KINSHIP PROGRAMME

WHO ARE WE AND WHAT IS OUR MISSION?

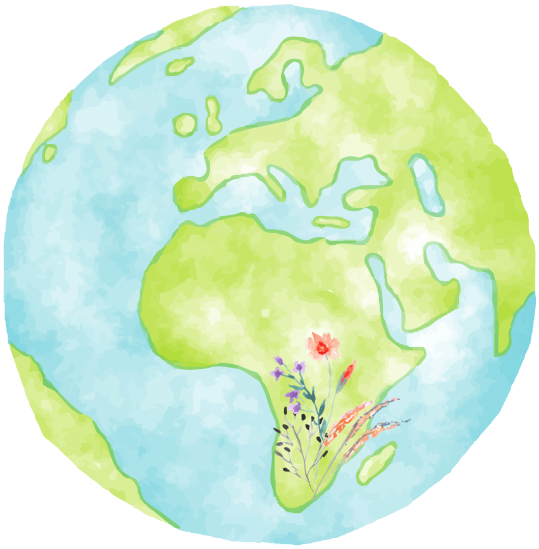
Cultivating critical consciousness

PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY

MICHAELA GEYTENBEEK
MPHIL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
FOUNDING DIRECTRESS OF THE KINSHIP PROGRAMME

About the Kinship Programme

The Big "Why"



Our increasingly urban lifestyles have resulted in a widespread **human-nature disconnect** which is believed to play a key role in our slow response and reluctant action to challenges such as climate change, deforestation and pollution. In order to address these environmental issues, we need to encourage the formation of a relationship between humans and nature. This relationship, often termed *nature connectedness*, can become engrained in our environmental identity if formed before the age of eleven. Our purpose at the Kinship Programme is to **encourage children to develop a relationship with nature** and a **desire to champion conservation** both now and later in life.

Programme overview

We operate like an **extramural activity**, offering 1-2hour sessions, every afternoon in a natural space. Children attend once a week on a set day. We also offer dedicated sessions for certain **schools** on a weekly basis, either in the morning or as an extra-curricula activity. We currently service the Durban North and Salt Rock areas as well as pro-bono experiences for children in our surrounding communities such as Molweni, KwaMashu and Waterloo. Over the past two and a half years we have developed and refined our own curriculum and philosophy based on **intent research** on how to facilitate the development of nature connectedness. This research has led to the development of our **nature experience facilitator training.** We want to see as many children in nature as possible - developing a muddy-footed relationship with our wonderful world. Our training aims to offer a transformative learning experience for the future facilitator.

Trained facilitators will also receive all of the materials necessary for them to facilitate their own nature experiences for children. We offer our alumni support and guidance throughout the practical element of their training and when they embark on practicing. One of the driving reasons for doing this is to extend our reach into the townships.

We also custom design **environmental education projects** for schools. The projects involve working on a particular problem within the community and using 21st century skills such as collaboration and critical thinking to solve these problems.

In 2021 a few families approached us to start a Montessori Forest inspired school space. This led to the formation of **Kincottage**. Our Kincottage children are enrolled as homeschoolers and attend our space Monday through Thursday to receive tuition.

We give back to our community through our **Labours of Love** initiative. Community members, of all ages, join us once a week to uplift a chosen natural environment.

Values

- we embody kindness, empathy and understanding
- we believe unwaveringly in the child
- we are deeply in awe of our wonderful world
- we are grateful for all that has been created
- we are respectable, responsible and trustworthy
- we allow our inner child to come out and play
- we follow the child in constructive, safe experiences
- we practice a "leave no trace" policy
- we evolve and develop to serve our community

