

# Bushkids

Chloe Dragon-Smith and Wendy Lahey

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Bushkids is an on-the-Land learning initiative based in Yellowknife.

Learning outdoors or “in nature” is becoming a popular movement across Canadian society. For us in the north, the Land is the foundation for northern cultures, languages, and knowledge systems. It follows that learning on and from the Land has been integral to Indigenous societies since time began.

Bushkids works in an ethical space of engagement<sup>1</sup>, where Indigenous worldviews and non-Indigenous worldviews co-exist in a mutually respectful and creative space. Mainstream Canadian (and northern) curriculum comes from a western model of learning, and so much of the work of Bushkids is to create healthy space for Indigenous ways of teaching and learning to come into balance with the way all kids are currently learning<sup>2</sup>.

Colonial research and science has been confirming what Nations in the north - and all across Turtle Island - have always known. Spending time outdoors is good for children, good for learning, and benefits everyone long term<sup>3</sup>.

The goal of Bushkids is to share an (ever evolving) model for accessing balanced learning for all children that is rooted in places, peoples, cultures and languages. There is no right way to learn, and learning must be determined ultimately by Land, people, and the relationships that bind them over time.

Our vision is for every community in the north to have their own version of this model, with its own name, its own values, and its own spirit. Bushkids is not a new way to learn - on the contrary, it is a belief in the knowledge that has always existed here: in ourselves, each other, and the Land.

This is all represented in the poster by Trey Madsen. To learn more, go to [www.bushkids.ca](http://www.bushkids.ca).

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<sup>1</sup> Ermine, “Ethical Space.”

<sup>2</sup> Dragon Smith, “Creating Ethical Spaces.”

<sup>3</sup> Parks Canada, “Connecting Canadians with Nature.”





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**Chloe Dragon Smith** is a young woman born and raised in Somba K'é, Denendeh, of German, Dënesųłiné, Métis, and French heritage. She grew up close to her Indigenous cultural values and learned traditional skills for living on the land. Her mother is Brenda Dragon, and her father is Leonard Smith, and her grandmother is Jane Dragon. The women and men of her maternal lineage lived, harvested, ate, shared, struggled, loved, and died on the Land in the boreal forests of northern Canada. Chloe cares about revitalizing Indigenous systems – self-determined systems of living, learning, management, economies, and governance. As a mixed blood person, she feels a constant responsibility to bridge barriers and help create balance however she can.

**Wendy Lahey** is from Burlington, Ontario, and was raised by her Polish mother Phyllis Bryk and Cape Breton father, Sandy Lahey. Raised simply with a strong value of gratitude, Wendy has a large family with traditions that centered on food from the garden, farm or the sea. She is fortunate to have lived in Somba K'e since 2004 on Yellowknives Dene Land, Chief Drygeese, Treaty 8 territory, home of the North Slave Métis Alliance and countless other Nations who live here or traveled here since time immemorial. She believes in an education system of Land-based learning where Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews are in strong relationship and are equally valued.

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## REFERENCES

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