

2025

OUTDOOR LEARNING LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 16- 18, 2025 BANFF CENTRE



EXPLORING PLACE AND PEDAGOGY

Outdoor Learning Leadership Conference 2025

Participant Insights & System Priorities

School system leaders across Canada came together in Banff, AB in October 2025 for the Outdoor Learning Leadership Conference, exploring **Place and Pedagogy: Where Learning Happens**. This overview reflects the insights shared at the 2025 Outdoor Learning Leadership Conference — a collective call to bring learning outside more often, for every learner.



WHY THIS MATTERS

School system leaders across Canada agree: outdoor learning is essential for student well-being, engagement, reconciliation, and environmental literacy — and must become a pedagogical approach, not an add-on.

WHO PARTICIPATED

230 school system leaders attended the conference from across multiple provinces and territories, and included:

- Principals & Vice-Principals
- District Consultants / Instructional Leaders
- Directors / Senior Administration
- Researchers & Policy Leaders

STRONG MOMENTUM FOR CHANGE

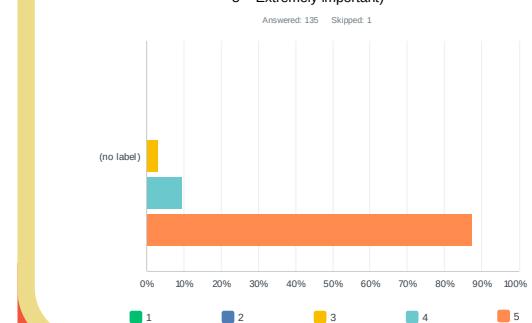
87% strongly believe outdoor learning should be a regular part of learning in their education system

Leaders see the greatest opportunity for the growth of outdoor learning through:

- Indigenous ways of knowing
- Curriculum integration (literacy, numeracy, etc.)
- Well being (student and teacher)
- Environmental Literacy



Q3 On a scale of 1–5, how strongly do you believe outdoor learning should be a regular part of learning in your system? (e.g., 1 = Not at all important, 5 = Extremely important)



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OUTDOOR LEARNING SYSTEM INTEGRATION

System level actions that would have the strongest impact in helping to advance outdoor learning include:

- 1 Integrate outdoor learning into policy and strategic plans
- 2 Provide sustained funding and resources
- 3 Invest in professional learning and mentorship
- 4 Embed Indigenous ways of knowing
- 5 Strengthen leadership, advocacy, and collaboration networks

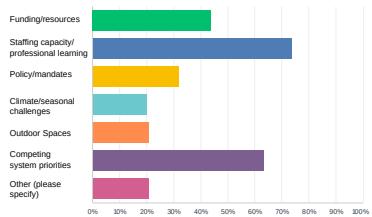
BARRIERS TO SYSTEM-WIDE ADOPTION

Top barriers identified:

- 1 Staff confidence & professional learning
- 2 Competing system priorities
- 3 Funding for resources (i.e. gear, transportation, etc.)
- 4 Administrative risk / safety constraints

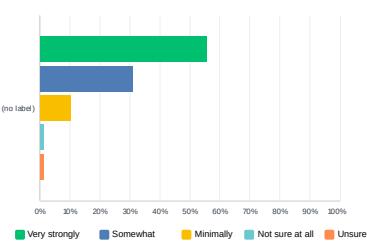
Q4 Please choose your top 3 barriers to implementing outdoor learning more consistently in your schools or board?

Answered: 134 Skipped: 2



Q11 In your view, how strongly does outdoor learning support or enhance environmental and climate learning opportunities in your system?

Answered: 135 Skipped: 1



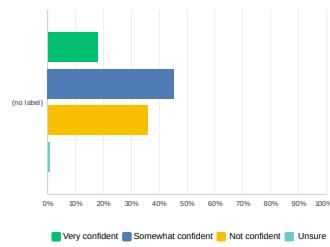
OUTDOOR LEARNING STRENGTHENS ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY

Leaders believe outdoor learning:

- Builds environmental connection and sense of place
- Strengthens climate literacy
 - » Inspires stewardship and responsibility

Q7 How confident are you that outdoor learning opportunities in your system are equitable and accessible for all students and teachers?

Answered: 134 Skipped: 2



EQUITY & ACCESSIBILITY MUST IMPROVE

Only **18%** believe opportunities are equitable across students.

Contributing inequities:

- Cost/availability of warm gear
- Transportation and staffing ratios
- Geography and access to nature
- Variability in principal support

→ GOING FORWARD

SYSTEM PRIORITIES

Build staff capacity and shift mindsets

- 1 Integrate OL into curriculum + scheduling
- 2 Invest in equitable access to gear and nature
- 3 Align climate education with Indigenous knowledge systems
- 4 Strengthen leadership commitment at every level

WHAT SCHOOL SYSTEM LEADERS NEED

- Leadership tools
- Policy alignment
- Professional learning and mentorship
- Funding pathways and partnerships
- Guidance on fostering Indigenous relationships
- Evidence, models, and success stories
- National networks of support

“ Success looks like Outdoor Learning being embedded across all grades and subjects, with teachers confidently using natural environments to meet curriculum goals. Students would regularly learn outside, enhancing engagement, well-being.”

