



Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities: Youth Summit Outcomes



Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Climate Leadership Plan (VICC-CLP) Steering Committee
viccclp.com

We respectfully acknowledge that the Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Region is located upon the traditional unceded territories of many different Indigenous peoples.

Our climate change challenge

Climate change is a complex and ongoing challenge facing communities across the Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Region (VICC). By 2050, it is anticipated that British Columbia will experience:

- Temperature increases of 1.3 to 2.7 °C;
- Increases in average annual rainfall from 2% to 12%, with summers being increasingly drier;
- Loss of glaciers resulting in changes to fish habitat, declining quality and storage of drinking water; and
- Continued rising sea levels along most of B.C.'s coast, more frequent wildfires and rainfalls.

Climate change will impact all sectors of society and the economy now and in the future. Communities large and small, rural and urban have adopted a range of initiatives and there are a growing number of regional plans that aim to scale up these efforts to promote co-ordinated actions. Climate change impacts are experienced at a local level, yet existing municipal and regional district governance structures can constrain climate action plans, making planning at a broader regional scale essential. This is why we need to plan at a Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities wide scale.

Our communities are connected in tackling this challenge. Our overarching goal is for all our climate actions to increase community resilience across the Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities region, which in turn will better prepare our communities to navigate climate challenges.



Young people are leading the charge. Today's young people are crucial to building a fairer, more sustainable future.



The plan

The **Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Climate Leadership Plan Steering Committee** (VICC CLP SC) was convened by three Vancouver Island Mayors—Lisa Helps (Victoria), Josie Osborne (Tofino), Michelle Staples (Duncan)—to catalyze climate mitigation and adaptation throughout the region. The VICC CLP SC includes representatives from each of the regional districts on the island and the Sunshine Coast (urban and rural), working together to produce a regional plan that will catalyze climate mitigation and adaptation projects and activities throughout the coastal region.

This document shares the **VICC's Climate Action Goals: Youth** across several thematic areas. These goals were jointly developed with participants in the VICC's Youth Climate Forum which took place May 8th, 2021. This event brought together youth and young adults between the ages of 13-26 to collaborate on visions, goals, and actions for the region.

Theme 1: Equity, Healthy Communities, Social Justice, and Social Resilience

Resilience is the ability to *persist, adapt, and transform*, and is a characteristic of healthy communities. In everything we do, we must support the health and well-being of our most vulnerable populations; this will increase overall community resilience and a community's ability to better withstand the shocks and disruption that climate change will bring.

Equity and social justice principles strive for a fair and equal society in which each individual matters, their rights are recognized and protected, and decisions are made in fair ways. This includes Accessibility (what programs or services are truly accessible, particularly to those without financial means) and Choice (who has the agency to choose and what impacts the ability to choose?).

GOAL 1:

Live according to the principles of UNDRIP

- Ensure that the principles of UNDRIP are upheld;
- Ensure that communities are connected and that they work together to protect the environment;
- Recognize and acknowledge reconciliation and Indigenous knowledge in planning and decision-making from the beginning. Reconciliation involves recognition of history and centering Indigenous priorities within the planning process;
- Develop principles and legislation so that lands and waters have the opportunity to be recognised as living beings with rights.

GOAL 2:

By 2030, a social justice and equity lens must be placed on all climate change decision making

- Ensure that no one is unhoused in BC by 2025 and ensure that everyone has enough food;
- Ensure there is equitable access to mitigate climate emissions for everyone;
- Develop better mental health resources and education in schools, universities, institutions, and workplaces;
- Research barriers to taking climate action and ensure that these are considered in climate mitigation and adaptation policies;
- Implement Green New Deals across municipalities.

GOAL 3:

Promote more education and equal opportunities for people to act and live in harmony with land, waters and people

- Develop more resources and educational materials for individuals to be sustainable, ensuring throughout that people feel empowered through the educational system;
- Develop alternative economies so that people do not have to choose between a healthy environment or a healthy economy;
- Develop more opportunities for outdoor education schemes for all age ranges;
- Establish more opportunities for people to spend time outdoors to aid health conditions;
- Ensure that climate science is included in every school's curriculums;
- Diversify voices and facilitate equal participation: de-stigmatize those in the community needing support, encourage youth voices and participation, remove barriers for youth, BIPOC, LGBTQ, and women to have a say at the table and get into leadership positions, and design policy for all working and/or planning tables that clearly identifies who has to be represented.

