



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



OUTDOOR LEARNING SYSTEM INTEGRATION

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

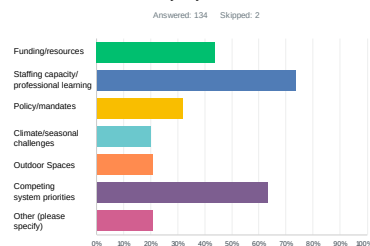
- 1 Integrate outdoor learning into policy and strategic plans
- 2 Provide sustained funding and resources
- 3 Invest in professional learning and mentorship
- 4 Embed Indigenous ways of knowing
- 5 Strengthen leadership, advocacy, and collaboration networks

BARRIERS TO SYSTEM-WIDE ADOPTION

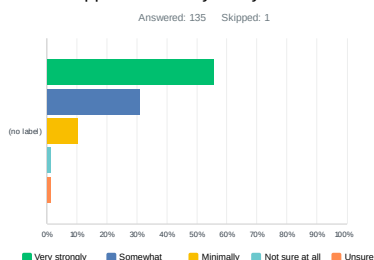
Top barriers identified:

- 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?



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

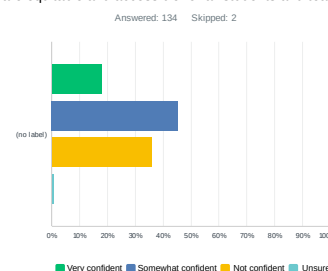


OUTDOOR LEARNING STRENGTHENS ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY

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?



➔ 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

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



“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.”

