**PARTNERS ENVIRON NOTES**

1. **Name/type of centre and ratio children/adult.**

Name: Wet Wellies Ink

Type: Group Daycare

Ratio: 1:8 with 3:16 at certain hours of operation

*Introduction:* Wet Wellies Ink is a group daycare licensed for 16 children from 30 months to school age. The centre will staff three permanent positions: the Owner/Operator who will be an ECE; the Manager who will also be an ECE; and an adult who will be either an ECE or an ECEA. Although the current number of children is limited to 16, we have designed our outdoor space to accommodate 25 children and additional staff if future expansion is desired. Consideration was given to the impacts Covid-19 has had and we were inspired to create an outdoor space that embraces the provincial health and safety recommendations; ergo a space that invites children outside seemed a reasonable solution.

The name originated when we were discussing transitioning inside. We wanted a space where children’s wet coats and boots could be placed. I knew at some point Juanita’s accent would be a topic of discussion so I suggested honouring that and use the word “wellies” instead of boots. I then suggested “wet wellies” as a play on “wet willies”… It made us both laugh and we thought it may do the same for our families. In addition, many children are now familiar with the term “wellies” for “boots” as Peppa Pig, a popular cartoon character, uses this term regularly. Finally, we wanted something simple and decided that because we were in the business of having wellies get wet whenever possible, we would call ourselves Wet Wellies “Inc.” but in the finalization process, the work “Ink” seemed more appropriate. The water from a puddle is the ink wellies use in their creativity.

1. **Include design features drawn and items of interest.**

Juanita was very cognizant of the incremental weather we experience in Courtenay and developed an outside space that tackles this issue as often as possible. We collaborated on the areas we would consistently refer to as the Quiet Zone, the Active Play Zone, and the Adventure Zone. These areas were further developed to accommodate staff and children on less than ideal weather days. We also designated areas for specific ideas of play – i.e. an affixed stove unit in the mud kitchen area or the wooden stage for social/dramatic play. But thought also went into the freedom of play we wanted to inspire and so we tried to ensure that children could explore and allow their imagination to flow. Pathways were given consideration so that if a child made a mud pie in the kitchen area, he could take it over to the science area and examine it with a magnifying glass. We have dispersed Nature Zones throughout the centre that includes such things as raised garden beds, apple trees and a “forest window/TV”. Our property is surrounded by wooded areas beyond our fence line and these forest views will be included as a resource material utilized throughout the year. We incorporated nature in our Quiet Learning Zones. For example, we will be using the apple trees to create mesh-netting reading pods. Quiet time laying on the stage watching the clouds go by can also become a quiet learning zone. Of course we realize that just because we designate the area as a quiet centre does not mean it will stay that way. The fairy area may start as a quiet area – as fairies tend to be! – and suddenly be invaded by raucous, roaring dinosaurs! Hmmmm, what will happen next…?

We also believe we have succeeded in providing opportunities for several types of play. The need for sensory-based play is met in various centres but specifically in our sensory path. The pathway is “compartmentalized” and would begin with three recycled, brightly painted tires filled with sand, dirt and storage for shovels, buckets, etc. Next a section of pea-gravel connects the tires to the next section of the sensory pathway while simultaneously transitioning children into the mud kitchen centre. The remaining sectional pathway would contain a variety of items such as sand, pea gravel, driftwood, etc. for the children to explore. The pathway would lead children towards the loose parts materials in the construction area. Symbolic and dramatic play definitely have a “formalized” area but this can also freely happen in our construction area inspired by the loose parts provided. Constructive play may happen in the construction area or in the Quiet Zone with multi-coloured unit blocks.

We also believe we have met the space requirement for the types of play we want children to encounter throughout their day. There ae areas for playing by oneself, such as the chalk area or apple tree pods, but the centre’s space has also been designed so that children can interact with others if they so choose. The raised garden beds, for example, have been designed with indentations in the beds to allow children to garden alone or interact side-by-side even if they are on opposing sides of the garden beds. We wanted areas to be intimate enough for small groups when needed but also provide opportunities to expand to accommodate larger group gatherings. Our solution has become using carpet remnant ends/samples and stumps as seating. Storage has been intentionally created in the Quiet Zone for totes and one tote would include these carpet ends. Such seating is easily transported from a quiet circle time activity to theatre-seating as children gather to enjoy a presentation by a community member like maybe a fireman or dental hygienist. And located in our constructive play area will be stumps of various heights, weights and diametres; having the stumps near the back fence line, nestled between the stage, the apple tree pods, and the loose-bits construction area, invites both children and adults to move them about when seating is needed. The seating solution in other areas also allows for either small or large group gatherings. A table for the Quiet Zone will have two sections that when together, create an octagon shape that will accommodate eight children. As this is a covered area, the indoor stackable chairs could and would be used. The space has also been configured to have a large group activity by separating the octagon table or by using the carpet samples as seating during an outdoor circle time. Certain spaces have been designated for only small groups. The paved area of the Active Play Zone has been specifically designed for no more than eight children at one time. The bicycle area has four bicycles available, each bike holding two passengers. A ramp made from four, recycled palettes and a traffic tunnel to drive through will earn this area the right to label itself an Active Play Zone! The adjacent chalk area is also designed for limited numbers. The remainder of the outdoor space implements flexibility as often as possible. Removable table and chairs can limit numbers in the outdoor kitchen centre; fold them up and the kitchen crew can feed the animals living in the garden beds by the water fountain…

