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# **Learning Community Family Agreements (LCFA)**

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*The Kith Homestead Learning Community was founded to support the needs of home educated children in the local area. We come together to create a nurturing homely environment that supports the natural pace of learning for each child, whilst also creating a community of families to share the journey.*

*We believe in fostering a sense of belonging guided by love, unconditional respect, with the guiding principles of sociocracy. We commit ourselves to uphold these values and create a collaborative atmosphere where every voice is heard and valued for years to come.*

## **I. Introduction**

The purpose of this agreement is to outline the collaboration, communication and ethos of the Learning Community (LC) both for the facilitators, those currently in the community and for those wishing to enter.

The LCFA aims to set clear expectations regarding educational philosophies and pedagogies, responsibilities, communications, conflict resolution processes, and other relevant aspects of participation in the learning community. In turn this will help support a positive and open environment for everyone, where families can share resources, expertise, and experiences for the benefit of all involved, both within the community and beyond.

*In essence, the purpose of this agreement is to articulate the underlying reasons for establishing the Learning Community and the ethos that governs it. The LCFA will guide the actions and behaviours of the participating families, promoting a safe environment for our young people for years to come.*

**Scope**
The scope of this agreement extends to all activities and gatherings at Kith Homestead and within the WhatsApp group, associated with the LC

## **II. Commitment to Educational Philosophy**

**Statement of Educational Philosophy**
Our educational philosophy is rooted in Natural Pace Learning (NPL) which honours the individual rhythms, cycles of development and interests of each child. This approach allows children to learn at their own speed, fostering a deep and lasting understanding of the world around them.

**Commitment to Individualised Learning**
In championing NPL, we recognise that each child has their own unique way of learning and understanding of the world. By giving them opportunities to explore the homestead environment; both the place and people, in a natural, unpressured manner, their innate curiosity and passion for learning will be nurtured.
We also recognise the unique strengths, interests and learning flow of each individual, acknowledging that one-size-fits-all does not effectively meet the diverse needs of the young people.

Whilst there will be times where everyone gathers together as one unit, there is no expectation to "perform" we only ask that there is respect for those who do wish to engage with the content at the time.

## **III Unconditional Listening and Language***By upholding the principles of “Unconditional Listening” and language in positive, consensual, and respectful ways, we aim to create an environment where every member feels valued, understood, and supported.*

**Unconditional Listening**
We commit to practising Unconditional Listening, providing our full attention to the speaker without judgement or interruption. Through active and empathetic listening, we seek to understand and honour each person's unique perspective, fostering an environment where all voices are valued and heard.

**Positive, Consensual, and Respectful Language**
We recognise the power of language in shaping our interactions and experiences. We strive to use positive, consensual, and respectful language, acknowledging the impact our words have on others. Through mindful and affirming communication, we aim to uplift and inspire one another, ensuring that our interactions reflect our commitment to nurturing a supportive and inclusive LC.

* When language is inappropriate to the age and development of the group, the individuals involved will be reminded verbally. A Reset Circle (see sociocratic guidance for more information) will be called to reestablish the boundaries and limits of appropriate language for the group if repeated incidents occur.

**Consent and Respect**
We acknowledge the importance of consent in our interactions, both as adults and for the young people. We will seek consent before sharing personal stories, experiences, or information, honouring each individual's privacy and boundaries. As a basis of consent, each child is reminded regularly that "no means no and stop means stop".

* We have seen the young people of the community flow through waves of rough and tumble play over the years and will remain dutiful to the changing needs to move their bodies in such ways. Where play is seen to be out of the bounds of consent, the facilitators will intervene in a timely manner if the young people don't themselves.

**Language as a Tool for Empowerment**
We view language as a tool for empowerment and self-expression. We advocate the use of language that uplifts and encourages, fostering an environment where every member feels empowered to express themselves authentically and contribute to the collective growth and learning of the community.

**Continuous Learning and Growth**
We understand that language and communication are dynamic and evolving. Therefore, we commit to continuous learning and growth in our communication practices, remaining open to feedback and actively seeking to improve our ability to express ourselves with clarity, empathy, and respect.

## **IV Continued learning and development**

As part of the role of facilitator, we remain open to new learning about human development. Honing our practices to meet the needs of the groups with continued studies, concepts, ideas and theories, alongside the more practical handcrafts, homestead skills, naturalist and other skills necessary to work in the environment.