Our 2023 Plan

Reaching our communities

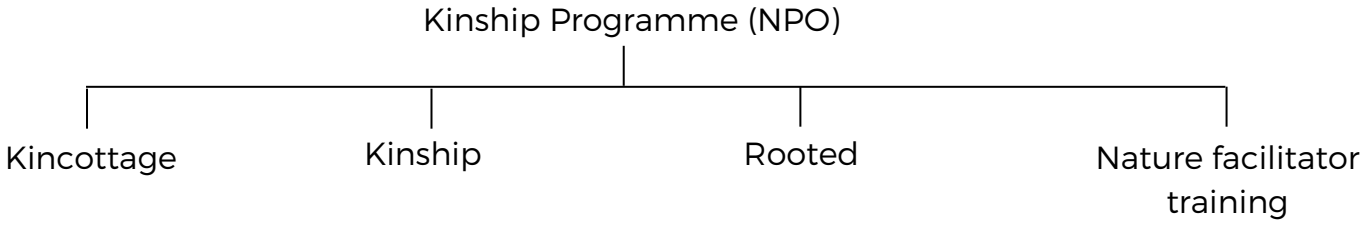
We are in the process of becoming an NPO. As a result, we hope that we will be able to fund the addition of community children at Kincottage. We will also be able to contribute funding towards the training of community members on how to facilitate nature experiences to encourage the development of nature connectedness. Kincottage and our extracurricula activities will be the vessels for conducting practical training. The training of additional Kinship facilitators will lead to the proliferation of experiences in nature thus providing more children with the opportunity to explore and develop a love of nature. We will also be using any additional funds (our own and donations) for maintaining our wild spaces.

Establishing a conscious community

We have realised that many people are yearning for a sense of community, have a desire to give back as well as learn about and re-embed within our natural world. We will be establishing a conscious community wing that will provide people with the opportunity to engage with these different elements through the provision of volunteering opportunities, partnerships, short courses during which both knowledge and knowing can be shared and other events that unite our communities in good work.

Our 2023 Plan: cultivating critical consciousness

Overview of the Kinship programme in 2023



Kincottage is our Montessori Forest inspired homeschool tutoring for children aged 6 -9 years. We operate Monday - Thursday in the morning.

Kinship offers our nature experiences. This includes:

1. Our extramural offering, both private and at schools
2. Dedicated nature experiences as lessons within the school day
3. Customized PBL Projects for schools
4. Overnight adventures
5. Labours of Love

We will be offering **training** to budding **nature experience facilitators**. Through four different components our facilitator training aims to provide both a transformative learning experience for the trainees as well as offer all the tools that we have developed to lead immersive nature experiences. This wing of the programme will be used to also train disadvantaged community members so that they can spread our knowing with their children in their communities and grow a love for nature in their little ones.

Rooted is our space for encouraging conscious community. We will be hosting transformative learning experiences for adults, short courses on natural topics in collaboration with experts in certain fields (such as short courses in birding or foraging), fundraising markets and Fun Runs, and volunteering opportunities for adults and children alike.

Our vision and mission

Our overarching vision is to **cultivate a critically conscious community who practice and advocate for sustainable living.**

Each of our entities play a specific role in contributing the achievement of this vision.

- **Kincottage** and **Kinship** provide mindfully crafted nature experiences that hopefully progress each individual child's state of nature connectedness.
- The **nature experience facilitator training** shares our understanding of how to best facilitate the development of nature connectedness and thus equips more people with the ability to facilitate experiences and bring more little humans into a closer relationship with our natural world.
- **Rooted** creates a space for support, the sharing of informative knowledge and knowing and curates opportunities for our adult community to give back.

OUR MANAGEMENT TEAM

Michaela Geytenbeek
Founding Directress

Hi there, I'm Michaela: a barefoot environmentalist with a passion for child development. I grew up building forts, racing snails and helping at my mum's Montessori PreSchool. After school I completed a Montessori teaching diploma, Mechanical Engineering degree and Postgraduate in Sustainable Development. I also found hiking. Being fully immersed in nature had a profound effect on me and I came to believe that everyone should be able to experience the majesty of the mountains, the all-consuming rationality of how small we are, and yet, capable. As a result, I founded PathFinders_SA and have been lucky to witness the incredible effect that nature has had on many others. While working on my masters in Environmental Engineering I came to believe that the split with nature is at the heart of the environmental crisis. I also realized that many children in Durban did not have the opportunity to engage with wild nature in a safe environment. As a result, I started the Kinship Programme, and shifted my research and masters to an MPhil in Sustainable Development. I hold a MPhil in Sustainable Development focusing on facilitating the development of nature connectedness. Concurrently I completed my mountain guiding qualification and a certificate in Montessori Elementary Teaching. I also work as a research consultant looking at shaping education for the 21st century.

