



Power of Collective Impact

Working Together at the Intersection of
Health, Education and Conservation

Learning by Nature | May 6, 2025



Using a collective impact approach and working directly with school system leaders, we are providing opportunities for students to learn about nature, in nature. Thank you to our partners and participants who shared their passion, expertise and support.

Adam Jaffer, School District 36: Surrey
Andy Day, BC Parks Foundation
Ashley Bangsund, School District 39: Vancouver
Brij Patel, Tree Canada
Cara Laudon, Teacher, School District 39: Vancouver
Carla Mellott, Silverberry Pro
Carter, Student, School District 23: Central Okanagan
Catherine Munro, Teacher, School District 71: Comox Valley
Chantal Martin, Vancouver Botanical Gardens Association
Chelsea Rooney, BC Parks Foundation
Cohen Bradley, BC Parks Foundation
Conor McMullan, School District 44: Cheakamus Centre
Dani, Student, School District 23: Central Okanagan
David A'Bear, Teacher, School District 36: Surrey
David Karuhije, BC Parks Foundation
David Zandvliet, Simon Fraser University, UNESCO Chair in Bio-cultural Diversity and Education
Derek Lai, Vancouver Coastal Health
Geiza Bianchi de Lellis, UBC Botanical Garden
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Gwenyth Dwyn, Healthy Schools BC
James Bartram, IUCN Nature Based Education Task Force
Jay Dixon, School District 71: Comox Valley
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Kate Henderson, Metro Vancouver
Kate Le Souef, BC Parks Foundation
Kate Shapiro, Environment and Climate Change Canada
Kelsey McWhinnie, Teacher, School District 57: Prince George
Kerrie Mortin, Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation
Kevin Ebert, RBC
Laura Hergott, BC Parks Foundation
Lee Karpenko, School District 57: Prince George
Marcus Lobb, Farm to School
Mariana Brussoni, BC Children's Hospital Research Institute
Marnie Birkeland, Teacher, School District 23: Central Okanagan
Megan Zeni, Environmental Educators Professional Specialists Association (EPPSA)
Melinda Young, City of Burnaby
Melissa Lem, BC Parks Foundation
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Nanette Richards, Silverberry Pro
Natasha Way, Climate Action Secretariat, BC Ministry of Energy and Climate Solutions
Rebecca Clapperton-Law, NatureKidsBC
Rhiannon Lewis, UBC Botanical Garden
Richard Han, Public Health Association of BC
Ron Jacobson, NATS Nursery Ltd
Ryder Oliver-Green, UBC Botanical Garden
Sarah Flynn, Centre for Global Education
Sarah Nathan, Ducks Unlimited
Satya, Student, School District 71: Comox Valley
Sherry Lu, BC Ministry of Environment and Parks
Susan Herrington, UBC
Tara Alteo, UBC
Tara Moreau, UBC Botanical Garden
Trish Baker, Langara College
Tugce Conger, Fraser Health
Victor Elderton, Simon Fraser University
Will Valley, UBC
Yousif Attia, Birds Canada

Setting the Stage

Speakers

Andrew Day, CEO, BC Parks Foundation

Jennie McCaffrey, VP, Health & Education, BC Parks Foundation

Cohen Bradley, Director, Indigenous Initiatives, BC Parks Foundation

Carter, Student, School District 23: Central Okanagan

Dani, Student, School District 23: Central Okanagan

Towards a new ecosystem of learning – a shared vision for nature-rich school grounds and place based education

Learning by Nature is building Nature Parks on school grounds, linked to 'sister' parks and Indigenous protected areas. Together we are creating opportunities for youth to learn about climate change, biodiversity, the health benefits of nature, and positive actions they can take to protect their future and ours.

We're here because we want to move from talk to action. We're here because we have a say in our future and the future of our environment.

Carter, Grade 10 student from Kelowna

- Learning by Nature is building a collective impact approach and works directly with school system leaders
- The program's four core pillars are: School Ground Nature Parks, Community of Practice, Student Engagement, and the Research Collective
- The five founding school districts—Vancouver, Surrey, Central Okanagan, Prince George, and Comox Valley—have demonstrated a shared vision and early leadership, creating real, measurable change for students, teachers, and ecosystems alike

Since gathering on May 6, 2025, SD 87 (Stikine) has joined the Learning by Nature program as the sixth founding school district.

