

# British Columbia Libraries Association Climate Action Committee



## *Annual Report 2024 – 2025*

### **CAC EXECUTIVE TEAM FOR 2024 – 2025**

- Co-chairs: David C. Waddell and Caitlin MacRae
- Recording Secretary: Lisa Nathan
- Directors at Large: Helen Brown and Diana Marshall
- Student Representatives: Amory Strader and Dan Hackborn

### **SUMMARY & CONTEXT**

The BCLA Climate Action Committee spent the past year growing our reach and selectively starting new initiatives. We asked ourselves the question: ‘How do we keep doing this, to greater impact, and in a sustainable way?’

#### **Sustaining the Committee**

Sustainability speaks to both our commitment to climate actions as well as how we work together to avoid burnout and stagnation. This meant spending 2024-2025 increasing our networks, collaborating with different organizations across the country and the world, and offering presentations to seed interest in other places and sectors.

There is so much work to do, we need to broaden our audiences and also acknowledge when person-power and other resources must increase to match growing need. We are surrounded by examples of increased burden on the ecological health of all life in the lands of our country, as well as the burden on the mental and physical health of our communities. With this increase, our efforts also need to scale. It continues to be our mission to help inspire justice-based action and resilience throughout the library and information management community.

### **Inaugural Benchmarking Survey**

The implementation of a flagship project for the committee this year, the BC Benchmarking Survey resulted in the participation of over 75 organizations sending in their responses on a number of climate action topics. Libraries often struggle to use common language and approach when tracking our progress and work. The BC Benchmarking Survey ensures year over year comparison in order to track progress. The Survey Working Group from the Committee worked with other Climate Committees to provide guidance and consistency across Canada for other future surveys, a notable collaboration being with the Ontario Library Association's own Climate Action Committee. The success of this project also highlighted for us the importance of data stewardship, meaning future surveys will require more investment and support. Collecting this amount of data year over year may expand beyond what a volunteer working group can maintain. It may also require someone with a direct background in statistics. The CAC has begun conversation with the BCLA on how to handle ongoing data stewardship and are grateful for the discussions so far.

### **Addition of Sustainability to BCLA Values**

In June 2024, the Committee put forward a resolution at the BCLA AGM to add sustainability and climate justice to BCLA's values statement which was well received. Thanks to the work of the CAC, the document and presentation were received with 100% support from the attendees and are now listed under [BCLA's core values](#).

### **Conference Presentations and Support**

The number and types of conferences that committee members presented at increased this year quite substantially. We list them in our initiatives section below.

A major piece of advocacy requested by the community was better support for the various governance bodies that help direct the GLAM sector information institutions around BC. The interest in sustainability and climate action grows but the support often skews towards library staff and professionals, neglecting the unique needs and perspectives of board members and trustees. There remains more work to do in this space, with more opportunities to engage on the topic at the governance and director level.

### **Climate Action Week**

Climate Action Week in Libraries occurred for the third year from November 2-8, 2024. The level of interest in Climate Action Week increased slightly and we saw a healthy increase in the number of libraries signing-up for the first time. We also saw some attrition where a small handful of past libraries did not respond back about participation. We received several media interview inquiries, with 3 morning radio broadcasts interviewing Committee members on Climate Action Week, and a TV spot featuring programming information. We partnered with the Mental Health and Climate Change Alliance to run a workshop for us about library workers' mental health and how to support our communities in the face of stress and climate anxiety.

Respondents had asked for more resources on climate anxiety in the previous year's survey, which is where the idea for this presentation came from.

Our Committee is proud to see Climate Action Week prosper, but it has reached an inflection point where we need more support beyond our volunteer base. The CAC believes that more sustained outreach is required to keep our returning participant numbers high, which is challenging as we grow across multiple provinces. We put together a grant proposal and continue to navigate the funding landscape to find the right fit for BCLA as an organization in order to help grow Climate Action Week. Ultimately, we are seeking to make Climate Action Week similar to the Summer Reading Club model with a part-time staff position to help scale up the work, coordinate more materials, and support participating libraries. BCLA is supportive of these efforts and we will continue to pursue grant funding possibilities.

## COLLABORATION & RELATIONSHIPS

Collaboration continues to be important to us. The CAC looks to let many hands make light work and lift up the work of other libraries through the [Library Toolshed](#), which provides information organizations a place to share their ideas on climate work and inspire others. As in prior years, we have committee members sitting on committees across the country, such as the Ontario Library Association's Climate Action Committee and the CFLA (Canadian Federation of Library Associations / Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques)'s Climate Action Committee. One outcome from this work was the support of a collaboration between our friends at the CFLA / FCAB and the Vancouver Public Library to create a pair of primer documents to help libraries across the country with Climate Action, information, and programming. The Climate Café document ([English](#) / [French](#)) and the Climate Guide ([English](#) / [French](#)) will hopefully serve the library community for years to come.

