

Big Cove YMCA Outdoor Centre



Planning Guide 2024

The YMCA of Greater Halifax/Dartmouth - Mission Statement

The YMCA is a charity dedicated to the growth of all persons in spirit, mind and body,
and to their sense of responsibility to each other and the global community.



Planning Guide for Spring and Fall Programs

Welcome to Big Cove YMCA Outdoor Centre

This booklet is designed to assist you in planning your trip to Big Cove YMCA Outdoor Centre and answer some of your questions about your upcoming outdoor experience. If you have any questions or would like more help in planning your trip, please do not hesitate to call at (902) 301-5175, the camp office in May through to October at (902) 922-2224, or by email at bigcove@halifax.ymca.ca.

About Big Cove YMCA Outdoor Centre

Founded in 1889, Big Cove YMCA Camp has a very strong tradition of providing unique outdoor experiences for the youth of Nova Scotia. We are the oldest overnight camp in Canada, with former campers and alumni that can be found worldwide. Big Cove's long history of quality and tradition has made us a leader in residential camping in Nova Scotia.

Big Cove has changed significantly over the years; however, the benefits and opportunities participants receive remain the same. Nestled in a secluded cove on Merigomish Harbour, Big Cove YMCA Outdoor Centre is a paradise of forest, field, ocean, salt marsh and shoreline. As a YMCA camp, it is our goal to provide these youth with opportunities for development in spirit, mind and body. With over 100 acres of pristine wilderness, Big Cove YMCA Outdoor Centre is ideal for Outdoor and Environmental Education and team building. A detailed description of our program options can be found further on in this guide.

When Can We Go?

We offer Outdoor Education programs for schools during the months of May, June, September and October. Our maximum capacity at any given time is 100 (if your group is slightly larger, please contact us to discuss options). Groups with less than 60 participants may be booked with another smaller group simultaneously. Groups of 60 or more will have the site exclusively. Typically, school visits are three days in length: Monday-Wednesday or Wednesday-Friday. We also accommodate requests for one, two and four-day stays based on site availability.

About Our Staff

The staff at Big Cove YMCA Outdoor Centre is a committed group of individuals dedicated to providing quality outdoor programs for youth. Most have worked in an overnight camp setting or as part of community initiatives with youth. Before you arrive, all staff participates in a week-long training session, and as a requirement, staff are certified in First Aid and CPR, and many have National Lifeguard Certification and/or Wilderness First Aid. Our staff is qualified to provide a safe and quality program and have the energy and enthusiasm to make your time at camp fun and adventurous. We are happy to help out with anything, be it a quick camp tour, review of rules and policies or leading various activities at our site. We are committed to making your visit to Big Cove YMCA Outdoor Centre as positive and educational as possible and will work with you to add any special touches or ideas to our program.



Typical Outdoor Education Program Schedules

This is a typical three-day program schedule for groups attending Big Cove in the spring and fall. Rotations can be chosen from various activities seen on the following page.

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
7:30		Wake up	Wake Up
8:15		Table Setters	Table Setters
8:30		Breakfast	Breakfast
9:15		Rotation B	Pack Up
10:45		Rotation C	Depart
12:15		Table Setters	
12:30	Arrival – Move in, Meeting, Tour, Games	Lunch	
2:00		Rotation D	
3:30	Rotation A	Rotation E	
4:45	Recreation Time	Recreation Time	
5:15	Table Setters	Table Setters	
5:30	Dinner	Dinner	
7:00	Campwide Game	Rotation G/Skit Night or Coffee House Prep	
8:00	Campfire	Campfire/Skit Night or Coffee House	
9:00	Snack	Snack	



Program Options

Group Building and Personal Challenge Sessions

These programs promote cooperation and focus on building a strong group dynamic among youth. The activities at our outdoor centre operate on the principles of “Challenge by Choice,” which enables participants to set goals for themselves. For example, one child might want to learn how to stern (steer) a canoe and another might set out to learn how to be an effective paddler. Both will learn a new skill, achieve success and have fun. Activities are always supervised by qualified Big Cove YMCA Outdoor Centre staff.

