



ECOscool Winter 2015 Presentation Notes

Slide #1:

- Lookout Mountain is the first mountain on your left (south) as you are driving west on the Trans Canada highway
- Mt. Yamnuska is on the north side of the highway
- Has anyone ever been to the Camp Chief Hector YMCA?
- Outdoor School programs run from September through to June
- Residential summer camp programs run in July and August
- Outdoor Programs such as yoga weekends, family weekends, corporate retreats, youth conferences and weddings run on weekends

Slide #2:

- Canmore is the closest town and it is approximately 20 minute drive from our site
- It takes approximately one hour from Calgary to get to our site
- a branch of the Calgary YMCA however we are unique in that we offer residential programs
- Please check our website for more information and photos of our site and programs (www.ymcocalgary.org)

Slide #3:

- as we are a branch of YMCA Calgary, we have a full time General Manager named Jill Jamieson
- Jill directly supervises the Outdoor schools Manager (Peter Carson) who is responsible for planning, communicating with parents and teachers, booking, budgeting, hiring, purchasing, training and helping to support groups
- The Outdoor Schools Coordinator works on a day to day basis with students, teachers and counselors and are also involved in planning, training and parent/teacher communication
- The ODS Manager and ODS Coordinator work to train and supervise counselors
- Counsellors eat, sleep and facilitate activities for their students with the support of teachers and support staff
- We have a number of counselors from other countries such as Australia and New Zealand as well as from all over Canada
- Counselors participate in a week of mandatory training before beginning to work with students and they are all trained in First Aid and CPR
- Counsellors have previous experience working with youth and many have worked previous seasons at Camp Chief Hector YMCA
- Ongoing training, feedback and staff development
- Counselors must provide a current, clean criminal background check including a vulnerable sector search to be employed by YMCA Calgary

Slide #4:

- We are fortunate to find ourselves in the midst of an active ecosystem out at camp and do see quite a bit of animal activity in the surrounding area (ie. deer, elk, coyotes, bears, cougar, squirrels, rabbits)
- Work closely with the local conservation officers to report and monitor animal activity on our site
- Camp is a very loud, active place and animals tend to steer clear of our main area
- Proper disposal of waste/animal attractants
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- Students travel in groups with their counselor; if a student needed to go to the washroom, or to get something from their dorm they travel with a buddy
- Please do not send any extra food to Outdoor School with your child
- injuries at Outdoor School are similar to those in an elementary school gym class or recess such as sprained ankles, bumps and scrapes, broken bones and the occasional cut and/or bruise
- counselors carry first aid kits at all times and have radios and bear spray if they are away from our main buildings
- as a service provider for schools board we are legally unable to stock medications, including OTC commonly used medicines such as Tylenol and Benadryl
- Please hand-in your child's medication to their teacher in a Ziploc bag clearly labeled with their name and dosage instructions. Students may not have any medications (except asthma puffers or Epipens) in their dorms.
- In the case of an emergency, the closest ambulance dispatch station is located in Kananaskis which is approximately ten minutes away. Calling 911 works from our site.
- Busing provided by Cardinal Coachlines which is a CBE approved carrier; familiar with the drive
- No major illness outbreaks with a school group – hand sanitizer, showering, hand washing, lots of food and water, rest
- If student is ill please keep them home; if student falls ill they will often need to go home to properly recover
- Parent communication around injury/illness is a partnership between teachers and YMCA staff members

Slide #5:

- student accommodation is in heated dormitories with electricity, showers and washrooms
- YMCA counselors are responsible for bedtime, overnight supervision (radio) and the morning wake-up
- dorms are divided by gender and have same-gender counselor supervision
- Dorms have bunk beds and mattresses but students will need to bring a sleeping bag or bedding, and a pillow.
- towel for showering
- Laundry facilities and extra bedding available in case of "accidents"
- Teacher dorm is near-by for support around medication, homesickness, etc.

