



## Forest Days Professional Development Program for Teachers

*Fall 2020-Spring 2021*

### EVALUATION REPORT

By Landere Naisbitt, Outreach  
Coordinator, BHHT



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**BLUE HILL  
HERITAGE TRUST**

SERVING THE TOWNS OF THE GREATER BLUE HILL PENINSULA

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## The What, Where, When, and Why

Because of Covid-19, there was a great increase in interest around outdoor learning on the peninsula, and we had many requests for advice and assistance at the beginning of the school year. In response, Blue Hill Heritage Trust offered a free, year-long Forest Days Professional Learning Program, for teachers on the Blue Hill Peninsula. This Forest Days Program was a professional development opportunity for any teacher on the Blue Hill Peninsula interested in integrating Forest Days into their school day. It included a series of 10 workshops from September-May 2020-2021, a mini-grant for supplies, and Professional Development hours through Maine DOE.

### **The full program package ended up including the following elements:**

- A Mini Grant from BHHT for \$250 for outdoor classroom supplies
- 10 zoom 1-1.5 hour workshops plus one in person workshop and one field trip.
- A copy of the Forest Days Teacher Handbook created by BHHT, plus additional resources every month for expanding learning.
- Time during workshops to bring ideas, concerns, and questions to the table.
- Continuing Education Credits from Maine DOE
- Individual consultation time reserved on a first come, first serve basis.
- Presentation by guest speakers who are National and International leaders in outdoor learning, Forest Days, and Forest School.
- A Book Grant for teachers to purchase books to enhance their outdoor learning experience and teach environmental studies.

### **Workshop Topics:**

 September: *Philosophy of Forest Days and Introductions*

 October: *Getting Started Behind the Scenes: Safety Protocol*

 November: *Getting Started with your Class: Taking it all Outside for the First Time* (GUEST SPEAKER: Eliza Minucchi)\*

 December: *Nature Crafts and Teacher Show and Tell*

 January: *Learning from the Land*

Bonus Workshop: *Turning a Problem into the Curriculum* (GUEST SPEAKER Anna Logos)

 February: *Emergent Curriculum* (GUEST SPEAKER, Caylin Gans)

 March: *Ecological Relationships and Impact Assessments and Land Acknowledgements*

 April: *Aligning Nature-based Activities to Standards* (GUEST SPEAKER, Hazel Starks)

 May: *Fire Building Outdoors*

 June: *Wild Edibles and Goodbye Fairy Feast* (canceled due to pregnancy bedrest, but resources shared with teachers via email.)

\*More about guest speakers in later section

- Right: Fire Building Workshop at BHCS

## Who was Involved?

### Teachers/Schools:

Teachers from all eight elementary schools on the peninsula joined us for this program for a group total of 13 teachers:

Blue Hill Consolidated School  
Brooklin School  
Brooksville School  
Penobscot Community School  
Adam's School  
Surry School  
The Bay School  
Sedgwick Elementary School

We had a diverse group ranging from pre-K- 8th grade teachers, specializing in science, art, special education, Spanish, agricultural arts, and homerooms.

### Guest Speakers:

1. **Eliza Minucchi**, public school kindergarten teacher, adjunct faculty at Antioch University New England, and founder of Forest Days in Vermont.
2. **Caylin Gans**, internationally known Forest School leader, author, and nature mentor who trained in the UK and is now living in Ottawa, Canada.
3. **Hazel Starks**, co-founder, Naturalist Educator, and registered Maine Guide at Maine Outdoor School, L3C.
4. **Anna Logos**, Founder of Falcon School for homeschoolers and educator at Oak Meadow.

### Donors:

Thanks to grant funding from the **Ferguson Foundation**, **Anahata Foundation**, and the **Bary Lyon Small Fund of Maine Community Foundation**, BHHT was able to offer mini grants to all participating teachers to purchase Forest Days supplies, a Teacher Handbook full of outdoor learning resources, stipends for guest speakers, and a teacher book grant.

*"We hope this program will help build skills and inspire more time learning outdoors during Covid and beyond in all the public schools on our peninsula", Naisbitt remarked. "Seven of the eight elementary schools on the peninsula have representative teachers participating in this program, and we hope over time this movement will grow! We thank the schools and teachers for joining us on this journey!"*

*"We hope to make Forest Days programs long term and sustainable in our community as a way to encourage connection, learning, and stewardship of the land on school grounds and beyond," - L.N. Outreach Coordinator BHHT*



# Survey Results

## December Mid-Year Survey

### Purpose:

To find out how the program is going for teachers, what they enjoy, and what they hope to see in future workshops.

