

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority Outdoor Education Task Force Statement Draft for Feedback October 2020

In 2019, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) convened the Outdoor Education Task Force (Task Force) to develop a framework for the long-term provision of out-of-classroom learning experiences related to natural science, conservation and the environment that meets the needs of the student population to the year 2040.

As part of a series of working group activities, the Task Force was asked to imagine a future where outdoor education is accessible to all - holding an important role in students' learning experience. The Task Force proposed the following for TRCA's role in bringing the framework to life:

We envision a future where...

The students of Ontario have consistent and equitable access to high-quality outdoor education.

Educators have the confidence and self-efficacy to make environmental stewardship the core of their classroom pedagogy.

Trustees, in partnership with parents and guardians, advocate to school boards for system change in how funds are allocated for outdoor education, ensuring flexibility for classrooms and whole boards in their support of outdoor education.

Community comes together to create a system of support safeguarding impactful out of classroom learning related to natural science, conversation and the environment.

Generations of environmental stewards are nurtured , nourished, empowered and sustained with outdoor education experiences; contributing to a citizenry with a life-long appreciation for nature and land, and the agency required to take action. These actions ensure a viable future for ourselves and the environment.

TRCA is the...

Catalyst that brings stakeholders together to make environmental learning and stewardship, that is rooted in equity and anti-oppression, a reality for all students.

Convener of important conversations and facilitator of taking actions that will link school boards to school boards, organizations with school boards, and school boards in around its jurisdiction to TRCA - along with valuable input from council members, community liaisons and educators. This work shifts the culture of the education community - with students, parents, guardians, classroom educators, administrators and central staff - to one that champions the importance of outdoor education.

TRCA will bring this vision to life by...

Stepping into our leadership role | As TRCA we have a leadership role to play.. A history of doing meaningful, impactful work has made us a leader in conservation and outdoor education; uniquely grounded in science. We will leverage our ability to influence how the education community fosters environmental stewardship rooted in equity, anti-oppression and cultural appreciation.

Leading with student voice | For outdoor education to become equitable, anti-oppressive and reflective of student identities, students must lead the way in imagining, influencing and informing possibilities. As an organization at the forefront of watershed and ecological management, we will collaborate with students to centre their identities and lived experiences in outdoor education experiences.

Convening and building the collaboration ecosystem | Shifting culture requires stakeholders to collaborate. TRCA is the connector for groups, creating support systems for educators, students and communities to engage in outdoor education. It is this collective that will build momentum to advocate for system change in funding outdoor education and creating the budget flexibility needed to allow individual schools and school boards to engage in outdoor education. As collaboration grows in the system, new partnerships will emerge.

Setting the standard for outdoor education programming | As a collective, we will identify the guiding principles that must be embedded within outdoor education design. It is these principles that will set the standard for experiences that are rooted in equity and anti-oppression; accessible to all and affirming to student identities, regardless of socioeconomic and geographic proximity. Guiding principles will jointly be created with school boards, educators and organizations and used in designing their outdoor education experiences, promoting environmental stewardship. This is how we build capacity in community to look for quality experiences in outdoor education.

Co-creating the entry points | TRCA supports students, educators, school boards and community organizations in bringing outdoor education experiences to life. There is no single right way to start developing as an environmental steward. Instead, TRCA will collaborate with organizations and educators to co-design outdoor education experiences that are rooted in cultural knowledge and appreciation, and embedded within inquiry-based learning that amplifies the learning and experiences.