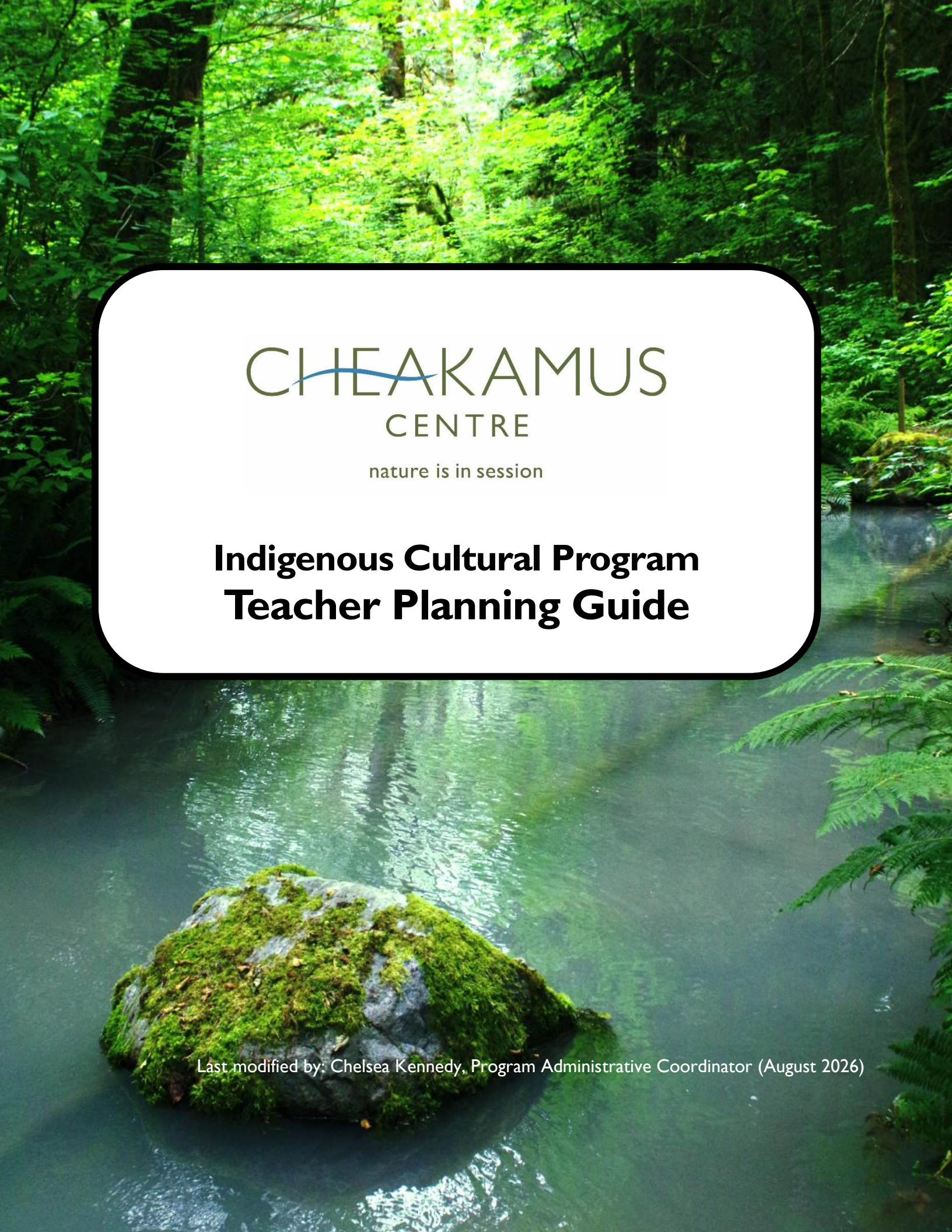

CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

nature is in session

Indigenous Cultural Program
Teacher Planning Guide

Last modified by: Chelsea Kennedy, Program Administrative Coordinator (August 2026)

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1 | K’aýáchtn (Welcome) to Cheakamus Centre and the Indigenous Cultural Program

