



[Header Image Description: This is a logo for the Youth Project, which is black hand-drawn text in all capital letters that says “Youth Project” with an exclamation point at the end. On each side of the word “Youth” there are three drawn expression lines, shooting outward like lights from a star. End of description.]

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Access Guide to Camp Coyote (2022)

This guide has been developed for the Youth Project’s overnight summer camp, Camp Coyote, occurring from July 30 to August 2nd. Its goal is to provide an overview of the space our camp will be held at (Camp Mockingee), to allow youth and their guardians to decide if the space will be the right fit for their youth.

How to Get There

Camp Mockingee is located in Upper Vaughan, Nova Scotia. Campers will be able to take a bus with the YP, or be dropped off at the camp itself by their adult. Youth are also permitted to drive

themselves to camp, but will be required to leave their keys with a staff member for the duration of camp. The bus to camp will be departing from the Youth Project (2281 Brunswick Street, Halifax NS). There will be a wheelchair accessible bus as well as an additional larger, non-wheelchair accessible bus.

COVID-19 Expectations

The Youth Project is committed to providing the most accessible space for all campers, that means that we will be upholding a mask mandate at all of our camps.

Camp Seahorse: Campers and volunteers/ staff will be asked to wear masks unless they are eating and drinking and in these contexts folks will be socially distanced and/or outdoors. If you came with a close friend and/or bubble buddy - you are welcome to unmask together and not socially distance during meal times and break times as long as other campers' space and boundaries around covid-19 are respected.

We will ensure that there are specific cool-down/low sensory spaces where campers can take off their masks and have a needed mask break. This is important for many reasons including but not limited to restrictive gender affirming gear, heat exhaustion, etc. We encourage campers to check in with themselves and ensure that they are taking the breaks that they need.

Campers are asked to take a covid-19 test and swab their throat and nose 3 days before the first day of camp, if campers have a

negative test but covid related symptoms, they are asked to please stay home for all other camper safety.

Before leaving to camp with Youth Project team members and/or before official registration, all campers and staff are required to self-administer and/or have a supportive adult and/or bubble friend administer a covid-19 test. Before any youth is fully registered and before supportive adults/parents/friends drop off the youth fully, the test must come back negative.

The Youth Project will provide tests and extra masks at all camp spaces. There will also be hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies throughout camp to ensure that folks are staying as safe as possible.

If during camp a youth and/or facilitator begins to feel any covid-19 symptoms, they will be asked to isolate and their guardian/family member/friend will be called for immediate pick up.

Camp Coyote:

As we will be in cabins, all the same rules apply with the entire camp, but youth will be sleeping un-masked with their cabins. At sleep-over camp, these cabins will act as a bubble for outdoor activities and socially distanced in-door activities.

If you have any questions and/or concerns about our covid-19 policy, please contact our Executive Director:

carmel@youthproject.ns.ca

Access to Physical Camp Spaces

Building Access

The main cabin and rec cabin at Camp Coyote, as well as the staff cabins, can be all accessed via wheelchair ramp, or otherwise by a set of (1-5 step) stairs. The smaller cabins where many youth sleep do not have ramp access, have 3 steps at their entrance, and are located on a slope. If youth can't access the smaller cabins, there are bedrooms available in the accessible buildings where they can sleep. This does, however, mean they might feel isolated from their cabin group during wake-up and bed times. Youth who stay in these cabins will still have access to a supportive adult when needed.

None of the doors in the camp buildings are automatic, and are often kept closed to keep bugs from entering. The doors are relatively lightweight, and some staff will be available to help with opening and closing.

Sleeping Cabins

The smaller cabins where many youth sleep have bunk beds. If youth have access needs that require sleeping on the bottom bunk, but would like to sleep in the smaller cabins with their group, they will get first pick of beds to ensure their needs are met. Youth sleeping in the accessible buildings will be in a single room with a twin bed, and will be close to accessible bathrooms. If youth need support transferring from a seated mobility aid to their bed, we have staff available trained in supportive transfers.

