

# R.O.O.T.S. SCHOOL HANDBOOK

## FOR YOUTH PROGRAMS



Greetings! We are excited about your interest in our programs. We hope that this handbook answers any questions you have about who Roots is as a school and what our policies are. We see ourselves as distinctive in that our programs that are focused, challenging, serious, at the same time maintaining an adventurous and joyful experience. It is important that we make who we are as a school clear so that you can make the judgment as to whether you see yourself, son, or daughter to be a good fit. This handbook outlines our teaching philosophy, our expectations, our policies, and logistical details. Please read through this carefully, and contact us with any inquiries.

### **Education Philosophy**

We draw from many educational models, and prescribe to none. All students are individuals whose needs are met through awareness and application of these teaching philosophies.

### **Effective learning happens when we care about what we are learning.**

Roots first goal with its students is to inspire passion for learning. This happens through awareness, awe, and joy of the natural world and humanity's role in it. By engaging students with first hand experiences and challenges, we inspire curiosity and a personal need to learn. In connecting the learning to the students themselves, the environment around them, and the people in their lives, our students are able to apply the lessons in a broader context. Finally, learning these skills is as 'good old fashioned fun' as it gets and it keeps us all wanting more.

### **Living with the land requires a relationship to the realities of the natural world.**

Cultures that live close to the land have learned to see the world as it is, and act accordingly to keep their communities alive. Through learning from the earth and natural materials, students learn to accept and move with the realities of the world around them. Sometimes these understandings can be challenging to accept, and we work to help people of all ages to integrate lessons as they are ready for them. It is through these truths that our relationship to the Earth grows intimate and full.

### **Everyone's ancestors lived with the land.**

Ancient living skills are the birthright of all people; they belong to everybody. Each one of us is not only capable of reaching proficiency with these skills, we are naturally inclined to do so by the tens of thousands of years that all of humanity spent learning and living these skills.

### **Knowledge is only valuable when it supports our understandings.**

Roots teachings are based in skills and skills are based on our body and mind understanding not just information, but experience. Experience is gained by doing, through success and failure, and is the core of the education we offer. Through linking knowledge to experience, we gain understanding. By synthesizing many understandings together, we learn to see the broader contexts of the world.

### **Learning is a skill.**

We are all naturally incredible learners. We look to develop students to be self supported learners through awareness and questioning.

And so we ask, that as we teach, as we all learn, that you show these skills the respect they deserve. Devote yourself freely to them, with an open mind. Let them effect you in whatever way they will.

## **Educational Challenges**

Challenge is a very important element to our programs. We see challenges as a way to push ourselves to grow and better understand who we are in our strengths and personal challenges. They come in a variety of formats, as people are challenged differently. Overcoming challenges results in the reward of accomplishment, personal pride, and having stretched who we know ourselves to be. As a school we look to be supportive of where people are in their lives and do not make demands upon people that are out of context or beyond them developmentally. We will never force a student to challenge themselves past the limits they define.

## **Who is a ROOTS Student?**

We are often asked about the types of students who attend ROOTS, and we are always excited to say that there is no specific demographic for our programs. They are old, young, with experience in our field, and without. Commonalities exist in the characteristics we see displayed. Students are often considerate of others, willing to be challenged, and adventurous, hard working, thankful, honest, cooperative, and capable. What is most important is that the student is excited to learn, enjoy themselves, and participate in the program.

## **Facilities**

We work hard to make sure everyone's needs are met. Given that, we are a survival school and things are rustic. Students use our composting toilet, an outdoor classroom, a workshop for advanced skills projects, and a yurt in the colder months. For the hot months, there is a creek with a lovely dip hole to clean and refresh oneself. Most if not all class time happens outside. Depending on how accustomed students are will determine how much their comfort levels will be pushed. Acceptance of the weather conditions is a valuable skill, but we understand how really tough weather can be a distraction from learning and try to minimize that as best we can by using our facilities.

## **Meals**

For overnight programs, we cover three meals a day unless it is the first or last day. For day programs, we do not offer meals unless it is an overnight. We look to support locally sourced and organic foods from which we offer wholesome meals. We do serve meat, and if requested, can provide vegetarian, vegan, and gluten free fare. Please communicate what your needs are on the registration form. We will accommodate dietary needs as best as we can. In extreme situations, we will discuss with you another option.