To be in good relation with the living world, we need to know the names of the species around us. When we can hear birdsong, we learn differently. We learn better.

Andy Day, BC Parks Foundation



Dani and Carter, students from Kelowna, speaking about the program.



Andrew Day, CEO, BC Parks Foundation, delivering opening remarks.



School Ground Nature Parks

- Planting of native trees and shrubs
- Opportunities for outdoor learning
- Connect to 'sister' protected areas



Community of Practice

- Administrators, educators, and students
- Teacher professional development



Student Engagement

- Climate and biodiversity leadership projects
- Field trips
- Career pathway skills



Research Collective

- Health and learning outcomes
- Implementation methods
- Biodiversity monitoring

School System Leadership Panel

Speakers

Ashley Bangsund, School District 39: Vancouver

David A'Bear, School District 36: Surrey

Jay Dixon, School District 71: Comox Valley

Lee Karpenko, School District 57: Prince George

Marnie Birkeland, School District 23: Central Okanagan

Beyond the barriers – what we can learn from school system leaders and how we can work together for greater impact

From discussions supporting outdoor classrooms that foster sensory regulation, to land-based learning that braids Indigenous and Western worldviews, the conversation was lively with stories and shared purpose. Each speaker highlighted the tangible changes they see in students and staff when learning happens outdoors, including more curiosity, more care, and more connection.

The immediate effect of taking learning outside is that students bring it home. My own son recently took me to a tree with sapsucker holes, something I'd never noticed before. Kids are becoming experts, and they're confident sharing that knowledge with their families. It starts with simple observations close to home, and then awareness grows: from their [school], then neighbourhood, to the community, to the province, to the country. With mentorship, that's when real change happens. That's where the impact is. And that is highly motivating.

Ashley Bangsund, SD 39: Vancouver

6532
Students Taking Action

Project Themes

Food Garden 8 (8.45%)

Learning with and from Sylix land

At Rutland Elementary, students are building on past successes—like planting a pollinator garden and making seed bombs—to imagine new ways to care for the living systems around them. With guidance from local mentors and Elders, they'll design biodiversity projects rooted in inquiry, from rewilding areas of the schoolyard to launching a biodiversity club and mapping nature's sounds over time.

Session 3

Mapping the Movement

Speakers

Laura Hergott, Manager, Healthy by Nature, BC Parks Foundation

Taking action together - celebrating success across culture and geography

- Through the Learning by Nature program, students will learn about real examples of BC's Indigenous-led conservation efforts through the **BC Conservation Fund**, and collect data on their school ground that reflects stewardship activities in these 'sister' protected areas
- The **Learning by Nature Growing Impact Map** displays the growing network of BC schools engaged in the program, and describes how students across culture and geography are leading school ground biodiversity enhancement projects
- By layering data with real stories from communities, the map will show where momentum is building and how these efforts are connecting students, educators, and ecosystems around the world

Co-Creating School Ground Nature Parks

Speakers

Nanette Richards, Silverberry Pro

From sketch to sapling – designing Nature Parks for scale, sustainability, and impact

In a hands-on session, small groups explored ideas for designing, installing, and activating the first Nature Parks across BC

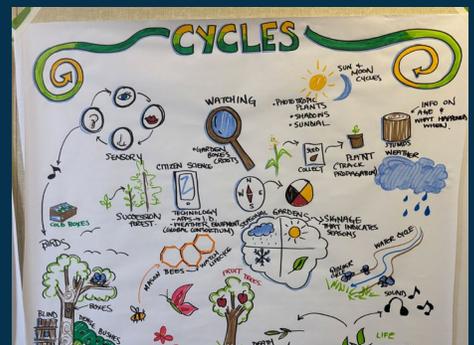
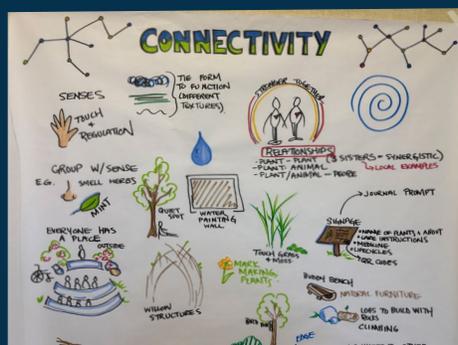
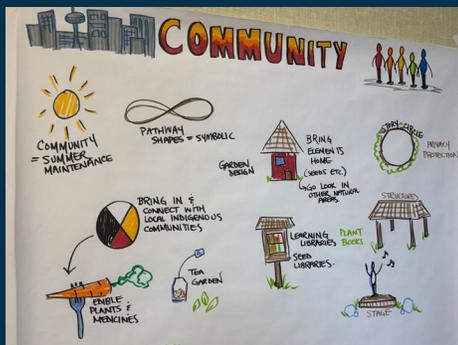
- 3 design themes emerged:
 - o Connectivity – Creating accessible, intentional spaces that invite interaction and community use
 - o Cycles – Emphasizing nature's rhythms: moon phases, seasonal change, sun patterns
 - o Community – Encouraging shared experiences, intergenerational learning, and land-based storytelling
- Favourite features included:
 - o Berry Bonanza – Connecting students to food systems through native edible plants
 - o Aroma Grove – Engaging the senses with fragrant species and calm spaces
 - o Builder's Basecamp – Spaces for tactile learning, creativity, and construction
 - o Twiggly Tunnels – Movement-friendly features that support regulation and exploration
 - o Gathering Grove – A place for stories, collaboration, and cultural sharing
- Participants discussed practical solutions to shared challenges - from how long it takes for certain plants to mature to how to ensure youth voice, accessibility, and ecological integrity are embedded in every Nature Park



