

## **Safety Policies and Standards of Care with School & Youth Groups**

We have been leading Algonquin Park school canoe trips and retreats with high school and post-secondary students from Northern Edge Algonquin since 1987. Through the last decade, we have grown to offer rich learning experiences through all four seasons and with intermediate age, international/ESL, and 'at-risk' youth. The following summarizes the standards we keep to ensure visiting students and staff enjoy safe memorable learning experiences.

**Dedicated Senior Staff:** Visits are planned and coordinated by a senior program staff who has both qualifications and experience as a teacher and within outdoor education and back-country travel. This staff will be involved with your visit from start to finish.

**Dietary and Health Concerns:** Menus are designed to take into account health and dietary requirements of every student. Medical history, dietary and allergy information for each attendee is collected as part of the registration procedure. Address, phone, emergency contact and OHIP or insurance numbers are also collected. This information informs our program and menu planning and is reviewed and carried by NEA staff in order to prevent and treat emergencies effectively.

**Supervision:** We maintain or exceed a 5:1 student to supervisory adult ratio for all school group visits. This is done through providing our own qualified staff at no more than a 10:1 ratio and working with visiting chaperones / teachers. Additional & qualified staffing is available for groups with needs of greater individual attention as well. We support school policies in regard to prohibition of smoking, alcohol and illegal drug use. Students in possession of contraband materials will be sent home on public transit at their own expense.

**Certifications:** Our staff are certified in Wilderness First Aid and CPR. For canoe trips, our guides have paddling certifications with ORCA, OWWA, BCU, AECSCA, or ACA and minimally Bronze Cross aquatic life saving qualifications. We ensure that a staff with a National Life Saving (NLS) certification is on every student canoe trip as well. Our canoe trip routes involve flat-water paddling only; therefore students will not be canoeing in fast-moving water or rapids at any time. Trips involving more specialized activities (winter, climbing, etc.) require additional training, experience and /or certification. Copies of the certifications of the staff who will be working with your group, along with criminal record checks are available upon request.

**Risk Management and First Aid:** Northern Edge Algonquin staff members receive regular training in managing risk in outdoor education and back-country adventure travel, preventing and dealing with the variety of health threats that can occur. We have developed and regularly update safety policies and procedures specific to the activities we lead, the environments we travel through as well as the age levels and abilities of the student groups we lead. These policies and procedures include but are not limited to rules around swimming, pfd-wearing at all times in canoes, preventing sun-stroke, ensuring clean drinking water, dealing with lightning, fire, wild animals, hypothermia and extreme allergic reactions. Our staff will educate visiting students and staff on safe, respectful, environmentally friendly practices for enjoying our outdoor learning adventures. Our staff will work with visiting chaperones to ensure rules are followed and (rare) disrespectful or dangerous behaviors are dealt with effectively.



## **What Students Can Expect at “the Edge”, Northern Edge Algonquin**

**Weather:** Prepare for weather that can be wet, sunny, cold, or warm. As a result of the higher elevation, Algonquin is cooler than surrounding areas. Snow flurries can occur as late as mid-May or as early as September. By the middle of May biting insects, such as black flies and mosquitoes traditionally emerge and they are usually noticeably less prevalent by the end of July, making early May and August through October ideal times for canoe trips. Winter at Northern Edge Algonquin means enjoyable outdoor adventure in deep snow. Cold temperatures are kept at bay with layered approach that focuses on keeping dry and not overheating.

The daily mean temperature for May and September is 11°, with nighttime temperatures occasionally reaching 0°. Winter temperatures generally range between -10° and -20°.

### **What to Pack:**

Choose clothing that will ensure a warm, dry visit. During any season, layers of clothing offer the greatest flexibility and comfort:

- Inner wicking layer (long underwear) to remove moisture from the skin
- Insulating layer (sweater/fleece) to keep warm
- Shell (outer jacket) to resist wind and moisture

Synthetic materials (polypropylene, lycra, polyester, nylon) offer greater warmth and durability (even when wet) than cotton or wool and also dry quicker. Medium to heavy fleece is appropriate for cool evenings. Wool socks are economical and much warmer than cotton, wet or dry.

Please leave valuables and watches at home.

### Personal Items:

- Toothbrush and toiletries
- Personal medications
- Camera
- Flashlight or headlamp (with spare batteries)
- Insect repellent (June to August)
- Sunglasses, sunscreen, lip balm
- Personal water bottle

### Clothing:

- warm hat (toque)
- sun/rain hat
- 2-3 long pants (sweat pants, cotton, nylon, canvas, etc.)
- 1-2 snow/waterproof pants
- 3-4 long sleeves/sweatshirts
- wind and water repelling jacket/shell
- 1-2 sweaters
- 2 pairs of shoes/boots
- several pairs of warm socks
- long underwear/long johns
- 2 pairs of mittens/gloves
- scarf
- inside shoes/slippers
- warm sleeping clothes
- sleeping bag

### **Learning Experiences:**

We work with visiting teachers and chaperones to create learning experiences in nature that are curriculum based, as well as providing opportunities for your child to explore their personal leadership characteristics, their role in healthy community living, and their personal strengths and interests.

### **The Menu:**

Visiting teachers ask students and their parents to provide important information regarding health issues and food allergies that will be used in providing menus that put ensure all participant needs are looked after. Our menus have been met with overwhelming approval with over a thousand visiting students over the past decade. On overnight canoe trips youth are guided in the preparation of healthy, satisfying meals and go home with an appreciation for the essentials of responsible food choices and nutrition.

**Our Equipment:** It is never required to purchase personal clothing or equipment to enjoy experiences at the Edge. In the event participants do not have immediate access to any of items list above, please inform the teacher/organizer and we will make arrangements to provide them from our inventory. There is no additional cost for borrowing our equipment, which can include: sleeping bags, rain gear, waterproof pants, insect repellent, water bottles, etc.

**Leave Valuables at Home:** We look forward to introducing you to our solar-powered facility, and sharing adventures that are not possible in many other locations in Ontario.

- Doors do not lock and we cannot be responsible for items lost during your visit.
- It is not possible to charge portable electronic devices such as mp3 players.
- A great deal of time is spent in the outdoors, so moisture can damage sensitive electronic devices.