Women in Outdoor Careers

Career Discovery Day

May 20, 2026 - Rocky Mountain House | **May 21, 2026** - Whitecourt

September 22, 2026 - Grande Prairie | **September 24, 2026** - Calgary





This program took place in regions inhabited by the First Peoples of Treaty 6 and Treaty 8 and the Métis people of the Battle River and Peace River Territories since time immemorial. In the spirit of reconciliation and reciprocity, Inside Education respectfully acknowledges all Indigenous Peoples whose deep respect for the environment forms the foundation of our personal responsibility for the stewardship of our environment and natural resources, a connection we strive to foster through all of our programs.

Introduction



Inside Education is pleased to report on a third successful year of Women in Outdoor Careers programs, a series of educational events designed to connect female and non-binary students with professionals in a variety of environmental and natural resource sectors including agriculture, forestry, energy, reclamation, monitoring, conservation and stewardship.



Four Women in Outdoor Careers events were held in 2026 at four different field sites - Des Crossley Demonstration Forest near Rocky Mountain House, Huestis Demonstration Forest outside of Whitecourt, Boreal Wetland Centre near Grande Prairie, and Jumpingpound Demonstration Forest outside Calgary.

Expert guests were invited to speak about their career paths and a “day-in-the-life” at their job, and each guest brought a hands-on activity or interactive equipment as a demonstration for students. This year’s program saw great uptake, with **42** expert guests interacting with **298** students from **15** schools across the province.

Thank you to the funders who made this program possible

Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership
Alberta Government
Canada
Alberta Newsprint Company
CANFOR
Canadian Natural
cenovus ENERGY
FORESTRY FUTURES ALLIANCE
Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta (FRIAA)
KEYERA
MILLAR WESTERN
Ovintiv
PEMBINA
STRATHCONA RESOURCES LTD
West Fraser
Weyerhaeuser

Des Crossley Demonstration Forest

The first Women in Outdoor Careers program was held at Des Crossley Demonstration Forest outside of Rocky Mountain House. In attendance were **54** Grade 8-12 students from:

- **Bluffton School**
- **David Thompson High School**
- **St. Matthew Catholic School**
- **West Central High School**



Experts joined from various outdoor and natural resource sectors and brought hands-on demonstrations and activities; including a rotational grazing activity with the Central Alberta Forage and Livestock Association, a tree survey exercise with West Fraser, a SAGD model demonstration with Canadian Natural, plant identification with Work Wild, and a variety of tools used in the field work of each organization.



The day ended with a networking session where students connected with one another and shared their experiences from the day.

Expert Guests | Organizations

- **Pam Melnick & Rebecca Heemeryck** | Alberta Forestry
- **Katie Howes** | Canadian Natural
- **Tatyana Pavlovets** | Central Alberta Forage and Livestock Association
- **Willow Hauber** | Keyera
- **Britni Smith** | West Fraser
- **Mariam Souraya** | Work Wild

"I was excited to be able to showcase my profession, I didn't really know anything about the work I do now when I was their age and maybe a little seed was planted for a couple of students to explore a career in the outdoors."

- Rebecca Heemeryck, Alberta Forestry

Huestis Demonstration Forest

The Whitecourt Women in Outdoor Careers program held at Huestis Demonstration Forest welcomed **55** Grade 10-12 students from **École Pine Grove Middle School, Holy Redeemer School, and Hilltop High School.**

Students got to experience a wide variety of hands-on activities related to outdoor careers, including water testing, plant identification, water infiltration testing, and trialling various forestry tools like diameter tapes, tree planting equipment, wildfire gear, and drones. The small group setting allowed students to interact closely with our expert guests and have more in-depth conversations, allowing deeper insight into the day-to-day workings of different outdoor careers.

This opportunity gave female and non-binary students the chance to learn more about available jobs in the natural resource and environmental field with the goal of inspiring them to pursue these careers after graduation.





