



TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Grasslands Summer Institute

July 2-5, 2024

Calgary - Pincher Creek - Lethbridge - Medicine Hat

An experiential learning event for educators to gain first-hand information about the grassland ecosystem, water and sustainable agriculture.

This program toured through regions inhabited by the First Peoples of Treaty 7 and the Metis people of the Battle River Territory 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

The **Grasslands Summer Institute** was a **4 day immersive experience for teachers** to explore sustainability practices, innovation and research that is shaping agriculture in southern Alberta. Participants had the opportunity to hear from a wide range of experts including academics, government, Indigenous peoples, and the agriculture and agri-food industry.

Each program component related to at least one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Zero Hunger, Quality Education, Clean Water and Sanitation, Affordable and Clean Energy, Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, Responsible Consumption and Production, Climate Action and Life on Land. By using the goals as a framework for the program, we inducted teachers into the collaborative efforts that are shaping the future of agriculture and considered how these relate to the classroom, curriculum and other school activities.

As a result of the dedication of these teachers to spending the first week of summer break on a professional development program, **an estimated 5000 students across the province will benefit.** We are proud to share the outcomes and impacts that this program made on these teachers, and how they will enhance classroom learning and enrich agriculture education.



**PROGRAM AT
A GLANCE**

The Program

Through this dynamic program 25 educators:

- **CONNECTED** with sustainable agriculture, energy, water, and climate change topics through a unique program with a hands-on, experiential and inquiry-based learning model.
- **PARTICIPATED** in meaningful conversations with a variety of stakeholders, experts, and educators who hold multiple perspectives.
- **CREATED** lasting networks with passionate educators from across Canada
- **ENHANCED** their lessons with current, accurate and meaningful content related to sustainability topics affecting the grasslands region that will engage students of all ages.

PROGRAM TOPICS & THEMES

- Sustainable Agriculture
- Drought and Water Conservation
- Carbon Sequestration and Emissions Reduction
- Youth Engagement
- Climate Resilience and Adaptation



Tuesday, July 2

Introductions, Getting to Know Each Other and Goal Setting Activities

Grasslands 101: Water, Agriculture and Biodiversity in Southern Alberta
University of Calgary, Nutrien

We Love Alberta Beef: From pastures to feedlots, exploring the different ways cattle are raised and finished
University of Calgary, Grazed Right Beef, Canadian Cattle Assoc., Rimrock Cattle Co.

Wednesday, July 3

Headwaters Tour- Hydrology and Forest Fire Research at the Westcastle Research Station
University of Lethbridge

Energy Production in the Southern Alberta- Classroom Activities

Indigenous Connections at the Piikani First Nation- Rangeland and Watershed Management and Youth-Led Environmental Stewardship
Piikani Nation Lands Dept.

Thursday, July 4

Urban Forests for Climate Resiliency
City of Lethbridge

The Economics of Renewable and Alternative Energies
University of Lethbridge, SHAD Canada

Regenerative Agriculture and the Agrifood Chain
Quattro Farms, Plants Dig Soil Consulting Ltd.

Friday, July 5

Bringing Agriculture to Your Classroom
Irvine Agriculture Discovery Centre

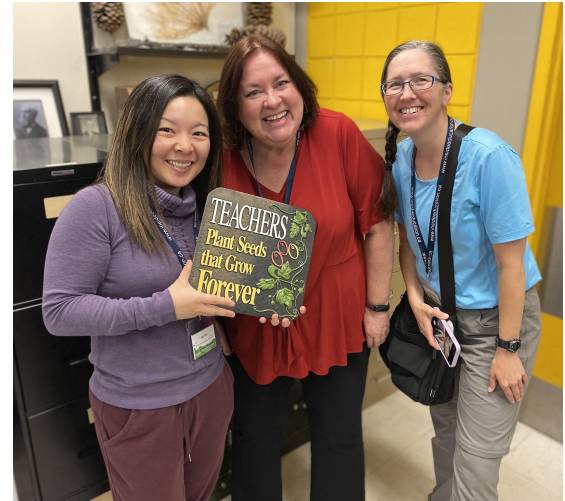
Education Workshop and Debrief

The Participants

The **2024 Grasslands Summer Institute** attracted many high-quality applications from which Inside Education invited 25 highly engaged educators with varying level of experience, and who work with students from kindergarten through post-secondary. Many of these teachers additionally lead extra curricular activities such as school green teams and eco clubs, classroom gardens, and local and provincial science fairs, showing their passion for science and environmental topics.