Small group discussion about Nature Park design and features.



Small group discussion about Nature Park design and features.



Nature Park design theme brainstorms. Photos submitted by Silverberry Pro.

Session 5

Research That Reflects the Real World

Speakers

Dr. Jean Buckler, University of Victoria

Driven by data – building a framework to measure impact and guide design

Led by the University of Victoria in collaboration with the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, and Public Health BC, this research collective is tracking outcomes across five interconnected areas: biodiversity monitoring, climate behaviour change, health and happiness, educational benefits, and environmental literacy and community impact.

- The key findings from small group discussions:
 - o Participants want to know the impact of nature on students' and staff's mental health, learning, behavior, community connection, and environmental values
 - o Participants want to use this information to guide funding, policy, programming, and shared goals while centering student and community impact
 - o To collect this information, participants want to use existing tools and partnerships, and embed simple, student-centered approaches into daily school life



Small group discussions on session 5.

Session 6

Building a Broader Community of Practice

Speakers

Dr. David Zandvliet, Simon Fraser University, UNESCO Chair in Bio-cultural Diversity and Education

Kerrie Mortin, Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation

Sarah Flynn, Centre for Global Education

Dr. Megan Zeni, Environmental Educators Professional Specialists Association

James Bartram, IUCN Nature Based Education Task Force

Integrating knowledge and expertise – aligning with existing and up-and-coming education, conservation, and youth engagement initiatives across the country

Dr. David Zandvliet, Simon Fraser University and UNESCO Chair in Bio-cultural Diversity and Education

- BC is home to the Institute for Environmental Learning, a Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), accredited by the United Nations University (UNU), that supports community-based research on best practices for environmental learning in both the formal and informal education sectors



Small group discussions on session 5.

- The soon-to-be published Ministry of Education's BC Environmental and Learning Framework builds on the **2007 Environmental Learning and Experience: An Interdisciplinary Guide for Teachers**
- It offers a conceptual framework for introducing environmental learning in all classrooms, while providing several general principles of teaching and learning to guide teachers in designing integrated activities for a variety of learning contexts how these efforts are connecting students, educators, and ecosystems around the world

Kids have a natural curiosity when they're in nature. They're learning about the questions that they think are important and what's important in their community, rather than a very structured and fixed curriculum.

David Zandvliet, Simon Fraser University and UNESCO Chair in Bio-cultural Diversity and Education

Kerrie Mortin, Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation

- **Get Outdoor (GO)** field trip grants provide K-12 students with opportunities to spend time outdoors learning and experiencing B.C.'s biodiversity by covering transportation, project materials and or program fees
- The **Wild School** grant program is a free, whole-school, 3+ year initiative for K-8 schools to support outdoor and place-based learning
- **Leadership environmental action projects (LEAP)** grants support place-based learning in the conservation and stewardship of B.C.'s biodiversity for high school students

Sarah Flynn, Centre for Global Education

- Using an inquiry-based approach, the **AP Nature Education Seminar** equips students with the knowledge, skills, and mindset needed to navigate a rapidly changing world
- **EducationNatureNexus (ENN)** is a global school-based initiative connecting learning, dialogue, and conservation action in partnership with IUCN and the UN Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD)
- ENN empowers youth (ages 13–18) to shape global biodiversity conversations and lead real change through education, art, policy, and storytelling