About Us

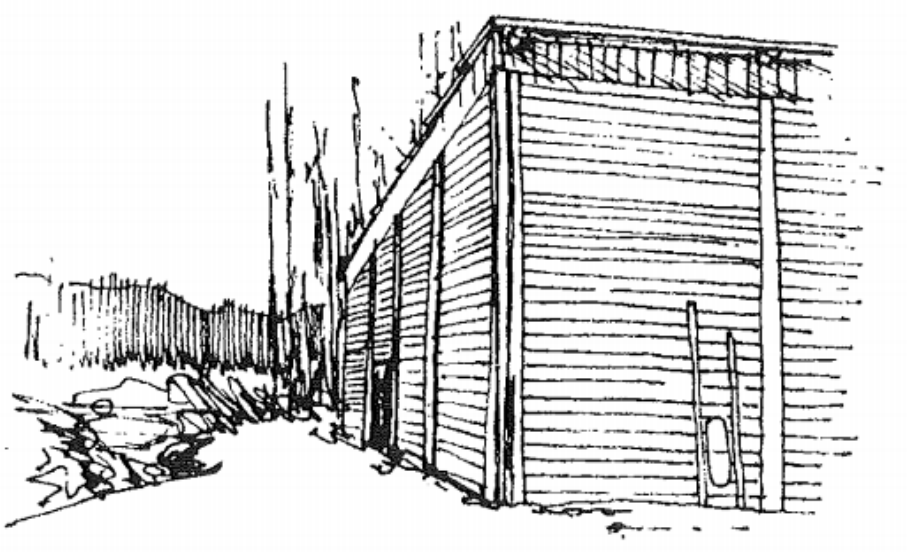
Located on 420 acres of ecological reserve in the Cheakamus River Valley near Squamish, BC, Cheakamus Centre is a world-class outdoor learning centre rooted in environmental stewardship and place-based education. We respectfully acknowledge that we are on the unceded traditional territory of the Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Nation. This land has long been a place of learning for the Ch’iyá’mesh people, who have shared their culture, history, and traditions here for millennia.

Our Vision at Cheakamus Centre

To be a dynamic centre of excellence for environmental and Indigenous cultural education, and a welcoming place for learning, gathering and sharing in nature.

Program Objectives

1. To enhance students’ understanding of, and respect for, First Nations culture in general, and the pre-contact longhouse culture of the Sḵwx̱wú7mesh people, in particular.
2. To provide a cross Indigenous cultural learning experience based on students and adults living communally and participating in traditional daily activities of the Coast Salish people.
3. To promote greater understanding and awareness of the beliefs and traditional values of the Coast Salish culture in relation to sharing, the seasons, and respect for others and the environment.



2 | Program Overview



Expectations of a Chaperone

A safe and enriching outdoor education experience depends on the support of adult chaperones. Each group should bring **one chaperone per 10 students**. Chaperones are responsible for **supervising participants at all times**, including overnight in the Longhouse.

It is imperative for all chaperones to be fully present with the program and to be responsible for the students safety and engagement, especially during non-programming and transition times.

During Programming Time:

Chaperones stay with the group, follow the Program Leader's guidance, assist with student engagement, and help manage behavior or conflicts. If a student is unable to participate due to illness or injury, the school is responsible for their care.

Outside Programming Time:

Chaperones take on a more active role—supervising before and after meals, during self-directed time, and overnight in the Longhouse (for two-day programs). Duties may include:

- Organizing games during self-directed time
- Assisting at mealtimes and with chores
- Supporting homesick students at night

Note: Alcohol is strictly prohibited for all school groups and chaperones.

We encourage rotating duties so all adults can also enjoy the experience.





Program Activities

You and your students will be immersed in Coast Salish living throughout your stay, and students will rotate through selected activities. Before arrival, divide students into **groups of 10**—these Activity Groups will stay together for all activities, meals, and chores. Overnight programs include **three Cultural Activity Blocks** and **one Evening Activity**. Day programs include **two Cultural Activity Blocks**.

See activity descriptions below:

Indigenous Cultural Programs
Cedar Bark Weaving Practice your hand with traditional techniques and tools in working with cedar. Depending on the group, projects might include cedar rope, cedar mat or paint brushes.
Wool Weaving Explore the traditional Coast Salish art of wool weaving, learning about the many applications of this important cultural practice.
Hunting and Fishing Learn to look for animal signs and increase your level of awareness with your surroundings. Students will learn about traditional hunting and fishing practices.
Wood Working Experience using traditional tools and techniques to split kindling and create kindling for fires. Traditional tools include our rock hammer, wooden mallet, bone wedge, wooden wedge and adze.
Plant Gathering/Ethnobotany Draw on indigenous teachings and local knowledge and explore the forest to learn about traditional medicines, food and resources. **Best time of year for Plant Gathering is the spring.**
Traditional Indigenous Games Learn to play traditional games testing skill, strength and your friendly competitive spirit. **Grades 4+**

Evening Programs
Campfire and Legends Enjoy an evening around the campfire listening to legends, stories, drumming & singing.
Night Walk Take a sensory walk around the site and explore how animals adapt to low light conditions.