### Questions and Responses:

#### ***What have you enjoyed most about this program so far and what key take-aways can you share?***

- I've loved reading through the mandatory and optional materials that have been provided. It has also been really helpful to hear others' experiences when we meet as a group.
- This has been great. I am learning a lot and using the info to develop our own program. Just hearing from others what they are doing has been very helpful. It is a timely and generous offer from BHHT to be able to take this course. I am so grateful. I have appreciated connecting with other teachers on our peninsula, that has been a bonus. (We are not alone!)
- Learning the safety and how to learn outside
- I am enjoying being inspired to create an outdoor classroom at our school.
- I love having a chance to check in with other teachers and share ideas with each other.
- I have loved the collaboration between other teachers working outdoors with children. Landere's preparation for each class has been really helpful. It was great to have the guest speaker, Eliza Minucci, and I did pick up a few ideas to use in my program from her.  
Hearing ideas I can use.

#### ***What would you add or change to this program to help it better fit your needs?***

- Maybe more info on integrating art with classroom curriculum in outdoor classrooms
- Perhaps break-out groups? Homework assignments....although I appreciate that the workload is light, given that there is so much teachers are doing these days. I don't mind digging deeper, however.
- More ways to target academic standards
- I am a middle school teacher so I would like to hear more about how to make an outdoor classroom work for my age students. I wouldn't really change anything because we're an elementary school PK-8 so getting something set up for the lower end will be great. I can see us wanting to develop a second outdoor classroom for the older students, too.
- It's too bad it isn't a normal year, because I'm wishing we could collaborate in person and have visitors do activities with our kids.
- It would be a fun and helpful learning tool to visit the other students' outdoor learning spaces. We can gain little gems from each other's programs. Also, in the sharing of your space, it helps you see it through the eyes of others and may shed light on what you love about it and what you might change. Filling out the risk assessment forms was thought provoking in considering all the risks (and responsibility) we take when being in the forest with children. However I would not implement using the forms at my school unless it was required for our program to be open. Nevertheless it is a good exercise for teachers to complete at the beginning of the program to think through plans of action for the various risks involved. I think an hour per session is too short because we have not had enough time at the end of presentations for questions, comments and discussion.
- I like the in-person idea for next year, but I also like the fact that I've been able to watch recordings of meetings after the fact because life gets in the way of after school stuff so easily!

 **What are your strengths in outdoor teaching now, and what skills would you like to gain?**

- Strengths: my confidence and comfort level of being outside with kids, linking emerging interests from the outdoors into the classroom Needs Improvement: increase my knowledge of how to ID the most common trees and plants in ALL seasons.
- Because I see each class one class period for art and one for steam I would like to learn more about integrating specials into forest day
- I am not afraid to try something new. That's a strength. And I am not a typical teacher....I feel I have always thought outside the box. Sometimes that has worked against me, especially with parents or admin that are unwilling to think out of the ordinary....or are not comfortable with it. But I persist...and it tends to pay off. I am looking for ways to really teach outdoors, reading and math, while out in the snow though. With the exception of a few warm-up breaks, we have been outdoors everyday this school year. But, it's cold!!! and I am not sure how to teach when children's fingers are too cold to move!
- Love to be outside a flexible teacher who can easily see my way out of the box.
- I need to really look at my curriculum more to see how we can use the outdoors more in learning about science and math.
- I'm definitely feeling more confident about our time in the woods and have gotten better at discussing risk assessment with kids. I'd like to develop my skills in explicitly teaching kids how to safely participate in "risky" behaviors outdoors.
- My strengths are in sharing with the children my love for and comfort in nature and the outdoors. Also I love storytelling about woodland creatures and to include simple puppet stories out in the forest. I would love to learn some fun easy crafts to do out in the woods with young children.

- I have gotten much better at facilitating smooth transitions between our different outdoor 'modes'. I need to experiment a lot more with using the outdoors to teach the things I've taught indoors previously- and not just by taking the inside lessons out. I want to dump more and more pieces of the indoor lessons and adapt them to use the outdoors to full advantage

 **Are there any specific topics and/or skills you would like to see covered in this program if possible?**

- I would like to talk more about "risk management" and how that can fit into the safety policy at a public school or how people have worked around this so that the 6 risky behaviors can be "allowed" during outdoor play.
- Building infrastructure, art integration into forest days, citizen science projects
- Handling the cold....
- More academic valued resources
- I am curious about how much schools use their outdoor space in inclement weather. What about low temperatures? Wind? Rain?
- I look forward to learning more about Indigenous perspectives of the land we are inhabiting. It would be wonderful to be a bird in a tree (not a fly on the wall) observing one of Landere's Forest Days with the children.
- Writing, Speaking, Listening, Presenting, Reading Information, SEL, the Social Sciences and the Sciences (Everything I teach, in other words!)

