

## **POLICY 173: Climate Action and Sustainability Policy**

The Board of Education of School District No. 8 (Kootenay Lake) (“The Board”) commits to responding to climate change, as reinforced in the School District 8 (SD8) Strategic Plan, and this commitment will be demonstrated in an effective and measurable way in its services.

Climate change is being experienced by communities and individuals across the globe. Within SD8, the impacts of climate change have included changes to historical weather patterns, smoke from wildfires, extreme heat and precipitation events, flooding, drought, landslides, avalanches, evacuations, and disruptions to transportation and services, to name a few. It is acknowledged that this list is not exhaustive and that additional, yet unknown impacts can be expected. There is a desire to build widespread awareness and take action to address sustainability and climate change within the district.

The Board’s Sustainability Policy sets a vision for a desired positive future state regarding the School District response to climate change and sets high level direction for SD8 to decrease the impacts of climate change through preparedness, adaptation and climate action, and to contribute to climate change mitigation solutions.

The Board recognizes the interdependence of the environment, the economy and society, and the challenge of balancing all three in building a healthy, sustainable future. The Board believes in the concept of sustainable development as defined by the United Nations World Commission of Environment and Development and is committed to assuming a leadership role, corporately and in school communities, by modelling sound environmental education, operations, and management attitudes and practices.

This policy acknowledges the climate emergency as stated in sources including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations Climate Action Charter (2016) and B.C.’s Climate Action Charter.

The Board’s policy response to climate action aligns with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, and the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. SD8 recognizes and respects Indigenous rights and knowledge in response to climate action. Meaningful engagement and partnership with Indigenous communities is essential in developing sustainable solutions that honour both nature and culture.

## 1. Board Responsibility

The Board's responsibilities with respect to this policy are to:

- Govern SD8 based on the educational aspirations of local communities and in accordance with policy direction established by the provincial government (BCSTA 2018).
- Foster opportunities for students and staff to learn about sustainability, climate change and climate action to help build a society that is socially responsible and environmentally sustainable.
- Recognize schools as an important part of healthy, sustainable communities.
- Encourage effective environmental practices and sustainable behaviours, and the development of environmental literacy.
- Act as a positive and constructive partner with communities to build awareness and support for an effective response to climate change.

## 2. Vision

SD8 envisions this climate action and sustainability policy and related planning and implementation contributing to a positive future in the following three areas:

- 2.1. Education, Awareness and Action - Learning through education, awareness-raising, engagement and action changes mindsets, behaviours and practices.
  - 2.1.1. Students, teachers, administrators, staff, trustees, parents, families, community members, rights holders and Metis partners ("all education partners"):
    - 2.1.1.1. Are engaged and have the critical thinking skills to understand the sustainability, climate and biodiversity crises, including the causes, related data and information, and how these are experienced in their communities now and into the future.
    - 2.1.1.2. Are empowered, have the skills and know how to make decisions and take action to address climate issues.
    - 2.1.1.3. Have a sense of ownership, responsibility and accountability to sustainability and climate action.
  - 2.1.2. Indigenous knowledge and ways of learning regarding climate change and sustainability are honoured and included.
- 2.2. Stewardship - Efficiency and resilience is increased and the SD8's climate impact is reduced.
  - 2.2.1. Efforts in the areas of sustainability, decreasing the impact of climate change, adaptation and resilience are focussed, with goals and targets used to monitor progress.
  - 2.2.2. Work in this area contributes to operational efficiencies and, in some cases, to financial efficiencies over time.

## 2.3. Culture - SD8 inspires a response to climate change in schools and in other sectors.

- 2.3.1. SD8 leads by example and demonstrates commitment.
- 2.3.2. Action is informed by a diversity of voices.
- 2.3.3. SD8's commitment to climate action informs and drives decision-making at all levels.
- 2.3.4. Conversations about sustainability and climate change are encouraged.
- 2.3.5. Students are supported in their mental health, fostering the building of climate resilience.

