



STORIES OF
CONNECTION



ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION



STORIES OF
CONNECTION

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Stories of Connection Environmental Education Summative Report Y1
loppet.org/stories

PROJECT INTRODUCTION

Environmental Education through the Loppet Stories of Connection Project aims to connect North Minneapolis youth to green space and Theodore Wirth Park and to develop a pathway of future environmental leaders.

Stories of Connection (SOC): Collecting and sharing stories from North Minneapolis & BIPOC communities about their connections to the outdoors, nature and Theodore Wirth Park, and using these stories to create educational artwork, nature-based programming and healing opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds.

The Loppet Stories of Connection Project's Environmental Education is possible through the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR).

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COMMUNITY NATURE PROGRAMMING

Connecting North Minneapolis to Green Spaces and Theodore Wirth Park



ENVIRONMENTAL PATHWAYS

Developing a Pathway of Future Environmental Leaders from the North Minneapolis Community



LOPPET NATURE PROGRAMMING

Delivering stories curriculum to North Minneapolis youth through Loppet Adventures summer camps and Junior Loppet programming

CONNECTING NORTH MINNEAPOLIS TO GREEN SPACES AND THEODORE WIRTH PARK

Connecting youth to the outdoors is a focused goal within SOC environmental education, with an expansive and active vision to reach all ages! SOC partnered with K-12 schools, neighborhood associations, running clubs, community organizations, community gardens, libraries, recreation centers, nature centers, Boys and Girls clubs, senior living centers, rehabilitation centers, churches and non-profits organizations to connect people to green spaces and to Theodore Wirth Park.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING

- 25 New community partnerships
- 81 Total programs delivered in 2025 to new and existing partners
 - 14 Spring 2025 programs
 - 21 Summer 2025 programs with new partners
 - 13 Summer 2025 programs with existing partners
 - 18 Fall 2025 programs
 - 15 Winter 2025 programs
- 286 Total hours of community programming facilitation
- 1,520 Community members connected to the outdoors

Metrics include both inreach and outreach community programming for 2025



"Sanando en la naturaleza" environmental program
-in partnership with COPAL



"Tree ID Orienteering"
-in partnership with MAIC



"STEM in Forestry" -with Hall STEM
Academy Super Scientists

NEW COMMUNITY PARTNERS

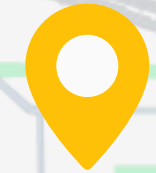
- Turning Point
- Las Estrellas
- Lind-Bohanon Neighborhood Association
- Renew Earth Running
- COPAL
- Heritage Park Neighborhood Association
- Urban Agriculture Initiative
- North Regional Hennepin County Library
- PCYC Arts & Technology High School
- Webber Neighborhood Association
- Folwell Neighborhood Association
- Harrison Recreation Center
- Sumner Hennepin County Library
- Minneapolis American Indian Center (MAIC)
- Latinos in Comunidad
- Youth & Family Circle Minnesota (in collaboration with Hiking Hijabie)
- Kroening Nature Center
- GEM and GISE
- Northside Healthy Ways - Northside Achievement Zone
- John W. Hardeman III Boys & Girls Club
- Pond's Edge Senior Living Center
- Neighborhood Navigators
- Zen Community Garden
- Zion Baptist Church
- Metro Blooms

STORIES & CONNECTION COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING STORIES

STORIES OF CONNECTION

Sunken at the Quaking Bog

The Gardens for Change Crew went on a scavenger hunt adventure at the Quaking Bog. With the boardwalk in need of repair, we hopped and skipped around to explore. We definitely got our shoes wet and some, a whole leg!



CAMDEN

FOLWEL

Stories Under the Stars

Have you heard the story of Ojig the fisher that makes up the 'big dipper' constellation in the sky? This summer we shared old and new stories under the stars with the Lind Bohanon Neighborhood Association and the Bell Museum.



Train Track Bucket List

A sunny, warm and crisp early afternoon set up the perfect time to cross off a bucket list item- walking along the train tracks. The folks from Heritage Commons at Pond's Edge shared a fun moment together along our walk to stop and play.



LARD-HAY

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY OF FUTURE ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS FROM THE NORTH MINNEAPOLIS COMMUNITY

The Environmental Internship team delivers engaging nature and storytelling curriculum to North Minneapolis youth through the Loppet Adventures summer camps and community programming. We are a part of the Stories of Connection project's summer outdoor pathways program for youth, which provides a paid opportunity to explore and play in Theodore Wirth Park and other North Minneapolis green spaces, focusing on nature connection, mindfulness, and environmental justice. Interns complete a capstone project aimed at fostering personal connections with nature to add their stories and experience to the legacy of Minneapolis parks.

SUMMER 2025 PATHWAYS

- **4 Summer Camp Nature Counsellors** dedicated a total of **715 hours** to environmental exploration and program facilitation.
- **1 Northside Pathways Intern** dedicated a total of **439 hours** to internship coordination, community programming, mentorship and environmental exploration.
- **4 field trips** to Kroening Nature Center, We Are Water Exhibit, MN Arboretum and the Northside Residents Redevelopment Council.
- **20 community programs** facilitated with interns this summer.
- **9 weeks** of environmental internship and summer camp programming.



