

# TAKE ME OUTSIDE

## 2021 IMPACT REPORT

“

Take Me Outside does a great job of bringing Canadian classroom teachers, parents and administrators together around the important goal of taking learning outside. Their work in this field across the country raises the bar for all children, and helps to normalize outdoor learning.

- Teacher, Surrey, BC.





“ Being outside is not just a refreshing change, for both teachers and students, but invigorating to the mind and body as well. We all need to be closer to nature, and this is such a great way to start the ball rolling. We should do this more often!

- GR 1/2 teacher, Kelowna, BC.



## OUR MISSION

Take Me Outside is a non-profit organization committed to raising awareness and facilitating action on nature connection and outdoor learning in schools across Canada. We believe in a future where spending time outside learning, playing and exploring is a regular and significant part of every student's day.

Take Me Outside would like to acknowledge and celebrate the diverse environments and peoples of our country whose Lands inspire our mission statement here. It is important we begin by acknowledging that outdoor learning would not be possible without access to the natural world that has been stewarded since time immemorial by the many Indigenous First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples who have walked and continue to walk and steward these places on Turtle Island. We also acknowledge that we as an organization have much to learn and grow as we continue our work towards reconciliation and in supporting educators to rise to the Truth and Reconciliation Committee's calls to action numbers 62 – 66.



# A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



At the beginning of 2021, it was hard to predict exactly how the year would unfold. Despite the many challenges, we were proud to continue supporting educators across the country in their dedication to outdoor learning. In fact, we saw greater uptake than ever before. Perhaps it was because more and more people are seeing both the benefits and possibilities around simply spending time outdoors, and the lifetime of meaningful experiences it can spark.

As we look back on the previous year, Take Me Outside had plenty of success, events, and partnerships worthy of celebrating and sharing, as well as areas we still have to work on. This report acts as a recap of our initiatives and activities while helping us set a roadmap for this upcoming year. If you were able to be a part of any of our initiatives, we thank you for your support and hope this reflection shows just how much collective and ongoing enthusiasm exists for outdoor learning across the country. And we hope you find it as inspiring as we do.

“ We are becoming stewards of the land as we play and learn on the unceded Algonquin territory of the Anishinaabe people. We are looking forward to experiencing the land as the seasons change this year.

- Kindergarten teacher, Ottawa, ON.

# YEAR IN REVIEW

11 years since Colin Harris, TMO founder and Executive Director ran across Canada and the number of times we've celebrated Take Me Outside Day

**16,000**

Educators participated in a Take Me Outside event or campaign in 2021

**60**

Organizations added to our new Outdoor Learning Resources page

**446,000+**

Learners participated in TMO initiative

**2500+**

Educators participating in TMO Outdoor Learning webinars

**3.8 million +**

Hours of learner outdoor time from participating in Take Me Outside initiatives

**68%**

Increase in educator and learner participation from 2020-21



MONDAY OCT 18  
INDIGENOUS  
KNOWLEDGE

TUESDAY OCT 19  
HEALTH &  
WELL-BEING

WEDNESDAY  
OCTOBER 20, 2021  
**TAKE ME  
OUTSIDE  
DAY**

THURSDAY OCT 21  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
EDUCATION

FRIDAY OCT 22  
DAY OF  
REFLECTION



TO ACCESS OUR FREE EVENTS AND  
RESOURCES THROUGHOUT THE  
WEEK OF OCT 18-22, SIGN UP AT  
[TAKEMEOUTSIDE.CA/TMODAY](https://www.takemeoutside.ca/tmoday)

#TakeMeOutsideDay



## TAKE ME OUTSIDE DAY 2021 Week Long Events from Oct 18 - 22

For the first time since we launched Take Me Outside Day 11 years ago, we scaled up into an entire week of events, activities, and encouragement to celebrate outdoor learning! Within the expanded program, we incorporated three different themes and hosted 13 different workshops and virtual events over the week, the highlights of which included:

- a keynote Q&A by Dr. Jane Goodall
- a panel of five Canadian Olympic athletes
- Indigenous learning and storytelling by Carolynne Crawley & Celestine Aleck
- environmental sing-along by Remy Rodden
- workshops for educators co-hosted by our outdoor learning partners

For a more detailed picture of the week, **you can view or download the TMO Day 2021 report**. However, it's hard to capture this flurry of nationwide activity with words and images alone. Alongside the help of educators and students in Toronto, ON and Surrey, BC we made a **video** showcasing the spirit of the day, which we think speaks volumes to the positive impacts of outdoor learning, no matter where in Canada you are.

“

*“BEST DAY EVER” is  
something I hear  
every year.*

*- Elementary teacher,  
Winnipeg, MB.*



# TAKE ME OUTSIDE DAY 2021

## 8800+

Schools and Educators signed up from  
Coast to Coast to Coast

## 400,000+

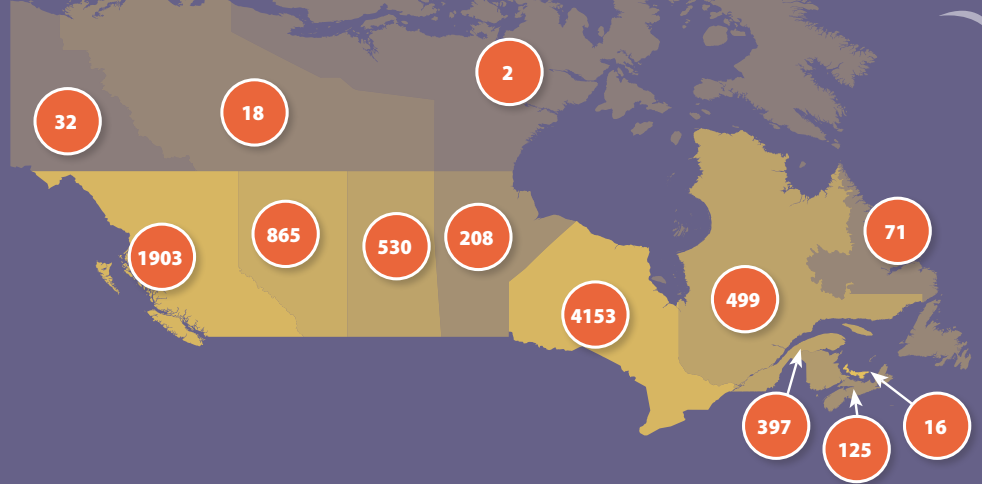
Students who went outside on October  
20 (official Take Me Outside Day)

## 1.2 million

Twitter accounts reached and trending  
nationally on October 20

## 19

Partnering organizations



“ My students and I loved Take Me Outside Day this year! I have been incorporating Forest School practice into our daily learning this year, but on Take Me Outside Day, we spent the whole day outside! My grade 1/2 class was very excited at the beginning of the day and exhausted by the end. It was a great day. We journaled, completed a vocabulary scavenger hunt, sang songs, explored the forest behind the school, and even had a picnic lunch. The weather was warm and beautiful! Many students told me that it was the “best day ever”.

- GR 1/2 teacher, Nepean, ON.



# TAKE ME OUTSIDE FOR LEARNING CHALLENGE

## Getting learners outside every week

At the heart of the Learning Challenge is a commitment from educators to spend at least one hour per week outdoors with their students. Its open-endedness allows educators to execute endless ways to learn outside the four walls of a classroom. On our part, we support educators by providing resources, activity ideas, discounted outdoor learning supplies, and professional development opportunities through our monthly newsletters, an initiative we started during the 2020/21 school year.