Bathroom Access

The main cabin where youth will eat and do indoor group activities has accessible bathrooms (with the exception of automatic doors), equipped with grab bars, and adequate room for a full-turn in most wheelchairs. The accessible bathrooms that have showers are also equipped with shower chairs. The bathrooms in this building can be used at any time, including during night hours.

The smaller cabins where many youth sleep do not have bathrooms, but other bathrooms on the campsite can be used at any time. The rec cabin also does not have bathroom access.

Central in the outdoor space there is a multi-bathroom structure with both showers and toilets, these can also be used at any time (but do get more moths at night). These bathrooms have a ground-level entrance, but are not wheelchair accessible. These bathrooms are however close to the main cabin with the multiple accessible bathrooms listed above.

Youth are encouraged to use the showers in the main cabin and the outdoor structure, but because of the small size of the hot water tank, we ask that time with the water on is limited to one-and-a-half to two minutes.

Outdoor Spaces and Terrain

The ground on the main outdoor space is unpaved. This ground is a mix of gravel and short grass, and has some resistance for mobility aids with wheels. There are some areas of uneven ground that might be difficult to navigate for campers with balance-related access needs.

The majority of the area where we will have activities is flat, however a smaller portion of the camp sits on a steep slope. The sloped area includes the path to the beach and the smaller camper cabins. If there are youth who would like to participate in beach time but need support navigating the slope, there are staff available to support getting up and down the hill - for example, pushing manual wheelchairs, or offering balance support.

As mentioned before, if campers can't access the smaller sleeping cabins because of the slope, there are rooms available in the accessible cabins where they can sleep.

Seating Access

Campers will have access to places to sit in all sections of the camp, and are welcome to sit or lay down whenever they want or need. The majority of the seating in the dining hall will be armless plastic chairs, with some benched tables. In the main flat outdoor area around the firepit, youth have access to wood benches to sit on. In all sitting areas, there are spaces where seated mobility aids can be parked. Youth are also encouraged to take time to lay

down when needed, and can do so in their cabins after letting a camp staff member know.

Places without seating are the beach and the court area, however chairs can be moved there if needed. If campers would like to sit on the ground outdoors, they're encouraged to do so in areas without grass, because of the risk of ticks.

Suggestions for Mobility Accommodations

It can be difficult to ask for support in having our needs met, so below is a non-exhaustive list of things that might be helpful to campers during their time with us. If any of these things would be helpful, we will give youth lots of opportunities to let us know!

- Would you prefer to sleep in one of the accessible cabins?
- Would you prefer to sleep in one of the camper cabins, but need a bottom bunk?
- Would you like support opening and closing cabin doors?
- Would you like support getting up and down the slope to the beach?
 - Would you like support getting up and down cabin wheelchair ramps?
- Would you like support transferring from a seated mobility aid to your bed?
- Would you like to let staff know any other mobility-related supports we can offer during your time at camp?

Food and Sensory Access

Food and Eating

We have wonderful Camp Coyote volunteers who make the meals we share together, and who develop the menu based on all the campers' needs. Your dietary restrictions, allergies, sensory needs, and preferences are all very important, and we want you to share them with us! Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee a gluten-free kitchen space that is free from cross-contamination so we cannot accommodate serious gluten allergies that can be triggered through cross-contamination, we will have g/f options available though!

Some things that are helpful for us to know are if you have any food allergies or intolerances, what foods you dislike and what foods you absolutely love, if you have sensory needs that make certain foods harder to eat, or if there are any food groups you don't eat for any other reasons (like if you're vegan or vegetarian).

We can also ensure that campers have tools that make eating more accessible. Some examples of things we invite you to share: if certain utensils are harder for you to use, if you'd benefit from access to straws, if you prefer cups with handles (like mugs), if you would like support carrying your dishes to and from the kitchen, if chewing or other food-related sounds are difficult for you, or any other eating-related access needs that you'd like to share with us.