- **Group Initiatives**

Activities and games that promote group problem-solving, cooperation, trust, and team building. Some activities include human knots, wind in the Willow, Peanut Butter Sea, and more.

- **Trust and Challenge Course Sessions**

These activities are designed to foster individual and group development while promoting self-confidence and trust. All Big Cove YMCA Outdoor Centre staff are trained to lead these program areas.

- **Low Challenge Course**

This is a great option for a group looking to build a strong team dynamic. This particular course has various elements emphasizing individual initiative, challenge and teamwork through activities like Whale Watch, Bermuda Triangle and more.

- **High Ropes Course**

Our High Ropes course has five elements to choose from including the Giant's Ladder (which is a tandem activity), the Leap of Faith, the Vine Walk and the Pirate's Cross. With larger groups, only one element can run at once, but multiple challenges can be run simultaneously for small groups. It is the perfect program for groups looking for that extra challenge and personal goal setting.

- **Climbing Tree**

The Climbing Tree activity involves climbing a giant pine tree while hooked into a belay line. It has all the excitement and challenge of tree climbing with the added safety of a high ropes course.

- **Zip Line Course**

An old favourite at Big Cove, the zip line is a single cable line element that promotes self-awareness, individual initiative and self-confidence

Environmental Learning and Interpretation Sessions

These activities help to develop an appreciation of nature in a unique environment. Activities are run by Big Cove YMCA Outdoor Centre staff and include a variety of different interpretative games and activities.

- **Earthwalks**

A nature walk circling camp property that incorporates imaginative and creative activities to engage the group's senses with the sights, sounds, smells and textures of the world around us. The purpose is to help build an appreciation of the natural environment as well as co-operation among group members. The program can be tailored to various ages and needs.



Nova Scotia Curriculum-Based Activities

These are activities that cover some aspects of learning outcomes in an interactive, experiential model. Focused on Earth Sciences and Outdoor Education, these activities present themselves as a fun and engaging way for students to re-inforce certain school outcomes.

- **Earth and Space Science**
Learn how the relative positions of the Earth, Moon, and Sun are responsible for the moon phases, eclipses, and tides. Observe and learn about our solar system and galaxy while viewing many of the constellations our cabins are named after, as well as many more fascinating things one finds in the night sky.
- **Predator/Prey**
Students experience a food chain first hand as they become herbivores and carnivores struggling for survival in this fun and active game. Through this game students learn about animal classification, life diversity, and natural selection.

Outdoor Pursuits Sessions

These are sport activities that most people have heard of but have never had the opportunity to try. A teaching session is offered to become familiar with the equipment and safety issues and is then followed by a game to reinforce what has been learned. All aspects are taught and supervised by Big Cove YMCA Outdoor Centre staff.

- **Canoeing**
Lessons in canoeing include paddle and PFD selection, canoe launch, basic strokes and great games to emphasize and practice skills.
- **Archery**
The archery sessions introduce students to the equipment, safety rules, shooting technique and lots of target practice.
- **Wilderness Skills**
Wilderness skills sessions are usually offered in conjunction with an overnight trip but may be run exclusively. Sessions in this area make learning the basics of fire lighting, shelter building and minimal-impact camping fun and exciting.

The Finishing Touches to Any Outdoor Education Program

These activities are usually based during the evening and provide fun activities that help make camp the fun, memorable environment it is.

Campfires

Songs, stories, and skits around the campfire to end the day. Usually thirty minutes to one hour in duration, campfires are the perfect touch to an evening program.

Camp wide Games

Including Capture the Flag, Survival, Economy, Stones, Kick the Can, and Gold Mine The list goes on!

Skit Nights/Coffee House

These fun activities give students and teachers the opportunity to show off their talents.

Recreation time

During recreation time students get a chance to talk to friends and staff, receive further instruction in an area of their choice or participate in low key sports and games.