Megan Zeni, Environmental Educators Professional Specialists Association

- EEPsA shares classroom-ready environmental, place-based, sustainability, outdoor, experiential, and Aboriginal education **resources**
- The **Canadian Outdoor Learning Resource Hub**, hosted by Take Me Outside, is a collection of educators and organizations committed to this work of extending learning beyond four walls
- The **Classrooms to Communities (C2C)** network supports educators, school districts and communities through local, regional and provincial initiatives and events across B.C. like its annual Provincial Conference in October
- NatureKids BC hosts nature clubs for young families to get out and explore, play, learn about, and take action for nature together such as hosting **Explorer Days**
- The BC Teachers' Federation hosts **Climate Change Connections in the B.C. Curriculum: K-3**, a handbook for teachers to teach about climate change through accurate, age-appropriate information

Instead of bringing nature inside, teachers can default to nature being the classroom – everything that we are required to teach can be very effectively taught outdoors.

Megan Zeni, Environmental Educators Professional Specialists Association

James Bartram, IUCN Nature Based Education Task Force

- The National Framework for Environmental Learning is a high-level guide for practitioners, policy makers and leaders in the formal and non-formal education sectors to aid in better integrating environmental learning in those spaces and beyond
- It is the result of a collaboration between Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) and many partners and stakeholders including youth, Indigenous Peoples, academia, formal and non-formal education experts, international partners, provincial/territorial governments and other federal departments, philanthropic and private sectors, industry, and more
- Please see the **What We Heard** report from the 2024 national public consultation to better learn how Canadians' input informed this Framework

Panel Discussion on Exploring Career Pathways in the Nature Sector

Speakers

Kate Le Souef, VP, Programs, BC Parks Foundation

Marcus Lobb, Farm to School

Cohen (Taaydal) Bradley, Director, Indigenous Initiatives, BC Parks Foundation

Rethinking “green” careers – how they are defined, how to prepare for them, and why they’re important

The final panel of the day spotlighted how Learning by Nature can help shape future careers in conservation, stewardship, and environmental education. The panelists shared perspectives on how the program can inspire youth and support the growth of an inclusive, skilled nature workforce.

From gateway employment opportunities with the BC Parks Foundation, to Farm to School programs building agricultural competencies, the discussion covered the full spectrum of how schools can be a launchpad for environmental careers. Panelists also emphasized the different trajectories students might take in government, nonprofit, tourism and corporate sectors and the values, skills, and lived experiences that shape those paths.

Key takeaways included:

- The need to diversify the human capital of the nature sector
- The growing demand for nature-based careers in BC and across Canada
- The importance of stewardship education and student ambassador programs as early gateways

All jobs are green jobs.

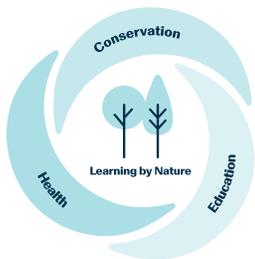
Kate Le Souef, VP, Programs, BC Parks Foundation

Taking Action Together

Learning by Nature is a collective effort to provide sustainable, practical solutions to the challenges our youth are facing today. Youth are calling for action at pace and scale for global impact. Spending time in nature has been shown to make kids kinder, healthier, and support future career success. By connecting youth to nature on their school ground Nature Parks, and real examples of conservation efforts, we are growing a culture of stewardship and building support for Indigenous protected areas.

Being in nature deepens my understanding of what's important in our communities and why learning is not just worksheets, and learning is not just doing work in a classroom at a desk, it's so much deeper than that.

Carter, Grade 10 student from Kelowna



- ✓ Enhance nature literacy and job-ready skills.
- ✓ Advance reconciliation through land-based learning.
- ✓ Achieve higher test scores and increase graduation rates.
- ✓ Increase biodiversity in communities.
- ✓ Improve mental and physical health.
- ✓ Boost climate resilience and increase shade.
- ✓ Grow support for nature conservation.
- ✓ Create equitable access to nature.

Recognition

We acknowledge and respect the rights of Indigenous people, and their relationships with the lands, waters and life in their territories. We seek to build positive relationships and respect for First Nations culture within parks and Indigenous protected areas.