 **What else would you like to share about your experience so far?**

- I'm so grateful to be a part of this opportunity .
- I am new at this with our school but am getting a lot out of this program. again...I am just so grateful. I can't believe this opportunity has presented

itself to us! (Thank you so, so much!)

- My kids just love being outside in our space! I love it as well. We are beginning to work on learning more about its plants and critters. That seems valuable to me.

-Thank you for inspiring us!

-It's been great! My students LOVE Forest Friday, and it's become a highlight of my week too. I'm curious about how other schools are using their grant money. We have some ideas, but no clear plan yet.

-Landere has done an amazing job putting this Learning Program together and I do hope that it is offered again for more teachers. Also I hope that perhaps the next one can be offered in person, or at least some of the sessions can be in person because that will help deepen the connections and collaboration between teachers on our peninsula.

-I would like to be in a similar group with a narrower focus on teaching the middle school standards outdoors specifically.

## TAKE-AWAYS:

🌿 Learning from and sharing ideas with other teachers in the group

🌿 Gaining ideas and inspiration to create outdoor classrooms and nature programs for their students.

🌿 Interest in in-person workshops and collaboration as well as field trips to other schools outdoor spaces.

🌿 More focus on ID of trees etc, and how to integrate specials into Forest Days.

🌿 More practice developing skills for assessing risky play

🌿 More about how to handle inclement weather

🌿 Integration of Indigenous perspectives

🌿 Overall participants grateful to participate in this free course and students already getting something out of it as well through their teachers.

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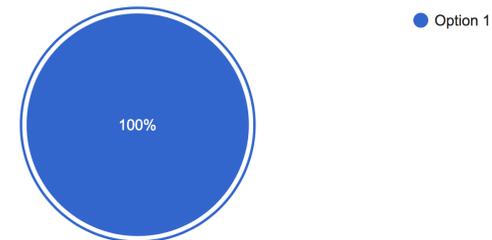
## Follow Up Survey (to last one)

### Purpose:

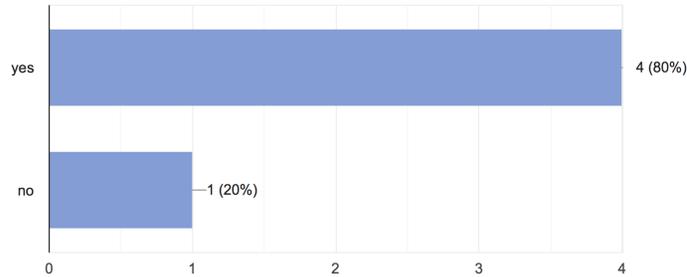
This survey follows up on some of the teacher comments in the first survey to get a better understanding of their needs for future workshops.

### Questions and Responses:

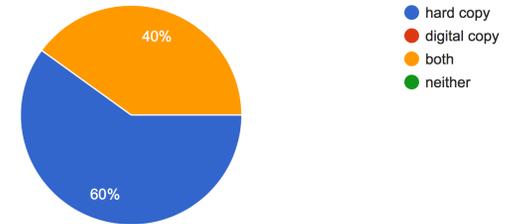
Do you enjoy being in a group of teachers with diverse teaching environments (science, special ed, pre-K- 8th grade, etc.) or would you prefer to be ...with the same age group and more similar content?  
2 responses



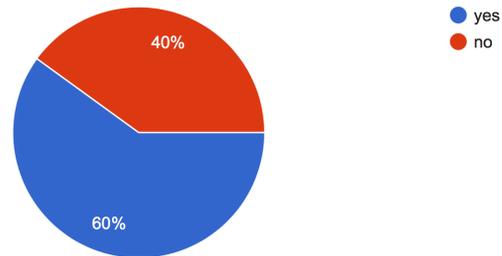
Would you like to experiment with break-outgroups in our virtual workshops?  
5 responses



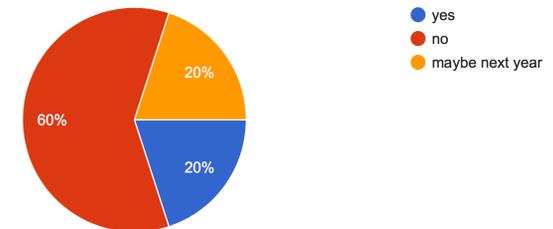
Do you like the hard copy teacher handbook or would you prefer a digital copy?  
5 responses