Facilities at Big Cove YMCA Camp

Accommodations

While at Big Cove YMCA Outdoor Centre, participants will live in cabins. The cabins can accommodate up to ten students and chaperones. Cabins are serviced with electricity and have bunks and vinyl-covered mattresses. A central washroom facility has flush toilets and showers. Students must provide their bedding (i.e. sleeping bag) and towels while at camp. Please note: the cabins are unheated, and participants should be prepared for potentially cold evenings in the spring and fall.

Health and Safety

Safety is our primary concern. The Big Cove YMCA Outdoor Centre staff team is trained in Standard First Aid and CPR. We have first aid supplies on-site; however, it is mandatory that each group provide an emergency vehicle with a designated driver to take a student or teacher to the hospital if necessary. Local medical facilities are only fifteen minutes away in the town of New Glasgow. Teachers should also check their own school policies regarding emergency procedures.

Food Service

Three delicious, well-balanced meals and a nutritious evening snack are served family-style every day in the pavilion (our dining hall). The cabin groups are responsible for setting and clearing their own tables.

Due to the increasing number of severe nut allergies, Big Cove YMCA Outdoor Centre is a “nut-safe” facility. We ask that students who bring their own meals or snacks only bring products that are nut safe. Special needs due to allergies or religious observance can usually be accommodated with prior notice. In the case of severe dietary restrictions, direct consultation between parents and our Food Service Manager or Camp Director is recommended.

- We ask that students do not bring junk food with them. In the past, we have found that there is a lot of litter created from junk food. We work hard to keep our grounds litter-free. Junk food in the cabins also creates problems with animals. If there is food stored in your cabin there is a greater chance of animals such as mice, squirrels and raccoons coming into your cabins. To prevent this from happening, please do not store any food in your cabins.

Telephone

All senior staff have cell phones for emergency use, so schools are strongly encouraged to prohibit student cell phone use while they are at camp. The camp phone number for incoming calls is (902) 922-2224.

Insurance

All of the programs and activities provided by Big Cove YMCA Outdoor Centre by their staff are covered by the YMCA's liability and fire insurance. The YMCA is not responsible for personal liability in the case of any non-YMCA staff providing service to a group or damage or theft of personal property while at Big Cove YMCA Outdoor Centre.



How do I begin to plan an Outdoor Education experience for my students?

Booking Procedure

Priority is given to returning groups. After that, bookings are accepted on a first come, first served basis. Call the Big Cove YMCA Camping office (902) 425-9622 or email at bigcove@halifax.ymca.ca to make a booking. To secure your booking, we must receive a completed and signed Group Rental Cancellation agreement along with a 25% deposit.

2024 Fees

Day Rental	\$ 88.00/participant
One Night Rental	\$ 122.00/participant
Two Night Rental	\$ 180.20/participant
Three Night Rental	\$ 212.00/participant

The cost for teachers and chaperones is half price. The chaperone/teacher rate is applied at a ratio of 1 chaperone per 8 campers. All additional chaperones will be charged the full fee. The fee includes use of the camp's facilities, programming, accommodations and meals, plus evening snacks. In order to keep costs to a minimum, students are required to bring a bag lunch on the day of their arrival. If you do require extra meals or additional hours outside of the regular times please let us know as we would have to add additional fees to the pricing guide**

Payment

The number of participants on your Group Rental Cancellation Agreement will be the number that is used for billing purposes unless the final number is greater. We allow for a variance of 5% in your total numbers for unexpected cancellations. Medical cancellations require Doctor's notes. It is imperative that we have an accurate count of the students confirmed to attend. We use this information for staffing purposes and menu preparations and to ensure the entire facility can be used should other groups request at that time. We ask you to commit to this information on the Group Rental Cancellation Agreement. If you are unsure, estimate low on the Agreement, and please keep us informed of any changes. On the last day of your group's visit your school or organization will be invoiced via email from our camping office – **c/o Big Cove YMCA Camping Office, 2269 Gottingen Street, Halifax, N.S. B3K 3B7.**

Cancellations

The 25% deposit is non-refundable after January 31, 2024. Should you cancel before January 31, 2024, you will receive a refund minus a \$25.00 administration fee.

