



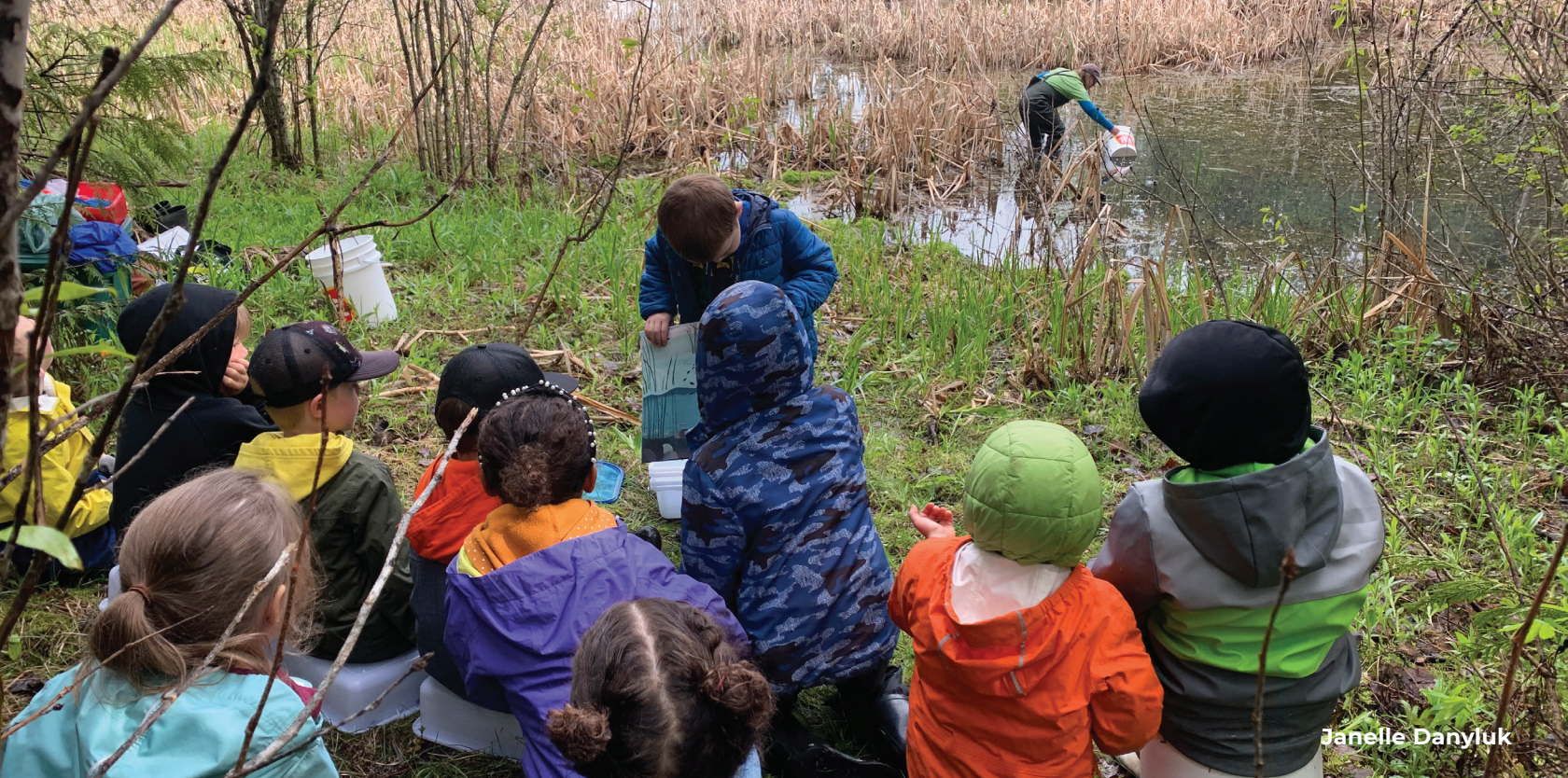
TAKE ME OUTSIDE *for learning*

SCHOOL YEAR
CHALLENGE
2021/2022

IMPACT REPORT

Because not all
classrooms have
four walls





Janelle Danyluk

“It became part of our daily routine. Every single day we got outside for meaningful learning opportunities. It became more than what we did. It was who we were. My kids craved it and loved it. It changed all of us.