“

*I like knowing how many classes are signed up (nationally) and I'm inspired because others are going out, too. Let's all go!*

*- GR 11 teacher, Westville, NS.*



## 2020/21 LEARNING CHALLENGE:

- 3000+ educators participated in the Learning Challenge

Out of 345 educators surveyed:

- 96% of educators wanted to participate again the following year
- 83% of educators were able take learning outdoors consistently through the school year
- 98% said they found our monthly newsletters helpful in their teaching

As the **2021/22** school year began, we saw a 126% increase in registrations for the Learning Challenge! Building community was at the forefront of our intentions and one way we did this was through monthly “virtual campfires” where folks could informally gather, share success stories, exchange ideas and resources, and have a safe space to troubleshoot challenges. These began in December 2021 and will continue into 2022.

## DURING THE 2021/22 SCHOOL YEAR:



6800+ educators signed up for the Learning Challenge



90,000+ student participants



An estimated 3,435,504 hours of collective outdoor learning over the 2021/22 school year



# WINTER CHALLENGE

## February 15 - 26th, 2021

Winter may not be the first season that comes to mind when you think of outdoor fun. But we're here to help change that! Our annual Winter Challenge occurs in February, and the feedback we receive each year affirms just how many learning opportunities can be found even when temperatures drop and snow blankets the landscape. This past year, many educators were in their online classrooms during the weeks of the Winter Challenge, which created barriers for many to participate; nonetheless, we are looking forward to hosting it again in 2022.

- 333 educators signed up
- 9000+ students
- An estimated 83,000+ hours of winter outdoor time over two weeks



*It's a bit daunting at first, but committing to outdoor education has been one of the best decisions I have made this year.*

*- Elementary teacher, Barrie, ON*



*My learners enjoyed being part of a challenge and getting outside was the best thing for their mental health this year (and every year!)*

*- Elementary teacher, NB.*

## STUDENT VIDEO CONTEST

We know there are so many positive benefits connected to spending time outside regularly. The Student Video Contest is a way for students to make something that creatively expresses these benefits and shows what the outdoors means to them. Each year, the talent and passion expressed through the submissions never fails to exceed our expectations in the elementary, secondary, and class categories. In 2021, Colin Fearing from Canmore, Alberta was our grand prize winner with **"A World Beyond The Screen"**. You can find his work alongside the other winners **on our website**.

Thank you to our annual supporters of the Student Video Contest: Banff Mountain Film and Book Festival, Banff Airporter, Banff Centre, Best of Banff Lodging Co, and MEC.



# DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are areas we continued to address in 2021 both at organizational and personal levels. These were some of our milestones:

## Organizational:

- Obtained a third-party analysis and review of the organization from The Corker Collective
- Staff and board members participated in a DEI professional development session
- Explicitly sought out new staff, board, and committee members who represent 2SLGBTQ+, Black, people of color, and Indigenous communities.
- Partnered with Strong Nations for Every Child Matters campaign and donated 10% of t-shirt proceeds on National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.



## Communications:

- Added pronouns and land acknowledgements to all staff and board members' biographies and email signatures
- Added a Canada-wide territory acknowledgment to our website

## Events and Resources:

- Focused on Indigenous Knowledge as a theme for Take Me Outside Day, hosting virtual learning opportunities and workshops for educators and learners
- Hosted workshops that focused on inclusion and accessibility, land-based learning, and incorporating Indigenous perspectives
- Updated our online resource library with learning tools and pedagogy related to DEI and Indigenous-focused resources



Take Me Outside recognizes that the goal of embedding DEI into all areas of our organization is not a singular goal to reach, but a journey rooted in a systemic issue. These highlights are seedlings of what is to come in 2022. We are excited to begin implementing action items from our DEI analysis and form a DEI Committee to advise our work. We look forward to further examining, learning, and unlearning in order to play our part in making the outdoors a place for all learners and educators.



## TEACHER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Our newly formed Teacher Advisory Committee (TAC) aims to increase Take Me Outside's sense and understanding of outdoor learning in Canada, and thereby support our organization in making decisions that will best allow it to accomplish its mission.