We also have a 60-day cancellation policy. If your group cancels any less than 60 days prior to your scheduled arrival you will be invoiced for 50% of your expected fees. If your group cancels any less than 30 days prior to your scheduled arrival you will be invoiced for 100% of your expected fees. Each group is required to sign a copy of the Group Rental Cancellation Agreement upon confirmation of dates.



Damage

Accidents do happen, and we do expect usual wear and tear on our facility during your stay. The school will be responsible for any replacement or repair costs if there is any willfully damaged equipment or property. Any expense incurred during your stay will be included on your final invoice.

Program Times

Program Time During program times, one or several Big Cove Camp staff will be present to facilitate the program. We ask that group leaders and parent volunteers participate in the program or remain close by. This will help us with any specific participant needs that we might need to attend to. Our staff are prepared to fill all program times, rain or shine! However, with a better knowledge of the participants, we ask that schedule changes (ending an activity early due to rain or participants getting cold) come from the chaperones. Our staff are very flexible, so please feel free to let them know if your group is too cold/tired and need a break.

Non-Program Time In times where your group is not directly involved in program, we require that you take responsibility for your group's participants; this gives our program team time to prepare for up-coming programs. This could include hanging out in the center of camp, going for a short hike, setting tables for meals, or just sitting on the porch of the cabins enjoying nature

Confused, Unsure, Questions?

Don't worry! We can help with the planning of your trip.

- **Prep Meeting:** A planning session with a staff member to finalize the details of your trip, plan your schedule for your time at the outdoor centre and discuss any special needs your group may have.
- **Parent Meeting:** A meeting with the parents, yourself and a staff member to discuss the facility and program as well as valuable information to help better prepare their child for the experience.
- **Student Prep Meeting:** A meeting with the students to discuss any concerns regarding the trip or any questions the students may have.

Directions to Big Cove YMCA Camp

Big Cove YMCA Outdoor Centre is located off the Trans-Canada Highway 104, east of New Glasgow. Take exit 27 off of the 104. Turn left onto NS-4 Trunk W (signs for Nova Scotia 4 Trunk W/Pine Tree/Little Harbour/Melmerby Beach) 300 metres. The Big Cove road is the first road on the right. Follow that road all the way to the main camp. Please drive carefully on the camp road because of a railroad crossing and other cars.

Merchandise Sales

Some merchandise from prior years may be available for participants to purchase on the last day of the program. Please note that our new merchandise typically does not arrive until late spring for our summer season so what we are selling is from past years.



Teacher Checklist

- ❑ Confirm dates
- ❑ Sign and send in Group Rental Cancellation Agreement and deposit
- ❑ Advise and inform students/parents of their Outdoor Centre trip
- ❑ Consider a fund raising activity to reduce the cost per student
- ❑ Reserve buses or transportation
- ❑ Plan the schedule, considering the options you'd like to include
- ❑ Schedule a meeting to inform parents and students about the trip and recruit chaperones
- ❑ Collect money, permission and medical forms
- ❑ Divide students into rotation and cabin groups.
- ❑ Two weeks before your visit, notify the Program Co-ordinator of the exact number of students, teachers and chaperones that will be attending - also, notify the Outdoor Centre of any food allergies or medical conditions that need attention.
- ❑ Schedule a final meeting with the students and teachers to go over last-minute details and ensure students have everything they need
- ❑ Bring medical forms, cabin and session lists to the Outdoor Centre



Suggested Clothing List for Spring and Fall Groups

Clothing:

- | | | | |
|-------|------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|
| _____ | Four pairs of socks | _____ | Sunscreen |
| _____ | Four pairs of underwear | _____ | One jacket |
| _____ | Two pairs of pants | _____ | Two pairs of shoes |
| _____ | One pair of shorts | _____ | Raincoat/pants & rubber boots |
| _____ | Three or four t-shirts | _____ | One bathing suit |
| _____ | Two long-sleeved shirts | _____ | One beach towel |
| _____ | One sweater | _____ | A hat |
| _____ | A toque (it can get cold!!!) | _____ | Insect repellent |