Finally, we applied the same flexibility to quiet and noisy exploration as we did to small and large groups. Intentional use of calming, flowing materials coupled with limiting areas to one or two at a time was done to produce low-key activities and low-key energy. The apple tree pods using ribbons instead of mesh after seeing a rainbow; a wooden swing built for two gently swaying to and fro; individual swingers enjoying parallel play at its finest on a set of T-framed swings – limiting numbers influences noise levels and thus become mini quiet zones for children needing a reduction in stimulation. We also whole-heartedly agreed that children needed an opportunity to be loud, active and risky in their play and designated two specific areas for children to indulge in these behaviours by providing safe play spaces. The Active Play Zone, bikes going in circles, children playing hopscotch, loud voices and laughter, will have no expectations of silent play! We also plan for amplification of volume in our Adventure Zone. In the opposite corner of the stage area is located a centre that combines adventure and imagination with some high-intensity active play. This corner of the early learning centre gently rises 5ft to a grassy knoll. Several options are provided for accessing the plateau of the hill as well as for returning to the bottom of the hill when children are ready. (Please note: As this is a feature I will be discussing in Question 8, I will not go into detail here.)

1. How licensing requirements have been met.

and

1. Note any important safety features.

Wheelchair accessible. Square footage. Shading for equipment. Safety rails. Smooth flooring/pathway transitions. Noise pollution addressed. Prevention and entrapment solutions. Easy to facilitate supervision. Open sight lines. Meet 180 minute outdoor play requirement. Limit on prolonged sitting activities. Opportunities provided for physical literacy. Locus on safe risk taking and reduction of hazards. Taps into Vestibular System i.e. increases System’s ability to detect movement and gravitational pull through the various zones encountered at Wet Wellies Inc. Zone proximities transition well. Nature, Adventure, Active Play, and Quiet Learning Zones are identifiable. Portable sun shades/sails.

Square Footage:

To our delight our outdoor space square footage is 202.5 meters squared. 52.5 meters squared above licensing requirements of 6 meters squared per child. ((maximum 25 children x 6 = 150 meters squared), (Child Care Licensing Regulation, 2020, p.g 12)).

Careful consideration went into what ground materials we used:

Composite Decking – Quiet Zone and Stage Zone.

This material is durable. It resists fading, staining, scratching and mold, and won’t rot, crack or warp. It’s also insect-proof and splinter-free, making it safer and more comfortable for our children. Water drains quickly from the surface through the 1 centimeter spacing, along with quick drying making it super easy to look after. The Composite decking provides the look and feel of wood and are made from recycled and reclaimed safe materials. It is also aesthetically pleasing.

Concert – Bike Zone:

This concert paved area has been stamped to give a plank-like wood grain look, and to create a non-slip surface. The concert has been tinted a nature wood colour to provide a cooler temperature of the concert also.

Pea gravel, paving stones – Mud Kitchen Zone and Science Lab Zone:

Water play will be enjoyed in these two zones therefore drainage is important. Along with the great drainage benefits of these materials, they are easy to maintain, prevents weeds, erosion, inexpensive and versatile.

The depth of pea gravel is 6 inches to absorb any falls that may occur (Safe Play Space, 2007, p.g 3).

Grass – Adventure Zone and Construction Zone:

Through specialized rubber mat design grass is grown in these zones with safety in mind. The rubber mat is designed to absorb the impact of children falling, running, and their rough and tumble play. At the same time the grass continues to grow and look beautiful. Just like regular grass the same care and maintenance applies to the high quality specializes design.

Transition Mats - Quiet Zone:

On entry to the Quiet Zone durable rubber backed transition mats are placed to reduce the tracking of soil, dust, moisture into the Quiet Zone and Indoor Centre space. These slip-resistant mats limit falls and slipping also.