Scents and Chemicals

We ask that campers try to bring scent-free products, or low-scent products whenever possible. Some products to think about include detergents, hair products, soap, perfume, and lotions; using these products can make camp less accessible for campers with scent and chemical sensitivities and other sensory access needs. More heavily scented products like perfume can attract insects, so it's especially important to leave those at home.

We cannot, however, guarantee a scent-free experience at camp. We encourage campers to let us know if they have scent and chemical access needs. We will be providing low-scent sunscreen and hand sanitizer to campers however bug-spray used is often quite strong. If you have a severe allergy to bug spray and/or know of less irritating and effective alternatives, please let us know!

Weather and Heat

The week when Camp Coyote takes place is often one of the hottest of the year. The campsite has no air conditioning, and that means sometimes it can feel uncomfortably hot. We do, however, have some tools that we can use to stay cooler during camp.

It's important to stay hydrated during hot weather, and there will be water available at all times; we will also have electrolyte liquids when needed. In the kitchen there will also be damp cloths and handkerchiefs kept in the fridge that youth can use to cool down, and can be accessed by asking a staff member. We will also make sure there's time to cool down by swimming in the lake on extra hot days.

Campers can also take breaks from the heat in the concrete basement of the main cabin if other indoor spaces are too hot. The basement can be accessed via stairs in the main cabin, or by a ground level entrance at the back of the building. This entrance may be difficult to access because of its location on a grassy slope, and has not been tested with a wheeled mobility aid.

Lighting

During camp, youth will have lots of time in the sun! The main outdoor space gets lots of direct sunlight, and we will be doing a lot of outdoor activities (but youth always have the option of taking a break indoors). Packing sunscreen and sunglasses are strongly encouraged, but we will also have extra on-hand so that everyone has access to them.

The lighting inside all of the cabins is mostly natural window light, and battery lamps are used during the evenings. Sometimes certain types of lighting, or too much sun, can hurt our eyes, give us headaches, or feel overwhelming - some tools that might be

helpful are packing your favorite sunglasses, and taking regular sun breaks.

During the night time, the cabins have outdoor lights so that they're easier to find in the dark. We also encourage youth to bring flashlights, and staff will have some on-hand if needed!

Sound

The two cabins where most group activities will happen - the main cabin and the rec cabin - are large hall type spaces, and produce a lot of echo. It might be louder in these spaces, more difficult to hear each other, and more overwhelming to the senses. Campers who have sensory-related, speech-related, and hearing-related access needs might find these spaces more difficult to navigate in larger groups. To help with some of these barriers, we will have a microphone and speaker in use when having larger group chats.

When campers are sharing space together, it's important to think about how to make the space comfortable as a community. Something that we can consider together when making a space easier on the senses, is trying to lower the levels of noise we're making individually. This mostly means trying not to yell and scream, even though it can be easy to do so without realizing when we're excited about being with our friends!

Some tools that might be helpful when feeling overwhelmed by sound: taking a break with a buddy to go to a quieter space (like outside or in a different space) after letting a staff member know where you are going, using an ear barrier (like earplugs or noise-canceling headphones - we will have disposable earplugs available), or by using a tool called stimming!

Stimming

Lots of people find it helpful and soothing to stim in many different situations - like overwhelming social spaces, or to navigate things that engage our senses in strong ways (like exciting music, delicious food, or harsh lighting). Stims are usually repetitive actions; sometimes they're body movements like hand-flapping, with an object like a fidget toy, or with sound like repeating a word we like, and those are only to name a few!

There are times at camp where youth might feel overwhelmed or overstimulated, and may find it helpful to use a tool like this to feel more comfortable. We ask all campers to remember that these are amazing ways of navigating shared spaces, and while our neurodivergent community members (for example, autistic folks) are often marginalized for stimming, everyone stims in one way or another!