The goals of the TAC are to:

- Help TMO stay updated on diverse outdoor learning happenings nationwide
- Regionally and nationally advocate for TMO projects and initiatives
- Connect TMO to local organizations that are doing related work
- Identify gaps in outdoor learning that TMO can help fill
- Leverage diverse experiences to explore innovative ways to help educators take learning outside the classroom

Since its formation in the fall of 2021, the Teacher Advisory Committee has regularly met online to support these goals. The committee has, and is currently building representation of educators from a wide range of grade levels across Canada, who contribute diverse experiences and perspectives to our goals.

- 15 TAC members from 8 provinces/territories

# EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS 2021

What started as a response to the pandemic has turned into an ongoing virtual workshop series driven by the enthusiasm of our participants from across the country and an increasing demand for seasonal outdoor learning topics. In 2021, we had:

- 14 free workshops throughout the year
- 2500+ live participants
- 2500+ spring series views on YouTube
- 2000+ fall series views on YouTube

Our partnership with the Outdoor Learning Store strengthened as we continued to offer these workshops and we're deeply grateful for their ongoing support. These virtual webinars allow for increased accessibility for those in all time zones and communities, regardless of how urban or remote, and we are excited to present them throughout 2022.

“ This series of workshops was a breath of fresh air! I enjoyed logging on and listening every Thursday night, it was what kept me excited to go back into the classroom the next day and try new things. I am so thankful for this series.

- Spring Workshop Series Attendee

“ The Canadian Outdoor Learning Spring Workshop Series was so valuable. Wonderful speakers with wonderful resources available. Thanks for continuing to light the fire and promote taking kids outside!!

- Elementary teacher, Brooks, AB



## SPRING 2021 WORKSHOPS:



**Davod Sobel**  
The sky above and the mud below



**Ian Shanahan**  
Teaching about climate change



**Remy Rodden**  
Inspiring environmental learning through music & song



**Laura Gilbert**  
Water education resources



**Haley Higdon**  
The importance of indigenous perspectives in children's environmental inquiry



**Gillian Judson**  
Imaginative ecological education

## FALL 2021 WORKSHOPS:



**November 4, 2021**  
Place based education: Finding the good in the pandemic



**November 18, 2021**  
Game of groans: Winter is coming!



**September 16, 2021**  
Outdoor learning tips, tricks, tools & resources



**September 23, 2021**  
Indigenous resources & perspectives for outdoor learning



**December 2, 2021**  
Get outside: Learning outdoors in the Winter



**December 9, 2021**  
Outdoor learning Winter gathering for educators



**October 14, 2021**  
Outdoor learning in the early years



**October 18-22, 2021**  
Take Me Outside Day & Week

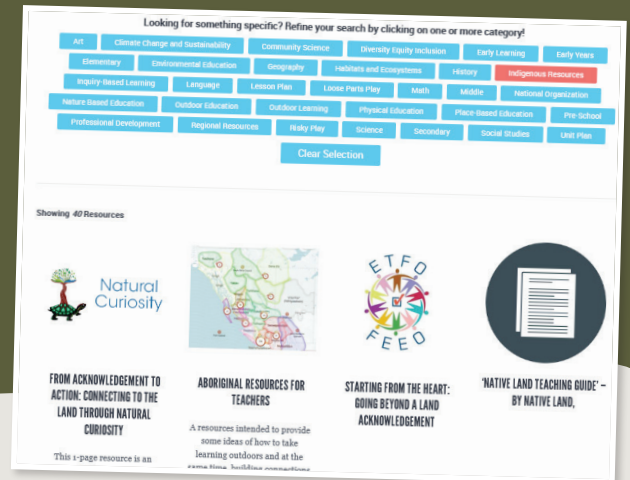
# OUTDOOR LEARNING LIBRARY

This past year, we added to both the diversity and amount of resources in our **Outdoor Learning Library**, from online toolkits to native land maps to novels and storybooks. These resources are organized by topic and are easily searchable through our directory, which offers filters such as 'Outdoor Education,' 'Risky Plan' and 'Inquiry-Based Learning.'

