

STORIES FROM THE LAND

Reflections from the Take Me Outside 2026 Outdoor Learning Conference

The 2026 Outdoor Learning Conference, hosted by Take Me Outside, brought together educators, land-based practitioners, environmental leaders, storytellers, and community builders from across the country. For Whitney Tsetso, who is working to develop a Junior Guardians program in their community, the gathering provided new tools, meaningful connections, and renewed inspiration for helping youth build relationships with the land.

Coming from an environmental background rather than a formal teaching role, they arrived seeking information on how outdoor experiences and environmental knowledge could be more effectively connected to education. What they discovered was a community of people working toward the same goal from many different directions.

Throughout the conference, keynote speakers shared powerful insights into Indigenous education, environmental learning, climate justice, wellness, storytelling, and belonging.



The conference opened with knowledge keeper Sylvia Ann Fox, whose welcoming message grounded participants in gratitude, relationships, and respect for those who came before us. Her lifelong commitment to cultural wellness and community service reminded attendees that learning begins with connection—to one another, to ancestors, and to the land itself.

"Through the keynotes, I was inspired with stories and research, and given hope for meaningful climate justice action," said Whitney.

"I learned more about the power of storytelling, and how it can be connected to language, as well as mapping in many different ways," Whitney shared. "I learned fun new ways to show students how to explore and connect with the land. I learned how other people have overcome barriers getting youth out on the land and how to connect my own activities to curriculum outcomes when working with the schools."

Just as valuable as the formal sessions were the conversations between them. Participants exchanged ideas, shared experiences, and built relationships with educators and land-based practitioners from across Canada. These connections often became learning opportunities in themselves.

Other memorable moments were the ones spent on the land. In one workshop, participants found bright red pieces of rotten wood used in hide-smoking traditions, known in Dene communities as Cho Jiee. Moments like these highlighted one of the conference's central messages: some of the most powerful learning happens when we slow down and pay attention to the land around us. By the end of the conference, Whitney left with practical resources, new relationships, and fresh ideas to bring home.



“Overall, I left the conference with new tools, resources, and connections, feeling inspired to help youth in our community build their relationship with the land.” Said Whitney.

The 2026 Outdoor Learning Conference demonstrated that outdoor and land-based education is about much more than taking learning outside. It is about fostering imagination, nurturing wellbeing, supporting reconciliation, building community, and creating opportunities for young people to connect with the places that sustain them.