

# A Field Guide

What can you expect at Mill Bay Nature School?







Anticipating our first year  
of co-creation and growth


**There is a teaching in  
every part of creation.  
It is our task to find it,  
learn it, and apply it.**

K. Goodwin

created -"Standing on the shoulders of giants"- by Kim Ondrik  
Head Learner, Mill Bay Nature School,  
Cowichan Valley, the Warm Land

June 2018





**W**e are co-creating  
from the ground up  
a new learning & teaching  
community.

**In any ecology, there is soil from which all living things emerge.**

This **Field Guide** speaks of the humus  
in which our school finds its origins and nourishment.

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**At Mill Bay Nature School you will see children, parents, and community members taking up active and participatory roles that allows them to interact and work collaboratively with educators. This is the spirit of co-creation.** You will hear children proposing new and different ideas for today's rhythm - "I think it would be best if we ate earlier today because we want to have time to walk to the pond in the afternoon." You will hear parents suggesting why a deer fence may solve the mystery of the missing plants - "Does anyone want to learn about how to build one?" You will hear community members with particular skills offering their gifts and talents - "I would like to work once a week with anyone interested in learning how to make soup." **Co-creation also acknowledges that each one in the community has different expertise and experience to share in order to develop a rich ecology of learning and growth: *teachers* bring years of study and practice in supporting human growth and development; *parents* bring both a deep understanding of their children as well as their vocational interests and passions - like *community members* do. *Children* bring their curiosity and questions, and willingness to take chances, make mistakes, and get messy - which inspires us all.**





**At Mill Bay Nature School, we are willing to get muddy  
and be open to ecological mystery.**

**Nature is important to children's development in every major way: intellectually, emotionally, socially, spiritually, and physically. Play in nature is especially important for developing capacities for creativity, problem-solving, and intellectual development.**

Keller, 2005

<http://childnature.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/FSC-Guide-1.pdf>

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**At Mill Bay Nature School you will find the children and teachers outside. The natural world becomes our site for experience, provocation, and observation, and where the seeds for growing awareness and further inquiry are sown.** There is no need to design classroom spaces to provoke the child's mind - instead all the local ecosystems - the field, the forest, the pond, the beach - provide the objects, the relationships, the interactions, the questions. **The thoughtful & intentionally designed inside ecology will stimulate a variety of responses to the outside.** In the rhythm of our days, you will see a natural flow between inhaling and exhaling; exploring and documenting; questioning and searching *and* re-searching; absorbing and expressing; busyness and quiet. You will hear children asking questions, sharing theories, problem solving, being creative with new ideas. **Nature also refers to the natural needs of a human being. Like all living organisms, from microscopic fungi to the majestic Humpback whale, children have inherent needs.** Children need to be cared for; feel safe; have a strong sense of belonging and know they are loved; be recognized and respected; and have the opportunity to pursue their strengths, talents, gifts, interests in diverse, creative, and fluid ways with high support and high expectations. Adults need to see children as the future, as responsibility-bearers - those who will make decisions and care for the future world that they will not see.





Clothing is an important part of an outdoor school - particularly as weather patterns shift with the changing seasons. A child that is consistently warm and dry throughout the day will be much happier and more likely to fully enjoy the benefits of learning in an outdoor environment than a child that consistently comes unprepared for the day's weather and is often cold and wet. Remember too that each child is different and has an individual tolerance for wet/dry and cold/warm conditions, and depending upon their interests or personality, may naturally engage in activities that challenge the limits of their clothing constantly requiring multiple changes a day (*think* mud puddles ... ) **Mill Bay Nature School will have two mudrooms for children to stow their outdoor clothing - labelling clothes will help the community stay organized. Thank you !**

You don't have to invest in new and costly items to keep your child warm. Thrift stores and online used clothing sites (facebook) are great places to look for children's clothing at affordable prices. As our children grow, we will seek ways to facilitate clothing swaps.