One of the goals of Inside Education teacher professional development programs is to foster a network of teachers who are dedicated to bringing environmental education and stewardship into the classroom and to do so by discussing topics, news and research relevant to Alberta. Based on post-program surveys filled out by participants, this goal was met as **100% of respondents agreed that the PD was a great networking opportunity and high value learning opportunity.**

- Lori Adamson** | Southern Alberta Collegiate Institute, Lethbridge
- Alleha Bowen** | Calgary Board of Education, Calgary
- Michelle Butchart** | Crestwood School, Medicine Hat
- Josie Caro** | École Claudette-et-Denis-Tardif, Sherwood Park
- Donya Clayton** | Charles Spencer High School, Grande Prairie
- Heidi Exener** | Colonel J Fred Scott School, Calgary
- Bamidele Fasunwon** | Piikani Nation Secondary School, Brocket
- Kaaren Finlay** | Riverside School, Calgary
- Benjamin Gee** | Edmonton Islamic Academy, Edmonton
- Allison Ghosh** | Brentwood School, Calgary
- Leanne Huppertz** | Richard F. Staples School, Westlock
- Mandy Hutchinson** | Almadina Language Charter Academy, Calgary
- David Johnson** | Olds College Werklund School of Agriculture and Technology, Olds
- Jennifer Just** | Mother Margaret Mary Catholic School, Edmonton
- Karen Larter** | Millarville School, Millarville
- Roger Moore** | University of Alberta, Edmonton
- Irene Schwarz** | Jennie Emery School, Coaldale
- Julie Shea** | Graminia School, Spruce Grove
- Sam Sirianni** | Rundle Academy, Calgary
- Agnes Tomkow** | Career Pathways School, Wabasca
- Gigi Tsui** | Ontario College of Teachers- École élémentaire La Fontaine, Kleinburg ON
- Rae Ann Van Beers** | New Humble Community School, Calmar
- Corinne Webb** | Simons Valley School, Calgary
- Laura Webb** | Holy Redeemer Catholic School, Edson
- Makayla Widmer** | Northcott Prairie School, Airdrie



“Exploring the historic journey of the Rimrock Feedlot to sustainability and technological advancements in cattle management [and] highlighting the use of biodigesters to reduce carbon emissions, was particularly enlightening”

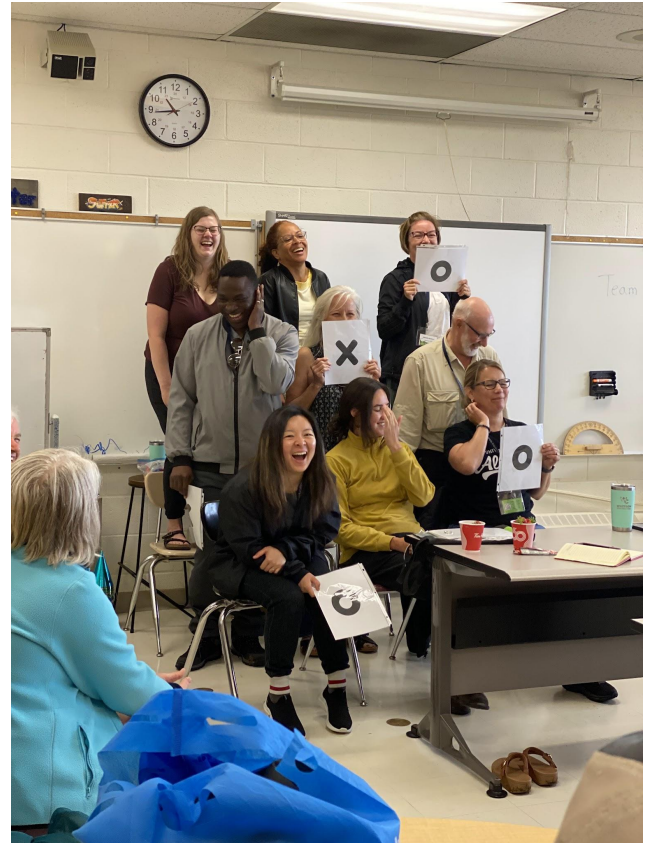
Gigi Tsui, Ecole elementaire La Fontaine, Kleinburg ON