Bedding:

- _____ One sleeping bag (preferred) OR
- _____ Two thick blankets and a sheet
- _____ One pair of pajamas

Toilet Kit:

- _____ Soap, shampoo, brush/comb
- _____ Toothbrush, toothpaste
- _____ Towel

Optional:

- | | | | |
|-------|------------|-------|-------------------|
| _____ | Flashlight | _____ | Board games/cards |
| _____ | Pillow | _____ | Sunglasses |
| _____ | Camera | _____ | Laundry bag |

Please do not bring:

- Ipods, ipads, cell phones, tablets or other electronics
- Candy and junk food

***** Please label everything! *****



Big Cove YMCA Outdoor Centre

PARTICIPANT DIETARY RESTRICTIONS

PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING FOR ANY STUDENT OR CHAPERONE ATTENDING THE OUTDOOR CENTRE WHO HAS DIETARY RESTRICTIONS OR FOOD ALLERGIES. PLEASE PRINT THIS FORM AS NEEDED FOR ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANTS. THIS FORM SHOULD BE RETURNED TO THE OUTDOOR CENTRE AT LEAST 2 WEEKS PRIOR TO YOUR VISIT IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE NECESSARY FOODS.

SCHOOL: _____ DATE OF TRIP: _____

<p>PARTICIPANT NAME: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> STUDENT <input type="checkbox"/> CHAPERONE ALLERGIES: _____ SEVERITY: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> CELIAC <input type="checkbox"/> VEGETARIAN <input type="checkbox"/> VEGAN <input type="checkbox"/> LACTOSE INTOLERANT OTHER: _____ _____</p>

<p>PARTICIPANT NAME: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> STUDENT <input type="checkbox"/> CHAPERONE ALLERGIES: _____ SEVERITY: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> CELIAC <input type="checkbox"/> VEGETARIAN <input type="checkbox"/> VEGAN <input type="checkbox"/> LACTOSE INTOLERANT OTHER: _____ _____</p>

<p>PARTICIPANT NAME: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> STUDENT <input type="checkbox"/> CHAPERONE ALLERGIES: _____ SEVERITY: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> CELIAC <input type="checkbox"/> VEGETARIAN <input type="checkbox"/> VEGAN <input type="checkbox"/> LACTOSE INTOLERANT OTHER: _____ _____</p>

<p>PARTICIPANT NAME: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> STUDENT <input type="checkbox"/> CHAPERONE ALLERGIES: _____ SEVERITY: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> CELIAC <input type="checkbox"/> VEGETARIAN <input type="checkbox"/> VEGAN <input type="checkbox"/> LACTOSE INTOLERANT OTHER: _____ _____</p>



Cabin Groups

The site is divided geographically by the camp road. Cabins 1-7 are on one side and cabins 8-12 are on the other side. Normally, cabins 1-7 are available for females and cabins 8-12 are for males. This may change depending on your male/female ratios. You do not need to use all cabins but all can be available. If your group is attending the Outdoor Centre at the same time as another group, staff may rearrange the cabin numbers you have selected, but your groupings will remain the same.

#1 Ursa Minor
Teacher/Chaperone

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

7 _____

8 _____

#2 Delphinus
Teacher/Chaperone

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

7 _____

8 _____

#3 Draco
Teacher/Chaperone

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

7 _____

8 _____

#4 Lacerta
Teacher/Chaperone

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

7 _____

8 _____

#5 Aquila
Teacher/Chaperone

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

7 _____

8 _____

#6 Pyxis
Teacher/Chaperone

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

7 _____

8 _____



Cabin Groups (cont.)

