

Take Me Outside

STRATEGIC PLAN

2025-2027





History and Background of Take Me Outside

In 2011, Colin Harris, founder and Executive Director of Take Me Outside ran over 7,600 kilometres (the equivalent of 181 marathons!) from St. John's, NL to Victoria, BC. Along the way, he visited 80 schools and met with almost 20,000 students, talking with them about the importance of finding balance between the amount of time they spend in front of screens and the amount of time they spend outside. The final day of his cross-Canada run was in late October. To celebrate the end of his journey and to continue the momentum of raising awareness on this important issue, Take Me Outside Day was established. This campaign, along with other programs and initiatives that have since been established, are at the heart of Take Me Outside's mission to have more learners and educators strengthen their relationship with the outdoors.

Small Organization, BIG IMPACT!

Take Me Outside operated with a part time Executive Director and one staff member from 2017-2024. Despite its modest size, TMO has reached 4 million learners and educators over the past 12 years. In 2023 alone, TMO engaged 64,000 educators in a Take Me Outside event or campaign, resulting in 931,000 students heading outside for learning.

Take Me Outside has established itself as a leader within the field of Outdoor Learning, and is well positioned to do this work.

Vision Statement

Take Me Outside believes in a future where spending time outside learning, exploring, and playing is a regular and significant part of every learner's day.



Why Outdoor Learning? Why Now?

The dominant learning environment for educators and learners across North America continues to entail desks surrounded by four walls, with an increased focus on the use of technology in the classroom. However, research is clearly showing the benefits of learning outside, but this teaching practice is not widely adopted by educators and administrators. With growing inequalities around health and well-being, access to outdoor spaces, and issues surrounding screen time, there is a need for outdoor pedagogical approaches that not only address curricula but help improve the overall health of all students. A teaching practice that includes outdoor learning has the potential to be a path to improved health and well being (for both learners and educators), a path to addressing environmental issues like climate change, and a commitment to reconciliation by strengthening relationships to the land through Indigenous ways of knowing.

Beyond our Vision, our Guiding Principles are:

We centre the health and well-being of educators.



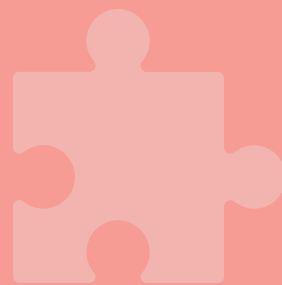
We strive to embed diversity, equity, inclusion and accesibility in everything we do; engaging in critical reflection of ourselves and our work to uncover and examine our areas of weakness.



We strive to pursue creativity in our programs and intitatives, including the way we communicate.