**Basically, your child will need layers of clothing and footwear to match the changing seasons.**

**Here are some excellent guidelines on layers borrowed from TÍR NA NÓG Forest School :**

<http://www.tirnanogforestschooll.ca/clothing-at-forest-school/>

The items you will want to spend more money on are the outer layers of clothing which is your child's first line of defense against the elements. Middle and base layers are where you can save money by shopping for these items exclusively at thrift stores. Here is a breakdown of outer, mid and base layers:

**Base-Layer:** Natural fabrics such as wool or cotton work well as an inner layer, as well as fleece. The key for this layer is to wick moisture away from the skin and insulate the skin with a breathable layer to keep them dry.

**Mid-Layer:** This is another insulation layer that creates 'dead-air space' between your child's skin and the elements. This airspace helps in keeping your child warm. Wool sweaters (Merino wool is exceptionally warm and soft on sensitive skin) and fleece tend to work well.

**Outer -Layer:** Water-proof and wind-proof, as well as breathable.





## Footwear

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Children will need both outdoor and indoor footwear that they can independently put on and take off

**Outdoor Footwear:** sneakers or hiking boots, as well as neoprene or other waterproof boots rated for the cold. Look for one piece molded, pull-on footwear with insulated lining, or thick neoprene boots. **For your information:** boots labeled “water resistant” are not waterproof; nor are boots with laces, buckles, velcro, zippers, etc. Change of socks for wet and snowy weather would also be very helpful.

**Indoor Footwear:** slippers, slipper socks, or slip-on running shoes - *anything easy to pull-on or take off*

## Other

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- **Sunscreen** for sunny fall and spring days
- **Rain hat** (*not* umbrellas), **winter hats & mitts** (with an extra dry set)
- **Small backpack** to carry water, snacks, journals, etc. outside





**All children are fully included and seen as rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent, connected to adults, other children, and a unique, fluid environment.**

Malaguzzi, 1994

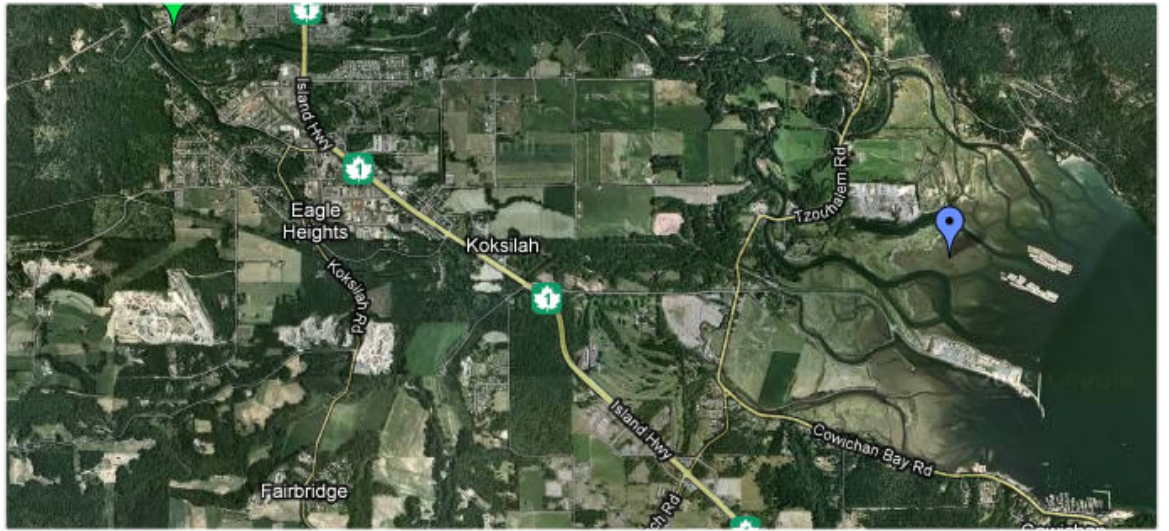
[https://dspace.library.uvic.ca/bitstream/handle/1828/8015/Slipp\\_Kari\\_MEd\\_2017.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y](https://dspace.library.uvic.ca/bitstream/handle/1828/8015/Slipp_Kari_MEd_2017.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y)