Morning Activities
Day 1 - Cedar Walk Discover the traditional uses of the Cedar tree and its cultural significance to the Coast Salish peoples. Students will visit an old-growth cedar, as well as a culturally modified tree.
Day 2 - Group Wide Traditional Games Try your hand at one of the traditional games that First Nations have played for generations. Games typically played are Knobby Ball or Shinny. **Note:** students younger than grade 4 will participate in an alternative activity - TBD

Note: *You will have the opportunity to select activities on the Planning Form, however depending on seasonality or expertise of program staff, your top choices may not be available.*

Draft Program Schedule (Overnight Program)

Time	Day One
9:15 AM	Arrival, Welcome and Orientation
9:45 AM	Traditional welcome and intro to life at the longhouse Arrival Snack & Hot Drink
10:30 AM	**Cedar Walk**
11:30 AM	Lunch Preparations & Lunch
1:00 PM	Chores
1:30 PM	**Cultural Activity A**
2:45 PM	**Cultural Activity B**
4:00 PM	Snack & Self-directed Time (chaperone-led)
5:00 PM	Salmon Feast Preparation & Dinner
6:30 PM	Chores
7:00PM	**Evening Activity**
8:00 PM	Bed-time Preparation and Self-directed Time (chaperone-led)
9:00 PM	Lights out
Time	**Day Two**
7:00 AM	Rise & Shine, Pack-up Gear, & Breakfast Preparations
7:30 AM	Breakfast
8:30 AM	Chores
9:30 AM	**Cultural Activity C**
10:15 AM	Snack
10:45 AM	**Group-Wide Indigenous Games**
11:45 AM	Lunch Preparations & Lunch
1:00 PM	Closing Circle
1:30 PM	Departure





3 | Preparing for Your Program

All of our forms can be found on the Teacher Resources Page on our website.
Please use the "Indigenous Cultural" drop down menu.

Form submission
Please email completed forms to our Program Administrative Coordinator at chelsea@cheakamuscentre.ca.
Please ensure ALL fields in forms are complete, including parent/guardian signatures where applicable.

Stage	Action Items
Booking	▪ Confirm proposal details, dates, and estimated numbers ▪ Alert Cheakamus Centre of any extra space/facility needs or complex student needs ▪ Submit signed contract and deposit to secure your booking ▪ Send C.O.I. (Certificate of Insurance) – *see your contract for details*
6-8 Weeks Before Visit	▪ Complete and return the **Planning Form – *due ASAP*** ▪ Organize transportation to and from Cheakamus Centre ▪ Distribute the following forms to parents/guardians/adult participants: - **Informed Consent Forms** - *for all student and adult participants* - **Medical Forms** - *for Overnight Programs ONLY – no med form for day programs* - **Packing List** ▪ Begin filling in the **Cultural Group Med Diet Summary**
2 Weeks Before Visit	▪ Final due date for remaining forms: - **Informed Consent Forms** - *for all student and adult participants* - **Medical Forms** – *Overnight only* - **Cultural Activity Group Med Diet Summary** - Confirmation of final numbers *Once this number is confirmed, you are responsible for payment of the guaranteed or actual number served, whichever is higher.*

Activity Groups
Cheakamus Centre will assign the number of **Activity Groups** needed for the Cultural Activity Group Medical/Dietary Summary. If your student numbers change significantly, group numbers may be adjusted.

Keep groups **as even as possible**, and **submit the form as an Excel file** (not a scanned PDF). Be sure to **include all dietary needs** and **highlight any life-threatening or anaphylactic allergies**.

One Day Programs

Medical Forms are **not required for one-day programs**, but we do need dietary and medical info for all students. You may use our Medical Form to collect this, especially if your school doesn't already have the information on file. If you do use our form, please do not send it to us**.**

Overnight in the Longhouse

For the Overnight Indigenous Cultural Program, students, adult chaperones, and teachers all sleep inside the Longhouse during their stay. Sleeping mats are provided and each individual should bring their own sleeping bag and pillow. Please refer to the packing list for what to bring for your program. Our Program Staff will explain and facilitate the sleeping arrangement setup on day 1. You can find a detailed interior layout of the longhouse here - everyone will sleep on the raised platform sleeping benches. Students are advised to change their clothes either in their sleeping bags, in the bathroom, or in the change area at the back of the longhouse. A recommended resource for preparing younger children for spending time away from home/family can be found here.




Note: *If attending in the late fall/winter, please be prepared for a winter camping experience.*

Location & Directions

The Longhouse is located at 1600 Paradise Valley Road - Please do not rely on GPS Maps; look for the large green Cheakamus Centre South Entrance sign. Driving directions will be confirmed prior to your program.

