Outdoor Experiential School

Teacher's Manual

Camp Chief Hector YMCA

Outdoor Schools

2016
Welcome

For over thirty years, Camp Chief Hector YMCA has been running residential outdoor school experiences that provide unique opportunities for enhancing curriculum objectives, building communication and cooperative group skills, and providing a shared experience for students of different backgrounds. All of our programs are centered on the four core values of the YMCA: Caring, Honesty, Responsibility, and Respect.

I have worked with many school groups over the years, and I am aware of the challenges involved in planning an Outdoor School experience. However, I am also reminded daily of the long-term benefits that result from getting kids back into nature. Please let me help you with your paperwork, scheduling, and other logistical hurdles. I look forward to working with you and your students.

Cheers,

Christopher Schmid
Outdoor Schools Manager

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

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SITE LOCATION
Camp Chief Hector YMCA is located 45 minutes west of Calgary in the Bow Valley. Driving directions and a map can be found at our website at www.ymcacity.ca/camps/camp-chief-hector.
Accommodations & Dining

OES students live in tipis located in the forest around our mid-camp area. Fires provide light and warmth in the tipis for a cozy atmosphere. Tipis are comfortable even in rain or snow, although there is the chance of being a bit damp. Shower facilities are provided for all clients, though students will likely only shower once during their stay and there are outhouses and indoor washrooms located in various locations around our site. Hector Lodge contains our dining hall and is an indoor space that is available for programming. Students eat three meals a day, and will have a snack in the evening during campfire. Students with birthdays during the program celebrate with cake.

Deposits, Cancellation Policy, Bus adjustment & Invoices

Outdoor School bookings are made many months in advance and are difficult to replace if cancelled. Schools are required to pay 10% of their estimated total to secure their booking. Late cancellations cause significant hardship for our charitable operation, and impede our ability to provide affordable programs and services. As a result, if a confirmed booking is cancelled, the non-refundable deposit is held to cover costs associated with booking and planning, and cannot be transferred to another program. If a written cancellation is received prior to the scheduled start date of your booking, the following conditions apply:

- 90 days’ notice and greater - no additional penalty (non-refundable deposit is forfeited)
- 89-60 days’ notice - your organization will be invoiced at 50% of the total booking cost (or you can decrease your numbers by up to 50% without penalty)
- 59 days’ notice or less - your organization will be invoiced at 90% of the total booking cost (or you can decrease your numbers by up to 10% without penalty)

For fall season programs, we do understand the uncertainty around new classrooms. We do not want schools to suffer financially because of our programs so groups have 30 days before their program dates or until the first Monday that school is in session, whichever is the later date, to decrease their numbers by 10-50% without penalty.

The current cost of Outdoor Experiential School is **$295.00 plus GST per student for a total of $309.75**. This includes counselors, meals, accommodations, activities and round-trip busing if you are within the Calgary city limits. If your school is located outside of Calgary and you will be booking your own buses, we will subtract $15.00 from our fee for each student. This adjustment will be reflected on the final invoice.

Due to food and staffing costs, we cannot offer refunds or reduced fees for students who must arrive late or leave early for any reason during a week of program.

Financial Assistance

As with all YMCA Calgary programs and services, financial assistance is available to those who need it through YMCA Calgary’s Strong Kids Opportunity Fund. The Opportunity Fund Application should be filled out by the parents/guardians of each student requiring financial support for their program. Assessment of need is to be completed by the teacher/school for each participant and is to remain confidential.

Please note:

**Building healthy communities**
YMCA Calgary does not provide 100% subsidies.

We ask that all families contribute what they can to their student’s Outdoor Schools experience, no matter what the amount.

It is acceptable for the school’s budget or a fundraising initiative to contribute additional funds on behalf of a student.

Outdoor School fees are subject to 5% GST which will be added to the school’s final invoice. Opportunity Fund Applications must be submitted to the Outdoor Schools Manager upon your arrival at Camp.

TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES

Nametags

Each student should come to Outdoor School with a nametag. Any type of tag that will last the week will do, but we suggest using “wood cookies.” To make wood cookies, take logs approximately 10 cm in diameter and slice off pieces approximately 0.75 cm thick. Drill a hole through each wood cookie, near the edge, and attach loop of yarn or string that is long enough to easily slip over the students’ heads. Students can then colour their nametags using felt markers or wood paints. Students are welcome to use a nature name for the week, but we would also like their real name on their nametag.