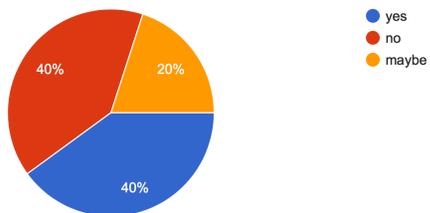
Do you want more "homework" to dive deeper in this program?  
5 responses



Last but not least, would any of you like to co-present at the MEEA (Maine Environmental Education Association) conference this year? It is a ...gain if this interests you, email me so we can talk!  
5 responses



This spring, would you like to share your outdoor classroom space with our teacher group? If yes, please email me so I can start an ongoing list to draw from later this year.  
5 responses



### TAKE AWAYS:

 I will use this information to help make decisions for the 2021-2022 course.

## End of the Year Survey

### Purpose:

To get a sense of the value of the program for the teachers, their key take-aways and personal growth, and their suggestions for how to improve it for next year.

### Questions and Responses

#### **What is one you learned during our many workshops that you plan to try with your students?**

- fire building, pine needle tea
- Silently sitting and listening in the woods
- That the first step is to get outside. Recess, fun , relax, or learn. Getting started was the key.
- I have always wanted to do fire and I felt very supported to start doing so. Fire building!
- learning from Hazel Stark, making a thunderstorm by first rubbing hands, then snapping, clapping, stomping and even knocking rocks or sticks together
- Continue to develop outdoor classroom space

#### **List 3 key take-aways or aha moments from the program.**

- the importance of land acknowledgement, risk assessment, and the wide variety of activities and lessons that are possible in the woods!
- Ease of outdoor education, learning how many resources are available to

help, ease of using nature as a palette in art classes

-1. I felt very strongly in the beginning that I needed to lead the learning. Have a lesson plan and bring the children to it. Or in some cases drag them away from something else to do my plan. I have turned a corner on this thought and am more observant now and catch the interests of my children. 2.You don't need to know everything before you go outside to explore. Take the guides and just ask and think about something with the students. There is no wrong thought or suggestions about exploring. Research ideas from the students. 3.Belong to the space you call home. Harvest, create, write, read, entertain etc. there. You will be surprised what you will find yourself doing. 4. Seek others and grow for yourself.

-I was reminded that there are so many ways to do 'school'. I realized that I can go so much farther. I felt supported in letting kids take reasonably safe risks.

#### **What was the most beneficial workshop of this series for you and the least beneficial? Why?**

- I enjoyed them all.
- Most the curriculum/standards although I was not there at the zoom the recording was really great and helped me think about my Own practice and how to do better. Lest maybe,I am not sure because each one had merit in its own right
- Everything was great. Hazel Stark was the speaker that I felt spoke to me especially. She had a way of drawing things out of me to process. I felt that what I was doing was ok and she offered ideas for going forward.
- I didn't make it to all of them, only about 1/2- I think I liked the first one best.
- The fire building session was most beneficial, but that's probably largely because it was in person - and also something new to me. I can't remember

any specific session that I didn't benefit from. Even if I went into it feeling like I already knew the information, there was something new to learn.

-Most beneficial was with Eliza Minucci and learning some fun "tricks of the trade" activities to do with young children outdoors because I can put these ideas to direct use in my program with 3-6 year olds Least beneficial was standards connections to outdoor learning because we have different standards in a Waldorf EC program.

-It was great to be able to connect with fellow educators and hear what they are doing with students. Though Zoom was super convenient, I wish we had had more in person time (and that my own schedule allowed for it..super busy!)

essentials ready for scheduled and/or impromptu forest days: first aid kit, tick spoons and ID cards, field guides, magnifying glass, whistle (or other attention getter - I often use a tiny harmonica).

For our EC outdoor program I purchased an ice fisherman sled for transporting items out to the forest in winter, 20 tin cups and camping spoons for hot oatmeal snack outdoors, 2 folding saws, hooks for hanging knapsacks and other items on trees, and whisk broom for sweeping off benches. I recommend all of these items because we found them all quite useful

I contributed all of my mini-grant towards the upcoming outdoor classroom space being developed at BHCS by the Mill Stream.

***Describe how you used your mini grant funds: what did you purchase, has it been helpful, and what items, tools, gear etc. would you recommend to other teachers?***

I did not receive a mini grant. I did use some of my own budget to purchase a Kelly Kettle though!