Slide #6:

- employ a full time Food Services Director named George Mayra Fajardo - email is in the parent manual
- Students eat in their activity groups in Bowfort Lodge
- Can accommodate for a wide range of food restrictions such as lactose intolerance, vegetarianism, gluten-free and pork-free.
- Please contact us if you have questions about your child's dietary options while at camp – we can provide the menu for the week
- Please contact us if your child is anaphylactic to dairy, eggs or wheat
- We are a nut-safe site and do not use peanut products in our kitchens. Some ingredients (ie. chocolate chips, raisins) say "may have come in contact with nuts" and in this case we would provide a nut-free option.
- Please do not have your child bring any extra food to camp unless your child has a restriction or severe allergy and it is arranged beforehand with a teacher or camp staff. This food will be stored in the camp kitchen.
- Students eat three meals a day (8:30, 12:30, 5:30) as well as snacks
- Examples: are cereal, fruit, eggs, toast and sausage for breakfast; grilled cheese, soup, veggies and dip for lunch; and spaghetti, garlic bread and salad for dinner
- Students help to set and clear tables



Slide #7

- ECOschool stands for Environmental Awareness and Community Building in an Outdoor Setting
- Three main themes: curriculum ties, personal development and building a connection with the land and nature
- Great opportunity for hands-on learning to classroom topics

Slide #8

- Initiative and team-building activities give counselors a chance to get to know their students
- These activities involved students working together to accomplish a task or reach a goal
- Students also have fun and work together using their communication and conflict resolution skills
- Great for teachers to see the different dynamics that result among their students

Slide #9/10

- the Challenge Course and Low Ropes also focus on team building and physical education
- on the challenge course, students are given a task which they have to complete as a group
- the low ropes course is a series of elements that students help each other to complete

Slide #11/12/13

- Predator Prey is a wide-scale tag game that is based on the food chains of the Bow Valley
- students are assigned to be an animal and they run through a sections-off area of the forest trying to escape predators and gather food and water
- great activity for teachers to get involved in
- introduction and debrief tie the game together with learning objectives

Slide #14/15

- for one day of their visit out at camp students will participate in a day of exploration around our main site
- not about the distance traveled or elevation gained
- focus is on learning about and enjoying oneself in the out of doors
- wetlands, trees and forests, evidence and investigation of animals
- pack a bag lunch after breakfast to eat out on the trail
- counselors have first aid kits, radios, bear spray and knowledge of our trail system
- in poor weather conditions, groups may drop by building for a visit to warm up before heading out again or build a fire in one of our many fire pits
- defer to school board regulations about adverse weather conditions

Slide #16

- Students will enjoy learning about trees and forests through hands-on activities and will work to record their findings through journaling and sketching



Slide #17

- drama games provide an opportunity for students and counselors to enjoy some games and perhaps plan a skit or presentation for campfire
- as many of our activities are outdoors and quite physical, these activities give artistic and creative students a chance to shine
- provide an opportunity to be indoors if the weather is not cooperating

Slide #18

- the ECONomy game is an opportunity for students to learn about supply and demand, provincial differences and building a community
- students are split into groups (provinces) and each province is given a certain amount of resources, and technology that they can use for income to build infrastructure
- work together to build their community ie. mall vs. school

Slide #19/20

- after dinner, students reconnect with their classroom teachers to talk about their day
- teachers run activities such as hockey, Capture the Flag, crafts, board games, drama games or soccer for students
- during this time, counselors have a staff meeting and then get a quick break
- following classroom meetings and activities, students meet back up with their counselors and head down to the campfire pit
- campfires give students, counselors and teachers a chance to perform songs, stories and kits
- campfire is a great way to finish off the day all together before heading off to bed at about 9:00
- campfire ends early on one evening to enjoy some beautiful stargazing

Slide #21

- Parent Manual contains a packing list for your student's visit to camp
- warm clothes, mittens and toque, snow pants and ski jacket
- a flashlight for evenings in the tipis or dorms
- a bathing suit and towel for showering (optional)
- feet are very important at Outdoor School – good shoes and lots of extra socks are necessary
- backpack to use to transport items around site and a pencil case for drawing and journaling
- make sure medication is handed in to teachers when your child is heading out
- a water bottle is very important to stay hydrated
- Please label EVERYTHING, especially black/brown snow pants, ski jackets, winter boots, etc.