Primary educator, Drayton Valley, Alberta

“

Nature became our teacher and we were able to incorporate Indigenous Education into many of our Learning Challenges while outdoors and then do more follow-up on a variety of topics back in class. I feel this type of education brings out the best in the students (and the teachers!).

Primary educator, Ottawa, Ontario



Janelle Danyluk



Jeremy Eskritt

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Whenever we go learn outside, the kids are the happiest! They always say 'This is the best day ever!!' It has helped me grow as a teacher and get me out of my comfort zone of the classroom! We love it!

Early years educator, Winnipeg
Manitoba



What is the Learning Challenge?

The Take Me Outside for Learning Challenge is a commitment to ongoing outdoor learning throughout the school year, with a pledge to try taking your learners outside at least once a week.

While it initially began as an extension of our annual Take Me Outside Day, which occurs each October, the desire from educators to continue the momentum throughout the entire year has

turned the Learning Challenge into its own annual initiative!

The Challenge is designed to be accessible, simple, and fun for those involved. Whatever outdoor learning looks like to you, we are here to support and celebrate it. All participants are provided with a monthly mail-out featuring professional development opportunities, resources, outdoor learning activity ideas to support the journey and spark inspiration.

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I run a weekly communication skills and emotional regulation group with a selection of students. While many are comfortable outside, for some the regular outside time was new and challenging. It was great to see how their attitudes toward being outside changed over the year. All of the hesitant students responded well to support from their peers and from me and now look forward to going out for our weekly adventures.

Secondary educator, Elkford, British Columbia

Land-based learning

It is important we begin by acknowledging the success of the Learning Challenge is a direct benefit of accessing the natural world that has been stewarded since time immemorial by many Indigenous peoples, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, who continue to walk on the land and nurture these places. We begin with gratitude and the utmost respect for the lands that supported such wonderful outdoor learning experiences throughout the 2021/22 school year. We thank the guardians and the educators teaching the languages of connection to these places.

In the few short years since the Learning Challenge began, we've seen continued interest and growing registration numbers. **Participation now represents almost every corner of the country from coast to coast to coast, with registrations from each province and territory except for Nunavut.** Over half of these participants are concentrated in either Ontario or British Columbia, and in the future, outreach efforts will be focused on increased geographic representation and inclusion across the country.



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The ease in anxiety slowly melted away as the year progressed and they have now settled quite nicely into their newly developed relationship to the land. It's been a long and bumpy road but with repeat visits to our school community's land, we are all making our way back home.

Early years educator, Mono Cliffs, Ontario.

Staying Connected

During the course of the 2021/22 school year, we continued to see the ongoing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic encouraging educators to spend more time outdoors for the myriad of benefits to learning, safety, and wellbeing; many who continued to teach online also found ways to connect! We saw educators getting creative about what their outside time looked like: taking activities outdoors previously done inside, or bringing community-based experiences closer to classes. Near the end of the year, when pandemic restrictions generally lessened, some were able to

organize multi-day trips after a long hiatus, and others ventured out beyond day trips for the first time!

Increasing the sense of community among participants is an ongoing goal for Take Me Outside. From December to June, informal Virtual Campfire Connections were hosted in conjunction with the **Global Environmental and Outdoor Education Council (GEOEC)** and the **Outdoor Learning Store** to provide a space for educators to gather, share stories and successes, troubleshoot challenges, and ask questions in a welcoming, open format.



@mrsmeadk2



Jeremy Eskritt



Karen Fond

“

As I teach virtually this has been an interesting challenge. But we have gotten outside every single day of learning and learned a lot about each other's biodiversity and environments. We even connected with conservation areas and explorers around the world who taught us the importance of being outside.

Intermediate educator, Sarnia, Ontario

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I teach distance learning, so I do not have students in front of me in a classroom. I integrated outdoor learning into weekly challenges with students and options provided in learning activities. In 1:1 calls with students we often talked about the impact of being outside and some additional possibilities for how to spend both structured and unstructured time outdoors.

Primary/Intermediate educator, Kenaston, Saskatchewan

This year's stats:

6,991

Total registered educators

282,007

Total learner participants

60%

Almost 60% of participants teach in a primary school setting at least part of the time

78.3%

78.3% of participants were able to fulfill the commitment of the challenge at least 60% of the time, with **42.3% of those surveyed able to take their learners outside once a week 95-100% of the time!**



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Daily nature walks opened up many meaningful discussions about nature and other topics, provided excellent bonding time with each other and with nature, exploration of biodiversity and the life that shows up at seasonal changes, and to be a part of a challenge that so many other like minded people were doing were all integral to our experience.