Suggestions for Food and Sensory Accommodations

- Do you have any dietary restrictions or sensory-related food needs that we can incorporate into the menu?
- Are there certain tools or supports that would make eating more accessible (straws, certain utensils, etc.)?
- Do you have scent or chemical sensitivities or other related access needs you would like to let staff know about?
 - Would you benefit from having access to disposable earplugs?
 - Would you benefit from having access to stim toys?
- Are you particularly sensitive to sun or heat in a way you want to let staff know about?
- Do certain ways of checking-in feel better when you're feeling overstimulated or overwhelmed?
- Do certain forms of communication feel better when you're feeling overstimulated or overwhelmed (or generally?) - such as typing on a phone, writing on paper, or using AAC?
- Do you have any other sensory-related access needs you'd like to talk to staff about?

Social Conditions

Names, Pronouns and Check-Ins

During camp we offer stick-on name tags so that youth and staff can write down their names and pronouns to wear. Just like how you can't know someone's name by looking at them, you can't know someone's pronouns by looking at them either. If you need

to use someone's pronouns and they aren't wearing a name tag, it's important not to assume. Instead, you can ask "what are your pronouns?".

During group activities at camp, we will often do go-arounds of everyone's names, pronouns, and access needs. These go-arounds are also times when youth might choose to try out a new name or pronouns, just to see how they feel for the day! Talking in a big group can sometimes feel overwhelming, and youth are always welcome to skip their turn by saying "pass" or making a gesture.

Camp Activities

The things we will do together at camp will be planned based on the campers who register! Once we know who is coming, we can plan our activities based on what everyone likes to do and what everyone's access needs are, and make sure there are things to do for everyone.

If there are certain activities that you really love, ones that you don't love so much, or ones that feel more accessible than others, we would love to know!

WiFi Access and Phone Service

Because of the location of Camp Coyote, there is very little phone service available, and no internet access. If campers need

access to a phone, there is a landline available. There are outlets available in the main buildings. Please bring a portable charger with your regular charging cords if you would like to always have access to your device.

Suggestions for Camp Activity Accommodations:

- Do you like movement-based activities? Are there certain movement-based activities that feel better to do or more difficult to do? Are there tools that make them more accessible?
- Do you like art-based activities? Are there certain art-based activities that feel better to do or more difficult to do? Are there tools that make them more accessible?
- Do you like talking-based activities? Are there certain talking-based activities that feel better to do or more difficult to do? Are there tools that make them more accessible?
- Do you like game-based activities? Are there certain game-based activities that feel better to do or more difficult to do? Are there tools that make them feel more accessible?

Environmental Conditions

Outdoor Space

Camp Mockingee is located in a heavily wooded area a fair distance away from the main road. Because of the nature surrounding the camp, there is the possibility that campers will

encounter pollen, bugs, high humidity/heat, ticks, and general “outdoors” risks.

Tick Bite Prevention and Treatment

Wooded areas in rural Nova Scotia have higher rates of ticks that carry tick-borne diseases, and it's important to take steps to reduce the risk of tick bites when preparing to spend time in these areas. Camp activities will happen indoors, and in outdoor areas that are much lower risk (short or no grass, gravel, and sand), however there are areas in the camp that youth have access to that may be grassier or more wooded.

When packing for camp, youth are encouraged to bring clothing that covers more exposed skin (like long sleeves and pants), lighter coloured clothing so that ticks are easier to spot, and enclosed shoes with long socks. However some days may be very hot, so youth may want to have lighter, more breathable clothes when in lower-risk areas.

While at camp, youth can reduce their risk by avoiding grassier and more wooded areas and staying in the central areas where we do group activities. We also recommend that campers tuck their clothing into each other, like pants into socks, or shirts into bottoms. We will have spray tick repellent on hand that everyone will have access to.

As a group, we facilitate very regular tick checks. Campers should do full-body checks after being outdoors, but some higher-risk places campers can keep in mind when doing checks are under the arms, in and around the ears, inside belly button, back of the knees, in and around the hair, between the legs, and around the waist.