Classroom Connections

With the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a framework, the teachers began the week by writing a target that they wanted to reach in their classroom, related to one of the goals being covered on the trip. Some of these targets related to classroom projects on topics like water conservation, exploring energy efficiency, and starting or expanding classroom and school gardens.

At the end of the week, the debrief activities reflected on these targets and how the speakers and tours of the week could help the teachers to realize those goals in the classroom. Some teachers changed their targets as a result of information they learned and became excited about such as new ways to teach the grade 7 Plants for Food and Fibre unit. We are excited to help them in a variety of ways including through the A+ for Energy, Little Green Thumbs and Nutrients for Life grants, learning resources and more!



“I feel much better equipped to be the ‘expert’ in the classroom. The number of resources - paper, online, professional, experts in the field and my own brain thinking in new ways is phenomenal. I really want to sit down and plan some activities based on this information I have gathered.”

- Lori Adamson, Southern Alberta Collegiate Institute, Lethbridge

Partners, Expert Guests, and Tour Hosts

We extend our deepest thanks to the program partners for their generous support of the 2024 Grasslands Summer Institute Program. The ability to provide teachers from across the country with full scholarships is critical in reaching our goal of financial accessibility and being able to support natural resource education at all levels through professional development opportunities.



A SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FANTASTIC EXPERT SPEAKERS AND TOUR HOSTS, AND THEIR COMMITMENT TO ADVANCING SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES AND EDUCATION OF THE PUBLIC IN THE GRASSLANDS REGION.

- Lynsay Beavers** | Canadian Cattle Association
- Ethan Champion** | City of Lethbridge
- Anna Larney** | City of Lethbridge
- Ben Campbell** | Grazed Right Beef
- Nichole Neubauer** | Irvine Agriculture Discovery Centre
- Mike Nemeth** | Nutrien
- Sofie Forsstrom** | Oldman Watershed Council
- Joaquin Four Horns** | Piikani Nation Lands Department
- Tanya Plain Eagle** | Piikani Nation Lands Department
- Joseph Yellow Horn** | Piikani Nation Lands Department
- Scott Gillespie** | Plants Dig Soil Consulting Ltd.
- Emily Ford** | Quattro Farms
- Shylo Penrod** | Rimrock Cattle Company
- Alvina Mardhani-Bayne** | SHAD Canada
- Dr. Ed Pajor** | University of Calgary
- Dr. Cathy Ryan** | University of Calgary
- Natalie Zardecki** | University of Calgary
- Dr. Celeste Barnes** | University of Lethbridge
- Dr. Laura Chasmer** | University of Lethbridge
- Dr. Danny LeRoy** | University of Lethbridge



