying calm and confident, trusting the program, and allowing space for discomfort. This healthy stress is part of how resilience is built, whether that means a quick goodbye at drop-off for younger participants, or navigating new social dynamics and personal "edges" for older ones. Kids often finish their days at Pine tired and dirty, but also bursting with pride and self confidence.

What to Bring Checklist

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.

  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 each day in 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

- [ ] **Lunch & Snacks**
  We will stop for lunch and snacks each day. Please pack litter-free and nut-free food.

- [ ] **Water**
  Please send your child with all the drinking water they require for the day (1L minimum)

Lost & Found

If an item is misplaced, you can contact our team at info@pineproject.org or ask your counsellors 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
- Distracting toys
- Any weapons or look-a-likes

Health & Safety

Managing Risk in the Woods

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

Campers 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 camper 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 parents 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 child 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.

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 and 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.

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.

Medications

Wherever possible, please administer medications for participants prior to coming to program. If the participant requires medications at program, please reach out to our office prior to the start of camp.

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 counsellors know if your child suffers from seasonal allergies.

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 camper is experiencing any symptoms of communicable illness, please keep them home.

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.

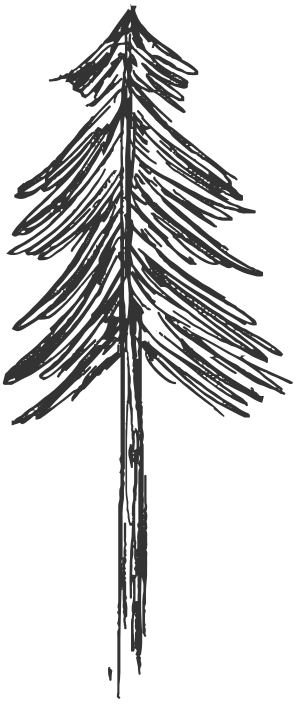
As always, we are committed to maintaining a safe and positive learning environment for participants and staff. Our programs aim to provide space and freedom to explore and learn, supported by clear agreements and expectations for participant behaviour.

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.

Communication

If you're running early or late, or in case of emergency, you can contact the Camp Supervisor (during camp hours) at:

Field Phone Number:

EAST: (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 camp experience for everyone. We are committed to listening and working collaboratively with families when challenges arise. If you have a question or concern about 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 child is enjoying our programs, Pine offers additional opportunities for kids to continue their nature connection journey:

- **Red Wolf Overnight Camp - An immersive wilderness experience for ages 7-16**
- **Outdoor School – Year-round programs in parks and ravines in Toronto**
- **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.

Communication

If you're running early or late, or in case of emergency, you can contact the Camp Supervisor (during camp hours) at:

Field Phone Number:

WEST: (437) 771 1176

For all inquiries, please contact our administrative team:

Contact us by phone:

(416) 792 2772

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Directions - WEST END

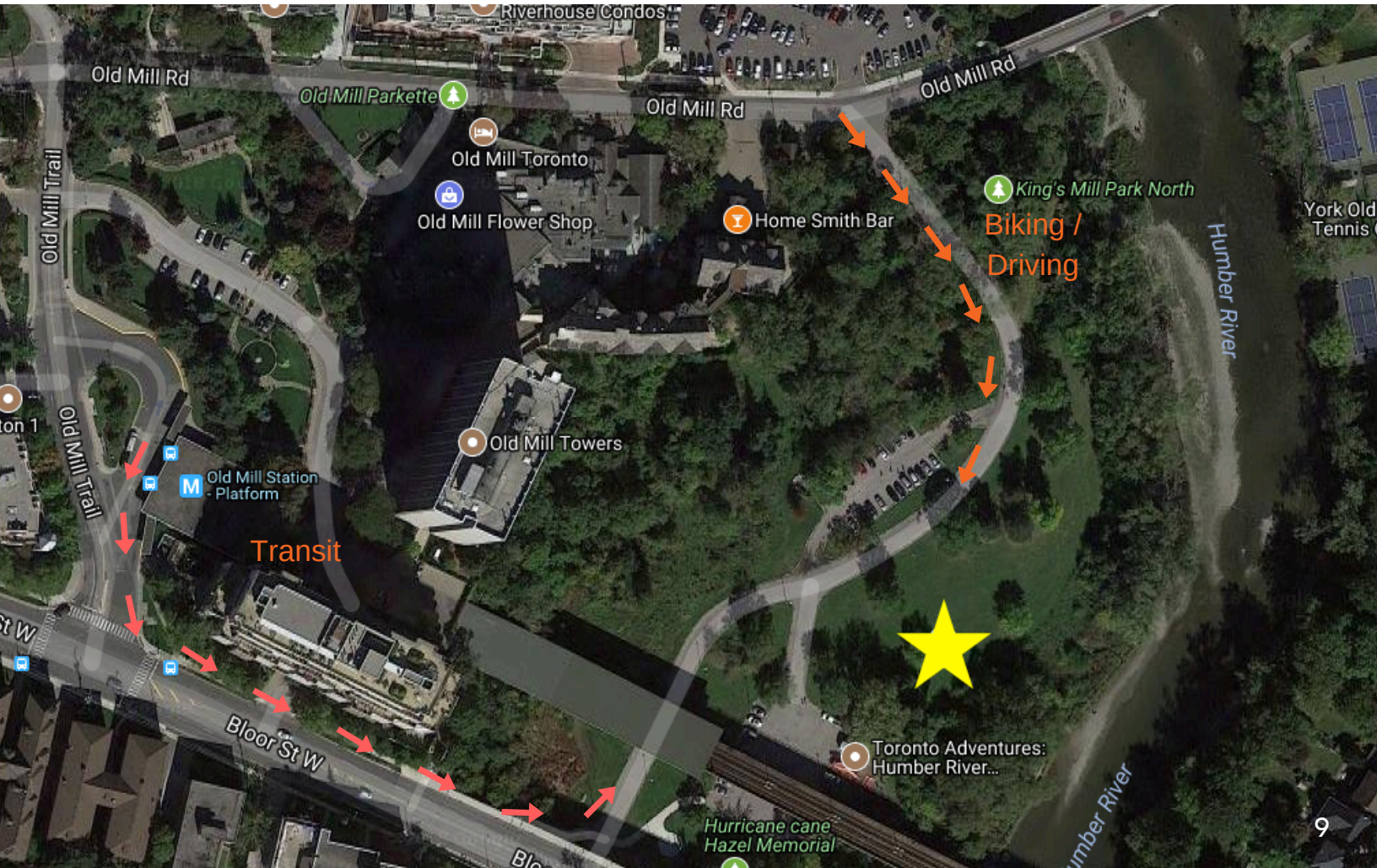
King's Mill Park
43.64958, -79.49202

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

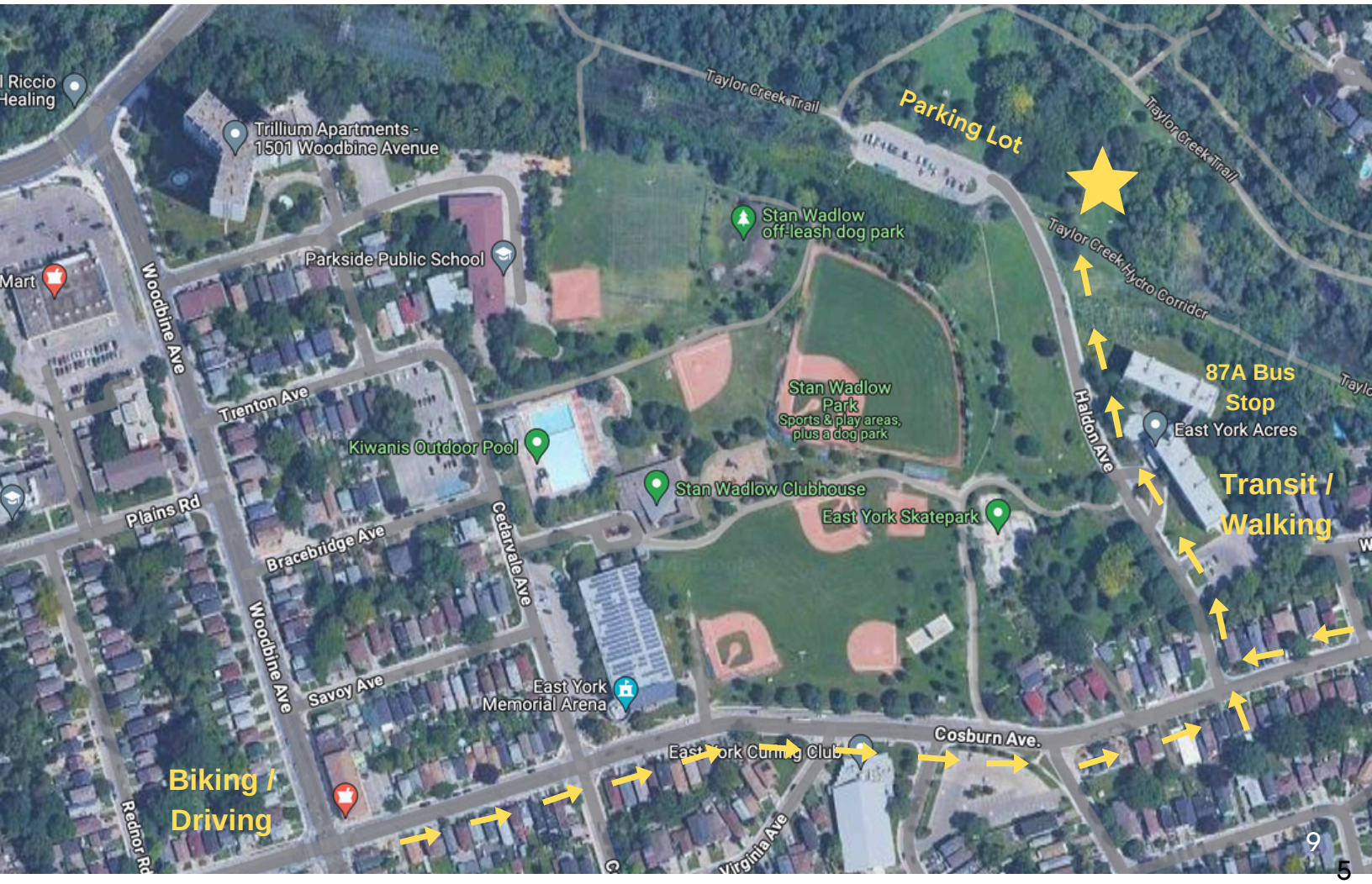
Stan Wadlow Park
43°41'58.4"N 79°18'43.5"W

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.