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**At Mill Bay Nature School the children we greet each day are unique and original, as much as they are diverse and interdependent.** Each comes from a unique family culture woven from generational strands. Each child also carries a unique genetic makeup deep within that determines potential capacities and vulnerabilities, which at the same time is significantly impacted by the variety of ecologies one has been planted in. Each child is a mysterious and sacred being. Mill Bay Nature School acknowledges that a multiplicity of expectations, desires, concerns, perspectives, and experience exist within a typical classroom community. **This is our starting point.** A socially just school is a safe place for each child and adult to talk about his unique life, her whole life, and in sharing these experiences, provoke and inspire others in the community to think and feel and *reconsider*. There is no one standard of humanness - no one way to be human. **Mill Bay Nature School is rooted in the notion that there is no right technique, no right organization, no right way to teach when one takes up a living curriculum - the challenge of honouring, including and stimulating the growth of *each* human.**



# Learning Maps



BC's schools assist in developing educated citizens who: are thoughtful, able to learn & think critically, and can communicate; are creative, flexible, & self-motivated; have a positive self-image; are capable of making independent decisions; are skilled & able to contribute to society; are productive, gain satisfaction through achievement; strive for physical well-being; are cooperative, principled, & respectful of others; and aware of the rights and responsibilities of the individual within the family, the community, Canada, and the world.

BC Ministry of Education

<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum-updates>

We are excited to engage with children from diverse backgrounds, gifts, talents, strengths, and challenges - growing the educated citizens outlined by the BC Ministry of Education (above). **We recognize that there are many different ways to develop these capacities - many different journeys - no one-size-fits-all.** In response to this challenge, at Mill Bay Nature School every child will have a personalized Learning Map\*. These Maps will guide the teaching staff as they tailor expectations and support, learning opportunities and challenges for individual children - to inspire, to provoke, to nurture all aspects of the BC curriculum. The Maps will be co-created by parents, teachers, and the child at the beginning of each school year, reflected upon throughout the year, and then re-visited each spring. **Parents will be invited to reflect on the following questions which make up the Learning Map during evening gatherings in the fall and spring at Mill Bay Nature School (see following page):**

\*The Maps meeting was designed by Forest & Pearpoint, 1992 at McGill University. It is a process to better understand the diverse and unique needs of students and is designed to help individuals & families move into the future effectively and creatively.

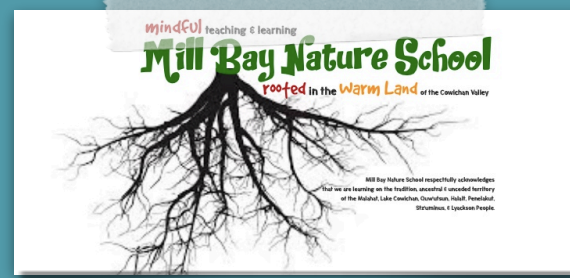


Learning Map for \_\_\_\_\_

Created by \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewed \_\_\_\_\_



### What is your child's personal history?

Start with birth ... early years ... family relationships ... places you've lived ... experiences, etc.

### What are your child's dreams? What are your dreams/plans for your child?

### What are your child's worries/concerns? What are your concerns/worries/nightmares for your child?

### What are your child's strengths, passions, gifts?

### What are your child's needs? Think about life in your family, community, school, friends, etc.

**Please circle the 2/3 most important to you.**



**W**e are committed to practicing relational and indigenous pedagogies.



**Learning is a process of construction, in which each individual constructs for himself the reasons, the 'whys', the meanings of things, others, nature, events, reality and life. The learning process is certainly individual, but because the reasons, explanations, interpretations, and meanings of others are critical for our knowledge building, it is also a process of relations - a process of social construction.**

**Riñaldi**

<http://www.fnesc.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/PUB-LFP-POSTER-Principles-of-Learning-First-Peoples-poster-11x17.pdf>