Program Impact and Feedback

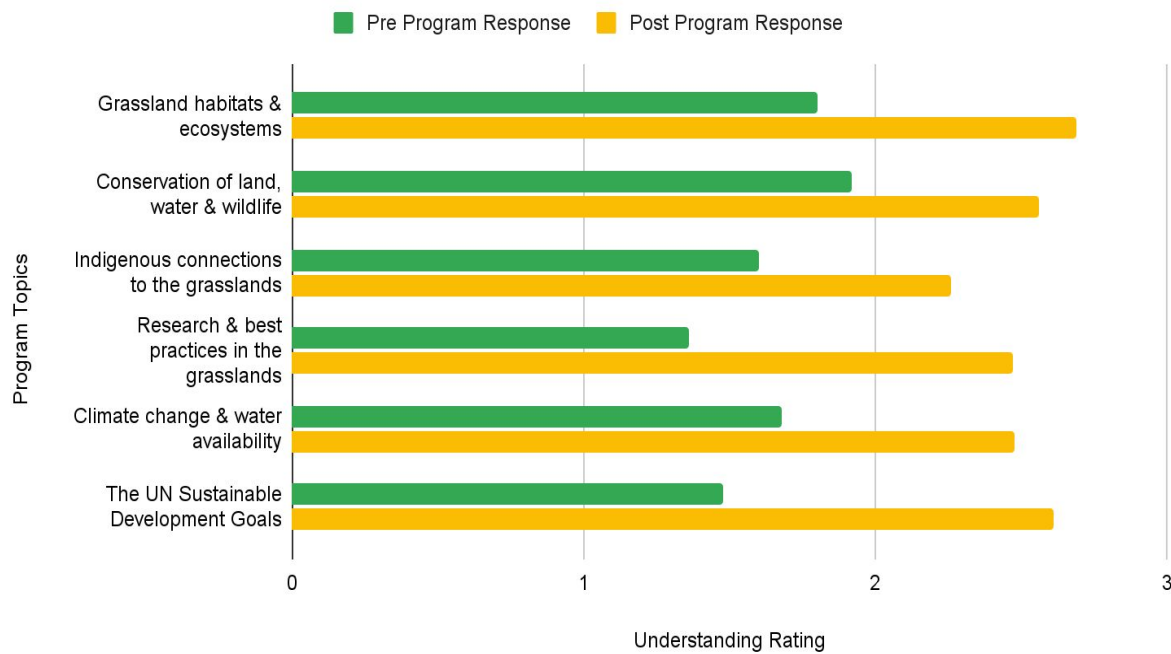
Inside Education is proud of the many success of the Grasslands Summer Institute Program and the feedback for the event was overwhelmingly positive and saw a 92% return rate on the post-program survey.

Between the pre-program and post-program surveys, participants indicated a **up to an 80% increase** in knowledge in topics including grassland ecosystems, indigenous connections to the landscape, and climate change effects in the region. Teachers felt their understanding of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and of research happening in the grasslands increased the most as a result of this trip.

100% of respondents indicated that they felt the program was **educational, worthwhile, and relevant to their teaching** and would recommend Inside Education programs to a colleague.

Participants rated their level of understanding of the following major themes

Ratings from "Don't know much about this", "Understand the basics", "Strong understanding" (scored from 1-3)



“This was an amazing and inspiring opportunity! I appreciated the variety of sessions and speakers as well as the time to connect with other inspiring educators. I really enjoyed learning more about my home and the many great things going here. It gives me great hope for the future.”

- Karen Larter, Millarville Elementary, Millarville



“It's free, it's well-organized, you meet like-minded people. You learn from experts in their field.. your eyes will be opened to things you didn't know you didn't know!”

- Josie Caro, École Claudette-et-Denis-Tardif, Sherwood Park



“Even though my students are older than most, there is no end of good ideas, questions, and concepts and people that I now have a connection with that is very beneficial. Thank you!”

-David Johnson, Olds College, Olds



“It provides a broad spectrum of science and agricultural curriculum implementation in and outside the classroom”

-Bamidele Fasunwon, Piikani Nation Secondary School, Brocket

49°41'46.1"N 112°51'57.7"W

The coordinates of the newly planted Inside Education Summer Institute Cottonwood Grove



Summary and Futures

Inside Education is thrilled with the outcomes of the outcomes of the Grasslands Summer Institute and the engagement of 25 highly dedicated teachers. The positive feedback received directly from participants during the program, and written in the post-program survey indicated that the program was meaningful, pertinent, and a great value learning experience.

Inside Education recognizes the importance of educating teachers and students to improve agriculture literacy, foster stewardship actions and contribute to the collective climate movement with individual actions. In the 2024-2025 school year, we look forward to the return of Regional Agriculture Days and other Environmental Innovation Days across the province, the A+ for Energy Grant program, and agriculture classroom programs. It is more important than ever to understand where our food comes from and how its grown sustainably in a changing climate, and thus we remain committed to providing high-quality, hands-on teacher professional development opportunities for educators across the province and country.



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