



SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

S O U T H E A S T K O O T E N A Y

April 21, 2023

Jocelyn Carver, Board Chair
Columbia Basin Trust
Suite 300 – 445 – 13 Avenue
Castlegar BC V1N 1G1

Johnny Strilaeff, President &
CEO
Columbia Basin Trust
Suite 300 – 445 – 13 Avenue
Castlegar BC V1N 1G1

Dear Ms. Carver and Mr. Strilaeff,

RE: Columbia Basin Environmental Education Network (CBEEN) & Wildsight Funding

At the School District 5 (SD5), Southeast Kootenay public Board Meeting of April 11, 2023, the Board carried the following motion:

That the Board research and write a letter in support of CBEEN/Wildsight's endeavours to restore and enhance the Columbia Basin Trust funding for environmental education for 2024 to 2034.

Recently, our Board learned that the Columbia Basin Trust (CBT) will not be supporting Environmental Education next year and that this decision is based on feedback received in 2020. We believe it is important to note that 2020 was the year that COVID was officially identified as a global pandemic and priorities for most— if not all—organizations pivoted to meet this new challenge.

Our Board appreciates that reinstating funding for CBEEN/Wildsight programming for the upcoming year is likely not possible, however we do urge you to reconsider that decision. We also wish to focus your attention on your current strategic planning and outreach process for 2024 through 2034, to ensure that these vital environmental education programs remain a focus for the CBT in the decade to come, as it has been for the previous two decades.

The CBT was founded to support and create a legacy of social, economic and environmental well-being for the people living in the Columbia Basin. Under the BC government's *Columbia Basin Trust Act*, CBT is mandated "to manage its

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assets for the ongoing economic, environmental and social benefit of the Columbia Basin region". While we can only speak to our SD5 communities, we believe that over the years, the CBT has successfully created and supported environmental well-being throughout the region by way of its CBEEN, Wildsight and other related programs, targeted to our youth.

In SD5:

- For the past two decades, kindergarten - Grade 7 students and teachers have participated in over 2,000 "*Wildsight Education in the Wild*" programs including "*Winter Wonder*", "*Classrooms with Outdoors*", "*EcoStewards*" and "*Nature Through the Seasons*".
- Over the past decade, thousands of grade five (5) and six (6) students have enjoyed a rich twenty-four (24) week investigation into how their lifestyles and everyday actions—energy, waste and consumption—affect the health of the planet and how they can be agents of positive change through CBTs "*Beyond Recycling*" program.
- CBEEN has actively supported over two-hundred (200) educators, including classroom teachers, Indigenous education staff, principals, and support staff.
- In the past year over two-hundred (200) educators from SD5 registered for CBEEN's virtual workshops.
- Over five-thousand (5000) students are part of CBEEN's "*Take Me Outside for Learning*" School Year Challenge
- Over thirty (30) teachers are currently benefiting from CBEEN's "*Reconciliation Education*" course.
- CBEEN has had over fifty (50) teachers—as well as some trustees—register for the "*Ktunaxa Language Course*" this past year.

Since 2015 over ten-thousand-six-hundred (10,600) SD5 students have participated in five-hundred-ten (510) "*Wild Voices for Kids*" programs, developed and delivered by fifteen (15) individual community educators who are experts in their fields, who share knowledge about local wildlife, trees, plants and agriculture and teach sustainability practices such as composting with worms and recycling, local watershed and snow science, climate change issues, Métis culture and history and Indigenous knowledge and perspectives (when appropriate) in their programs.

Twentieth (20th) century schools were responsible to teach students academic knowledge and provide some athletics. In twenty-first (21st) century schools, in addition to academics and athletics, society relies on schools to teach empathy, ethics and stewardship, provide social, emotional and mental supports while ensuring students have basic needs like food and school supplies met.

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In the past decade, growing acknowledgement of the climate crisis –and a responsibility to Truth and Reconciliation— have added to the growing list of societal expectations placed on schools and districts.

To assist with these burgeoning expectations over the years, school districts have partnered with other government agencies, not-for-profit groups and Indigenous leaders as they struggle to prepare their students for the future.

CBEEN and Wildsight programs enabled our school district to prepare students – and by extension their families—for their environmental future, well beyond what our financial resources or expertise can provide. Without these programs, SD5 cannot deliver to our students the same, or even a comparable level of environmental education or engagement.

“Being young is a great advantage, since we see the world from a new perspective and we are not afraid to make radical changes.”

~Greta Thunberg

For the sake of our students, our future and our planet, we implore you to ensure that CBT’s funding for CBEEN and Wildsight programs receive the highest priority in your 2024 – 2034 strategic plan.

We look forward to your timely response to our request. Without proper stewardship of our environment, there is no social or economic future to consider.

Sincerely,



Doug McPhee, Board Chair

Cc: Hon. Katrine Conroy, Minister of Finance and Minister Responsible for CBT, CPC and CRT
Duncan Whittick, CBEEN Executive Director
Todd Hebert, CBEEN Chair & Executive Director, Columbia Outdoor School, Blue Lake Camp
Mia King, Program Manager, CBEEN
Jill Jennings, Wildsight Education Coordinator
Jennifer Roberts, Co-Chair Kootenay Boundary Environmental Education Committee
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Tom Shypitka, MLA Kootenay East BC
Shelley Balfour & Adrienne Demers, CFTA Co-Chairs
Krista Napl SD5 CUPE President
Lies Salvador, DPAC Chair
Aaron Thorn, President, SD5 Administrators' Association
Amber Byklum, Board Chair, SD6
Lenora Trenaman, Board Chair, SD8
Christine Dixon, Board Chair, SD10
Alan Chell, Board Chair, SD19
Catherine Zaitsoff, Board Chair, SD20

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