## 3. Board Commitments

The Board commits to a response to climate change, to encouraging education and courageous conversations about climate change, and to promoting sustainability as part of their commitment to lessening climate impacts and adapting to a changing environment in the following areas:

### 3.1. Education, Awareness and Action

In support of students, teachers, administrators, staff, trustees, parents, families, community members, rights holders and Metis partners ("all education partners"):

- 3.1.1. Encouraging conversations, learning and action related to sustainability and climate change.
  - 3.1.1.1. Empower education partners to undertake climate action and sustainability projects and make a difference in and out of the classroom.
  - 3.1.1.2. Support opportunities to connect learners to the natural world, empower personal action, and support critical thinking.
  - 3.1.1.3. Support community development and other sustainability and climate action projects in collaboration with key District and community partners.
- 3.1.2. Promoting growth of environmental literacy and ethics
  - 3.1.2.1. Foster informed decision-making and action-planning, providing education partners with opportunities to learn about sustainability, climate change, climate action and transitioning to a more sustainable future.
  - 3.1.2.2. Educational resources are made available that support the development of critical thinking, helping education partners differentiate between reliable data and misinformation.
- 3.1.3. Fostering hope through knowledge, empowerment, engagement and action
  - 3.1.3.1. Project-based and community-oriented student engagement is encouraged in collaboration with education partners.
- 3.1.4. Incorporating Indigenous knowledge, worldview and ways of learning
  - 3.1.4.1. Findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are considered and honoured.
  - 3.1.4.2. Elders are invited to share history and knowledge.

- 3.1.4.3. First Peoples ecological knowledge is honoured and integrated, including the relationship to nature in which humans are a part of nature and not outside of it.
- 3.1.4.4. Sustainability efforts are aligned with other focus areas like inclusion and reconciliation.

## 3.2. Stewardship

- 3.2.1. Reducing carbon emissions, conserving energy and water, and making transitions in relation to buildings, infrastructure, transportation, properties, purchasing, programs and services
- 3.2.2. Fostering biodiversity associated with District properties.
- 3.2.3. Considering carbon emissions, biodiversity, energy and water consumption in all decision-making.
- 3.2.4. Fostering programs to reduce consumption and waste, and promoting reuse, recycling and regeneration.
- 3.2.5. Decreasing climate impact through mitigation and adaptation, including considerations regarding the cumulative effects of District decisions and activities.
- 3.2.6. Ensuring accountability by setting goals, measuring and reporting on progress, and using public reporting mechanisms.
- 3.2.7. Advocating for resources to facilitate a transition to more sustainable options.

## 3.3. Culture

- 3.3.1. Bringing a sustainability lens and considering opportunities for climate change mitigation and adaptation in all areas of planning and decision-making at every level.
- 3.3.2. Fostering collaboration and engagement with education partners in our sustainability and climate-related efforts.
- 3.3.3. Ensuring SD8's sustainability policy and process is understandable and accessible.
- 3.3.4. Cultivating kindness, mindfulness, empathy, adaptability, creativity, community and resilience within the context of climate change.
  - 3.3.4.1. Supporting the mental health of students and staff in relation to understanding and responding to climate change and climate anxiety
- 3.3.5. Leading by example and demonstrating SD8's commitment
  - 3.3.5.1. All education partners' roles are understood.
  - 3.3.5.2. Environmental issues and climate action projects are designed in ways that all learners can contribute.
  - 3.3.5.3. Sustainable behaviour is modeled at every level.
  - 3.3.5.4. Partnerships with organizations and businesses are fostered.

- 3.3.6. Advocating for funding, including finding opportunities to partner with local and regional organization, to support sustainability and climate response commitments

## 4. Definitions

As much as possible, the following definitions seek to provide clear and basic understanding of ideas included in this policy. It is recognized that language changes with time, this policy should be regularly reviewed, and its terms and definitions revised as appropriate.

Please note that definitions are grouped and not necessarily in alphabetical order.

### **Sustainability**

A dynamic process that guarantees the persistence of natural and human systems in an equitable manner. Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987) and balances social, economic and environmental concerns. (IPCC, 2018: Annex 1: Glossary)

### **Climate change**

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. Such shifts can be natural, due to changes in the sun's activity or large volcanic eruptions. But since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas.

Burning fossil fuels generates greenhouse gas emissions that act like a blanket wrapped around the Earth, trapping the sun's heat and raising temperatures.