We are committed to the continuous improvement of our community and our educational practices. We shall regularly review and reflect on our community agreements to ensure they align with the values and goals.

We welcome constructive feedback and new ideas that can enhance our learning environment and strengthen our community bonds

## **V Participation and Contribution**

**Regular Meetings**
We commit to regular community meetings where the young people can express their ideas, concerns, and successes. Each gathering we'll host a circle to start our session; with gratitude, shares from the week, a check in and other important information for the day.
We shall foster relationships within our community through shared activities, celebrations, and collaborative projects throughout the day.
At the end of each session we'll hold a closing circle to check out, pay thanks and set the scene for future gatherings as well as saying our goodbyes.

These meetings extend from the LC to all gatherings at Kith for young people and adults alike.

**Participation and Contribution**
We believe that everyone has valuable skills and perspectives to contribute. We encourage active participation in the life of the community, including offering workshops, resources, ideas, skills, time or energy. From past experience, when adults from the community participate, it enriches the children's experiences in beautiful ways.

We're open to adults contributing to the community's functioning; whether through active participation, organising activities, or supporting community events.

**Volunteering**
We acknowledge the importance of connecting with and caring for the land that sustains us. Every family is encouraged to actively engage in sowing, growing, tending, and harvesting the garden with us throughout the seasons, as well as in maintaining and enhancing the communal educational spaces. This collaborative effort not only improves overall experiences but also fosters a deeper respect for the homestead space for everyone.

**Stewardship**
We shall act as stewards of our environment, promoting slow homestead practises tending the land, respecting nature in our educational activities and community practices.

**Community Involvement**
For Kith to meet the needs of the LC, we ask that LC families join us for Community Days to come together on the land as a collective. Working, playing and resting alongside each other, building, tending, crafting for the needs of the young people.

We pledge to run 4 Community Days per year, one per season. spring; March, summer; July (shortly before Kithfest), autumn; September, winter, December-February, weather permitting.

Alongside the community days, we will continue to run Kithfest as an annual summer celebration. Only active members of the Learning Community i.e. those coming weekly, will be welcomed to Kithfest.

## **VI. Conflict Resolution**

**Sociocracy**
We adopt sociocracy as our governance model, ensuring that decision-making is inclusive, transparent, and considers the voices of all community members.
We shall form circles for various aspects of our community life, such as planning, event coordination, and community well-being, with each circle operating within the agreed-upon framework.

**Re-Set Circle**
When members of the community have voiced concerns, behaviours have pushed the boundaries of the agreements or there is unease in the group, a Re-Set Circle will aim to revisit and establish the values allowing those involved to be reminded of the agreements. Allowing all involved to speak and be heard to assess where the challenges are stemming from. A Conflict Resolution Circle will be held if there are more or continued challenges in circumstances where we cannot find a solution

**Conflict Resolution Circle**
We understand that conflicts may arise and commit to resolving them through open dialogue, active listening, and a restorative approach that seeks understanding and reconciliation.
We shall establish a Conflict Resolution Circle to facilitate the process when needed, ensuring a respectful and supportive environment for all parties involved.

**Communication Protocols**
Where language or behaviours are not appropriate for the LC in the first instance a verbal reminder will be given. Followed by a Re-Set Circle if the challenges persist, followed by a Conflict Resolution Circle.

**Respectful and Constructive Dialogue**
In accordance with our agreements on language and communication, all dialogue is characterised by open, honest and empathetic communication that promotes understanding and growth. We seek to find common ground and promote mutual respect.

## **VII. Community Guidelines**

Code of Conduct

**Love**
We shall treat each other with love and kindness, recognising that our actions and words have a significant impact on the well-being of our community.

**Respect**
We shall offer unconditional respect to each member, appreciating individual differences and embracing diversity as a strength.

**Inclusivity**
We strive to create an inclusive environment where everyone feels welcome, heard and valued.

**Fair-play**
Upholding the principles of fair play, integrity and honesty in all community interactions. We support and encourage healthy competition where all members are uplifted regardless of outcome.

**Stewardship**
We act as stewards of our shared spaces.

**Personal Responsibility**
We take responsibility for our actions and their impact on the community, striving to act in ways that uphold the well-being of all members. We acknowledge and learn from our mistakes and failures, seeing them as an opportunity for growth and self-reflection. We'll learn at our own pace.