Expert Guests | Organizations

- **Katie Thompson & Leah Disney** | Canfor
- **Amanda Gamble & Payton Shank** | Gateway Research Organization
- **Hannah Shepherd** | West Fraser
- **Ashley Johnson & Shayla Watson** | Athabasca Watershed Council
- **Cathy Colley & Tasha Erickson** | Canadian Natural
- **Meghan Thomas & Eryn Snoddon** | Alberta Wildfire
- **Laura Brandon** | WorkWild

Boreal Wetland Centre

The Grande Prairie Women in Outdoor Careers event held at the Boreal Wetland Centre saw **133** Grade 8-11 students from **six schools:**

- **Peace Wapiti Enterprise Centre**
- **Sturgeon Lake School**
- **St. Catherine Catholic School**
- **Holy Cross Catholic**
- **St. Gerard School**
- **Derek Taylor School**

Rotating through seven stations, each speaker provided students with hands-on activities and an opportunity to learn directly from professionals working in different outdoor career fields. Activities included forest measurements & forestry tool demonstrations, wetland & soil testing, tree planting, plant identification, urban planning, invasive species identification, and building nature connections.

Overall, this event provided an engaging and educational experience that encouraged students to explore careers in the natural environment and gain a better understanding of the important work being done across Alberta's outdoor and natural resource sectors.

Expert Guests | Organizations

- **Chelsey Rhodes** | Alberta Parks
- **Melonie Zaichkowsky, Kaitlynn Tonsi, & Sharla Gullion** | Canfor
- **Jill Henry & Kate Winterford** | City of Grande Prairie
- **Jessica Ross** | County of Grande Prairie Agriculture
- **Jenna Leroux-Harquil** | Ducks Unlimited Canada
- **Aurelia Jas & Shannon Rogolino** | Weyerhaeuser
- **Laura Brandon** | Work Wild







Jumpingpound Demonstration Forest

The Calgary-area Women in Outdoor Careers program at Jumpingpound Demonstration Forest welcomed **56** Grade 9-12 students from **Queen Elizabeth High School and Sir John A. Macdonald School.**

Rotating through the expert guest stations in small groups, students were able to connect with the speakers, learning and asking questions about their journey and the day-to-day aspects of their careers.

With hands-on activities at each station, students got to experience a variety of outdoor career tasks including tree planting, reclamation, plant and animal identification, pasture assessment, Wolman Pebble Count, building relationship with the land, and trying out wildfire gear.

The day ended with a networking activity, survey, and written commentary that encouraged students to think about what they learned throughout the event.

Expert Guests | Organizations

- **Nicole Mills & Mel Hairabedian** | BGC Engineering
- **Ainslie Campbell, Angie Stefura & Jamie Parish** | Canadian Natural
- **Lori-Anne Forbes** | Foothills Forage and Grazing Association
- **Anastasia Drummond & Brooklin Bellavance** | Alberta Forestry
- **Elyse Hyde** | Summit, an Earth Services Company
- **Morgan Paul** | The Howl Experience
- **Britni Smith & Taylor Popyk** | West Fraser







It helped students think about industries and careers they may never have thought about. It was good to get students out of the classroom and into the forest.

- Janine Morrish,
David Thompson High School



PROGRAM IMPACTS

I learned that even if I go into a more 'mathy' field like engineering, I can still pursue a passion in the outdoors.

- Student, Calgary



I wish I had gotten to do this event when I was in junior high. It's great to get to showcase career options I imagine most students have never heard of.

- Nicole Mills, BGC Engineering

AND FEEDBACK



Today was an amazing experience, especially when I was learning about wildfire control and environmental stewardship. It was incredible how these jobs influence our everyday lives, saving societies and communities.

- Student, Calgary

Summary and Futures

The **Women in Outdoor Careers** program allowed Inside Education to showcase outdoor careers in a variety of sectors, including forestry, energy, water, agriculture, and wildlife. One of Inside Education's missions is to connect students with careers in natural resource fields, especially students from populations underrepresented in these areas, so we are proud to have hosted this event for a third year.

In connecting students with these experts, they were able to gain a better understanding of the skills and expectations required of certain careers, and the paths that these women took to get to their positions.

We believe that the outdoor nature of this program, along with the incredible expert guests acting as mentors, will help uplift the next generation of women and non-binary leaders to become environmental and natural resource stewards. Inside Education intends to continue to highlight a wide variety of environmental and natural resource topics by showcasing and developing hands-on, careers-focused programs!







For more information, contact **Inside Education Society of Alberta** | **www.InsideEducation.ca**

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