I purchased fabric to make costumes. We have been studying flower and plant anatomy while in the woods and what better way to understand plants then to be one. So we are going to write a play with the kids as flowers telling about their anatomy and life in the woods

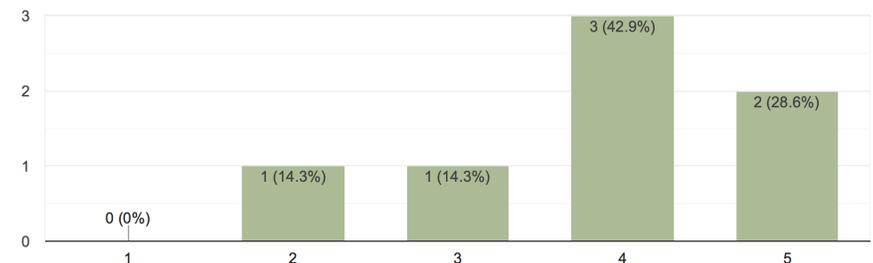
Outdoor drinking vessels for students and a large pump thermos for drinks. Books and materials for projects we did in the forest ( maple syrup etc).

We have already made great use of all the ID books Corrie got us. The kids have really enjoyed them! I have left the money to the garden director for much needed improvements to our 'learning garden'.

I purchased a Kelly Kettle and fire strikers and will also get some camp mugs and new magnifying glasses. I would recommend keeping a backpack full of

Compared to the beginning of this year how has your comfort with outdoor learning grown (or not?)

7 responses



***Anything else you want to share about your comfort level in the outdoors changing over the last 10 months?***

- Knowledge acquisition always leads to comfort when doing something and

this program added to my knowledge. Thank you

- I was already very comfortable with outdoor learning and actually preferred it. However I did learn lots of useful ideas.
- I am thankful to the Trust and Landere for providing this link between teachers and schools. The guidance and organization of guest speakers and discussion was huge. Spreading it out over the year was a way to go slow and make changes as we learned and reflected and discussed. Thank you !
- I've always been really comfortable outdoors. It's more a question of what I felt would be supported as a best use of my time by the public school community.
- I have thought more about safety in the outdoor classroom, particularly near the stream.
- I am more confident leading younger students through the woods than I was before. I've always been more comfortable with middle school students and outdoor activities, and I'd loved watching my 3rd graders explore!

I am going to Hogg Island this summer for the Audubon Educator's Camp. I am really looking forward to it.

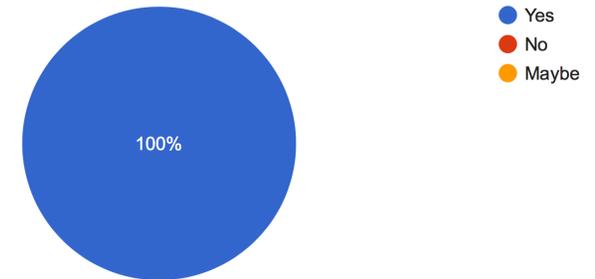
Melding community service and citizen science ever more effectively into relevant, applicable learning experiences with youth and adults.

I'd like to learn more about plant identification.

I would like to build my repertoire of games, crafts, and activities for various ages.

Would you recommend this program to another teacher?

6 responses



***What is it you hope to learn next in your journey of outdoor education?***

I hope to learn more games, and also to incorporate more cooking and fires into the learning.

I feel much more comfortable with implementing a school year long outdoor curriculum and making it fit into and argument the curriculum. I hope to keep learning new ways to do this and encourage the rest of my school to do so as well.

To visit, in person, some other outdoor education programs. Also I would like to learn more about wild edible plants and more about indigenous history of our land use.

***What recommendations do you have for Landere and BHHT for future programs like this?***

- Keep being awesome and inspiring! I so appreciate your support. Thank you!!!
- More hands on training although I know covid limited that. I would have loved to go to other schools and observe their programs first hand.

-I truly hope that the next and future classes can be in person. It was hard to not be able to collaborate with other like minded teachers in person. Also it would be helpful to be able to visit each other's outdoor program locations and set ups. The outdoor in person fire building workshop was the highlight of the whole class! Landere did an amazing job and was really well prepared. But I did enjoy and benefited from Hazel Stark and Eliza Minucci's presentations.

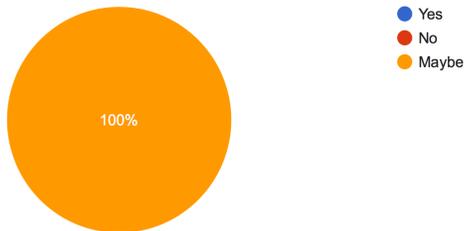
-It was lovely to hear so many different voices talk about teaching and learning outdoors.

-I hope you can keep offering this!

-Our one outdoor session was definitely the most useful, so while Zoom can be really convenient (even when it isn't a pandemic), the nature of this work is much better suited to in-person sessions - outdoors whenever possible!

