

# Alaska Natural Resource and Outdoor Education Association

2026 Environmental Educators Symposium, February 27, 2026  
Symposium Schedule and Session Descriptions

**Check-in 8:45-9:15 Refreshments provided by Grand Canyon University**

**Welcome 9:15-9:40**

**Keynote: 9:40-10:30 Lupine Reifler and Isabel Brown**

**Closing Remarks: 3:30-4:00 Brenda Duty**

**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Presentations**

**Professional Development Presentations**

**Capacity Building Presentations**

**Session 1: 10:45-11:45**

**What Can I Do To Help?: Regulation techniques for experiential educators and understanding why dysregulation in outdoor spaces occurs in students**

**Matthew Jones**

Following up on last year's neurodivergence training on curriculum development, this training is focused around the emotional support we as educators can give our students. Experiential educators have all experienced dysregulation amongst our students but are rarely equipped to properly support the student when this occurs. This training will dive into the psychology of why dysregulation happens, how it can manifest, and techniques we as educators can use to help students become regulated so they can fully enjoy our programs.

**Celebrating Alaska's Native Plants**

**Emily Becker**

This hands-on workshop will equip you to teach about Alaska's native plants with fun and immersive experiences. What is a native plant and how are they connected to Alaska's Indigenous cultures? We will taste-test plants, create plant art, and plant native plant seeds.

**Digital storytelling and short-film making as a tool for environmental education**

**Leila Pyle and Kamryn You Mak**

What better way to bridge communities and build a shared sense of place than through storytelling! In this session we will explore the use of digital storytelling - specifically short-film making and associated skills like community interviews - as a powerful tool that can be used by environmental educators to help students tell place-based stories in their community. This session will include a hands-on part where participants will try out a film-making skill by interviewing each-other! You will also have the chance to hear about Alaska Youth for Environmental Action's ongoing climate and storytelling youth film project.

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### Lunch 12:00-1:00

Lunch provided by ANROE.

### Session 2: 1:00-2:00

#### **Connecting culture, environment and classroom standards through WAYFINDING, a project for all types of learners**

***Lilly Goodman-Allwright and Emily Wesley***

For thousands of years, without GPS, compasses, phones, or any other instruments, humans have mastered navigation across great distances including oceans, mountains, and huge expanses of frozen tundra. This session provides a taste of the Wayfinding Unit developed by Lilly Goodman Allwright and others. The quarter-long project is designed to connect students with their environment and indigenous culture, while empowering them to know skills and methods to find their way -- both literally and figuratively. Our session will start indoors to provide an overview of the project, and then we will spend the rest of the time practicing "finding our way". Participants should be prepared to walk off-trail and up to 1.5 miles in distance.

#### **Time to Atlatl**

***Glenn Hart***

Atlatls have long been an integral part of Alaska's unique history. Where survival was achieved in part through the use of this world tool, called an Atlatl. Atlatls were used long before the bow and arrow, in many places here on earth, and Alaska is no different. Many indigenous Alaskan cultures fully embraced the concept and use of these tools, to hunt, fish, and defend their homes. Here in Southcentral Alaska we have an opportunity to introduce this unfamiliar tool to many different level school ages/grades. The State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources have long been an advocate for learning, understanding, and practicing this tool. I hope to introduce this to teachers, parents, and other educational partners as a way to instill an additional STEM lesson.

#### **Values of Trees and Partnerships**

***Colleen Fisk and Molly Gillespie***

Renewable Energy Alaska Project (REAP) and Alaska Project Learning Tree (PLT) have collaborated for several years combining REAP's Alaska-based clean energy lessons with PLT's international award-winning curriculum to provide professional development for Alaskan educators. In this session, REAP and PLT will briefly discuss their partnership and past projects before leading an example hands-on outdoor lesson, "Value of a Tree." All attendees will receive "Trees of Alaska" field guide, a USB with curriculum, and other print resources from PLT and REAP.

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### Session 3: 2:20-3:20

#### **Indigenous Awareness Workshop**

***Mari Hansell and Paul Asicksik***

Indigenous Awareness Workshops are an opportunity for our community leaders to foster a stronger sense of understanding and appreciation for the diversity of Alaska Native cultures amongst staff and stakeholders. We designed our interactive and discussion-based training to support individuals and companies in their workplaces and beyond.

#### **Fun Evaluation Tools for Informal Education**

***Robin Mayo and Kate Trudeau***

What did your program participants actually learn? And how can we find out what they learned without boring everyone to tears? This session will explore many ways to evaluate student learning in informal settings, including games, quizzes and activities. We will include lightning-fast assessment for short lessons, and longer, more comprehensive evaluations for longer programs. In the process, we will evaluate the symposium!

#### **Full STEAM Ahead: Navigating a Changing Planet Through Polar Research**

***Tracy Wirak-Cassidy***

How do we teach about climate resilience and global connections without traveling to remote polar regions? This presentation highlights the power of Polar STEAM to translate complex polar research into tangible, hands-on experiences, and lessons. Learn how to bridge the distance between scientists on the ice and students in the classroom, empowering the next generation to understand and protect our changing planet.