## **VIII Attendance and Participation Expectations**

**Attendance**
Regular attendance is essential for creating a consistent and supportive environment for all. Attendance has a big impact on the morale of the group, especially for those who travel great distances to be able to join. We ask that your family is consistent in their attendance as much as possible.

**Participation**
Active participation can vary from person to person and evolve over time. In accordance with our education philosophy, we understand that each young person is an individual and participation looks different for everyone.

**Flexibility and Support**
We recognise the diverse needs and circumstances of families and aim to provide support where flexibility in attendance and participation needs to be considered.
For some children to attend, we understand that a parent/caregiver might need to be present. In these situations, we fully support the needs of the family. We ask that the parent check in with these agreements and flow with their child whilst respectfully moving through the homestead with the group.

**Reflection and Adaption**
We commit to regular reflection on attendance and participation expectations. With input and feedback from the community we can evaluate the expectations to suit the evolving needs of the group.

**Ill Health**
As facilitators we recognise that there will be days where their participation won't be possible due to ill health/sickness. In these times we ask that you give us as much notice as possible to attend to the young person as necessary or to let us know you won't be attending.

If the young person has a condition where it's possible to spread to other members of the community we ask that the family is vigilant in sharing the information to the WhatsApp group where appropriate, i.e. chicken pox, colds, norovirus etc

## **IX Communication**

We have seen the value of inter-community communication over the years. We see it as a vital pillar to the cohesion and functioning of the community. There will be two WhatsApp groups to facilitate the needs of the community as recommended.

One to effectively pass on important information about the running of the LC, the other to provide support, information and resources between members.

## **X Joining and Leaving the LC**

**Joining**
We warmly welcome new families into our community, offering support and guidance as they integrate into our shared educational philosophy and community practices. An orientation process will be provided by Kith to acquaint new members with our values, agreements, and the sociocratic structure of our community before officially becoming a community family

**Process for Exiting the Community**
When a family decides to leave the community, we ask that they communicate their departure with a month's notice and/or with ample opportunity for the children to say their goodbyes, helping to provide closure and maintain the integrity of their relationships.

**Following an Exit**
We request that the parents/caregivers of the family respectfully remove themselves from the community WhatsApp group and any other shared communication platforms to honour the privacy, safeguarding measures and ongoing activities of the community. We will remove the individuals from the LC email communications.

We wish departing families well on their journey and remain open to the possibility of their return, should they choose to rejoin our community in the future. Our doors and hearts are always open to those who have been part of the community.

## **XI Amendment and Review**

Process for amending the agreement, in accordance with sociocratic methods.

1. **Proposal**. Anyone who identifies the need for an amendment can propose a change by emailing lorna@kithhomestead.com or via the WhatsApp group through discussion and suggestions then a formal request.

2. **Review and Evaluation**. The proposed amendment is reviewed by the facilitators to assess the feasibility and impact of the proposed change; considering its alignment with the overall ethos/agreements.

3. **Consultation**. As necessary, we will consult with the community or those who may be affected by the proposed changes. This will be done either by seeking feedback, collaborative discussions or gathering perspectives from the community.

4. **Decision-making**. Together we will make a decision using the principles of sociocracy to come to a conclusion. If no conclusion can be made, we ask that the proposal is amended to take feedback/suggestions into consideration, then the process of consultation and decision-making will begin again.

5. **Integration**. If the proposal is accepted, it is integrated into the LCFA and into the LC.

6. **Communication.** The amendment is communicated to the community via email/WhatsApp and verbally to the young people within the LC if appropriate. Changes related to the amendment on the ground will be implemented in a timely manner.

We will regularly review and update these LCFA to address the growing community and evolving needs of the group.

## **XII Closing Statement**

By affirming these LCFA in writing, we pledge to uphold the spirit of cooperation and community in the bid to preserve childhood wonder and awe at Kith Homestead. Together, we create a thriving learning community where each member, young and old, contributes to and benefits from our collective efforts. Our commitment to the land and our respect for each other's learning journeys will guide us in cultivating a space where education is not just about the accumulation of knowledge, but about growing as individuals and as a collective.

Let us move forward with compassion, patience, and an unwavering commitment to support one another.