



Royal Roads  
UNIVERSITY

# Royal Roads University: Declaration of leadership commitment to the climate emergency

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Climate change is the most urgent threat humanity and the planet has ever faced. Bold action against the climate crisis is an urgent and moral imperative. Royal Roads University believes society can no longer ignore the global suffering and significant loss caused by a warming climate.

Royal Roads University formally declares its commitment to respond to the climate emergency with bold leadership. As a public institution with a deeply embedded culture of changemaking, we have a crucial role in addressing climate change with meaningful, impactful action.

Royal Roads will demonstrate the power of education to create a transformational shift toward a more equitable, sustainable, regenerative and resilient world. As a diverse community – of leaders, scholars, educators, employees, researchers, scientists, students, collaborators and visionaries – the university commits to taking direct action to help our communities fight climate change, overcome impacts with resilience and create a more equitable future for all life.

## **Our university's commitment is grounded in the following assumptions:**

- ❖ **Climate change needs systems to change.** The root causes of the climate emergency – including colonialism, consumerism and individualism – must be addressed as part of the solutions. Our response to this crisis needs to shift towards more meaningful relationships with Indigenous peoples and we must respectfully interweave Indigenous knowledge and worldviews for real climate action. Solutions to the climate emergency must be rooted in equity and justice, creativity, adaptation, empathy and compassion.
- ❖ **Urgent action is needed in the face of existential threats.** We have less than 10 years to implement the policy and system changes to limit climate catastrophe. Rapid, scalable actions are needed that span from dramatic emissions reductions to building adaptive capacity.

- ❖ **Building resilience and adaptive capacity are critical.** The risks and impacts of climate change are projected to intensify over the coming decades. Even if we succeed in reducing global emissions, the effects of climate change are already being experienced. Climate change will create compounding and synergistic disruptions on society, the economy, ecosystems, and communities.
- ❖ **Climate change action is about social justice and creating a more inclusive and equitable world.** Vulnerable, marginalized and under-served people and communities have contributed the least to climate change yet experience significant adverse impacts. Climate change will increase and magnify existing injustices and inequities. Therefore, climate actions must safeguard the rights of the most vulnerable and ensure fair, equitable and intersectional approaches to addressing climate change and its impacts.
- ❖ **The climate emergency is a whole-of-university priority.** This mirrors the whole-of-societal effort and approach needed to address the climate emergency. Climate action priorities will be integrated across all areas of the university.
- ❖ **Biodiversity and ecosystem health** are inextricably linked to climate change and there are significant benefits of addressing these interrelated issues together. Climate change and biodiversity loss compound each other; neither can be resolved unless both are tackled together.
- ❖ **Higher education has a critical role and a moral responsibility** to contribute resources and expertise to climate change challenges. We will prepare and empower society and students for the challenges we face now and in the future. Education, research and partnerships are critical to accomplishing this.
- ❖ **We can lead by example.** We will inspire others through actions. We can model innovation and action by shifting how we operate and function. We can also inspire transformational change with our leading-edge educational programs, critical research and by convening, collaborating and building partnerships for climate solutions.

With our [Climate Action Plan](#) as a framework, Royal Roads formally commits to bold, sustained leadership on the climate emergency. This plan includes the following targets and commitments:

- **To be in a meaningful relationship with Indigenous Peoples to interweave and accredit Indigenous knowledge holders with their worldviews.**
  - We will listen and learn from Indigenous ways of being and hold ourselves accountable – for families, communities and the planet.

- **To foster equity and inclusivity.**
  - We will make space for the wisdom, experience and leadership of people and communities who have contributed the least to climate change yet suffer significant adverse impacts.
  - We will listen, support and contribute to the empowerment of the people around us to confront the climate crisis.
  
- **To put life at the centre of every university action and decision.**
  - We will align institutional policies, plans and decisions with equity, diversity inclusion and climate action goals.
  - We will work to integrate climate action into everything we do and the urgency this work requires.
  
- **To make climate change education and capacity building a core purpose and strategic direction for RRU's educational mandate.**
  - We will leverage our greatest strength as a higher education leader: knowledge generation and collaboration that fosters local and global change-making.
  - We will create educational experiences that inspire changemakers, people with the courage to transform themselves and the world.
  
- **To urgently reduce greenhouse gas emissions and align with the 1.5°C ambition.**
  - We will reduce our emissions as quickly as possible - 65% by 2025, 80% by 2030 and net-zero by 2050.
  - Future constructed buildings will no longer rely on fossil fuels as the primary energy source.
  - We will extend institutional responsibility and leadership to reduce scope three emissions<sup>1</sup> 50% by 2030 (from 2019 levels) and to offset the remainder.
  
- **To prepare for the impacts of the risk on campus and communities by levelling up the capacity to adapt and build resilience.**
  - We will recognize and respond to climate change's real-world social, environmental, health and economic impacts.
  - We will activate critical steps and develop a Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy by 2025.

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<sup>1</sup> Scope 3 emissions are indirect emissions that occur in a company or organization's value chain (emissions related to commuting, travel, solid waste, food, procurement and embodied building emissions).

- We will pilot innovative solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation and share results and learnings with others.
- We will remain open and adaptive to changing our strategies and approaches as science, technologies, information and circumstances emerge.
- **To work with and foster communities of practice, networks and partnerships to identify solutions, mutual areas of interest, and opportunities to lead local, provincial, national, and international efforts to accelerate climate actions.**
  - We will create, and make available, resources, new knowledge and tools to enhance our shared capacity of those engaged in local and global problem solving to address the climate crisis.
- **To be transparent and accountable**
  - We will conduct an annual evaluation of our climate action performance with a public progress report highlighting targets and commitments.

Through leadership, research, education and collaborative relationships, we can empower and activate a groundswell of climate actions to help create a more ethical, inclusive and resilient future for all.

We are a community of change agents with courage, creativity and caring at our core. With this commitment, Royal Roads will demonstrate climate leadership that will define the next 25 years of our university and will catalyze actions in communities and regions well beyond the campus.

Together, we will move forward with the courage to transform the world.



Philip Steenkamp, PhD  
President and Vice-Chancellor