### **Would you like to consider being a mentor to a new teacher that attends this program in 2021-2022?**

Next year we hope to offer another professional learning program for teachers on the Blue Hill Peninsula. This time, in person and outdoors! Woul...andere@bluehillheritagetrust.org to find out more!  
6 responses



 **Landere and BHHT are planning on offering Forest Days programs to kids in schools next year. If you are interested in having a weekly, biweekly, or monthly BHHT presence in your outdoor classroom, please let us know what you might be looking for.**

A Tom Wessel like reading the landscape lesson or plant Id class or lichen/moss id anything actually. I would love to have BHHT work with our students and so would they.

We would love to have Landere join us for our Kindergarten Forest Friday class at Bay School, if possible, a couple times during the course of the year.

Michele Charette is taking over for me and IS interested! Contact her at PCS, please.

I'd love to work with Landere in a similar way to how we have worked in the past, with projects such as making acorn flour. This was so much fun and a highlight of the school year for both me and my students. Thank you, BHHT and Landere!

I think I'd rather do my forest days by myself, but I would love to maintain a connection to other teachers to share ideas and stories!

### TAKE-AWAYS

 The fire building workshop (our only in-person workshop) was a highlight for many. Do all IN PERSON if possible in 2021-2022!

 Learning activities to do immediately with students appreciated by teachers.

 Connecting with other educators was really helpful for teachers.

🌿 Overall mini-grants helpful for teachers in starting up their own Forest Days programs.

🌿 Guest speakers really appreciated by teachers.

🌿 Learn more games.

🌿 Learn tree ID and wild edibles.

🌿 Visit other outdoor classrooms.

🌿 Make a forum for past teachers who attended this program to remain connected?

🌿 Teachers overall more comfortable implementing year long outdoor programs after this course.

🌿 More connections to indigenous perspectives/history and current activism.



Top right: Sled with supplies for a day in the forest with the Bay School Forest Friday group

Bottom, right: Bay School Kindergarten outdoor classroom





*-tapping maple trees at Brooksville School*

## Stories from the Teachers

### ***Forest Learning Supported by BHHT***

I found that through the resources of an outside classroom we, (my students and myself) were able to spend more genuine time in the woods. This is not just outside space like a playground or field but a real wooded area with a brook, alders, deeper wooded area with maples and other deciduous trees and even further a set of trails that wove through soft, moss covered evergreen stands.

I knew from hiking excursions at Holbrook Sanctuary, and the wooded trails I spoke of previously that it was a different mindset than that of a playground. Don't get me wrong, playgrounds are wonderful spaces with so many sensory experiences. Playgrounds are perfect for swinging, sliding, jump roping, and spinning on the tire swing and places to collaborate with friends in games like kid ball or foursquare. Here's the things I noticed when we moved our recess and playtime to the woods. All of the things that I loved about a playground were available in our wooded space. Except now it seemed to be alive with many more possibilities. The imagination was now able to associate with surroundings that made any magical idea possible: fallen tree roots became a ship, sticks became scepters or arrows or building materials, children swung on branches, climbed trees, ran from one corner of our area to the other and leapt over anything they could. They transformed into captains, superheroes, fairytale characters, animals, or families. They shared, cooperated, helped, organized, encouraged, and at times argued and at the beginning of every time we headed to the woods they raced to return to all of the possibilities. What I have just written was the biggest gift of all.

As I look back on this extraordinary year my most fondest memories are the small characteristics I noticed about my students. M. was the child who found the tiniest things and brought them quietly to me to share. His latest was a cocoon that he had been watching and he again brought it to me saying, "It's empty today." A. was the child who knew a

firefly whizzing by and surprisingly he knew when it wasn't a firefly. When I asked how he knew he explained speed, wing size and body shape were different. Z. could almost always be found in a hidden spot, not hiding, just enjoying his solitude and observations. L and M spent about a week hunting for the return of a milk snake that was last seen in the root-system of "the ship". G. could organize the building of a fort and have everyone hustling to gather the needed materials. H. loved to hold slugs and made sure they were rescued from trampling feet on the runways. I could go on and on.

Learning fell into place along with imagination. We harvested maple sap from our woods and heard many stories under our old cherry tree sitting on stumps. After hearing Landere's childhood tale of making mud balls we had our own version that we made. We studied alders, maples and the great pine.

How did I become so comfortable in this setting? Did I do these things as a child? Probably. I had never orchestrated the time, energy and commitment to do so much with students in the woods. The BHHT is a huge part of our success. As our guide, Landere brought her own expertise and invited so many wonderful guests each month that kept my thinking going deeper and deeper. This was a wonderful experience and I would love to continue if that is a consideration of the organization.

