



Frequently Asked Questions

We've put together some commonly asked questions to give you more information about Wild Roots and what we offer. Click on the questions of interest.

If you have a question that you can't find the answer to or would like more information, please contact us at wildroots@littlelionswaldorf.ca

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General

What is the Wild Roots Nature-based, Early Childhood Family Collaborative?

Wild Roots is run by a non-profit agency: Little Lions Waldorf Child and Family Centre. Our Sault Ste. Marie programs take place solely in a local outdoor natural space with an intent to support your family's interest in a nature-based early childhood approach with opportunities for growth in development, fostering ecological consciousness, and building healthy relationships with each other and the rest of the natural world.

What kinds of programs do you offer?

Wild Roots offers two programs for young children and their families.

- a) The Preschool Program, for children aged 2.5 – 5 years of age, is licensed under the *Child Care and Early Years Act*. This half-day program (Monday and Tuesday mornings) focusses on play/inquiry-based learning experiences and integrates the Ontario government's early learning vision with aspects of Waldorf and nature-based approaches. Our ratios are low, which allows us to provide many varied learning experiences. Within this model collaboration is key. While led by registered early childhood educators, parents or designated family members take turns to be actively involved as on-site facilitators who work directly with the educators.**
- b) The Parent and Child program is designed for families with young children under 2.5 years of age (older children can also attend). This Wednesday morning 1.5-hour session offers young children with their parents (or designated family member/caregiver) a play/inquiry-based learning environment with many opportunities to learn with others.**

When do you offer programs?

Our programs are seasonal.

- a) Fall: The preschool session typically begins in early September and runs until early December. The parent and child sessions are offered monthly in September and October.**
- b) Spring: The preschool session typically starts at the end of April and ends in mid-June. The parent and child sessions are offered in May.**
- c) Winter: A parent-child session for all ages is offered during the winter months, weather dependent.**

Where are you located?

Our program is located at 1639 Goulais Avenue in Sault Ste Marie, Ontario. We acknowledge and are grateful for the opportunity to meet on land that is the traditional territory of the Anishinabewaki and Michif Piyii, territory covered by the 1850 Robinson-Huron Treaty as part of the Upper Canada Treaties. We rent space from HSCDSB St. Kateri Outdoor Learning Centre. This 180 acre location offers us time with forests, meadows and a lake.

Being Outdoors

How much time do you spend outside?

Both programs take place solely outdoors. Educators check the forecast in the morning. Our policies outline all of the necessary precautions and actions we will take if weather conditions become severe. In the event of severe weather, or other emergency situations, we do have access to one of the on-site indoor spaces. Depending upon weather conditions, we may cancel a morning session.

Why is outdoor play and learning beneficial for children?

Research about the benefits of outdoor play and learning is plentiful. A connection with the rest of the natural world has been shown to improve physical development, social skills, academic performance, emotional well-being, attention, and concentration as well as fostering an ecological consciousness. Check out these links for a quick overview:

- [Why Children Need to Play in Nature](#)
- [Benefits of Connecting Children with Nature](#)
- [Richard Louv – Nature Deficit Disorder](#)

What about health and safety?

We take the health and safety of the children and families very seriously. We have detailed policies that outline how we will address various health and safety concerns: hygiene, severe weather, fire, food, animal encounters and first aid. Policies will be available to you.

All our staff have First Aid certification, and we always carry a First Aid kit with us along with children's emergency contact information. All sites are assessed each morning before the children arrive.

Benefit-risk assessments, which manage any potential identified hazards, are a vital part of our program, as they support our belief that children should have opportunities to encounter risky situations in their play, to challenge their limits, and to overcome fear. This helps children develop body awareness, a recognition of their limits, and build their confidence and resilience. Some of the benefit-risk assessments include Sharing Spaces (with animals and plants), Tree Climbing, and Water. Parents engage with the educators to review and enhance these assessments to manage identified hazards. Children are also a part of this process. We discuss typical hazards and how we manage them during circles (especially at the beginning of the year) and when they arise during program time.