Day students are expected to bring their own lunches. It is important that their lunches are easily transportable. We do not offer refrigeration nor heating except for the occasional fire. Whatever students bring in, they are responsible for bringing back out. Please, always make sure that students bring water bottles.

## **Sleeping arrangements**

Boys and Girls will sleep in the same vicinity with mentors present sleeping with the group. In some programs, it is important that students learn how to build personal shelters in different seasons and weather conditions. They will build shelters in a group area that they will sleep in alone, knowing that there is an instructor nearby that they can go to if they become too cold, wet, or uncomfortable.

## **Safety**

Safety is one of the most important of survival skills. It is our responsibility to maintain everyone's physical and emotional safety, and any disregard for one's personal safety, or the safety of that around them will be quickly addressed. In the hot summer months, we will make sure that everyone has water to drink, and take dips (no swimming) into the creek to keep ourselves cool. In the case of lightening storms, we will move to a safe location and wait to proceed with our activities.

### **Tool use**

ROOTS utilizes simple hand tools, and see the importance of safely and effectively using a knife, rasp, draw knife, scraper, and other hand tools. The use of knives is prominent at ROOTS, and we value the rewards of what it allows one to accomplish. Before knives are used at ROOTS school, students are instructed in knife safety etiquette. Knives are tools not weapons, and will be treated as such. The same rules apply to bone and stone, and they will be treated with the same respect.

## **Medical Treatment**

### **Illness**

If a student shows any serious symptoms of illness, we will bring them to a comfortable place and call you to pick them up. We ask that students who have contagious symptoms stay home in order for others to stay healthy. If the event of a medical emergency, we will contact you immediately, and if we can't reach you we will call the primary physician and emergency contact indicated on the registration form.

### **Injury**

There are inherent risks to roaming and playing in the natural environment, therefore ROOTS looks to minimize hazards and behaviors that could lead to injury. We teach awareness of one's surroundings by moving at the speed the land dictates. In a survival situation, any injury poses a great risk and ROOTS stresses that students look out for their bodies. In the event of an injury, students will be under the care of a trained instructor. It is common for us to have those trained as a Wilderness First Responder or Wilderness EMT. For more information on such certifications, we like SOLO. [www.soloschools.com](http://www.soloschools.com)

These are the first of the staff to handle any medical emergency. As staff, we carry radios for communication, a portable med kit with us on extended voyages from base camp, and have med kits stationed in accessible areas. When appropriate, we will utilize yarrow for small cuts, and plantain for stings.

### **Drugs and Alcohol**

Alcohol, illegal drugs, and tobacco are not tolerated at ROOTS School. Students may not bring these substances to our programs. Failure to adhere to this policy may be grounds for parental notification and/or immediate dismissal.

### **Gear**

#### **Water bottle**

Everybody is a more capable person when hydrated. Please bring a water bottle that is easy to carry around. We will have water available to refill, so we recommend that you bring one that is a half to full liter. Please do not substitute sugar drinks for water.

#### **Lunch**

A whole and nutritious lunch helps keep the body going! Bring a lunch that is fit in a backpack. Any trash that is brought in, the campers will pack out. This is the easiest with the least amount of pre-wrapped foods. These days will be long, with a great deal of energy expended. Please take the time to make sure that the student has enough food, including snack(s).

#### **Knives**

We have quality, sharp, stainless steel, non-folding, full tang knives available for use. If you would like to bring your own knife, please bring a quality, sharp, non-folding knife that you are comfortable with. We will mostly be using them for simple carving projects. If you would like recommendations on purchasing one, please give us a call. For anyone to use a knife, they will have to pass a knife safety test that covers safe and proper care, handling, and use.

#### **Clothing**

It is very important for one's clothes to be appropriate for the environment and weather conditions. We want our students to be comfortable, prepared, and able to enjoy all weather conditions. If you would like recommendations for what to bring, feel free to call us. For cold weather, make sure to bring long underwear, multiple layers, wool pants and sweaters, multiple pairs of wool socks, gloves and a hat. During the summer, a long sleeved shirt for the bugs and cool nights goes a long way, a rain jacket, as well as clothes that can get wet and dirty. Students should be prepared to spend the day outside, in any possible weather condition.

### **Modern technology**

Students will not have the time or energy to use electronic devices while attending any ROOTS program. This includes watches, cell phones, gaming technology, cameras, and so on. We promote the value in having time away from these modern devices so we can turn our attention to the sound of the wood frogs, the crackle of a fire, or the telling of a story.

