

Human Well-Being



Nature as Teacher: Growing Resilience Through Outdoor Classrooms



Saskatchewan's provincial parks are more than scenic destinations. They have become vibrant learning spaces where thousands of students each year step outside traditional classrooms and discover the natural world first-hand. Through the Outdoor Classroom program, students from kindergarten to Grade 12 explore forests, grasslands, rivers and wetlands while taking part in curriculum-linked activities that spark curiosity and strengthen their connection to the environment.

In 2025, more than 16,000 students from 377 schools across Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta participated in 758 Outdoor Classroom programs. Park Interpreters and self-guided kits helped bring science, ecology and stewardship to life in memorable ways. Teachers reported that many students called the experience a standout moment of their school year.

Example highlights from the program include:

- **Forest Study:** A kindergarten class explored Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park, planted 100 lodgepole pine seedlings, and learned how healthy forests grow and renew themselves.
- **Grassland Ecologist for a Day:** Students in grades 1, 8 and 9 stepped into the role of grassland ecologists, using square-foot field techniques at Douglas and Buffalo Pound Provincial Parks to examine how prescribed fire limits invasive plants and encourages biodiversity and grassland renewal.
- **Aquatic Ecosystem Exploration:** Over 6,000 students got their feet wet in parks across Saskatchewan to collect and test water samples and discovered what supports healthy waterways.

These hands-on experiences help students and teachers see how natural systems respond to environmental variability. The program also deepens appreciation for the cultural significance of these landscapes, particularly in places shaped by generations of Indigenous knowledge and land practices. These insights help build early foundations for resilience by showing how people, land and ecosystems are connected.

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Why It Matters

From boreal forest to prairie grasslands, provincial parks offer a living classroom where science, ecology and stewardship come to life. The Outdoor Classroom program invests in the well-being of youth by encouraging curiosity, physical activity and meaningful time in nature. As students develop a deeper connection to the land, they are inspired to care for parks and natural spaces, helping to sustain the long-term resilience of Saskatchewan's ecosystems.

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