Where and how do children use a toilet?

First children may attend if they are wearing diapers. Families are responsible for diapers. For children using a toilet, we set up a portable toilet arrangement with a tent and handwashing station. Children also have the option to use the 'pee tree.' Toileting details are outlined in our policies.

How do we dress for the weather?

Dressing for the weather is the first step to ensure children (and adults) can embrace their time in our programs. Through a variety of sources, we offer ‘dressing for the outdoors’ tips for all seasons. We also share information about ways to protect ourselves from weather conditions that can cause frostbite or sunstroke. We do have a few Muddy Buddies available to rent for the season.

These are a few expectations related to weather:

- **Wearing layers – when it’s warm, cotton is advised and when it’s cold, consider fabrics that wick moisture (wool and polyester)**
- **Sturdy, closed-toed footwear with lots of room for toes to move around**
- **Pants are worn at all times, preferably pants that are tight around the ankles**
- **No necklaces, bracelets, or other jewelry items that may catch on things**
- **Please clearly mark your child’s name on all clothing items.**

Wild Roots Parent and Child Program

What are the hours of operation?

The 1.5 hour session is offered in the morning, typically 9:00–10:30 am

What is the cost?

Your family would be enrolled for the whole session. The family cost is \$9.50/morning. More than one child per family can attend.

What does a typical morning look like?

Each session begins with welcoming songs and ends with a story. In between, families will have time to explore with offerings of activities to ignite wonder and curiosity. Educators will also offer parents insights into Waldorf and nature-based philosophies to deepen experiences with their children.

Can more than one family member attend with their child?

Yes.

What do I need to register my family?

An enrolment form, requesting names of participants and a few other details, will be sent to you upon request.

Do you offer "family rates"?

Yes, the fee covers the cost of all family members attending.

Wild Roots Preschool Program

What are the hours of operation?

The preschool runs on Monday and Tuesday from 9:00 am to noon.

What is the cost?

Your child would be enrolled for the whole session. The cost is \$16.00/morning.

What does a morning look like?

The children arrive and complete a few tasks before they play around the Gathering Place. When everyone has arrived, we wash hands and gather for a morning circle and snack. Thereafter, we gather our belongings and walk to one of our playspaces. There, we take a moment to discuss the space before the children launch into their play or participate in activities offered by the adults. The morning ends with a story before heading back to the Gathering Place. Our website provides more details about our programming.

What influences the curriculum?

Our program integrates the Ontario government's Early Learning curriculum framework, [How Does Learning Happen?](#), along with aspects of Waldorf and nature-based approaches. We honour diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) through anti-bias, decolonizing and anti-racist education.

Our intention is to provide an unhurried learning space that is filled with fun, wonder, and awe, and helps children feel good about themselves, their families, and their communities, including the rest of the natural world. Our program statement, found in our Parent Handbook, provides more insight into our intentions.

Who are the educators?

Our team is made up of Registered Early Childhood Educators (who are active members of the College of Early Childhood Educators), along with educators with varying expertise and experiences. Our supervisor is a certified Forest School Practitioner. All employees are trained in Standard First Aid and CPR-C and have undergone a Criminal Reference Check / Vulnerable Sector (with an Annual Offence Declaration). We offer professional development for our educators to ensure that an enriching and responsive environment is consistently created for the children in our program. Nature is also seen as a co-educator.

Educators have several roles:

- Develop and facilitate curriculum (see above) that meets the needs of children
- Create and reflect on pedagogical narration and share with families
- Nurture relationship building and collaboration
- Ensure that policies and procedures are adhered to
- Ensure equipment/materials are in good working condition and available
- Inspection of playspaces

What is the facilitator's role?