Thank you so much,

**Kathy Allen, 1st-2nd grade teacher  
Brooksville Elementary School**



## Testimonials

### ***Dear Landere and BHHT,***

What a wonderful experience attending Forest Days was for me. Connecting with other educators around outdoor education started our own program. Landere's ability to teach and engage all in the process was wonderful. Each workshop gave me new tools to try at our school. As a result of forest days we have new outside desks, new curriculum drawn from both the workshops and the books we were given, we used our \$250 to make anatomically correct flower costumes that we will use in a play next year designed to teach about flower structure and pollination. I have a host of new art projects to use with my classes, and I have resources to draw from to expand our program. But most importantly I have a group of educators that I can ask advise and look for information on new lessons they have created as a result of forest days.

This program was just what I needed at this time. With Covid 'forcing' us 6 feet apart and often out of doors it allowed for a mindset shift and the information from forest days gave direction to the change.

Thank you so much for this valuable resource and for a leader so competent as Landere.

***Sarah Doremus, Art Teacher, Sedgwick School***



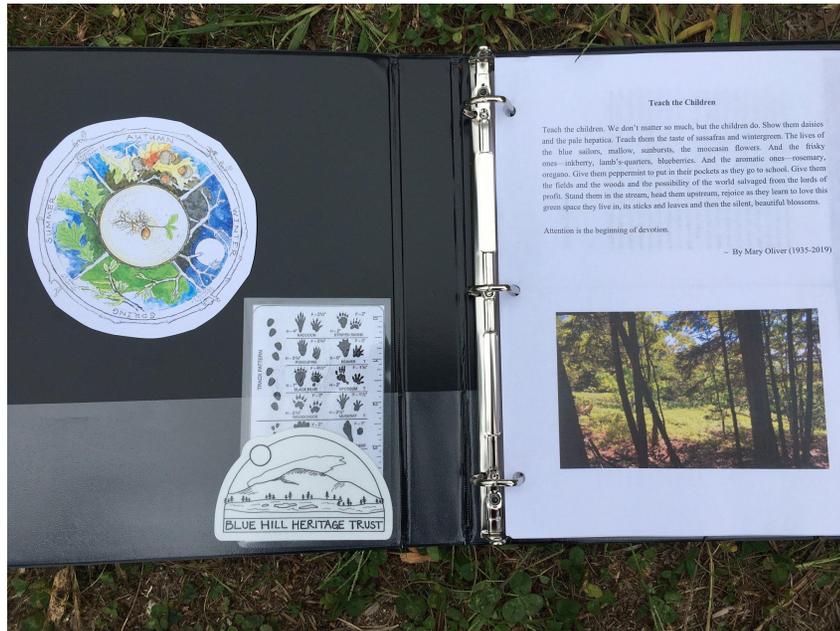
**Landere,**

Just a quick note to acknowledge your tremendous support and assistance to our educators. Your kind, compassionate and humble spirit combined with incredible expertise make you so valuable to our most important consumers, the children of the peninsula.

I love how you have taken this CV challenge and risen to the call to see the opportunity for outdoor learning and adventure. I always try to find silver linings in life no matter how hard it can be sometimes, and you are certainly one right now.

Know that your work has a high impact and that you matter so much to us right now.

Truly,  
**Megan,**  
**School Counselor, Blue Hill Consolidated School**



*Left: front of Teacher Handbook  
Above: back of Teacher Handbook*

## The MEEA Conference 2021 (Maine Environmental Education Association Conference)

**Purpose:** To collaborate with teachers from the program on another professional level. To provide an opportunity to increase the teachers' confidence in their own competency, the beauty, and the importance of their work with children outdoors. To provide a professional learning experience that required presenting for a larger group of like-minded educators.

**Location:** Zoom (due to Covid)

### Presenters:

Amy Bebell, 5th-6th Grade Science Teacher Brooklin School  
Kathy Allen, 1st-2nd Grade Teacher, Brooksville School  
Landere Naisbitt, Outreach Coordinator, BHHT

**Title of our Workshop:** *Forest Days and Place-based Education at School: Ideas for Day (and Nighttime!) Nature Connection*

**Content:** Landere from Blue Hill Heritage Trust will talk about the Forest Days Professional Learning Program they are piloting this year with local schools. They hope to make Forest Days programs long term and sustainable in their community as a way to encourage connection, emergent curriculum, and stewardship of the land on school grounds and beyond. Kathy Allen from Brooksville Elementary School will focus on how her first and second grade students are benefiting from place-based learning in their school forest and how their nature space has replaced their traditional playground. Amy Bebell from Brooklin Elementary School will offer some instruction on activities that have been fun and beneficial for her middle school students including Night Camping and Exploration on school grounds as

field trip replacements during Covid! We will utilize slideshows, storytelling, questions and discussion, zoom polls, and learning exercises to engage our audience throughout the workshop. The content will cover everything from nature connection pedagogy, sample outdoor learning activities, and community building skills. We will offer some practical and easily applicable tips and tricks while also asking the audience to push their growing edges to imagine learning in new ways.