The main greenhouse gases that are causing climate change include carbon dioxide and methane. These come from using fossil fuels for driving a car or heating a building, for example. Clearing land and cutting down forests can also release carbon dioxide. Agriculture, oil and gas operations are major sources of methane emissions. Energy, industry, transport, buildings, agriculture and land use are among the main sectors causing greenhouse gases.

<https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-climate-change>

### **Climate Action**

Climate action refers to efforts taken to combat climate change and its impacts.

### **Climate Change Adaptation - Building climate resilience.**

B.C.'s climate is changing, and climate scientists are projecting further changes over the next decades. Climate change adaptation involves preparing for these changes and the impacts they will have on natural systems and communities.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/local-governments/climate-action/adaptation>

Adaptation - adapting to life in a changing climate - involves adjusting to actual or expected future climate. The goal is to reduce our risks from the harmful effects of climate change (like more intense extreme weather events, wildfire, health impacts or food insecurity). It

also includes making the most of any potential beneficial opportunities associated with climate change (for example, longer growing seasons or increased yields in some regions).  
<https://climate.nasa.gov/solutions/adaptation-mitigation/>

### **Climate Change Mitigation - Reducing risks of climate change.**

Climate change mitigation refers to efforts taken to reduce or prevent the emission of greenhouse gases.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/local-governments/climate-action/adaptation>

Mitigation - reducing climate change - involves reducing the flow of heat-trapping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, either by reducing sources of these gases (for example, the burning of fossil fuels for electricity, heat, or transport) or enhancing the “sinks” that accumulate and store these gases (such as the oceans, forests, and soil). The goal of mitigation is to avoid human interference with Earth’s climate, “stabilize greenhouse gas levels in a timeframe sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, ensure that food production is not threatened, and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner” (from the 2014 report on Mitigation of Climate Change from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, page 4).

<https://climate.nasa.gov/solutions/adaptation-mitigation/>

### **Biodiversity**

Biological diversity is the variety of life on Earth and the natural patterns it forms. The biodiversity seen today is the result of 4.5 billion years of evolution and, increasingly, of human influence as well. It forms the web of life, of which humans are integral and upon which people and the planet so fully depend. (UNEP, 2020) See also, Canada’s 2030 National Biodiversity Strategy.

### **Ecological Literacy**

A full understanding of the ecological principles of place, normally those aspects of place that are not human. Humans may have an influence or be intertwined in ecological attributes of an ecology but this term has a focus on the natural world and ecological systems.

### **Environmental literacy**

Environmental literacy is knowledge of environmental concepts and issues; the attitudinal dispositions, motivation, cognitive abilities, and skills, and the confidence and appropriate behaviors to apply such knowledge in order to make effective decisions in a range of environmental contexts. Individuals demonstrating degrees of environmental literacy are willing to act on goals that improve the wellbeing of other individuals, societies, and the global environment, and are able to participate in civic life (Hollweg et al. 2011, 15-16).

<https://ed.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/news/images/stanfordsocialecologylab-brief-1.pdf>

### **Indigenous Knowledge and Climate Change**

Indigenous knowledge systems are critical to understanding how climate change will impact communities and natural systems, and support how communities adapt and prepare for these



changes. This knowledge is often broad, holistic, place based, relational, intergenerational and can be embodied through tangible or less tangible forms. While there is no one definition of Indigenous knowledge as it is unique to each Nation and knowledge holder, it can refer to the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. For Indigenous Peoples, local knowledge informs decision-making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life. These cumulative bodies of knowledge are integral to cultural systems that include language, systems of classification, resource use practices, social interactions, ritual and spirituality.

BC Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy: Actions for 2022-2025, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/climate-change/adaptation/cpas.pdf>

### **Cumulative effects**

Cumulative effects are defined as the changes in the environment caused by multiple interactions among human activities and natural processes, which accumulate across time and space. (Canadian Council of Ministers on the Environment, 2014)

Cumulative effects are changes to environmental, social and economic values caused by the combined effect of past, present and potential future human activities and natural processes. (BC Cumulative Effects Framework, 2024)

### **References**

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United Nations Climate Action

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Approved for field testing