Our list of major collaborations is as follows:

- **BC Libraries Co-operative:** The BCLA CAC continues to engage and cooperate with the Co-Operative. Examples include supporting Co-Operative professional development opportunities, and consulting on BCLA CAC informational pieces.
- **Association of BC Public Library Directors:** The group works with BCLA leadership to keep ahead on trends and through these channels assists the CAC. We appreciate their assistance on promoting initiatives from the committee and offering to connect individual libraries with various committee projects.
- **Public Library InterLINK:** The BCLA CAC continues to liaise with the InterLINK Youth Services Committee through information sharing at quarterly Youth Services meetings.
- **Ontario Library Association:** The OLA Climate Action Committee continues to include a BCLA CAC representative. Together, we collaborate and share ideas, including plans to build on each other's work and expand initiatives between provinces.

- **Canadian Federation of Library Associations:** In 2023 CFLA formed a Climate Action Committee and established inaugural membership. BCLA CAC is building strong ties to this national level counterpart through shared representation, with a goal towards increased coordination, knowledge sharing and capacity building in the sector.

People continue to reach out to us in BC and across the country, which is an important reminder of how important community and support is for this work. The BCLA CAC continues to be seen as a national trailblazer in this area, and folks across the country look to us for inspiration.

Please consider joining our meetings on the 3rd Friday or every month (details available on [Branches](#)) or join us at our yearly meet up at the BCLA Conference. We had another great meeting in 2025 and enjoyed getting a chance to meet and speak with many new people.

## INITIATIVES

The Climate Action Committee spent the 2024-2025 year collaborating on the following projects and categories of work. Each project involved a volunteer or group of volunteer working groups to move them forward.

### Increased Speaker/Conference Presence

The Committee contributed to various conference spaces and reinforced that climate action is a part of everyday work because the climate crisis is something that our communities respond to in everyday life.

Of note, the CAC was approached by independent libraries, library systems, conferences, and media outlets. Outside organizations acknowledge the work of the Committee and ask for our expertise and leadership, a clear sign that others want to grow their own climate action and leaders.

- **OLA (Ontario Library Association) Super Conference:** Committee members (Helen Brown, Lisa Nathan, Caitlin MacRae, Diana Marshall, Jennifer Wilson) contributed to a round of Lightning Talks that were pre-recorded and available to all attendees of the conference. Of note, this reminds our library and conference community that air travel can be reduced by sharing presentations online.
- **CAPAL25 / ABCES (Canadian Association of Professional Academic Librarians Conference):** Helen Brown gave a presentation titled “Essential Climate Justice Responsibilities in the Library Sector” which reinforced the importance of the BCLA Climate Action Statement as a foundation for climate work in Academic Libraries. A stand-out slide from Helen’s presentation reminds us that “now every job is a climate job” and directs libraries to the 10 calls to action from that statement.
- **BCLA 2025:** Regenerate BC held a panel on increasing climate literacy in British Columbia with Caitlin MacRae as a presenter. Lisa Nathan presented on the work of students from the 2024 Climate Justice course run at UBC’s School of Information.
- **Beyond Hope 2025:** Dan Hackborn presented 'Climate Change Adaptation in Your Library and Community', an introduction to disaster planning for libraries, covering lessons

drawn from climate adaptation research, emergency management fundamentals, and examples from around the continent where libraries have come face-to-face with the impacts of climate change in their community.

- **Northern Lights Internal Staff Conference 2024:** David Waddell gave a presentation on the different types of Climate Action in BC and some practical steps that can be taken to respond to community interest on climate action, sustainability, and disaster mitigation. He attended representing the Vancouver Public Library and as a member of the BCLA CAC.
- **WILU 2024:** Helen Brown presented "Rising Sea Levels and Vanished Streams in Vancouver: Teaching Climate Change and Land Use Planning Using Historical and Current Resources" at the Workshop for Instruction in Library Use's 2024 conference.
- **IAMSLIC conference:** Helen Brown presented "Reimagining IAMSLIC Conferences: A Proposal to increase Affordability, Accessibility, and Sustainability" in October 2024 as a proposal to encouraging virtual and in-person/hybrid approaches to conference in order to address emissions and accessibility.
- **Informing LIS Curriculum & Engaging with LIS students:** Committee members continue to support the ongoing development and running of the LIS graduate course, "Information Worlds of Climate Justice" offered by UBC's School of Information. Committee members also receive invitations to visit other UBC courses to share their insights and reflections on climate action work in the profession.