**The Book Grant from Anahata Foundation**

## Press Release:

Blue Hill Heritage Trust pivoted in many ways this past year to continue offering free nature-based programs to both the community and our local schools. One of these pivots was to offer its Forest Days Professional Development Program virtually to local teachers, reaching more schools at once. This revamped program caught the eyes of the Anahata Foundation who donated \$3,000 to help teachers participating in the program grow their classroom library with books related to the environment and learning in nature.

Each of the 13 teachers in BHHT's Forest Days Program selected books, tailored for their students and teaching specialty. With the help of Samantha Haskell and Matt Shaw at Blue Hill Books, a very large order was placed this spring and delivered to classrooms across the Peninsula! The books are a wonderful collection from all over the United States plus the UK and Canada, and are a mix of nature poetry, environmental awareness, emergent curriculum guides, Indigenous voices, picture books, and field guides. The students who will benefit from these new resources range from Pre-K - 8th Grade from diverse classes including art, science, spanish classes, special education resource rooms, and homerooms! They are all engaging in place-based learning on their school grounds and beyond, and these books will enrich these experiences. Interested in learning more about the specific books chosen for these classrooms? Blue Hill Books now has many of them in stock!

Teachers interested in participating in future Forest Days programs can contact Landere at Blue Hill Heritage Trust.



*From left to right: Kathy Allen 1st-2nd grade teacher at Brooksville Elementary School, Samantha Haskell owner of Blue Hill Books, and Merrie Eley Kindergarten Teacher at the Bay School pose with their books!*

## What Went Well

The cohort of teachers who showed up each month to participate in the workshops and learning enjoyed being together and making connections between schools. Another highlight were the guest speakers we were able to fund and host, bringing a variety of voices to the outdoor learning table. While the absence of in person events was felt, many teachers were grateful for zoom sessions they could easily attend while eating dinner after work. We covered SO many topics and this richness provided by BHHT as well as guests created an environment that was full of food for thought as well as practical activities that could be tried and implemented immediately. The addition of the book grant meant that teachers had a chance to delve even deeper into this knowledge base as well as their outdoor teaching practices. The mini grants were well received and many teachers bought supplies to continue their journey with establishing Forest Days or other outdoor learning programs. They all received credit for participation through the state as well and this was appreciated. The fact that we had teachers from every Elementary school on the peninsula join this cohort for the year is quite exciting, and not only that but a great array of disciplines among them. All of them said they would recommend this program to other teachers!

## Limitations

While the teachers' workshops happened in part due to covid opening up this option for programming, covid also limited what we could experience hands-on and outdoors in a learning setting together. The fire building workshop was the only in-person program and was very well received with great attendance and feedback. In

the future doing in person programs more often would be ideal. This was also the first time BHHT offered this professional development program to local schools and didn't have any previous evaluation or reflection to fall back on in improving the offerings. We did several surveys and now this report, but did not have a formal evaluation plan set up. A more formalized procedure in the future could be helpful. I am not an expert in all of the topics we covered but fortunately the contributions from the teachers and guest speakers made for a rich co-creating of knowledge and experience.

## What Could be Improved Next Year

- In-person programming if possible
- New content that teachers suggested in survey comments
- School/outdoor classroom visits if possible
- BHHT visiting during school hours as guest leader.

## Plan for 2021-2022

Due to a medical leave of absence, we had to postpone this series until Jan 2022. As we will be starting in the middle of the year, the current plan for continuing this series is to offer workshops once per month to any teacher in the local schools interested in attending. We will have 1-2 guest leaders as well. In future years we will resume a year long cohort of teachers as this was beneficial for the group to have support in each other.

## Thanks and Gratitude

What a wonderful year, what a wonderful group of people, despite pandemic restrictions! So many thanks to the teachers, students, supporters, donors, BHHT staff, and guests who made this program successful. And of course a huge thank you to the land and this beautiful place for inspiring us to get out and know them better. We are excited to see how this program evolves in the future!



*Bottom: Surry Kindergarten drinking pine needle tea at BHHT Forest Days*