All of the actions to achieve these goals require a culture shift and transformation from the way projects are funded to the way we develop policy. We think it is important that a diversity of voices inform decision making.



Theme 2: Food Security and Sovereignty

Healthy food systems and ecosystems are the foundations of healthy communities.

Food security entails universal access to safe, healthy, culturally-appropriate food all year round and across the region. An overarching goal is the achievement of food sovereignty, in which communities are taking an active role in co-managing their food systems to ensure that these systems express their values.

GOAL 1:

By 2025, most of our food is from the island and grown sustainably

- Grow food in public areas wherever possible and equip communities with the policies and financial means to get this started;
- Work with the province and federal government to support the development of kelp farming;
- Develop a programme where every school can set up a community garden;
- Advocate that local universities and institutions invest in and research cultivated meats;
- Encourage the phasing out and banning of fish farms;
- Establish forums for sharing community knowledge.

GOAL 2:

By 2022, all communities have access to resources to support embedding food policy into their policies and practices

- Ensure First Nations can harvest important food sources;
- Reduce cost barriers for the new generation of farmers (ecosystem service enhancement).

GOAL 3:

By 2030, land and water-based ecosystems that are essential to food production are protected and restored region-wide

- Ensure Agricultural Land Reserve (ARL) is protected and increased its productivity;
- Encourage landlords to allow (and encourage) renters to grow their own food;
- Ensure that food systems are part of all land use planning and management;
- Advance the creation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas and co-management agreements for important growing and harvesting areas.

To be resilient, food systems need to be supported and organized across a variety of scales (household, neighborhood, community, regions) and they both require and support healthy lands and waters.

They also have the potential to help mitigate climate change and increase the resilience of communities to adapt to it. Prioritizing healthy lands and waters in all actions is essential. We need to recognize, respect, and develop synergistic relationships across First Nations' and Settler approaches to food systems. We can build upon the extraordinary variety of work that is already underway towards enhancing local, sustainable and resilient food systems.



Theme 3: Circular Economy

A circular economy aims to eliminate waste and pollution, keep products and materials in use, and regenerate natural systems. To minimise the use of resource inputs and the creation of waste, pollution and carbon emissions, products of non-biological “technical materials” such as metals, plastics and synthetic chemicals are kept cycling in the economy through the design of systems that facilitate reuse, sharing, repair, refurbishment, remanufacturing and recycling. Organic-based biological materials are managed to ensure that at end-of-life they are properly decomposed to return nutrients to the environment to support the regeneration of natural systems.

GOAL 1:

By 2025, reduce 50% of food waste and divert 95% of organic material from landfill and incineration

- Legislate to ensure that businesses dispose properly of their waste;
- Learn from and build upon existing models that work for reducing and redirecting food waste;
- Develop efficient and effective composting systems that are required in all schools;
- Establish better educational materials on how to manage food waste and compost for residential and commercial properties;
- Provide greater access and funding for recycling depots in more parts of cities and rural areas;
- Coordinate with forestry, restaurants and grocery stores to create new collection streams;
- Ban organics from co-mingled waste streams;
- Coordinate compost audits with farmers;
- Discourage ‘throw-away’ culture, and where it exists, ensure that there are means for people to re-use safely.

GOAL 2:

By 2023, ban all plastic packaging and mandate that all sellable goods are either recyclable or reusable

- Develop alternative materials which are less energy-intensive;
- Legislate that packaging be compostable or re-usable (see Good Natured Products Inc);
- Develop regulations to decrease packaging waste/ban single-use items;
- Establish a strategy to manage ‘bioplastics’.

GOAL 3:

Support communities via education and opportunities to grow more, compost more, and promote circular economies

- Support more education programmes around composting, recycling and reusing;
- Create programmes for students to connect with farmers;
- Encourage institutions, workplaces and businesses to promote multi-use products and/or compostable items;
- Devote sufficient funding so that local circular businesses can thrive;
- Encourage more food growing areas in urban spaces.