**Since time immemorial, the Cowichan and Malahat Peoples have lived on the land that Mill Bay Nature School sits on. It is considered 'unceded' land as it was not formally surrendered; it was absorbed by settlers.** Taking up the challenge of reconciliation, at Mill Bay Nature School you will see the children enter by the North-East doors (by the gym) - towards the East where the sun rises - starting the day in a circle. You will see everyone in the circle introducing themselves counterclockwise by saying their name and providing some information about their family and what land they are originally from. At times, visitors may also participate in a gratitude circle, or the passing down of knowledge from generation to generation through story, song, and observation. The First Peoples Principles of Learning (see link above) reflect the culture that emerged from this land more than 4,000 years ago, and continue to value the people, the land, and their relationships to each other. **Creating a culture at Mill Bay Nature School where the Cowichan and Malahat cultures are deeply respected, will be a focus supported by Elders-in Residence and aboriginal educators. Mill Bay Nature School seeks to practice these principles as they are natural to the life found in this place.**





**We** deeply value hands-on, experiential learning emerging from childrens' play, curiosities, and questions.

**The role of the adult is not as a transmitter but as a creator of relationships - relationships not only between people but also between things, between thoughts with the environment.**

**Malaguzzi, 1994**

[https://books.google.ca/books?id=NBXL2B40F9gC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.ca/books?id=NBXL2B40F9gC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)

**At Mill Bay Nature School you may see children attentively exploring the dirt noticing the new shoot that was there yesterday now missing. You may hear them wondering - "What happened?" "Where did the shoot go?" You may hear another child respond "deer!" Another may suggest "beavers?" Still another shouts "a T-Rex!" You may notice an adult nearby - a teacher - smile and hold, waiting to see what happens next - displaying the confidence and patience to allow children to follow their noses and hunches. They may take a photograph or record a note - reminding them of this small moment in time. Finally, in the fullness of the pause, an older child emerges from the forest beside the garden "We really need to build a deer fence if we don't want to feed the deer." "Why would we do that?" asks the one who noticed the missing growth. "What would the deer eat instead?" And so becomes a dialogue rich in wonder and compassion and understanding - between peers as thoughtful and ecologically accurate as any biologist could be - the interrelationship between deer and people and gardens. **The older child becomes a source of wisdom and knowledge; the younger, a fount of curiosity and wonder. The adult, a documentor of this small, but stunning moment; reciprocal respect found in this place of encounter and connection, interaction and dialogue, among citizens, younger and older, living and learning together - knowing that tomorrow holds more promise.****





**W**e are committed to following children's lead in learning and to take up pedagogical documentation as a daily practice noticing what is emerging in the child's development - capturing moments through photography, video, dialogue, field notes - to share with others to gain their point of view and to better understand the child.

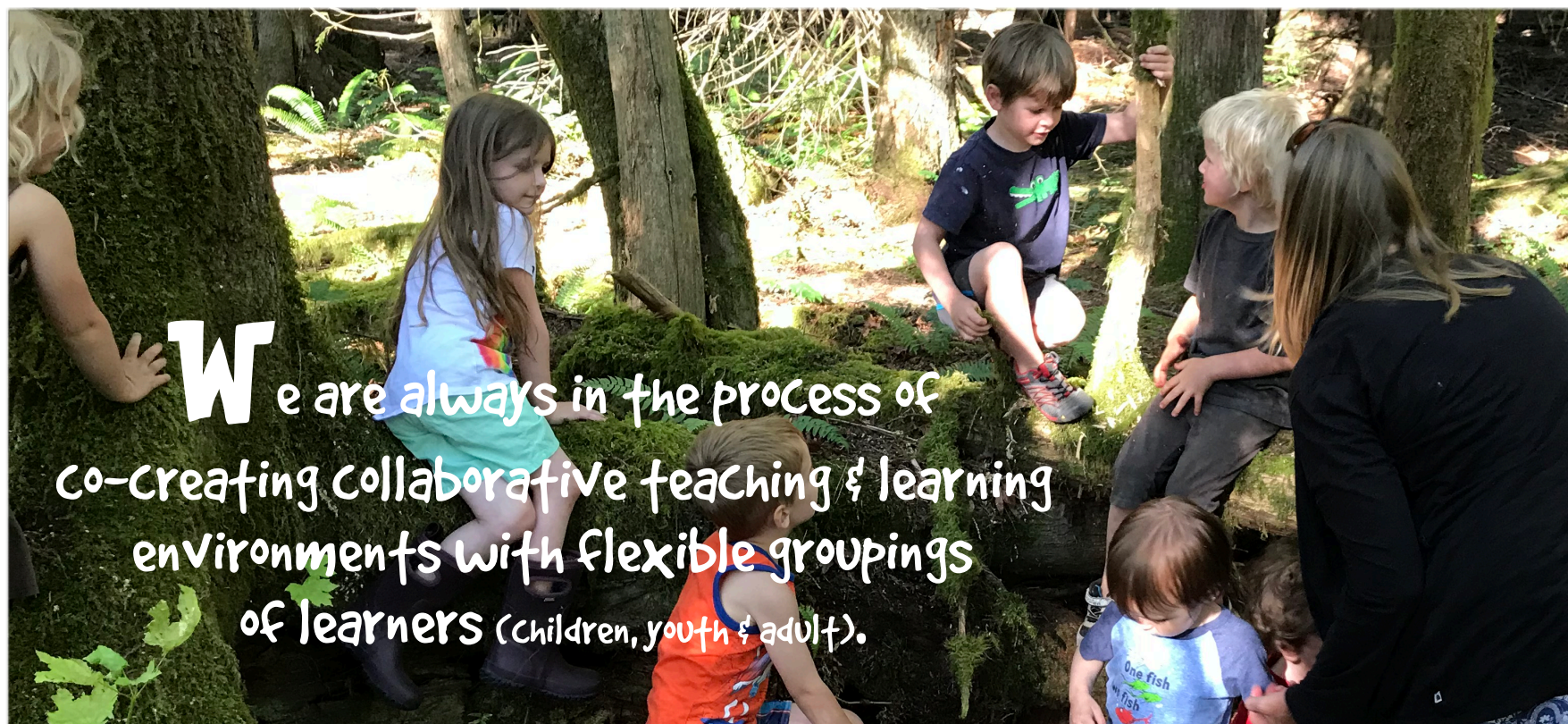
**The key is abandoning the idea that one is teaching the curriculum. Instead, what the teacher should be doing is creating experiences for students that will result in the outcomes we want. Those experiences will produce unexpected corners for both teacher and student. The teacher has to be prepared to say, "I don't know. Let's find out."**

**Rod Allen, 2018**

<https://mobile.edweek.org/c.jsp?cid=25920011&item=http%3A%2F%2Fapi.edweek.org%2Fv1%2Fblog%2F115%2Findex.html%3Fuuid%3D76784>

**At Mill Bay Nature School, we imagine our work called teaching and learning as connected to the images of seeds, growth, decay, pruning, seasons, diversity, interconnectedness.** This organic, ecological metaphor acknowledges that to promote growth and development in every learner, we must see the unique living being of each; considering the unique growing conditions needed - rooted in both nature and nurture. What are their personalities, gifts, limits, fears, insecurities, experiences, passions. What is her heart to become? What is the knowledge he needs to develop more fully? Moreover, this process of self-awareness is delicate and intricate, and as teachers we need to respect this unveiling - as difficult as it is at times. Like the complexity of ecology then, we become absorbed in interactions that cannot be reduced to a set of rules. How do we, as teachers, remain mindful of the creation of a learning culture ever-in-the-making that encourages risk taking so each may begin to expose his fragile, authentic, emerging self to the world? **Time and time again, children have taught us that teaching requires the preeminence of relational attunement - a patience and wisdom to watch, wonder, and wait. When we do so, learning becomes incomparably more productive.**





**We need to think of the school as a living organism. Learners (children, youth & adult) have to feel that the world is inside the school and moves and thinks and works and reflects on everything that goes on. Of course not all people are the same - each person brings a part of something that's different into the school.**

Malaguzzi, 1994

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/nov2015/emergent-curriculum>