Shade Equipment and Areas – Quiet Zone, Bike Zone, Active Zone , Stage Zone, Adventure Zone:

Our Quiet Zone pergola has a clear polycarbonate corrugated roof, which is extremely impact resistant and has a co-extruded UV protective layer. Keeping our child safe and protected from sunburn and sunstroke. Our octagon table has umbrella opening to create more shade.

The Bike Zone pergola has a roof UV protected canvas curtain to provide shade at any time and can be pulled to the desired distance for shade.

During the winter months we are able to enclose the Quiet Zone and Bike Zone with attachable canvas sides which have clear vinyl centre panels to see the outside world.

In the Active Zone, 2 mature apple trees provide natural shade on their own. When accompanied with the reading pods staff can change the fabric to best suit the weather conditions. The apple trees also provide clean oxygen to our environment space.

Both the Stage Zone and Adventure Zone have portable UV protected rainbow coloured canvas panel shade sails. Safety measures of attaching the sails with carabiners make them secure and at the same time manageable for the staff to put them up and take them down. Along with nature afternoon shade provided by the surrounding forest keeps our play equipment from getting to hot to play on. E.g. slide (Safe Play Space, 2017, p.g 1).

Fences, Gates, Archways – Outdoor Environment Perimeter:

All of our wooden plank fences stand to the height of 5 feet tall and topped with a 1 foot high vertical trellis increasing the height to 6 feet. With the exception of our 10 feet tall fence in the south east corner. This height allows the children to stand comfortable on top of the grassy knoll at 5 feet (Safe Play Space p.g 3).

Our tall fences provide a private existence from the public, a noise barrier, and a car pollution barrier.

All gates stand 5 feet tall with an archway increasing to the height of 6 feet, then topped with a pergola. Our gates are closed with its latch and secured with a carabiner at a safe height of 4.5 feet.

Archways within the outdoor space are 6 feet tall and topped with a pergola with a hanging basket on each side permanently attached for safely.

Parking – Staff and Family Parking:

Parking is available on the road in front of our centre. Our outdoor environment is located at the back of our centre. We have a policy in place when parking in front of our centre the vehicle is turning off to reduce pollution.

Railing Safety – Adventure Zone and Science Lab Zone, Bike Zone:

On the south side and east side fences, hand railings have been secured for safety and support while climbing the log stairs and grass pathway.

2 grab bars have been secured for safety and support at the science lab water table to aid the children when using the small 2 step fixed stool.

In the Bike Zone a permanent traffic pylon safety barrier has been secured to the low, 5 inches high, bike ramp. And on the other side of the ramp is a 4 feet slatted wooden plank fence with 3 inch spacing (Safe Play Space p.g 1).

Equipment – Outdoors:

All outdoor equipment and tools have a designated storage area or coverings so they are protected from all weather elements and wildlife.

Fire extinguisher, Grab and Go Backpack, – Safety:

We have 3 stations in our centre with a fire extinguisher and a grab and go backpack. 2 of them are located indoors at the front door and back door of the centre. The 3rd one is located at the north side gate by the Stage Zone. We feel it is important to be prepared for all health, medical and emergency situations. Along with the fire extinguisher, our grab and go backpacks have a index card system with up to date children and staff information, water, first aid kit, flashlight, whistle, radio, etc.

Our fire extinguishers are properly incased and securely attached. Our grab and go backpacks are placed on a secured hook out of the reach of our children.

Bathroom – Children and Staff:

When entering through the back door to our indoor centre the children’s bathroom is immediately on the left side of the open entrance area. The bathroom is equipped with 3 toilets, 3 basins, and 1 fold down diaper change table. Right now we are licensed for 16 children with the hope of expanding to 25 children in the future (Child Care Licensing Regulation, 2020. p.g11). Beautiful and colourful signage decorates the bathroom mirrors with instructions “to practice the rules of, health and hygiene in regards to hand washing along with cues given by the staff.

The staff bathroom is located at the front left side corner of the centre.

All basin heated water “is heated to no more than 49 degrees Celsius” (Child Care Licensing Regulation, 2020, p.g 26)

Kitchen – Children:

Immediately on the left side of the indoor open entrance area is our fully equipped kitchen. Our favourite place to prepare nutritional snacks/meals and refreshments. Heated water is no more than 49 degrees Celsius.

Back Door Entrance Area – Children, Staff, Family:

When designing both our indoor and outdoor spaces it was important to us to have a flow of fluidity from the outdoors to the indoors and vise versa through our back dutch styled door. Therefore the children’s bathroom and the centre’s kitchen locations were designed to be close to the back door entrance and our outdoor environment space. At this open entrance area to the left and to the right of the back door are 2 large windows for supervision visibility. Hooks and cubbies for the children’s back packs, lunch boxes, water bottles and a change of clothing available with easy access.