Student Groupings

Please divide your students into activity groups. Usually, it is possible for each school to have two horse groups of 8 students each, 2-4 canoe groups of 10 students each and 2-4 hike groups of 12 students each. Please contact the OES Coordinator or Manager for advice on dividing your students into focus activity groups. It is difficult for us to give specific instruction on this at this point, as student numbers change right up until your camp visit and groupings vary depending on your total number of students.

Evening Activities

Teachers are responsible for providing classroom meetings and recreational evening activities to students in the early evening. This happens directly after dinner (~6:15 PM) until students meet their counselors for evening snack and campfire promptly at 8:00 PM. Planning a schedule and arranging supplies for the three evenings of your stay will help you and your peers have a comfortable system when you are at Outdoor School. Some schools prefer to set up a rotation over the three nights or have teachers run activities for students in their own class. Having students sign up for activities before arriving at camp or during classroom meetings also helps to decrease confusion during transition times. Please contact the Outdoor Schools Manager or Coordinator if you need evening activity or classroom meeting ideas. Some program areas such as the Outdoor Games Court will need to be shared between schools.
Student Support

Participating in activities with your students is one of your main roles at Outdoor School. You will notice some of the students you were most concerned about show you sides of their personalities that you’ve never seen. You will be amazed by the maturity and courage of other students. To benefit from these changes, and to help them along, you must be sharing this experience with your students and helping them make the proper choices. Teachers are welcome to move between activity groups to see all their students in action, but it is expected that activity groups should have a teacher with them most of the time.

Please check your school board’s regulations in regards to field trip supervision requirements and expectations.

Counsellor Support

YMCA Outdoor Schools staff are experienced with youth in the outdoors, but are not teachers themselves. They appreciate your feedback and tips for dealing with students when it is delivered in a timely, supportive, and positive fashion. As students learn from them, it would be great for our staff to learn from your experiences with curriculum and youth. If a counsellor is having a particularly rough time with a student they may ask for a teacher to join their group for extra support. We like to deliver feedback to our staff as well. Please provide positive and constructive feedback to the OES Counsellors, Coordinator or Manager at any time throughout the week.

Campfire & Bed

Teachers are encouraged to perform at campfire and to sit among the students to help them focus. After campfire, students head to the wash shed and then off to their tipis for bed. Teachers are expected to help with bedtime and/or to stop by the tipis for a quick visit to say good-night or deliver medications. Before or after campfire is a great time to deliver evening medications and for any necessary student phone calls.

Student Care

The first priority of our staff is ensuring the physical and emotional safety of our young clients. Student care is a collaborative effort between YMCA staff, teachers, parent/guardians, and the students themselves. Like at school, teachers act in loco parentis (in the place of a parent) and are ultimately responsible for their students while they are attending Outdoor School. YMCA staff, who have a duty to care for clients at the Outdoor School, will consult with you about concerns regarding your students. Similarly, you should keep the YMCA informed of any changing circumstances in regards to your students. Please do not remove a student from a group without informing their counsellor.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

YMCA Staff Requirements

All YMCA staff are required to have current Standard First Aid and CPR certification. Most of our staff have training in wilderness or remote first aid, hiking instruction, and challenge course facilitation. Canoeing is always supervised by a Paddle Alberta Waterfront Instructor. Horseback riding programs are facilitated by trained horse staff. The Higher Ground area is always supervised by a certified Level 2 Challenge Course Instructor. There is a week of staff training at the
beginning of every Outdoor School season and we continue to work on staff and program development throughout the season. In order to be employed by YMCA Calgary, all staff also need a clean and current criminal record check including a vulnerable sector search.

First Aid

YMCA staff are trained in emergency procedures and will act in the case of a first-aid situation or other incident. Teachers will be asked to coordinate non-emergency decisions such as transportation, and to handle communication to principals and parent/guardians. YMCA Coordinators, and Managers are eager to consult with teachers to make these important decisions as the need arises. Our goal is for students to either return quickly to program, or access the support they need to feel safe and be comfortable. We do not have a nurse or doctor employed on site, but we do have some staff members with Advanced First Aid Training. YMCA Staff members carry first aid kits, and we have an automatic external defibrillator, spinal board, thermometers, splints, eye wash station, crutches and ice packs on site.

We try our best to accommodate the physical needs of students who are feeling unwell or who have limited mobility. The best decisions and plans are made between parents, physicians, and teachers. In many cases, students who are ill can only recover at home.