#7 Auriga
Teacher/Chaperone

- _____
- 1 _____
 - 2 _____
 - 3 _____
 - 4 _____
 - 5 _____
 - 6 _____
 - 7 _____
 - 8 _____

#8 Cassiopeia
Teacher/Chaperone

- _____
- 1 _____
 - 2 _____
 - 3 _____
 - 4 _____
 - 5 _____
 - 6 _____
 - 7 _____
 - 8 _____

#9 Pegasus
Teacher/Chaperone

- _____
- 1 _____
 - 2 _____
 - 3 _____
 - 4 _____
 - 5 _____
 - 6 _____
 - 7 _____
 - 8 _____

#10 Andromeda
Teacher/Chaperone

- _____
- 1 _____
 - 2 _____
 - 3 _____
 - 4 _____
 - 5 _____
 - 6 _____
 - 7 _____
 - 8 _____

#11 Perseus
Teacher/Chaperone

- _____
- 1 _____
 - 2 _____
 - 3 _____
 - 4 _____
 - 5 _____
 - 6 _____
 - 7 _____
 - 8 _____

#12 Cepheus
Teacher/Chaperone

- _____
- 1 _____
 - 2 _____
 - 3 _____
 - 4 _____
 - 5 _____
 - 6 _____
 - 7 _____
 - 8 _____

#13 Hercules
Teacher / Chaperone

- _____
- 1 _____
 - 2 _____

- 3 _____
- 4 _____
 - 5 _____

- 6 _____
- 7 _____
 - 8 _____



Rotation Groups

Here is where you can divide up the class. Rotation groups are the group of students who will participate in the activities together. The group should be no larger than 16 and no fewer than 8 students and each group will have a teacher or chaperone that will rotate with their group. We suggest that the rotation group be different from the cabin groups and include boys and girls.

Group A

Group B

Group C

Leader:

Leader:

Leader:

_____	_____	_____
1 _____	1 _____	1 _____
2 _____	2 _____	2 _____
3 _____	3 _____	3 _____
4 _____	4 _____	4 _____
5 _____	5 _____	5 _____
6 _____	6 _____	6 _____
7 _____	7 _____	7 _____
8 _____	8 _____	8 _____
9 _____	9 _____	9 _____
10 _____	10 _____	10 _____
11 _____	11 _____	11 _____
12 _____	12 _____	12 _____
13 _____	13 _____	13 _____
14 _____	14 _____	14 _____
15 _____	15 _____	15 _____



Rotation Groups (cont.)

Group D

Group E

Group F

Leader:

Leader:

Leader:

1 _____

1 _____

1 _____

2 _____

2 _____

2 _____

3 _____

3 _____

3 _____

4 _____

4 _____

4 _____

5 _____

5 _____

5 _____

6 _____

6 _____

6 _____

7 _____

7 _____

7 _____

8 _____

8 _____

8 _____

9 _____

9 _____

9 _____

10 _____

10 _____

10 _____

11 _____

11 _____

11 _____

12 _____

12 _____

12 _____

13 _____

13 _____

13 _____

14 _____

14 _____

14 _____

15 _____

15 _____

15 _____



The YMCA Core Values are key to fulfilling our mission.

- **Caring** Compassion towards others.
- **Respect** Respect for our volunteers, staff, partnerships, participants and supporters.
- **Responsibility** Responding to society's need in a socially proactive manner.
- **Honesty** Integrity and fairness at all times.
- **Health** A commitment to the well-being of individuals, families and communities.
- **Citizenship** Building a community for all people to grow in spirit, mind and body.

Together...making a difference!

For More Information:

WEBSITE: www.ymcahfx.ca

EMAIL: bigcove@halifax.ymca.ca
Ben.chisholm@halifax.ymca.ca

Halifax Office (year round):
Big Cove YMCA Camping Office
2269 Gottingen Street
Halifax, N.S. B3K 3B7
Tel. (902)301-5175

Outdoor Centre (seasonal):
Big Cove YMCA Outdoor Centre
119 Big Cove Road
RR #1 Sutherlands River, N.S.B0K 1W0
Tel. (902) 922-2224

Camp Director – Ben Chisholm

**We look forward to providing your group
with
“the experience that lasts a lifetime.”**