There is great potential for impact.

According to a 2009 US EPA study, 50% of total Green House Gas emissions are from the provision of food and goods (products and packaging). These emissions are accrued at each step of the item's value chain from material extraction, production, transportation, consumption and disposal. By systemically addressing how we manage materials by reducing extraction of raw materials, re-localizing supply chains, designing materials for re-use, repair and recycle, and reducing waste, large reductions in GHG emissions across sectors can be achieved – by some estimates, up to 2/3rds of the emissions in the provision of food and goods.



Theme 4: Green and Resilient Infrastructure

Infrastructure is the basic physical and organizational structures and facilities (e.g. buildings, roads, power supplies) needed for the operation of a society or enterprise; infrastructure resilience is the ability to reduce the magnitude and/or duration of disruptive events. The effectiveness of a resilient infrastructure or enterprise depends upon its ability to anticipate, absorb, adapt to, and/or rapidly recover from a shock.

Green infrastructure incorporates both the natural environment and engineered systems to provide clean water, conserve ecosystem values and functions and provide a wide array of benefits to people's health and wellbeing. Green infrastructure solutions can be applied at the scale of a building through to the broad landscape.

GOAL 1:

To preserve, protect, fund and restore 80% of essential natural assets and carbon sinks by 2030 (e.g. wetlands, salt marshes, old-growth, kelp forests)

- By 2022, all old-growth forests and sensitive ecosystems are protected and their health is continuously monitored;
- Expand co-management of natural areas with local First Nations;
- Develop conservation and restoration of native ecosystems (e.g. Garry Oak meadows, wetlands, forests);
- Develop regional care of marine ecosystems for local seafood;
- Monitor populations of key species;
- Host invasive species removal and native plant propagation in collaboration with First Nations.



GOAL 2:

By 2030, ecosystem-based management underpins all land use in VICC to maintain and restore healthy aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and to optimize the rebuilding of carbon stores

- Expand the protection and restoration of natural areas and ecological features;
- Develop water sustainability plans for all watersheds;
- Ensure local communities and First Nations are part of forest management decision making;
- Design and manage ecological connectivity on the local and regional scale.

GOAL 3:

By 2030, all infrastructure is climate-ready

- Ensure BC is net-zero by 2035!
- Develop adaptation mechanisms such as sea walls and rain gardens;
- Ensure resilient water management;
- In coordination with the goals set out for active transport, ensure an increase in safe bike lanes.

We need new ways of working to support infrastructure resilience.

We need flexible and scalable projects. We need to support and celebrate the leaders and champions and to develop community education and consultation. We need better resources and information sharing. We need to collaborate with industry, trades, communities, volunteer groups (e.g. streamkeepers), First Nations, labour unions and youth.

Green infrastructure is a cost-effective, resilient approach to reducing flood risk and the impacts of heat and drought while providing many community benefits such as carbon storage, clean drinking water, fish and wildlife, and spaces to recreate.

Meeting these goals will take strong advocacy to communicate and coordinate across jurisdictions and First Nations.

Theme 5: Buildings: Getting to Net-Zero through Retrofits and New Builds

Resilient and zero-emissions buildings can help achieve climate goals, reduce home-heating costs, and enable new skills-building for construction workers. Both emissions reductions and adaptation to changing climate conditions need to be accounted for when planning new builds and upgrading existing infrastructure. This is critical for mitigation.

GOAL 1:

By 2030, all new buildings are powered by 100% renewable energy, will be net-zero and resilient to the localized impacts of climate change

- Phase out fossil fuel extraction by 2027 and subsequently ban oil heating;
- Work with communities to develop official retrofit programs plans;
- Promote lifecycle costing so that more sustainable building options are assessed based on the cost throughout the entire life of the infrastructure;
- Encourage the building of smaller houses and apartments;
- Ensure that no one is unhoused by 2025 and embed social justice in all new building developments.

GOAL 2:

By 2030, all existing buildings are retrofitted

- Ensure all existing buildings are powered by renewable sources;
- Ensure there is sufficient funding and support for retrofits and that building owners are aware of who can do the work in their communities;
- Establish more heat-pump rebates;
- Encourage the re-use of building materials wherever possible and ensure greater transparency in what happens in building waste;
- Prevent demolishing buildings and start re-using them as much as possible.