Tatum Holder
Co-founder of Kincottage

Hello! My name is Tatum! You can often find me in nature surfing in the ocean, sun kissed on the warm sandy beaches or playing my ukulele tunes. After growing up in a Montessori environment and having my mum being a Montessorian, owning her own school, a deep love and passion for the Montessori Method and approach ignited. This inspired me to study and qualify in Montessori directress for ages 3-6 and 6- 12. On top of Montessori, I am also an active Specialised Kinesiologist, aspiring part time musician and have a certificate in Level 3 First Aid. I have had teaching experience teaching in schools, overseas as well as having a passion in working with special needs children. During the pandemic in 2020, I started a little homeschool tutoring group which lead me along a journey to where I am today, running Kin Cottage alongside Michaela.

I believe that when we educate the WHOLE child and give them every opportunity to understand their individual uniqueness, value and purpose here on Earth. With a love of nature and appreciation of the world around them; our children will be able to create a grounded, passionate, more loving, righteous, healthier and more peaceful society.

Carey Would
Kinship Directress

"Nature dwells in both directions, not just outside us. Our inner world is also nature. Our minds and bodies are manifestations of the evolution of the living earth." Micah from Rewilding.

Hi, I'm Carey. I am a mom of two beautiful boys, and it is their futures that makes me so excited to join Kinship. The urgent desire I have for them and all children to discover the wonder and wisdom of our earth as I did at their age, is what motivates me. I have been teaching yoga for over 10 years and am a qualified Mindfulness facilitator. I hope to apply these two practices (yoga and mindfulness) alongside my love and reverence for wild and free spaces, to help nurture our future decision makers into wise and compassionate nature lovers.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.
-Margaret Mead

Our Story So Far

Kinship Programme

Our programme is specially designed to encourage children to **sensorially and immersively engage** with our environment. We are unlike many environmental education programmes in that our purpose is not to teach about the environment - rather, it is to **teach how to BE in the environment.**

This approach encompasses more free exploration and allows us to be led by the children during nature experiences- all the while sharing meaningful and stimulating pockets of knowledge.

Our extracurricula programme targets families from more affluent areas. We **partner with environmental experts and enthusiasts** to bring rich and diverse experiences to the children. No Kinship session is the same - rather it is **specially designed** for each group, incorporating activities that we feel the children will enjoy. This very personalised approach is appreciated by our community.

As a lean structure we are able to **grow and morph** with our community and offer any extensions that they would like: these include holiday programmes, full day experiences and overnight experiences.

Kinship Programme at schools

We charge a flat rate for our school programmes and **custom design** the experiences based on what the teachers and children require from us. These experiences range from weekly immersive engagements in wild spaces to critically designed programmes to evoke emotion and environmental activism.

We know our children and allow them to lead us in constantly evolving our experiences.