#### Standalone Projects

- **BC Benchmarking Survey:** The completion of a flagship project for the Committee, the BC Benchmarking Survey ensures that a snapshot of climate action activity in the profession is available and comparable year over year. Asking questions like 'what is working' or 'where do we want to go' only becomes possible when you have a comparable baseline. Tracking sentiment and involvement in qualitative and quantitative terms will also allow our decision-makers to see how progress in these areas helps the broader challenges facing our communities. The year's efforts included several information sessions to encourage participation, collecting results, and moving forward a range of suggestions on broad data stewardship.
- **Library Trustees Project:** Several conferences ago, the committee heard from various library governance representatives (mostly board trustees) that they wanted unique supports for moving forward climate work in their respective libraries. In September 2024, Committee members presented the first ever Board Trustees event. After months of consultations and planning, this event presented the Climate position statement, answered questions from board members on various governance and policy topics, and offered suggestions on ways to help guide their institutions on climate awareness and climate action. Importantly it was a way for board trustees to share ideas amongst themselves and get climate on the table as a library board issue. It was an exciting new action and we are grateful for the interest in the community and for the dedication shown by our Committee members moving this forward.

- **Climate Action Week:** The 2024 iteration of Climate Action Week had a lot of exciting firsts, including a focus on mental health and resilience in the face of climate anxiety. We worked with speakers from the Mental Health and Climate Change Alliance to run a workshop ('Climate Anxiety & Libraries') for us in November of 2024. Our 2024 survey indicated that people continued to get value from CAW and that this year's theme did address their interests and needs. Special thanks to Rachael Huegerich for the work on the survey. While we maintained a fairly strong percentage of participating libraries and continued to welcome new participants from across several provinces, we also lost some participants to attrition. Recognizing that funding is the only path towards sustainable growth for this project, the Committee focused on a grant application during 2024-2025. We continue to navigate this landscape given the unique size and sector of our non-profit organization. We will continue to pursue grants, while continuing to push CAW to new heights in the meantime. In 2025 our plan is to increase bilingual support in French and English wherever possible and to increase our numbers in November 2025.
- **Book Recycling in Libraries:** The committee pursued some possible avenues to make book recycling easier and more affordable to libraries around B.C. This work is ongoing as the landscape is pretty complex. Initial findings revealed Planet Earth Recycling as a good business candidate, sparking broader discussion. The committee began a Branches discussion inviting information about recycling facilities in use by libraries throughout the province. The committee is actively collating a directory of organizations that help libraries navigate recycling options.
- **Collaboration on CFLA Documents:** The Committee connected the CFLA / FCAB and the Vancouver Public Library on a project that produced a pair of documents thanks to funding from Environment Canada. The first of these documents helped Canadian libraries to organize their first Climate Café, while the second provides a collaborative framework for making your own unique climate programs that respond to community need. These documents are available in French and English and are listed in our [Resources](#) section.
- **Highlighting 'Sustainable Libraries' Certification in BC:** Committee members highlighted their organization's journey to pursue '[Sustainable Libraries Initiative Certification](#)'. The CAC was thrilled to hear about Surrey Libraries' and Fraser Valley Regional Library's journey towards certification.

## WEBSITE

The Climate Action Committee's website includes the documentation produced by the committee, as well as core resources and briefing materials to provide context and reliable information on climate change and actions being taken by library organizations.

The committee also uses Basecamp and Google Docs. These are used for routine work like managing agendas, providing presentations, and most notably, for enabling asynchronous work and collaboration.

## MEETINGS & MEMBERSHIP

Regular monthly meetings were held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of every month at 12:00 pm. Working group meetings occurred as needed, depending on the project. In order to make the meetings accessible for members from different libraries and positions, all meetings were held on Zoom and the date and time were determined based on surveys and feedback.

Most communications are shared through the BCLA Climate Action Committee forum, which is part of BCLA's [Branches Online Forums](#) and is available to BCLA members and non-members. Some announcements are also shared in the main BCLA Discussion forum. Communication about upcoming meetings and initiatives takes place via the forum. It is also available for subscribers to connect with others about their initiatives, resources, professional development opportunities, and questions. Anyone can attend committee meetings or get involved in working groups.

## GETTING INVOLVED

New members are always welcome! You do not have to be a member of BCLA to get involved. Communication about upcoming meetings and initiatives take place via the online forum.

- Join the BCLA Climate Action Committee forum known as Branches [here](#)
- Join Climate Action Committee meetings (date, time, and link shared in the online forum)
- Get involved in a project working group
- Run for a Climate Action Committee executive position at our annual AGM (BCLA members only)
- Visit the Climate Action Committee website [here](#)
- Contact us at [climateaction@bcla.bc.ca](mailto:climateaction@bcla.bc.ca)