**At Mill Bay Nature School you will see teachers working with communities or small groupings of children. These groups are not set or fixed, based upon year of birth, however, and will change depending upon the focus, the theme, the project of the day, the week, the month, and how each appeals to the diverse population of learners there.** Like the world outside the school walls, as humans we are attracted to what interests us; what asks things of us that are appealing; what challenges us or frustrates us or stumps us. These cannot be predicted, and children need the opportunity to make choices - choices that may be wise or frustrating or incorrect - and in this way learn more about themselves and the world in which they live. This requires nimble adults; adults who are willing to try new things, new groupings, new challenges. At Mill Bay Nature School, teachers are willing to engage confidently as learners themselves - acknowledging they do not know everything or every process or every ecosystem or every possibility. Instead, they engage confidently in process - processes that provide children with high support and high expectations - the ideal conditions for human growth. **As days end and students are reunited with their families, you will see the staff at Mill Bay Nature School meeting and debriefing the day's processes - the celebrations, the frustrations, the challenges - asking What's next? What needs to change? What needs to remain and wrestle with? What is going well? Always in the process of making and re-making this place.**





**We** have a passion for building meaningful connections between home and school - grounded in trusting interconnections between all adults that care for and share the same child

**We use the words “funds of knowledge” to refer to historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for family or individual well-being - to survive or thrive.**

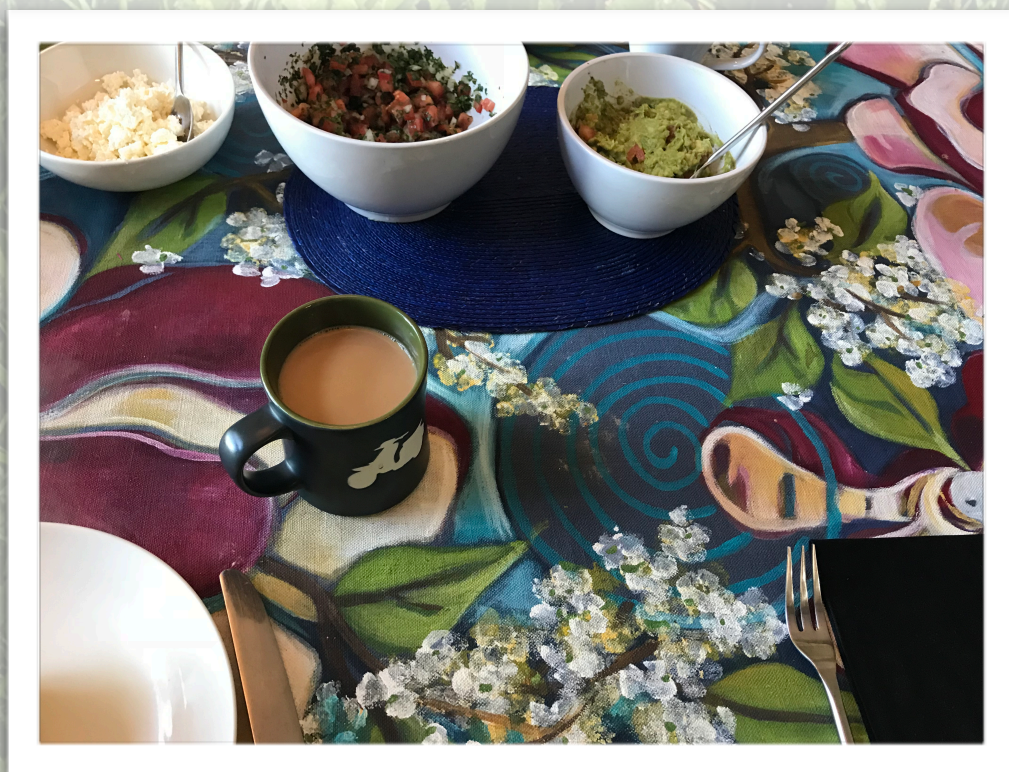
**Greenberg, 1989; Tapia, 1991; Velez-Ibanez, 1988**

<https://rylak.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/moll-et-al-1992.pdf>

**Children are already deeply rooted in communities before they step onto the field at Mill Bay Nature School and become part of its ecology. They are not blank slates.**