GOAL 3:

By 2025 (at the latest), we have the capacity across the island to support net-zero and resilient buildings.

- Establish a legislative authority (i.e. in LGA) so that local governments can regulate fuel usage in new buildings and promote fuel switching in existing buildings;
- Have local governments 'lead by example';
- Create partnerships between communities to get to net-zero together and share good practices;
- Raise awareness in the community of what types of community energy programs are available, types of funding, contractors in the area, etc.;
- Adopt a low-interest renewable energy and retrofit program.

Switching to low-carbon technologies and increasing the energy efficiency of buildings can move us forward to a future where buildings produce no emissions at all.

Regulatory changes, advocacy initiatives, and financing tools can help communities save money on heating, create new 'green' jobs, and be prepared to resist upcoming climate-related natural hazards.



Theme 6: Decarbonised Transport

Transportation is one of the biggest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions in the region. In line with the provincial CleanBC strategy, the region needs to move to a zero-emission vehicle future with widely available charging infrastructure. We also need to connect all communities via transit, railway, and biking to allow for decreased reliance on driving and complete streets development of communities across the region.

GOAL 1:

By 2030, everyone has access to free public transportation within and between communities

- Establish sustainable transport options: e.g. island corridor from Victoria to Courtney;
- Shift away from Victoria Regional Transit Commission model toward CRD-based transit governance with lots of voting seats for riders/stakeholders (e.g. First Nations, students, seniors, people with disabilities);
- Ensure user groups always have a say in their transport systems.

GOAL 2:

By 2025, all public transport is electric and there is at least one bike parking space for every car parking space in BC

- Electrify all public transport;
- Ensure that everyone can access free public transport: i.e. free bus, free train, with no age restrictions;
- Develop more EV infrastructure;
- Develop regulations/bylaws for new developments requiring the installation of EV charging stations;
- Develop and promote the use of bikes, bikeable cities and bikeable rural areas.

GOAL 3:

By 2025, there is an island-wide transportation plan

- Ensure that there are viable, affordable options connecting communities via (bike share, car share, bus, rail);
- Implement this system using passes, such as the Marmot card.

Electrifying vehicles and connecting communities via zero-emission transportation modes will lead to substantial environmental and socio-economic benefits.

To accelerate the transition, the region needs to have an integrated regional transportation plan. The plan will enable conversations with the provincial government to seek funding for EV charging infrastructure in all types of buildings, implementing new infrastructure to connect communities by rail and biking, and developing communities in a transit-oriented manner.



Theme 7: Active Transportation

Active transportation is central to health and wellbeing. Active transportation is any human-powered transportation like walking and cycling; it can be combined with other modes like transit. Investing in infrastructure to support active transportation protects the safety and wellbeing of friends and family and creates liveable spaces. Increasing active transportation can reduce trips made by vehicles and help us to meet our climate goals. Presently around 80% of GHG emissions in the province are from energy, of which half are from transportation.

GOAL 1:

By 2030, everyone has access to safe active transportation options

- Roll out a new 'bikes for everyone' programme which accommodates everyone's need: i.e. has a strong equity focus;
- Ensure that transport networks are connected rural-urban and between communities.

GOAL 2:

By 2030, build out more multi-use paths and bike lanes that build interconnectivity within the existing network across the island

- Ensure all major commercial and institutional centres have secure bike parking by 2025;
- Establish more bicycle hub repair centres;
- Implement lower speed limits for electrified transport;
- Promote separate bike and walking lanes and always ensure that transport is safe;
- Offer bike safety courses for all ages.

GOAL 3:

By 2030, plan active transportation and electric transit networks across the region, rather than by municipality

- Ensure that a coordinated, equitable approach is taken across all active transport planning.



We have the vision and the will. We know what to do. We need the capacity and agency to pull it off!

Upper level governments, in particular the Provincial government, set the incentives for investment in active transportation. This includes regulatory and implementation guidance that is often out of date or contradictory when it comes to active transportation. Too often incentives are set against active transportation. We need solutions that work for communities of all sizes—rural and urban.