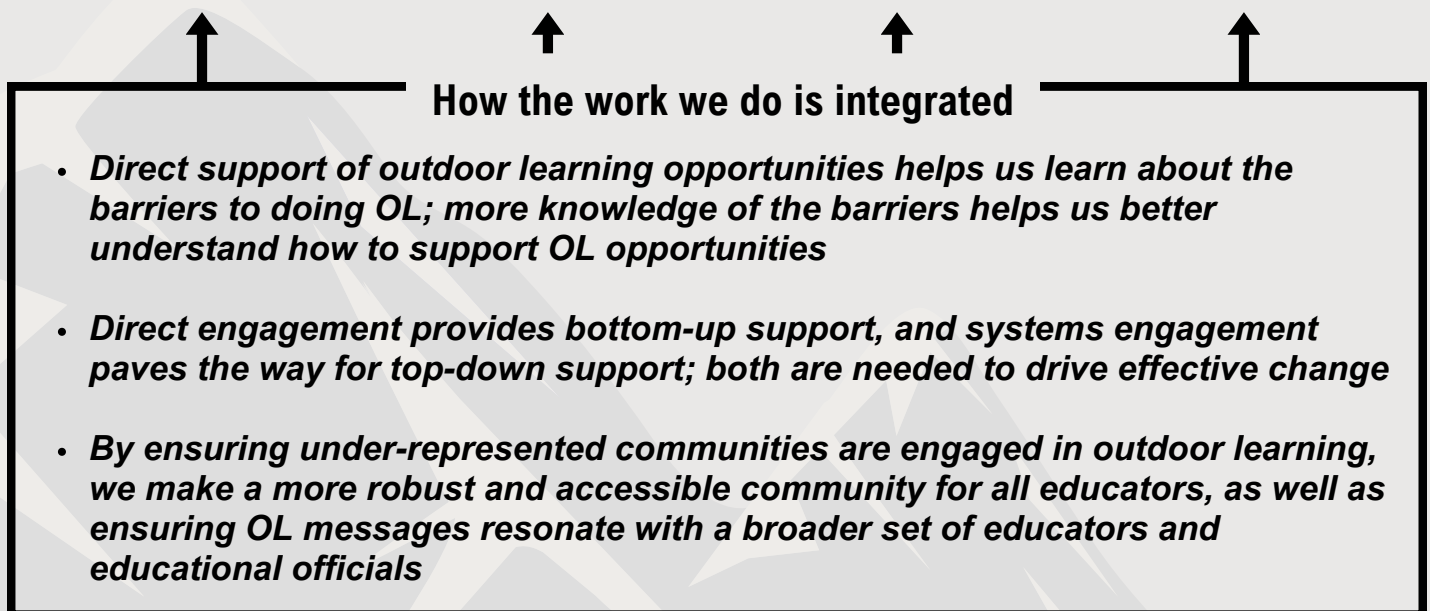
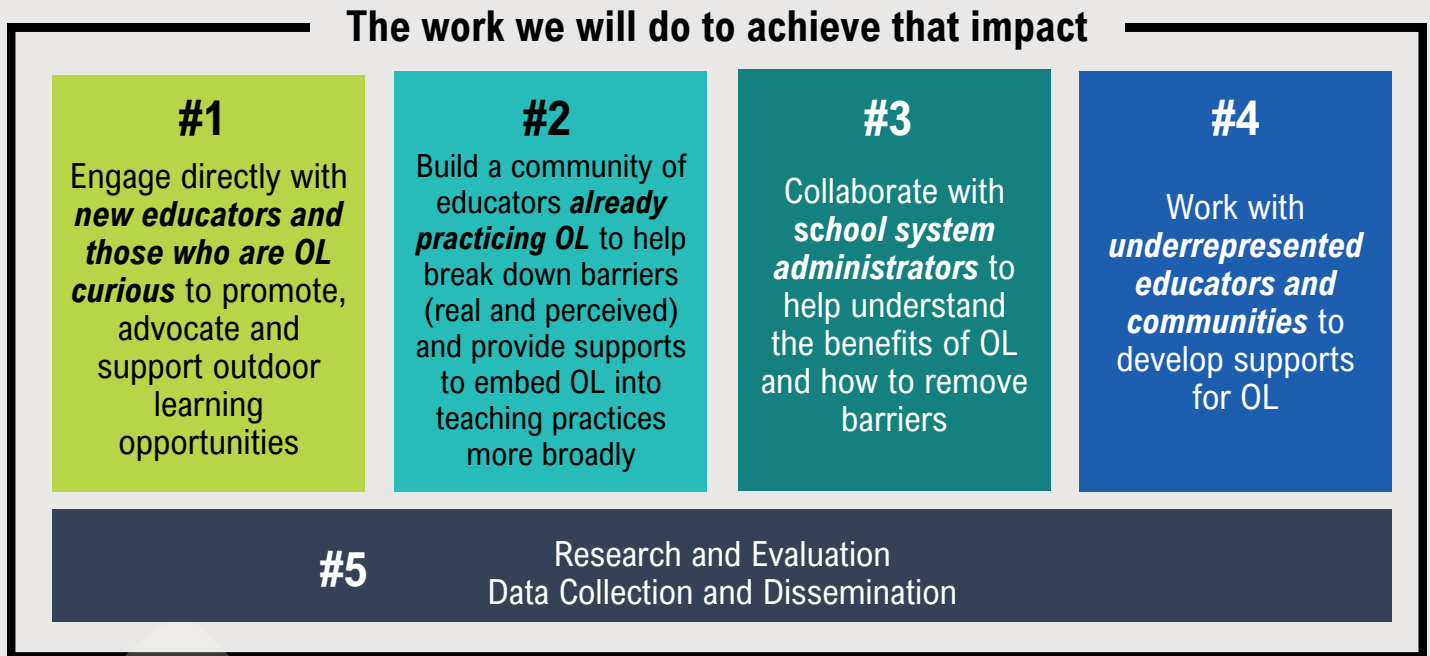
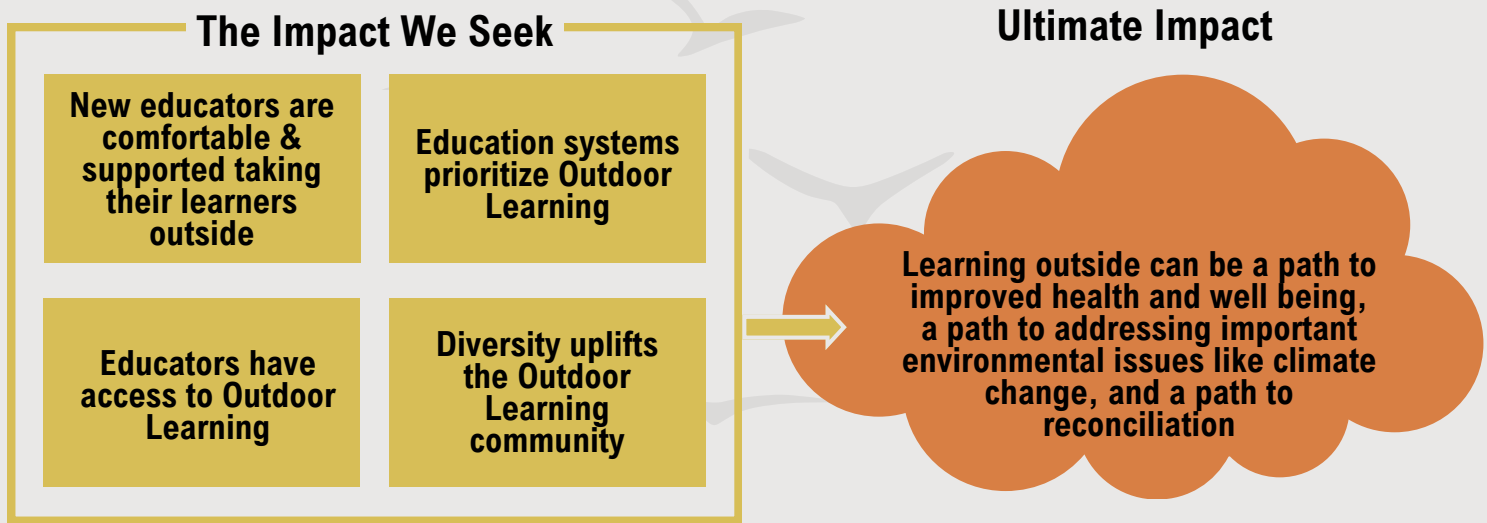
We commit to relationship-building with educators, administrators, organizations and individuals.