They have been loved, supported, and influenced by families, friends, neighbours, daycare providers, babysitters, coaches, teachers, media, television, etc. Children have already learned so much from these ecologies - long before they begin formal schooling. Families, in particular, offer rich repositories of accumulated knowledge - household histories and practices - that need to be acknowledged, appreciated, and honoured at school. At Mill Bay Nature School we welcome family members, neighbours, community members to become a part of our community, and we hope they will share their gifts, strengths, passions, and interests with us; maybe pitching possibilities and ideas to the children during our morning circles. You may hear things such as: “I really enjoy knitting. Would you like to learn?” “I make things with wood. Is anyone interested in building a bird house this afternoon?” “Have you ever done yoga before?” “I used to live in Mexico. Would you like to discover how to speak Spanish?” “I study ukelele at Frances Kelsey. Would you like to learn how to play?” “I love to read. Would anyone like to listen to me read amazing stories once a week?” **The possibilities to mentor are endless; the trust, reciprocal relationships, and competencies that naturally emerge from them are magic.** <http://differentlensblog.blogspot.com/2018/02/involving-mentors.html>





**T**he staff is committed to the philosophy embedded in the renewed B.C. curriculum. They are open to inquiring about their own practice - reflect, adapt, change - and willing to delve into deep, transformative conversations - seeking feedback, understanding, and growth.

**Becoming aware is strenuous and hidden work involving honesty, vulnerability, personal sacrifice and the decomposition of self-interest so that students in our care are provided what they need to grow and learn.**

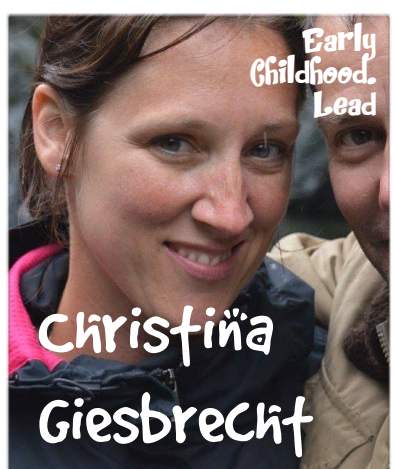
Ondrik, 2016

<https://vernoncommunityschool.wordpress.com/ondrik-research-study/what-is-the-lived-curriculum-we-have-co-created-at-our-community-school/>

## Introducing the Teaching Staff for 2018-2019



It is with joy that I introduce myself to you. My name is April Joy Olson. My father's heritage is 100% German and my mother's heritage is a 100% Scandinavian mix, which makes me a wonderful half and half mixture. I have one sister, Evelyn, who currently lives in Edmonton with my two amazing nephews, Lusajo (8 years) and Ezra (4 years). I adore spending time with them. My parents live in Vernon, B.C. I love to laugh, play, sing, and appreciate patterns in nature, architecture, and abstract art. Travelling, being out of doors, and playing piano are some of my greatest passions. I also love to practice Spanish with anyone I can and pick up the guitar whenever. I sometimes have a hard time knowing how to best spend my time, as I am drawn to so many passions - this is learning as well. I love to read anything from the *History of Mathematics* to the *Language of Emotions* - learn as much as I can through this. I am also continually learning to allow myself to slow down, reflect and let everything soak in.



Hello friends! I am proud of my Icelandic, English, and Scottish heritage, and my Vancouver Island roots. Born and raised in Victoria, Number One granddaughter to my Papa and Mama, sister to Kathy, Jade, Tyler, and Tyler (yes that's right). I am a mom to 5 kids aged 13-21. Passionate about my family, baking, hiking, and taking road trips with my adventurous, outdoorsman of a husband. I love reading, puttering in my garden and running too. I want to grow as a writer and artist and learn more about raising animals (chickens, goats etc.) I love birds. I have had the joy of teaching and learning with kids for the last 19 years and I love the curiosity of children. They are inspiring.