Intermediate educator, Greenfield, Nova Scotia



Janelle Danyluk

Feedback

Similar to what was observed through the 2020/21 Learning Challenge, educators reported feeling burnt out, overwhelmed and under supported, especially in the context of Covid-19 pandemic restrictions and safety concerns.

Some common barriers to getting outside included inclement weather, lacking proper gear or resources, and class/group management (needing a smaller educator:learner ratio).

Getting administrators, parents, and others who are adjacent to teachers in their classrooms to support and promote outdoor learning as a dominant culture for learning while fostering supportive communities of practice are some of the most important ways to address barriers to heading outside to learn.



Manon Ferland

“ We went on nature walks, returned to sit spots, and created gratitude altars using found items! Students observed more, became more present, and interacted with the natural world around them.

Intermediate educator, Victoria, British Columbia

“ Students look forward to the time we spend outside, and so do I! It's a time I have opportunities to literally walk alongside students to connect and build relationships.

Secondary educator, Edmonton, Alberta

92.7%

of Learning Challenge participants feel they will participate again next year.



“

Quote: As the year winds down and I ask my students what their favourite activities in Kindergarten have been, just about all the students say “time outside”!

Primary educator, Maple Ridge, BC

Addressing Barriers

Based on feedback received, Take Me Outside will strive to improve the Learning Challenge in the upcoming 2022/23 school year. Respondents brought up short activities to easily try out without much planning, perhaps fitting into a monthly theme or challenge. Improving the curriculum connections within the activities offered would also benefit busy educators who are looking to link the Learning Challenge with their units of inquiry.

Although open to all who are interested, the continuation of our free, seasonal, virtual workshop series was mentioned and well received by many participants who appreciated

the chance for regular, accessible, professional development in a variety of topics.

In the future, through working with our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee, Take Me Outside will work towards a more accessible challenge focused on highlighting the many voices that exist within the outdoor learning community and honouring the Indigenous perspectives which form the foundation of land-based pedagogy from coast to coast to coast. We want our resources, activities, and events to feel relevant and useful to all who sign up, and we are constantly looking to fill gaps as they come to light.



Jeremy Eskritt

Prizes

By registering for the Take Me Outside for Learning Challenge, participants received 20% off Take Me Outside educator apparel, and they were entered to win some amazing prizes. This year, our grand prize winners were Karen Fong and Deborah Quail-Blier. Karen won an all-expenses paid trip to Banff, Alberta. Special thanks to our sponsoring partners in this, especially **Banff Lodging Company** for their generous donation of a 4 night stay. Deborah received \$1000 to spend at the **Outdoor Learning Store** graciously donated by the **Pacific Foundation for the Understanding of Nature**.

Special recognition goes to Cataline Elementary School in BC, who had the most teachers officially signed up for the Learning Challenge this year (16!). The school received a swag bag full of prizes for their dedicated educators. Great work Cataline!

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We just LOVE being outside and so we can do just about anything outside that we do inside.

Deborah Quail-Blier, grade prize winner and educator,
Ottawa, Ontario

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The students have ownership and love for our local learning areas which we hope will continue through their journey through school and into adulthood.

Primary educator, Markham, Ontario



Mélanie Rainville

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Completing the learning challenges has been invaluable for me and my students. Students that are timid and anxious in class came alive when we were outside, they felt free to be themselves, and free to explore. They were given the freedom to choose how and where they learn best, and overwhelmingly they picked outside.

Primary educator, Formosa, Ontario



@hfcyouth



@mrsmeadk2

Partners

Further thanks and appreciation need to be expressed to the partners and supporters of the 2021/22 Take Me Outside for Learning Challenge. We raise our hands to our educational partners implementing and participating in this challenge, as well as our organizational partner: the **Outdoor Learning Store**. Thank you! Our partnerships are what make us able to increase the reach and impact of the Learning Challenge each year, and see the ripple effects of change heading into each coming school year.

We would also like to express a big thank you to **Mountain Equipment Company** for their generous support and funding.