The role of parents in our preschool program is very important. Parents or designated family/friends act as facilitators and are scheduled to assist in the program. A process to orient them to the program is provided, along with a detailed Parent Handbook. Monthly meetings are offered where new skills and crafts are introduced, aspects of our program philosophy are discussed, and questions/feedback about the Wild Roots program are encouraged. While parents are invited to share their expertise with the children (eg. visual arts, music, storytelling, fire-making, and modelling outdoor skills such as whittling), no specific skills or expertise are required. Since our program is play-based, often the facilitator role is to observe children's exploration, assist in tasks children want help with, follow the children's lead or help an educator with an activity. Program updates detailing what is happening are provided weekly to keep everyone "in the loop".

Facilitators will be required to present a current Criminal Reference Check/Vulnerable Sector.

Will my child be supervised at all times? What are the adult-to-child supervision ratios?

As a licensed program, a variety of strategies are in place to ensure that children are always supervised. Our ratios are 1 educator: 8 children. Our maximum group size is 16 children. We augment this ratio with the addition of facilitators so that our ratio is typically 1 adult: 5 children.

What will my child need to bring to the program?

Our parent handbook provides a detailed description of the program and ways to prepare. A few key things include:

- One of the most important things your child (and you) will need is outdoor clothing. We will provide some tips and resources to help with this. We do have a few Muddy Buddies that can be rented for the season.
- Your child will need:
 - A little backpack
 - Reusable water bottle
 - Small towel for drying hands
 - 2 carabiners
 - a whistle
 - Change of clothes and bag for wet clothing
 - Diapers (if needed)
- We will provide a situpon and name cookie

Can I set up a time to visit to the program?

Yes, a prearranged visit is encouraged. We can also have a visit before the program begins so that your child (and you) feels comfortable. Families are also welcomed to stay with their child if they need a little more time to settle in.

Do you provide snacks?

Our license (under the Child Care and Early Years Act) requires our program to offer a snack. Unfortunately, because we do not have a commercial kitchen or refrigeration system, the snack food we can offer will be highly processed and served in single-use, disposable packaging, both which do not align well with our program statement.

If you like, you may provide your child with a snack. If you choose this option, you would let us know through a note. Food requirements are outlined in the Parent Handbook.

Can my child bring his/her favorite toy to preschool?

Since we are not using toys in our program, we ask that you not bring toys from home. This also alleviates disappointment if a toy is lost.

What do I need to register my child?

The registration process will require an up-to-date copy of your child's Immunization Record. There are additional registration forms required, including consent forms, health, and emergency care information. The registration package will be provided upon request.

As well, the adults participating as facilitators will be required to submit a current Criminal Reference Check/Vulnerable Sector and additional registration forms. This package is available upon request.

Do you have subsidized spaces?

Currently, we do not have subsidized spaces.

Do you offer "family rates"?

We are unable to provide this option. Program fees are on a "as per child" basis.

Registration

How do I register my child?

The registration process is different for each program.

- **Licensed preschool program – You will receive a package that includes a variety of forms. An immunization record for the child is required. As well, the adults participating as facilitators will submit several forms and a current Criminal Reference Check/Vulnerable Sector. This package is available upon request.**
- **The parent-child program is a simple enrolment form.**

Both registration packages are available upon request.

What types of payments do you accept?

A deposit is required to secure your space. Billing occurs at the end of each month. There are two payment methods: Pre-Authorized Debit (PAD) Plan payment or a payment with Visa or MasterCard

Do families have to pay fees for days that their child does not attend due to illness or vacation?

Yes, fees are paid during all absences. Once a space is confirmed, it is payable whether the child attends or not.

What is your policy regarding children who are ill?

We aim to offer a space that is healthy for all. We operate within the health standard guidelines mandated by Algoma Public Health. Families are asked to complete the COVID-19 screen before attending and follow the guidelines outlined in the screen. Children and adults with fever or gastrointestinal symptoms may not attend the program until they are symptom free for a specified time period. More details can be found in our policies.

Do you provide part-time spaces?

Our goal is to fill all available spaces. If there is space, we are happy to accommodate families seeking part-time registration. Please check with us.