Medication

The dispensing of medications is the responsibility of the teachers who visit our site. Please collect and label all medications for the students in your school and create a recording system to track their administration. Students who carry “take-when-needed” medications such as inhalers, creams, or EpiPens may still do so at Outdoor School. Due to school board regulations, we do not have any medications on-site available for student use, so it is a good idea to bring some simple medications like Tylenol and Benadryl just in case. Ideal times to distribute medications are during meals (8:30am, 12:30pm, 5:30pm) and just after campfire before bed.

Student Transportation

Teachers are responsible for having one personal vehicle on site for their school. This car will be used to transport students to Canmore or Calgary for medical treatment in non-emergencies. In case of emergency, an ambulance will be called. Bus transportation to students from Calgary is provided by Cardinal Coach Lines. We will book these buses for you if your school is located in Calgary or an outside area serviced by this company. Please call or email if you are unsure about your busing arrangements. Unless otherwise noted, buses are booked to arrive at your school at 9:15 am on the day of departure. One bus is booked for every 30 students. Buses return to school between 2:00 - 3:00 PM on the afternoon of your departure, depending on where you are located in the city.

Parent Contact

Schools are encouraged to bring a cell phone for parent contact. If this is not possible, parents are encouraged to call or email the Outdoor Schools Manager or Coordinator if they would like to check in with their child. If a parent does call a CCHY staff member, we will take down all the information and pass the message on to the child’s teacher. If homesickness or religious beliefs are a concern, it can be arranged for students to call home before bed to check-in or say good-night.
We encourage a proactive approach to parent communication and ask teachers to call home during Outdoor School to let parents know about any incidents at outdoor school such as injuries, bullying, fights or animal encounters. Camp Chief Hector YMCA is long-distance from Calgary but a phone code will be provided to teachers while they are staying on site.

**Supervision**

Students are supervised by YMCA staff and teachers. If students need to move from one area to another, for example, from an activity area to the washroom, they travel in partners. At night, YMCA staff supervise our student tipis. Support staff and teachers are close-by and readily available in case of an overnight emergency. YMCA staff carry radios to maintain contact with the Outdoor Schools Coordinator and Manager as needed. It is expected that teachers are participating in program activities with students, attending campfire and lending support at mealtimes and bedtime. Please check your school board’s regulations in regards to daytime and overnight supervision requirements for teachers.

**Activity Risks**

In general, injuries at the Camp Chief Hector YMCA are similar to the types of injuries that occur in elementary school gym classe, at recess and playing out in the backyard. Because our activities take place outside, there is a risk of falls, joint injury, and scrapes as students move from area to area or as they run during wide-games. Every year we have a few students who visit the hospital in Canmore for a few stitches or to assess an injured arm or leg. Some areas, such as the low-ropes course, have potential for short falls, so students are trained as spotters to support their peers under staff supervision. Staff carry first aid kits at all times when they are working with a group of students.

**Environmental Risks**

The Bow Valley is an area prone to rapid and drastic weather changes. All students should be prepared for wind, snow, rain, and scorching sun all in the same week. The packing list included in the Parent/Guardian’s Manual should be followed so students have the warm layers, extra socks, and sunscreen that are required for a comfortable stay. It is better to come over-prepared than to have a wet/cold or hot/burnt student. Our outdoor activities continue in most weather conditions. We share our Bow Valley home with a number of wild creatures and there is the possibility that students could cross paths with a bear, cougar, elk or coyote during their stay at Outdoor School. Students travel in groups of ten when hiking and participating in activities and counsellors carry bear spray. We are very mindful of our waste management system and work closely with the local conservation officers to monitor animal activity on our site.

**The Outdoor Experiential School (OES) Program**

The OES Program fosters positive social growth and leadership for students in junior high and secondary school. Students participate in a full-day focus activity in the area of hiking, canoeing, or horseback riding. Other activities such as the high ropes course, archery, outdoor living skills and the challenge course initiatives are designed to enhance multiple objectives from various Alberta Education Programs of Study. Our approach to teaching these objectives has proven to successfully reach our students, including those with learning and behavioural exceptionalities that may experience difficulties in traditional classroom settings.
Activities that may be run by YMCA staff in the OES program are:

**Initiatives and Team-building Activities** – Students will spend time getting to know each other in their groups while participating in various initiative and team-building activities.

**Challenge Course** – This activity focuses on the development of communication and leadership styles by using obstacle-course challenge elements and facilitation to develop group goals.