Emergency Vehicle

We require that all groups participating in an overnight program have their own vehicle or transportation plan for non-life threatening emergencies. If available, please ask one of your supervising adults to drive up separately so that you have a vehicle on site. If you are not able to supply your own vehicle, an alternative transportation plan can be a local taxi service.




4 | Meals & Food

The Indigenous Cultural Program menu is chosen to reflect the types of food eaten by Coast Salish people of the area pre-contact. Our kitchen is able to cater to a variety of special dietary needs and restrictions – please indicate these on the **Cultural Activity Medical Dietary Summary.**

Meals	
Day Program	Arrival Snack – Hot apple cider & vegan cookie Lunch – hot rock soup (chicken, salmon, & vegan options) and flatbread ***Note** – when there is no fire ban, Bannock will be made on the outdoor fire
Overnight Program	Arrival Snack – Hot apple cider & vegan cookie Lunch – Hot rock soup (chicken, salmon, & vegan options) and flatbread ***Note** – when there is no fire ban, Bannock will be made on the outdoor fire Afternoon Snack – apple & muffin Dinner – Salmon feast – salmon cooked on the BBQ, carrots and potatoes cooked by students using the hot rock method. Dessert – ice cream & berries (Optional) Evening Snack – cookie Breakfast – Oatmeal & apples, hot chocolate Lunch – Meatballs, stewed onions and apples

Cooking in the Longhouse

Students will have the unique opportunity to be immersed in rustic traditional Coast Salish cooking processes, and to work together in their activity groups to prepare simple, nutritious meals.

Please note – vegetarian alternatives may not be the same "type" of food as the regular meal. For example, a vegetarian student may receive a veggie burger instead of the salmon feast, or falafel instead of meatballs.

Bentwood Boxes - A selection of meals will be made as a group using bentwood boxes. These boxes are traditionally made from a single plank of wood (usually Cedar) steamed soft enough to bend 90 degrees, with custom-fitting lids to make them water-tight and suitable for cooking. Students will assist in the process of adding hot rocks (porous lava rocks taken from the river and heated in the fire) to the water inside the boxes until it reaches a boiling point suitable for cooking.

Bannock – Bannock is an Indigenous food source traditionally made using the inner bark of red alder and Old Man's Beard (lichen) and seen as more of a filler or survival food; however the contemporary recipe is a mix of flour, water, and oil. The dough is wrapped around a stick and slowly cooked over the embers of a fire. Students will have the opportunity to hone their bread making skills and enjoy this delicious treat.

***Please note – if there is a fire ban, your program will be unable to make Bannock.**





Complex Dietary

If you have a student with a particularly complex set of dietary needs, please reach out to our Admin Coordinator who will coordinate with the kitchen if necessary. If we notice a dietary concern on a medical form that requires follow-up, we will reach out to the lead planning coordinator and sometimes directly to the parent/guardian. In some cases, such as serious dietary or medical concerns, we will allow outside food to be brought to camp. **This MUST be pre-approved by Cheakamus Centre. No other outside food is allowed on-site.**

Nut-Restricted Policy

Cheakamus Centre is a **nut-restricted site**. Please do not bring any food, skincare, or hair products containing nuts. While we don't provide nut products, we can't guarantee others won't bring them for personal use.

Chores – Overnight Programs Only

Students will be assigned group-based chores after each meal to support the program and build community. Chaperones help supervise and guide these tasks, which may include dishes, cleaning bannock sticks, firewood collection, making kindling, moving luggage, and sweeping the Longhouse.

5 | Medical & Complex Needs

Inclusion and Planning for Complex Needs

Cheakamus Centre is committed to providing inclusive outdoor educational experiences for all learners. We are able to provide a wide range of adaptations to support a wide range of student needs. To ensure all students have the opportunity to successfully participate in the Indigenous Cultural Program, effective communication between your planning lead and Cheakamus staff is required well in-advance of the scheduled program dates. On your **Planning Form**, there is space to indicate students with complex needs. Please be as detailed as possible when providing this information.

Please Note: Cheakamus staff can assist in care for complex students by providing activity adaptations when necessary, however it is the visiting school/organization's responsibility to ensure that there is a **Care Plan** for these participants and that they have the proper supports during their stay.

Medications

Visiting teachers and chaperones are responsible for administering all student medication while at Cheakamus Centre. Please collect all student medications and distribute at appropriate times.

First Aid

Cheakamus program staff are first aid trained and will attend to first aid requirements during program periods. During non-instructional periods, visiting teachers and chaperones are responsible for student care including basic first aid needs. On-call staff are available 24/7 to support first aid requirements (if required) or in the event of an emergency. **Groups are expected to bring basic first aid equipment and a vehicle to use in the event of emergency.** If an emergency vehicle is not available, a local taxi service can be used an alternative.