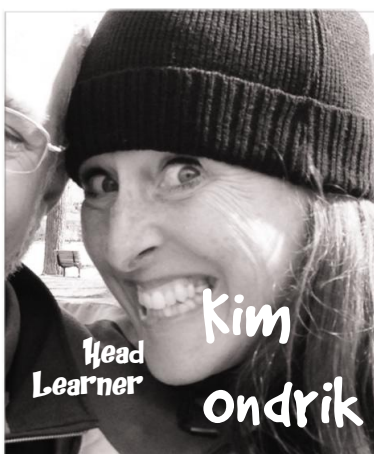
I am grateful that my family is eclectic in its makeup and has been in Canada for many generations. My roots are so firmly transplanted that I feel my culture is placed-based in Maple Bay and my grandmother's gardens in Glenora. As well as the mosaic of traditions that make up my family, I am deeply connected to my husband and son's Mexican culture and influenced by the years I lived there. I love to travel, explore different cultures, and to understand different ways of being. I love entertaining, cooking, dancing, and am always up for a game of trivia. I dabble in various art mediums and have created spaces as an interior designer for over 20 years. Art reflects life; and I am drawn to the complexities of emotion and story in expressionist art. We all have a story to be heard, understood, and accepted. All aspects of my life and teaching are guided by a love of learning, social justice, and empowering voice.



My family roots reach back all the way to the Reformation twisted and turned over the centuries by challenges and opportunities. These opposing forces pushed my parents and grandparents to escape persecution in the former Soviet Union and pulled them to create a new life in Paraguay. Early life in Paraguay was hard, much like homesteading in Canada, but my incredible brothers and I had a marvelous childhood filled with games of tag in orange groves and spider fishing. We were blessed to be nurtured by parents who were always our advocates and cheerleaders. When I was 7 my family immigrated to Canada making me a grateful first generation Canadian. My passions are learning, exploring, and creating. I am curious about our world and the people in it. Luckily my husband, who is my rock, shares my curiosities. We enjoy spending time exploring through hiking, eating, reading, and traveling. Our home in Cowichan is where we kick off our shoes, ground ourselves, and joyfully host visits from our families. I adore my work as an educator. One of the best parts of teaching is seeing a child's eyes open wide when they discover something new.



My ancestors hailed from England and Scotland as well as from the Metis nation and the Saulteaux people of Poplar River First Nation in Manitoba. Some of my ancestors from Scotland and England arrived in the early 1900's and made their way to the BC coast. Some came much earlier and worked the fur trade for the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay. Two of my Great Grandparents were classical musicians and classical music has been an important part of my life as I have a music performance degree in french horn from UBC. My Grandmother, on my maternal side, was Metis and Saulteaux, but became disconnected to her roots until later in her life when she developed a meaningful relationship with members of the Nicola Band in Merrit, BC which then helped her reconnect to our family in Manitoba. My passion for music led me to pursue a degree in Music Therapy and eventually Education. While I was working on my music therapy degree I worked for the Ministry of Children and Family Development in a program to connect with youth at risk and children of varying abilities. I have 3 young, beautiful, and active boys that love exploring the outdoors as much as I do. My husband and I have chosen Cobble Hill to live and work as it provides an opportunity to live close to farms, beaches, and forest.



My great, great, great + grandparents emigrated from Buck Country, England in the 1600's; one particularly brave woman travelled across the Atlantic in a freighter with 5 children and one in her belly at the turn of the 20th century as her husband was already coal mining in the Nicola Valley of British Columbia; and two of my grandparents came from Ireland and Denmark as young adults in the 1930's. I was born and raised in Tsawwassen by parents who cared deeply about their children - me and my two amazing and vibrant brothers - with grandmothers who nourished my inner artist and inner free spirit. My passions are: social justice, dancing, creativity, becoming wiser through listening and reading, and relationships. I deeply value sacred moments and unique clothing and boots. I am blessed with a gentle giant of a bee-keeping husband, 4 sons (16-25 years) who are full of life, and a vocational life spanning 3 decades now. Mill Bay Nature School is a beautiful dream come true - a place for my passion and vision, energy, and deep love for children and community building - and close to the ocean where my inner mermaid loves to explore the depths.