Daily Sign In/Out Sheet/Clipboard, Incident Report Book, Medication, Illness, and Injury – Children

On a daily routine, weather the children and staff are indoors or outdoors it is a policy for staff to sign each child in upon arrival and for an authorized adult to sign the child out when departing the centre. This clipboard is attached to the centre’s back door on the inside when we are in doors and on the outside when we are outdoors.

When outdoors the manager is responsible to have with them our Daily Satchel containing a small first aid kit, children’s and staff’s up to date index cards, (Child Care Licensing Regulation, 2020, p.g 31 & 32) a fully charged cell phone and designating a second staff member to have another fully charged cell phone for communicate, Incident Report Book and pen, an up to date allergy and medication report for all children and staff members to be able to act quickly when needed and to administrate medications on time.

When a child becomes ill or injured it is important to call the child’s parent, (s), or emergency contact immediately. When there are 3 or more children with similar illness we report this information to our licensing officer within 24 hours. When a child has suffered a serious injury e.g. broken their leg, we report this information to our licensing officer within 24 hours. Then all information is recorded in our Incident Report Book (Child Care Licensing Regulation, 2020, p.g 28, 29, and 30).

Monthly the staff and children practice and learn the importance of frill drills. On a monthly rotation staff and children practice and learn the importance of earthquake and wildlife drills. And every 6 months staff and children practice and learn the importance of a lock down drill. All drills are recording in our Drill Report Book and parents are notified.

Maintenance – Centre’s Indoor and Outdoor Spaces:

Daily, monthly, and annually the centre and play spaces, landscaping, fencing, gates, grass, decking, pea gravel, pavement, concert, pergolas, roofing, fabric materials, counters, storage areas and all furniture, equipment and tools are checked and reported in our Maintenance Book.

1. Note any important safety features.

(Maybe we can just copy and paste all the measurements you have documented and we can mash-up question 3 and 4? Or switch the answers? Not sure how we want to answer this…)

1. Explain why families would most enjoy coming…

We believe families would choose Wet Wellies Ink because we have taken the time to provide a space that welcomes developmental growth. In many areas, detail has been thought out and would be so much fun to present in person. (My attempt at descriptive words do not do the vision and design plan justice…) Geometric shaped mirrors and embedded coloured marbles make the garden walls sparkle and the fairies dance. Quiet Zone archways convey gentle acknowledgements to families arriving and departing. Families will appreciate that we respect nature and use natural materials whenever possible. The detail involved creating an authentic cooking station in the mud kitchen sends the message that we believe and view children as capable beings rather than simplistic creatures. We use colourful, rainbow panels in the sun shades/sails and umbrellas to uplift moods. We use wispy, billowy plumes of sheers sprinkled throughout the outdoor vista to instill a sense of calm and serenity. We use the environment to say playful learning experiences are what we do best!

1. Identify space parents comfort/enjoyment/ease is embraced.

In the Quiet Zone a painted mural depicting a “friendship” tree will welcome children and families as they enter the outdoor learning centre. There will be many branches and limbs on this tree as we will post pictures of family and friendship moments. We can transition our friendship tree through the seasons and include families by keeping photos current. A basket of books and several carpet squares will be easily accessible for a quick story before mom or dad heads off to work. Indoor space will also be made available for times when privacy is needed.

1. Identify space staff comfort…embraced.

Staff would be provided with their own bathroom located inside the facility. And whenever possible, an indoor space would be reserved as a staff lunchroom. Open sight lines have been maintained well enough that if an educator did need to step back from a situation, facilitating supervision can still be achieved. Educators can also take advantage of the quiet learning centres for some one-on-one time with a child, further strengthening their relationship.

1. Cite minimum of 2 creative/innovative/unique/etc. features.

For me, Donna T, I requested two things – a want and a don not want. I wanted a hill for the children (and I) where we could have “fun”. There was no clear or concise definition of “fun”…I just wanted to have fun. I was, on the other hand, very clear and concise about what I did not want – bark mulch! From the moment we were paired, Juanita had a complete picture of my unresolvable issues with bark mulch…

But my “fun hill” went beyond my simple little idea of rolling down a hill! Children are able to access the slide platform/hilltop four different ways. A walk up a general incline just proximal to the slide. On the hillside farthest from the slide traverses that will challenge large muscle groups and strengthen core muscle groups. Wooden steps along the outer fence line allows children to practice stair climbing. A rope climber is centrally located and flanked by a rock-climbing wall. All of this combined with either sliding down the slide or getting down the hill somehow makes me believe this would be a source of joy to children, families and staff.