In addition to these categories, we also created an entirely new resource page this year dedicated exclusively to our diverse range of **'Indigenous Resources'** so that our users can easily access and explore learning topics such as 'De-colonization,' 'Reconciliation' and 'Indigenous Ways of Knowing.'

We know there are many more valuable resources out there and this year we will continue to actively populate and refine this library with English and French resources and provide our users with the most relevant and up to date content to support their teaching.

- 23,000+ web page views
- 60 new resources added, for 136 total resources



## OUTDOOR LEARNING DURING A PANDEMIC

During the many ups and downs during 2021, we noticed time and again how outdoor learning proved itself to be an important option as educators looked for spaces beyond the four walls of a classroom to teach. Students and educators have both been asked to adapt and make sacrifices over the past two years, but it's clear that heading outside can not only act as a safer haven, but an effective classroom and a powerful place for all to explore and learn.

Research solidly supports the case for place-based, experiential learning outside, and we will continue to advocate to make it accessible to all, regardless of location, socioeconomic status, race, gender, and other systemic inequities communities face.



## GROWING CAPACITY

In 2021, TMO's capacity expanded as we made strides towards being a more self-sustaining organization through fundraising, our partnership with the Outdoor Learning Store, the online store, and our Executive Director Colin's book launch.

With the addition of some high profile speakers throughout Take Me Outside Day and growth in many of our events and initiatives, we began the first fundraising campaign in TMO's history! Thank you to all of the generous donors who chose to support us. In 2022 we are aiming to achieve charitable status and will begin providing tax receipts while drawing upon a wider range of grants and opportunities.

- Giving Tuesday campaign raised: \$2,635
- Fundraising campaign with ApplyBoard (external educational recruitment company): \$2000

## ONLINE STORE

Since launching, our online store has proven a great way for people across the country to support Take Me Outside's work through the model of a social enterprise. Bulk orders from schools are always welcome, and we saw more requests than ever before this year, all of which helped us grow and sustain ourselves as a nonprofit organization.

- Sales increased 60% from 2020, generating \$29,600 in total revenue
- Orders climbed 30%, totaling 412
- New products launched: toques, new t-shirt designs, and new trucker hat designs

## BOOK LAUNCH

In spring 2021, executive director Colin Harris's book *Take Me Outside: Running Across the Canadian Landscape that Shapes Us* was launched by publisher Rocky Mountain Books. *Take Me Outside* is Colin's story of spending nine months running from St. John's, Newfoundland, to Victoria, British Columbia, visiting over 80 schools along the way to engage with 20,000 students about the importance of spending time outside learning, playing, and exploring in the Canadian landscape. Colin's book has received high praise, finding its way on bestseller lists in various parts of the country.

# THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS FOR THEIR ONGOING SUPPORT

**We would like to express a big thank you to MEC for their generous support and funding:**



## WE'RE SO GRATEFUL FOR ALL OF OUR PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS:

Active for Life  
Alberta Council for Environmental Education  
Applyboard  
Arc'teryx  
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society  
Caribou Properties  
Classroom To Communities  
Columbia Basin Environmental Education Network  
Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario  
Earth Rangers  
EcoSchools Canada

Environmental Educators Provincial Specialist Association  
Ever Active Schools  
The Gaia Project  
Get Outside and Play  
Global Environmental Outdoor Education Council  
Great Minds Think Outside  
Green Learning  
Green Teacher  
ImaginED  
Jane Goodall Institute  
Kootenay Boundary Environmental Education  
Learning for a Sustainable Future

Leave No Trace Canada  
Natural Curiosity  
Nature Canada  
Nature for All  
New Brunswick Environmental Network  
Outdoor Council of Canada  
Outdoor Learning Store  
Outdoor Play  
SaskOutdoors  
TrailCollectiv  
Water Rangers  
Wildsight