It is important that students are comfortable leaving home. Homesickness can be a real issue for some people, and to keep the experience true to itself we do not allow letters in, or regular phone calls. Please make sure that both the student and the parent are ready to spend time apart. If you would like to check in with the office out of concern, that is understandable and we would be happy to talk to you.

### **Insect repellent**

A preventative measure for biting insects is a diet low in sugar, and high in vitamin B. We also recommend avoiding heavily scented soaps/shampoo/conditioners. We carry natural insect repellent in our medical kits for use. We do not have available or promote the use of chemically toxic bug sprays that contain DEET. Most insects are harmless and beneficial to the ecosystem at large. When we talk about hazards, we will be sure to bring up ticks; how to identify them, remove them, and what to look out for if anyone finds one.

### **Photography**

We as staff will occasionally take pictures of students that may become a part of our literature, on our website, or for local papers. Permission by you is indicated on the registration and waiver form. If it is a distraction from learning to have your picture taken, please do not hesitate to let us know. Also, it is best that you note that on the registration form.

### **Behavioral Issues and Dismissal**

It is important that rules, boundaries, expectations, and consequences are clear and understood. We will be clear in our orientation with students, and also ask that you as a parent/guardian communicate that appropriate behavior is expected at our programs. We know that as people grow that 'bumping one's nose' is largely unavoidable. ROOTS intends that all students leave knowing a little more about themselves. We look to be positive guides and model behavior that is encouraging, supportive, and honest.

As we look to support the needs of the individual, we also must support the needs of the group at large. We reserve the right to dismiss a student from the program if their conduct is found to be overly disruptive or damaging to the group's experience or their own. Furthermore, it should be understood that ROOTS is not equipped to be a therapeutic program. We do not have the support for children who are repeatedly unsafe to themselves or others.

In the case of disruptive behavior we will speak with the student directly. Most of the time, addressing the student's unmet needs is all that is needed to sort out a situation. If the issue reoccurs, a student will be moved away from the group to address the issue in a serious and focused manner, and with the instructor the student will make an agreement to make changes. If the understanding between the instructor and student is broken, and disruptive/destructive behavior persists we will address the parents/guardian. The final step would be in the student's dismissal for either a day, or the program in its entirety. We will not offer refunds in the event of this situation.

### **Arrival and Departure**

It is important to the program that students are dropped off and picked up on time. The times and directions will be specified in the letter we send to you after we receive your registration. We understand that there can be unforeseen circumstances that don't allow for that to always happen. PLEASE call the office to let us know as soon as you do. If we are not at our base location, an email can potentially be easier to receive via our phones and the spotty cell service. We have instructors who work hard, and they need time to rest and decompress so that they can continue to do good hard work. For overnight programs, if you are using public transportation for your child, please contact us so as to make arrangements.

### **Course Enrollment Requirements and Cancellation Policy**

It is the rare event that we cancel a program. In the extenuating circumstances that we need to cancel a program, we will let you know immediately and refund you any money that has been paid. All courses are filled on a first come first serve basis. The size of each class will be limited to a number that allows participants to receive an exceptional level of experience and education. A non-refundable deposit is required with your registration form with the remaining balance to be due on the first day of the class unless you have worked out a payment plan agreement. If you cancel your reservation for a class before two weeks prior to the start of the course, you will be able to transfer the full amount of your deposit to another course. The transferable deposit may be applied toward the cost of another course within 12 months of the original course date. If Roots School is not notified of your cancellation two weeks prior to the class, you will be charged the full amount of your deposit. Please allow two weeks for the office to process your registration form and deposit. Your reservation will be confirmed when you receive your confirmation letter with additional course information. Full refunds are only made in the unlikely event that we need to cancel a course. If a course is canceled Roots School is not responsible for any additional cost due to the cancellation or date change.

### **Payment**

Deposits vary according to the course and are listed on our website. Your deposit will be applied toward the cost of the course; the remaining balance will be due on the first day of the class. We accept cash, traveler's checks, your first born, checks, money orders, and credit cards online. Please make checks payable to Roots School LLC.

### **Privacy Statement**

All personal and medical information included in the registration form is used only by Roots School. E-mail and mailing addresses are never shared or sold with any other organization and will only be used by Roots School LLC.

### **Contact**

Please feel free to contact us with any questions you have.

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Kind Regards,

ROOTS School Staff