We centre outdoor learning as a pedagogical approach and a teaching practice that can be adopted widely by educators.



Our Intended Impact and Theory of Change





Our Theory of Change

The approaches and essential activities we will do to achieve our intended impact.

#1

Engage directly with *new educators and those who are OL curious* to promote, advocate and support outdoor learning opportunities

- 🍃 **Raise awareness** (TMO Day/Week; Winter Challenge; Student Video Contest)
- 🍃 **Help them take the first steps towards incorporating OL** (free virtual workshop series; Learning Challenge; national OL conference; OL certification program; leverage advocate/champion teachers in the next approach)
- 🍃 **Provide more intensive and consistent supports to make it as easy as possible for them to change their behavior** (virtual workshops, learning challenge, national OL conference, OL certification program, teacher retreats)
- 🍃 **Support these teachers through group connections with more OL-experienced advocates/champions;** working to attract and support new-to-OL teachers (teacher advisory committee; mentoring program)

#2

Build a community of educators *already practicing OL* to help break down barriers (real and perceived) and provide supports to embed OL into teaching practices more broadly

- 🍃 **Build a sense of community and avenues for mutual support among educators** (teacher advisory committee, peer support and mentorship, OL conference, TMO Day/Week, in-person retreats including educator well-being gatherings)
- 🍃 **Professional development opportunities** (OL conference, workshops)
- 🍃 **Create, consolidate and promote OL resources and tools** (online database)
- 🍃 **Identify barriers and supports for OL and how to tangibly address** (OL conference, teacher retreats, OL certification program)
- 🍃 **Offer programs beyond challenges** (educator spotlights, lesson plan sharing)
- 🍃 **Partnerships with like-minded organizations**
- 🍃 **Support educators who already prioritize outdoor learning to become champions of outdoor learning as a pedagogical approach** (ambassador program)
- 🍃 **Create a group of advocates / champions** to support new teachers and our work with school system administrators

Our Theory of Change Continued...

#3

Engage with *school system administrators* to help understand the benefits of OL and how to remove barriers to more OL in their district

- 🍃 Awareness Raising (conferences, workshops)
- 🍃 Using the information we are gathering to identify who to start working with and what supports they need (School Board Subscription Package)
- 🍃 Start direct work with targeted administrators (Provide links between OL and educator health and wellbeing (teacher retreats, research))
- 🍃 Specific school system administrator conference

#4

Work with *underrepresented educators and communities* to develop supports for OL

Use data and research to develop supports for under-represented communities, including:

- 🍃 **Community Building** (TAC, elevating underrepresented voices through storytelling, blogs, etc)
- 🍃 **Building Supports** (Explore targeted partnerships to address needs)
- 🍃 **Work to access specific funding to help underrepresented educators engage with OL** (conference, OL certification course, teacher retreats, etc.)



#5

Research and Evaluation
Data Collection and Dissemination

We will focus on research and data collection in order to better understand:

- 🍃 **The needs of underrepresented communities** to help to develop the right strategies for how to engage and develop supports for these communities
- 🍃 **Data collection/research** to fully capture/explore and understand school system administrator needs and what it would take to influence them to change
- 🍃 How a commitment **towards reconciliation** can be found through increased opportunities for Land-based learning, and how educators may approach that on both an individual and institutional level
- 🍃 **Collate, package and disseminate existing research** that creates linkages between OL and teacher health and wellness



The Impact We Seek

TMO will work to achieve the following impact over the next 3-5 years

- Educators, particularly those who aren't already familiar with outdoor learning or those who are new educators, feel comfortable and supported in taking their learners outside
- Education systems increasingly prioritize outdoor learning
- Educators have access to outdoor learning opportunities to promote their health and well-being
- Diverse voices, knowledge systems, perspectives and stories are uplifted within the outdoor learning community



Our Ultimate Impact

Over the next 5-10+ years

- Outdoor learning is as accessible, inclusive, diverse and equitable as possible
- There is a broad understanding of the benefits that come when learning happens outside
- Outdoor learning is integrated into provincial and territorial curricula
- Learning outside can be a path to improved health and well being, a path to addressing important environmental issues like climate change, and a commitment to reconciliation by strengthening relationships to the land through Indigenous ways of knowing.

Strategic Priorities

Our intended impact and theory of change provide clarity on the longer-term goals for TMO's work, and how we envision achieving those goals. **In order to do so, we have identified the following strategic priorities for the next three years.**

YEAR 1

Strengthen the Foundation and Learn

Build to Scale - Invest in infrastructure

- Focus on: hiring, building TMO's infrastructure, data collection and disseminating results

YEAR 2

Apply what we have learned and test solutions

Test solutions to address

- Barriers to support School Administrators and under-represented communities
- Health and Wellbeing through a connection to the land

Expand TMO Day to in-person events

Implement Educator mentoring project

YEAR 3

Focus on Scale

In Year Three, we imagine that we will maintain priorities that have been identified above, but with an emphasis on those areas that have shown the strongest connection to the impact that we seek.

We anticipate that our work in year three will continue to focus on:

- Engaging a greater number of educators in the OL movement through a clear understanding of how to achieve growth
- Continuing to build a community of educators who actively support OL in their schools and districts
- Deepening and expanding our work with Administrators and with under-represented communities based on the research we have done and the programs we have piloted.

Ongoing Priorities Across All Three Years

Engage a greater number of educators in the OL movement

Build a community of educators who actively support OL in their schools and districts