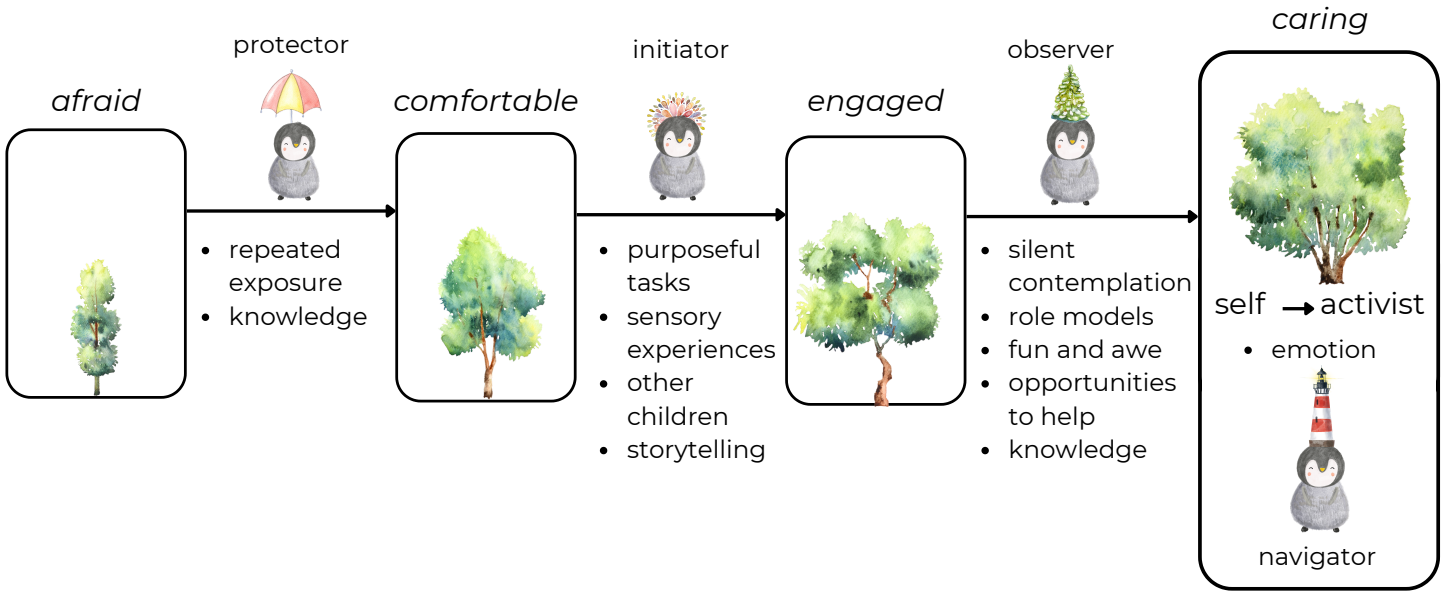
A snippet of theory from my masters research: the journey of nature connectedness

This is the intellectual property of Michaela Geytenbeek

Children appear to move along a trajectory of being afraid of wild nature, becoming comfortable in wild nature, being able to engage and act in wild nature and only then begin to care about nature. These different points on the trajectory are highlighted as phases of nature connectedness. Children possess different abilities that depend on which phase of nature connectedness they are in. As a result they require different experiences and support during each phase.

Our goal is to encourage children to practice pro-environmental behaviour- ie. reach the caring phase of connection. As a result we observe our children to identify where they are in the journey of nature connectedness and design our sessions specially to provide them with what they require to promote their furthering journey.

If you would like more information about the above you are welcome to approach me.



Nature experience facilitator training

One of our aims is to grow a conscious community of little people, connected to our natural world. Little people who will grow into big people that champion conservation and sustainable development. In order to encourage our dream to spread we have designed **facilitator training** and an accompanying **Kinship in a Box.**

Through four different components our facilitator training aims to provide both a transformative learning experience for the future facilitator as well as offer all the tools (Kinship in a Box) that we have developed to lead immersive nature experiences.

Kincottage

Kincottage is our lower elementary environment that follows the Montessori philosophy. We incorporate sustainability through nature-based learning.

Our aim is to provide purposeful learning experiences that nurture creativity, compassion and curiosity while equipping children with the skills and desire to critically analyse and solve real world problems in independent and novel ways. We believe in the WHOLE child and value learning that interconnects academic, spiritual, physical and social development.

Our children are enrolled as homeschoolers and they visit our space every Monday through Thursday morning. Each child has their own individual learning plan that delivers the CAPS requirements in a manner that interests them and encourages their engagement.

Our facilitators are experienced, qualified and over the past two years have established efficient and engaging means of delivering curricula content.

We maintain abreast current research and social and political issues to ensure that our children are exposed to relevant and meaningful learning. We have field experts join us for lessons and engage with community during monthly outings.