

ROOTS & RIVERS™ PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Rooted in the past. Flowing into the future.

Prepared by:

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Roots & Rivers Education Inc.

FOUNDER'S MESSAGE

For nearly two decades, I have worked in Yukon schools as an Indigenous educator, counsellor, and community member. I have taught in small rural classrooms, large urban schools, and everywhere in between. No matter where I was teaching, one truth always remained:

Students thrive when learning is rooted in who they are, where they come from, and the land they belong to.

Across Canada, educators are working hard to honour Indigenous students, integrate truth and reconciliation, and create culturally grounded classrooms — but most do not receive the tools, guidance, or confidence they need to do this well. Teachers often tell me:

“I want to teach Indigenous content, but I’m scared to do it wrong.”

“I don’t know where to start.”

“I wish we had resources made with Indigenous communities, not just about them.”

Roots & Rivers™ was created to answer that need.

This program was built from lived experience, community knowledge, classroom realities, and a deep respect for land-based learning. It reflects the values I was raised with, the lessons passed to me by Elders and family, and the responsibility we all carry to help students develop belonging, identity, and connection.

Roots & Rivers™ is not a ‘topic’ to teach. It is a way of teaching — a way of seeing students — and a way of honouring community and land in the everyday rhythm of school.

This work matters — for Indigenous students who deserve to see themselves reflected in learning, and for all students who deserve an education grounded in relationship, respect, and responsibility.

Thank you for considering this program for your school community.
I look forward to walking alongside you.

— Benjamin Wondga (Tyee Shāw)

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Roots & Rivers™ is a comprehensive K–9 education program that supports schools in authentically integrating Indigenous Ways of Knowing across all subject areas.

The program provides:

- Grade-specific curriculum units
- Land-based learning activities
- Cultural storywork and knowledge bundles
- Teacher guides and planning supports
- Assessment tools aligned with provincial/territorial standards
- Professional learning for educators
- Guidance for respectful community partnerships

The program is built on four core principles:

Belonging — Students learn best when they feel seen, valued, and connected to their identity.

Land-Based Learning — The land is a teacher — learning outside strengthens wellbeing, engagement, and cultural understanding.

Story & Knowledge — Indigenous stories and teachings provide frameworks for inquiry, literacy, and social learning.

Community Partnership — Classrooms thrive when Elders, families, and Nations help guide learning.

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW — K–9

Early Years (K–3)

Focus on exploration, sensory learning, identity formation, and foundational cultural relationships.

Primary & Intermediate (Grades 4–6)

Focus on community, land knowledge, inquiry learning, and cross-curricular connections.

Middle Years (Grades 7–9)

Focus on identity, community responsibility, and deeper critical inquiry.

LAND-BASED LEARNING FRAMEWORK

Land-based learning is foundational to Roots & Rivers™. It strengthens engagement, wellbeing, and cultural understanding.

Our framework includes:

- Seasonal learning aligned with local environments
- Outdoor experiential learning for literacy and numeracy
- Community involvement and Elder participation
- Safety considerations and land-based risk management
- Adaptations for urban, rural, and northern settings

Land-based learning is not an event — it is a way of seeing the land as teacher, partner, and knowledge holder.

INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING

Embedded throughout Roots & Rivers™:

- Storywork and oral traditions
- Seasonal cycles and land teachings
- Relational learning and responsibility
- Identity, belonging, and wellbeing
- Holistic approaches to literacy & numeracy
- Community voice and student agency

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Assessment emphasizes growth, relationship, and context.

Includes:

- Learning progressions for land-based competencies
- Outcomes-based rubrics
- Student self-reflection templates
- Storywork journals
- Cultural competency integration guides

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Roots & Rivers™ provides ongoing educator support.

Includes:

- Workshops on land-based learning, inquiry, and cultural humility
- Classroom coaching and co-teaching
- Strategies for integrating local knowledge
- Teacher planning tools and exemplars
- Professional learning communities (PLCs)

SCHOOL–COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Meaningful partnerships strengthen learning and reconciliation.

Roots & Rivers™ guides schools to:

- Build respectful relationships with families and Nations
- Engage Elders and knowledge keepers
- Co-create learning opportunities
- Integrate local stories, language, and identity
- Host culturally grounded school events

Community partnership is not an add-on — it is essential.

FAQ

How is the curriculum aligned with provincial and territorial standards?

Our program is fully aligned and integrates seamlessly with existing learning outcomes.

Do teachers need prior Indigenous knowledge?

No — the program is designed to support all educators with clear, respectful guidance.

Can schools purchase only certain grades?

Yes — licensing is flexible for single grades, full K–9 bundles, or district-wide access.

Do you offer training for teachers?

Yes — Roots & Rivers™ includes optional professional learning opportunities.

ABOUT THE FOUNDER

Benjamin Wondga (Tyee Shāw), B.Ed., MACP

Founder, CEO & Indigenous Education Director

Ben is a Yukon-based Indigenous educator, counsellor, and member of the Crow Clan from Kluane First Nation. With nearly two decades of experience in Yukon schools, his teaching centres on land-based learning, community knowledge, cultural identity, and student well-being. His work integrates classroom experience with graduate-level counselling practice, offering a trauma-informed, relational, and culturally grounded approach to education. Roots & Rivers™ reflects Ben's vision of helping teachers across Canada build grounded, relational classrooms rooted in belonging, community, place-based learning, and meaningful connections to culture.

CONTACT

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Serving schools across Canada