Squamish Taxi: 604-567-1111

Please report all incidents and accidents to the Cultural Programs Coordinator.

Advanced Medical Care

Medical care is available at the Squamish Hospital located 20 minutes from our site at 38140 Behrner Drive. In the case of an emergency, please call 9-1-1 and provide the location you are calling from (1600 Paradise Valley Road – South Entrance). Further information about emergency procedures will be provided upon arrival.

Sickness

In the case a participant falls ill, they will be separated from the rest of the group, and an adult chaperone will need to stay with them. In some cases, when possible, students will be sent home – it is the visiting school's responsibility to call parents and arrange for a pickup.

6 | Site Policies

Please review all **Cheakamus Centre policies** [linked here] before your visit. While comprehensive, these guidelines are essential for your safety and enjoyment on our large, dynamic site. Thank you for taking the time to read them.

7 | Frequently Asked Questions

Q: *May children or parents visit the property before the program?*

A: Our site is open to the public only during our Open House which falls on the first Sunday in May each year. Other dates may be available, please email chelsea@cheakamuscentre.ca.

Q: *Do I need to bring any extra food?*

A: All meals are provided during your Indigenous Cultural program. Any outside food must be **nut-free and pre-approved** by Cheakamus Centre administration.

Q: *Will all programs be able to cook Bannock?*

A: Unfortunately, programs running during a fire ban will NOT be able to cook Bannock over a fire.

Q: *Where do I find the forms for my Indigenous Cultural Program?*

A: All the forms for your program will be sent to you upon signing the contract, and they can also be found on our website under teacher resources, using the "Indigenous Cultural Program" drop down menu. Please scan and send your forms to chelsea@cheakamuscentre.ca two weeks prior to your program date.

Q: *What will the weather be like?*

A: The program will run rain, snow, or shine. Ensure your students are dressed for all weather before they arrive so that they can fully enjoy learning outdoors. Please check the forecast in our area here. In very inclement weather, adaptations will be made to ensure student safety.

Q: *Can I use my cell phone?*

A: Cheakamus Centre has good cell coverage throughout the site however, we encourage you to unplug and only use cell phones for emergency situations or to contact CC staff.

Q: *Do you provide transportation to Cheakamus Centre?*

A: No, visiting groups must arrange their own transportation to Cheakamus Centre. We are happy to provide recommendations for your travels. We require that all groups participating in an overnight program have their own vehicle or transportation plan for non-life threatening emergencies. If available, please ask one of your supervising adults to drive up separately so that you have a vehicle on site. If you are not able to supply your own vehicle, an alternative transportation plan can be a local taxi service.

Q: *How do I pay for my program?*

A: After your program is over, you will receive an electronic invoice from our Booking Coordinator.

Q: *Will adults be sleeping separate from students?*

A: No, everyone will sleep communally in the Longhouse, on the raised wooden platforms.

Q: *Does a Cheakamus staff sleep overnight in the Longhouse with the group?*

A: No, visiting staff will be the primary supervisors for overnight programs. There will be a Cheakamus staff available on-call, for emergencies only.

Q: *What type of clothes should I wear to the Longhouse?*

A: Please wear clothing that you do not mind getting dirty/smoky, as this is a rustic outdoor experience. Bring plenty of warm layers, rain gear, and rain boots if the weather is inclement.

Q: *Is there a fire inside the Longhouse?*

A: Unfortunately we are no longer able to have fires inside the Longhouse. There will be a fire outside, except in the case of a fire ban during the warmer months.

Q: *Is the Longhouse heated overnight?*

A: No, as there are no fires inside the Longhouse, there is no heat overnight. In the fall/winter/early spring, the Longhouse can be very cold at night. Please ensure all participants bring warm sleeping bags and an extra blanket if they are worried about the cold.

8 | Contact Information and Important Links

Forms submission and program questions: chelsea@cheakamuscentre.ca
Questions about booking/invoicing: niki@cheakamuscentre.ca

Website: www.cheakamuscentre.ca

Our Program Team:

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Director of Educational Programs
cmcmullan@sd44.ca

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Program Administrative Coordinator
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Matt Houston
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Niki Hurst
Education Booking Coordinator
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Kassidy Morency
Cultural Program Coordinator
cultural@cheakamuscentre.ca

Simona Bonelli
Executive Chef
Please email Chelsea for kitchen related questions

Huy Chexw A – *Thank You!*

We greatly appreciate your support in planning your Indigenous Cultural Program!