**Horseback Riding** – Students will get a chance to develop their horsemanship skills as they learn to tack up, pick hooves and groom our furry friends. Students will begin in the arena and then may move out onto the trail. Qualified horse staff supervise groups and a full-time horse director oversees all programs.

**High Ropes, Climbing Tower or Team Swing** – Students will push the limits of their comfort zones while making use of climbing technology to complete group and individual tasks on our aerial challenge courses. A Challenges Unlimited trained staff member supervises our Higher Ground area and staff are trained and monitored in our policies and procedures. Our equipment is inspected regularly and high quality helmets, harnesses, ropes and hardware are used on our course. This area is challenge-by-choice and students are able to provide support for their classmates from the ground if they are not keen climbers.

**Canoeing** – Students will get the opportunity to visit our lake and explore the area by boat in tandem or Voyageur canoes. A certified Waterfront Instructor supervises groups on our pond and all students, staff members and teachers are required to wear PFDs at all times.

**Focus Day** – On their full-day focus activity, students will explore the Bow Valley by foot, horse, or paddle. Historical and biological knowledge will be learned first-hand as students are taught progressively more complex skills to meet their goals. Students will pack a picnic lunch and will spend the day out on the trail.

**Goal Setting** – Each day, students will be given an opportunity to set goals with the help of both teachers and staff. Goals may focus on desired accomplishments or the demonstration of specific behaviours.

**Archery** – Students learn safety rules for our arena and how to load an arrow. Students will then learn to aim and will try to hit the bulls-eye on our targets.

**Hiking** – Students will participate in a full or half-day hike where they will learn about our local flora and fauna, play some games and explore our natural surroundings.

**Campfire** – A campfire concludes every day at Outdoor School and gives students, staff members and teachers a chance to reflect and share songs, stories and skits.

**Outdoor Living Skills** – Students will build shelters, cook over a fire and learn basic mapping, first aid and survival skills.
Sample Week

The OES Coordinator breaks student into tipi and activity groups for their week at Outdoor School. Students may be in co-ed activity groups during the day, but always sleep in gender-specific tipis.

Here is a generic OES program week. Program times and blocks will change throughout the season.

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<th>DAY ONE</th>
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<td>ARRIVAL &amp; GAMES</td>
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<td>COMMUNITY MEETING</td>
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The safety of each individual is of the utmost importance to us. In order to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants, the Camp Chief Hector YMCA reserves the right to alter the program at any time without compensation to participants, parents or guardians.

Building healthy communities
PREPARING FOR YOUR OUTDOOR SCHOOLS VISIT

Teacher-In-Charge and Outdoor Schools Manager Meeting

This is an opportunity to have your questions answered and to receive the information and paperwork necessary to plan for your Outdoor Schools visit. Please do your best to attend, but it is understandable if you are unable to do so. Contact the Outdoor Schools Manager if this is the case and they will make sure that you receive the necessary information. An email will be sent out with the meeting date and time at the start of the school year.

Parent Meeting

Parent/guardians need to be informed on the nature of extended field trips such as an Outdoor Schools experience. A teacher, principal or member of the YMCA Outdoor Schools team will share a half-hour presentation that highlights how the needs of students will be met, how risk is managed, and what activities they will complete during their stay. The meeting should take approximately 30 minutes, with a question period following.

In order to cut down on driving time, gas costs and the environmental cost of driving into Calgary from our site two or three evenings every week, we expect that teachers and principals who are experienced with our Outdoor School program will facilitate the parent meeting at their school. This will make meetings easier to schedule for individual schools as they will not be competing for ideal time slots.

Schools will be provided with a meeting package that includes a Power Point slide presentation, lecture notes, frequently asked questions and the necessary paperwork. Parents should be strongly encouraged to contact the Outdoor Schools Manager or Coordinator if they have comments, questions or concerns. Please inform the Outdoor Schools Manager if you are facilitating your own meeting and when it has been completed.

We are hoping to have as many schools as possible facilitate their own meetings. However, if you are a new teacher, at a new school or do not have a teacher or principal at your school who feels comfortable presenting the information to parents, we will continue to facilitate this meeting for you if your school is located within 1.25 hours from our site. If you live further away and your school does not have a teacher or administrator who is comfortable facilitating the meeting there may be a school in your area with a teacher or administrator who would be willing to facilitate the meeting for your school. Please contact the Outdoor Schools Manager to discuss your situation.

