

Daddy Goes to Forest Day

I had the pleasure of attending part of the forest day program at Assiniboine Park and was asked to share my experience with you.

I had a couple of meetings cancel and found myself with the afternoon off. I decided to turn up just after lunch and see how my daughter spent her time outdoors. I knew she would be happy for me to hang out with her for a while, but was surprised when her friends all mobbed me as well. I kind of felt like a rock star! After everyone calmed down I found out it was nap time, which after the greeting I had received was fine with me.

We assembled at the shade structure that the staff had created with a tarp between two trees that provided a cool place for the kids to have their naps - quite ingenious I must say. Everyone settled in, some zoning out immediately and others for some quite recharge time. Much to the staff's quiet amusement, I was "schooled" by one of the other children that I was not rubbing my daughter's back the way the teachers did at nap time; suitably educated I performed my task better for the remainder of nap time. -laugh-

After nap time we exploded out of the shelter to explore the surrounding area. The boundaries were clearly marked with yellow ribbons but I need not have worried because if I even got remotely near the boundaries the kids would come running over to remind me not to leave the area. They were well aware of where they could and couldn't go. We spent our time playing magical games that apparently needed no rules, from "crossing the lava river" (a dry creek bed), to "mummies and babies" and finally the perennial favourite of "I spy".

Quite a bit of the afternoon was spent chasing and gently catching dragonflies in butterfly nets, with somewhat limited success as you can imagine. The few that were caught were placed in special viewing jars for a while, marvelled at by all, carried around by some and then finally released. I got to sit back at one point on a small hill, between requests for assistance in the hunts, and just watched the hilarious sight of a group of kids chasing around a dragonfly that was flying around probably 12' in the air – their determination and their joy of the chase was inspiring.

We gathered as a group for snack time, and the kids excitedly regaled everyone with stories of their adventures while charging up on healthy snacks and plenty of water. It was after snack time we chose to leave as we had our own adventures planned. Besides being a wonderfully run field trip, I have to commend the staff for their almost constant engagement with the kids. I am always amazed at the level of energy they have, but even more so in this stimulating environment.

In closing I'd like to encourage anyone that can squeeze out a few hours in their schedule should attend one of these excursions. The kids dig it and you'll find it recharging as well.

All the best,

Paul