In the event of a bite, we will have devices on hand for removing the tick, and ensure the site is cleaned and monitored for a bullseye rash. Ticks are sometimes missed because of their size, and if a tick is believed to have been attached for 24 hours, or if youth show signs of Lyme disease transmission (new or increased rash, fatigue, muscle aches, joint pain, fever), we will call the camper's guardian to make a plan to access timely medical care. In this event we will also try to save the tick in a plastic sealed bag for testing, and will make note of when and where it was found on the body.

Medication Use and Storage

Medication must be stored with staff along with information about what medication campers are taking and the frequency. If youth would like to have consistent access to their meds and self-store their meds, that is possible with a note from a guardian/family member/supportive adult. If staff are needed to support dispensing medications, please share this during camper intake as staff will need written permission from guardian/family member/supportive adult to do so. Staff will also store Advil and

Tylenol for pain relief and/or headaches, as well as other Over-The-Counter (OTC) medications that may be needed. If the camper is under the age of 16, staff will need written permission that we can offer OTC medications as needed.

Substance Use

The Youth Project is deeply committed to working from a harm-reductive space in relationship to substance use. Organizationally, harm reduction means that we aim to work from a care-centric, open and shame-free framework around youth's various potential relationships to substance and do our best to ensure that our spaces are not alienating to youth who have relationship to substances but are also safer for youth who are sober and/or uncomfortable around substance/use.

We ask that youth attendees not use substances at camp as Youth Project staff and volunteers have a legal obligation to confiscate any substances that youth (19 and under) may have brought to the space and removal of substances will be a part of our Community Standards to build a safer space for all. If a youth is using substances at camp, the substances will be removed and the youth and staff will discuss a support plan with the intention of keeping them at camp that will be specific to each potential situation. If the Community Standards are broken three times, on the third time the youth will be asked to leave.

If you have a relationship with substance which includes using regularly and you still would like to come to camp, please make

note that you would like to discuss this with staff during your intake process and we will do our best to offer supportive options so that camp can be as accessible as possible for you.

If you use cannabis for medical purposes and/or pain management, please let staff know so that they are aware, have the appropriate documentation on file, and can support you accessing what you need. Sharing medication with another camper is a violation of community standards at camp.

It is so important that we build a space that can meet a variety of youth experiences and youth needs. These Community Standards in place are not meant to punish any camper, but rather work with each other, honor our available resources, skill sets, and limitations while acknowledging that there are often contradictory needs regarding substance as well legal obligations around youth substance use. If you have any questions or feedback about this policy, especially how it could better meet your needs, please be in touch with our Executive Director:

carmel@youthproject.ns.ca

Harm Reduction Information

We will have sharps boxes on site in every washroom spaces as well as menstrual and safer sexual health supplies in every washroom space at camp. It is so important that campers have access to supplies that they may need at camp as well as outside of camp to ensure their safety and care.

Smoking/Vaping

If youth are regular cigarette smokers or use a nicotine vape, we ask that you let staff know prior to camp and there will be a designated smoking area. Youth are asked to not share their cigarettes or vape with non-smoking youth.

Other Accessibility Notes

Barriers to Access: ASL Interpretation

Because of Camp Coyote's multi-day overnight format, we are unable to book ASL Interpreters. In working to remove this barrier, our goal in upcoming years is to have Youth Project staff in attendance who are fluent in ASL in interpretation roles.

Barriers to Access: Audio Descriptions

This year we're unable to bring a trained audio describer to Camp Coyote, however staff will be available to offer verbal descriptions of actions as needed throughout camp. We encourage youth to also give verbal descriptions when needed, which might mean describing what you look like before speaking, describing a picture if you want to share it, or describing an action that is happening. An example of this would be saying, "this is a picture of the Youth Project house, which is an old two story house that is dark gray and off-white with a bright pink door, and has the numbers '2281' beside the entrance".