If you do choose to have a YMCA staff member facilitate your Parent Information Night, the meeting package serves as back-up in case of illness, poor weather or traffic conditions on the highway that prohibit the YMCA staff member from travelling from our site to your school. Please contact Camp Chief Hector YMCA if you would like to arrange a parent meeting at your school. For the most part, a YMCA representative is available for meetings on Wednesdays or Thursdays, at either 5:00 or 7:00 PM.

Please contact the Outdoor Schools Manager at Camp Chief Hector YMCA to arrange a date and time to host a parent meeting at your school.
The night of the presentation you will need to have the following on hand:

- 1 copy per family of the Parent/Guardian’s Manual
- 1 copy per student of the Acknowledgement of Risk and medical form for your school board
- A sign-in sheet (as parents absent from the meeting need to receive this information)
- A projector screen, LCD projector, computer and the necessary cables set up and ready to go
- CD with the Power Point presentation, lecture notes and frequently asked questions

YMCA Paperwork

To prepare for your visit we need to know the numbers of male and female students attending, the number of teachers accompanying the group, the dietary restrictions of all parties, and medical/ emotional/learning needs that will require support.

YMCA Paperwork that must be submitted:

- Birthdays being celebrated while at camp, important dietary, medical and behavioural information should be compiled from your school board’s Student Information forms and transferred to the Student Activity Group Roster forms.

- Please do your best to have the completed School Details form and Student Activity Group Rosters faxed to 1-403-673-2179 or e-mailed to chris.schmid@calgary.ymca.ca at least one week prior to your arrival. If you are finding yourself very busy or parents are slow at returning forms, the key information is the number of students, gender split and dietary restrictions.

- Strong Kids Opportunity Fund applications must be fully filled out and presented to the YMCA Coordinator or Manager upon your arrival at Outdoor School. YMCA Calgary does not provide 100% subsidies. Please ensure there is some contribution from all parent/guardians using the fund.

Special Needs

If you have a student at your school that may need some extra support and reassurance in order to attend Outdoor School, please contact the Outdoor Schools Manager or Coordinator to discuss different options. Tours of our site are available for parents and students who are feeling nervous about attending. We can arrange for a parent to meet or contact their child’s counselor. Students with physical disabilities are definitely able to attend camp; however certain activities may need to be modified.

Lost And Found

We do our best to have students look at Lost and Found items before they depart and to send Lost and Found back to your school with you, however quite a few items get left behind. If a child or parent thinks they may have left something behind at Outdoor School, please have them take a look through your school’s lost and found. If they do not find the item, the Outdoor School Coordinator should be contacted at 1-403-673-3858, ext. 209. If the item is found, it can be picked up at
our site or at the downtown Eau Claire YMCA if requested. If items have not been claimed within two weeks, they are donated to a local shelter.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. Please contact the Outdoor Schools Manager or Coordinator if you have questions, comments or concerns. We look forward to having you at Outdoor School!

**OUTDOOR SCHOOL TEACHER PACKING LIST**

### Outdoor Gear
- Raincoat/Rain pants
- Warm Mittens
- Running shoes/hiking shoes
- Warm winter boots (lined)
- Thermal underwear bottoms and top
- Warm layer (i.e. fleece)
- Warm socks (i.e. wool)
- Toque/beanie
- Day pack
- Water bottle

### Clothing
- Pajamas
- Sweaters/Shirts
- Pants/Jeans
- Casual shoes/sandals
- Shorts/T-shirts
- Socks
- Slippers

### Fun Stuff (optional)
- Musical instrument
- Books/Journal
- Camera
- Nut-free snacks for your dorm
- Coffee mug
- Evening Activity supplies
  - Arts and Crafts
  - Sports Equipment
  - Board Games, Cards, Chess Boards
  - Classroom Journals
  - Reader’s Theatre scripts, story books

### Personal Articles
- Towel(s)
- Toothbrush & Toothpaste & Dental Floss
- Lip Balm
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Soap/Shampoo
- Deodorant
- Comb or Brush
- Sleeping bag
- Sheet(s)
- Pillow and pillow case
- Blanket
- Flashlight/Headlamp
- Personal Medications
- Tylenol, Advil, etc.
- Alarm Clock

### Outdoor School Support
- Student Information Forms
- Parent Contact Information
- Copies of your school board’s documentation (i.e. incident reports)
- Cell Phone
- First Aid Kit
- Activity Group Rosters
- Medication (Student/School)