Slide #22

- camp is a pretty casual, rough-and-tumble sort of place so it is not necessary to bring any nice clothes, jewelry, make-up, hair dryers or straighteners
- please do not bring digital media to camp – this includes cell phones, musical devices and all video games. Please do not send a cell phone with your child. If you would like to see how they are doing, please call the school, teachers at Outdoor School, or a YMCA staff member
- exceptions : camera, flash light or time-keeping device



- we do not have a “no-calling home” policy however we do limit the number of calls made by students.
- We are happy to have a student call home from our camp phone if they are not feeling well or are homesick. Teachers will often have a school cell phone with them out at camp that parents can call if they would like to check-in to see how their child is doing.
- If a student is planning on staying home from Outdoor School because they are nervous about being away from home, it is fine to arrange for that student to call home in the evening before bed.
- There is nothing to buy at camp so it is not necessary to bring any money
- Another reminder to please not send any extra food with your child unless it is arranged through a teacher or YMCA staff member (allergy and animal attractant concerns)
- In terms of camping equipment, students do not need to bring stoves, matches, knives, hatchets, tents, etc.
- Any type of shoe with a large heel is hazardous in the forest. Winter boots and a second pair of running or hiking shoes
- Please do not send any sort of aerosol body sprays or perfumes (ie. Axe); stinky and aggravates allergies and asthma
- Please do not drop by Outdoor School unexpectedly. If you need to drop your child off late or pick them up early this needs to be arranged beforehand so that they are prepared for their arrival or departure. If you need to pick your student up for a game, lesson or event please arrange this with a teacher beforehand.

Slide #23

- as we value the opportunity for each and every child to attend Outdoor School, the YMCA offers a subsidy program for students in need of some extra help
- we ask that each family pays what they can, but through private and corporate donations we are able to subsidize the remainder of the cost for any student
- please do not let financial worries get in the way of your child’s Outdoor School experience
- if you wish to access the subsidy fund, please see your child’s classroom teacher
- This form should be filled out completely returned to their teacher to be brought to Outdoor School.

Slide #24

- Please contact the Outdoor Schools Manager or Coordinator if you have specific concerns about your child’s camp visit
- Please contact Mayra Fajardo if you have dietary concerns
- If there are any questions that apply to the entire group, please ask!
- If you have a specific question about your own child, please come and discuss it following the meeting or contact us in the next few weeks.

Generally, teachers who have been to Outdoor School before have quite a bit to add to what is mentioned during the presentation. It is great to share past experiences and offer tips and advice that you have learned from your point of view over the years. If your school has been coming for a long time, current students should be encouraged to talk to their siblings or older students at school who have been to Outdoor School.

Parents should be informed about what paperwork needs to be completed and when it needs to be returned to the school. The YMCA cost of Outdoor School is \$225.00 plus GST(\$236.25) but some schools do fund-raising or have



sponsors to decrease the costs OR some schools will add on five or ten dollars to buy journals, craft supplies, etc for their students. Cheques should be made payable to the school. If you are booking your own busing, subtract \$15/student.

Parents will also need to know the school's routine for dropping their child and luggage off at school on the day of departure for camp, as well as for picking them up on the afternoon they return. Generally, buses doing a school route will not allow students to bring luggage on their bus to school so parents will have to make some alternative arrangements if their child usually rides the bus.

It is also a good idea for you to introduce the teachers that will be accompanying the students to Outdoor School.

Note: Quite a bit of the information in these notes is also in the parent manual. Parents need to be informed about the risks involved with Outdoor School so that they can make an informed decision. You do not need to mention everything in these notes but parents need to be aware of what is involved when they send their child to camp.

Frequently Asked Questions

What time does my child need to be at school on the day of departure?

Where do I drop them off at school?

When and where do I pick my child up when they get back?

What teachers are going to Outdoor School?

Who is providing the emergency vehicle?

How do you decide who is in which activity and sleeping group?

Will my child be with his/her friends?

Many schools will have each student choose three or four friends that they would like to be with and will guarantee that they can be with one of these friends so that they have someone who they feel comfortable with.

Will my child be in a group with students from other schools?

No, the groups are made up of boys and girls from the same school. However, students may share a dorm with students from another school and they will also eat meals and attend campfires all together.

How do you handle discipline issues?

Counsellors are trained in strategies for group management and conflict resolution. If a discipline issue does arise, counselors will do their best to resolve the situation. It may be that support from teachers or a YMCA Coordinator is required. It is very rare that students are sent home from Outdoor School for behavioural reasons and this decision would be at the discretion of your child's teachers and school administrators.