Meet the Summer 2025 team!
From L-R (Environmental Education and Justice Specialist,
Environmental Internship Interns)



Exploring Theodore Wirth
Regional Park's habitats



Youth leaders in community
programming

PATHWAYS CONTINUED

To continue offering paid opportunities to BIPOC youth in North Minneapolis, the Stories of Connection Project will hire:

- **2 Northside Pathways Interns** to deliver Winter 2025, Spring 2026 programming and curriculum development.
- **4 Summer Camp Nature Counsellors** for the 2026 Summer Internship.
- **2 Northside Pathways Interns** for the 2026 Summer Internship.

LOPPET NATURE PROGRAMMING

Delivering stories curriculum to North Minneapolis youth through Loppet Adventures summer camps and Adventures Junior Loppet programming.

ADVENTURE CAMP NATURE PROGRAMMING 2025

- **4 Environmental Interns** led **8 weeks** of nature programming through Loppet Adventure Camp from June-August 2025
- **152 Hours** of nature programming facilitation, working with youth ages 8-13
- Activities include: creek exploration, bog scavenger hunt, clay bugs, pinecone bird feeders, insect sweeping and more!



"Mapping our Land" Activity

JUNIOR LOppet NATURE PROGRAMMING 2025

- Monthly curated and seasonally aligned after-school nature programming with **4 public schools**
- **89 Youth** connected to the outdoors through nature programming
- **November Lesson Plan: "Nutty Squirrels"**
 - Team building games
 - Squirrel fort building
 - Squirrel nest hike and trash clean up
- **December Lesson Plan: "Under the Starry Night"**
 - Owls and their hunting skills
 - Winter animal tracks
 - Star Constellations and star wheels
 - Ojii the great fisher star constellation storytelling



Anwatin Middle School garden - programming space

JUNIOR LOppet NATURE PROGRAMMING PARTNERS

- Olson Middle School
- Franklin Middle School
- Anwatin Middle School
- Northeast Middle School
- Junior Loppet Northside



Adventure Camp Nature Programming at Twin Lake

IMPACT

As a follow up to community program, we shared a short survey that asks for community feedback to improve our facilitation and curation of programming to the people we serve to co-create high quality, accessible, and inclusive programming that lives our values of anti-racism, collaboration, inclusion, play, growth, stewardship and wellbeing.



“The kids enjoyed a great day at Theodore Wirth. Getting into nature they all felt welcome and included.”



“Our collaboration was amazing! Grace did an excellent job of including all participants and making sure they had a great time learning.”



“More programs on healing in nature, connecting with nature, and a class on the names of native animals and plants.”

NEXT STEPS

As we step into the second year of environmental programming in the Stories of Connection Project, here's what we can look forward to:



SPRING AND SUMMER 2026

Continued community programming with existing and new partners, after-school Junior Loppet nature programming, and summer Adventure Camp, summer Environmental Internship.

SPRING 2026

Two Environmental Education Leads will lead a weekly outdoor pathways program designed to connect high school-age youth and young adults from Minneapolis' Northside with opportunities for outdoor education, nature connection, mindfulness, embodied practice, outdoor leadership and environmental justice.

SOC INDOOR ART EXHIBITION

A traveling Art Exhibit features powerful original works by local artists—Charles Caldwell, Philipo Dyauli, Jearica Fountain, Kevin Martinez, and Asa-Azriel “Ace” Rice —each inspired by stories shared by community members around five central themes of connection, resilience, and place.

[Art Exhibition Traveling Dates](#)



STORIES & CONNECTION COMMUNITY PARTNERS

COLLABORATING IN NATURE AND SHARING STORIES

- Black Storytellers Alliance
- University of Minnesota Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC)
- Spiritfolk
- Turning Point Minnesota Recovery Connection
- Las Estrellas Dual Language Elementary
- Lind-Bohanon Neighborhood Association
- Renew Earth Running
- Four Sisters Farm
- COPAL
- Heritage Park Neighborhood Association
- Urban Agriculture Initiative Gardens for Change
- Hennepin County North Regional Library
- PYC Arts & Technology High School
- Webber Neighborhood Association
- Folwell Neighborhood Association
- Harrison Recreation Center
- Hennepin County Sumner Library
- Northside Residents Redevelopment Council (NRRC)
- Hall STEM Academy
- Minneapolis Academy and Career Center
- Minneapolis American Indian Center (MAIC)
- Latinos in Comunidad (LIC)
- Youth & Family Circle Minnesota
- Hiking Hijabie
- Kroening Nature Center
- GEMS-GISE-STEM Academy
- Northside Healthy Ways
- John W. Hardeman III Boys & Girls Club
- Heritage Commons at Pond's Edge Senior Living Center
- Neighborhood Navigators
- Zen Community Garden
- Park Brook Elementary School
- Minneapolis Parks Foundation
- Webber Camden Neighborhood Organization Youth Leadership
- Junior Loppet Summer Program
- Zion Baptist Church
- Metro Blooms
- Junior Loppet Northside
- Olson Middle School
- Anwatin Middle School
- Franklin Middle School
- Northeast Middle School

THANK YOU!

THANK YOU

The Loppet Stories of Connection Project's Environmental Education is possible through the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR).

Funding for the Loppet Stories of Connection Environmental Education programming supplies and materials is possible through the Public Lands Fund. The Public Lands Fund celebrates and protects public lands for all by funding efforts to conserve public lands and create a more accessible and equitable outdoors.

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STORIES OF CONNECTION IS MADE POSSIBLE BY:

