



**ACCELERATE / ACCÉLÉRER**

CLIMATE CHANGE EDUCATION  
IN CANADIAN TEACHER EDUCATION

L'ÉDUCATION AUX CHANGEMENTS  
CLIMATIQUES DANS LA FORMATION  
DES ENSEIGNEMENTS AU CANADA

# CCE IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROJECT REPORT

## Operationalizing the Accord on Education for a Sustainable Future in Vancouver Island University Teacher Education Programs



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### Summary

In 2022, the Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE) released the Accord on Education for a Sustainable Future, which acknowledges that faculties of education have a social and ethical responsibility to use the power of education to create change. The Accord identifies six principles of education for a sustainable future, the importance of: (1) Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, (2) relationality, (3) social justice, (4) well-being, (5) advocacy, and (6) hope.

However, Canadian teacher education programs (TEPs), including VIU's, have been slow to respond to the responsibilities outlined in the Accord. The overarching goal of this study was to operationalize the Accord by creating a curated list of children's picture books that can be used to introduce the principles of the Accord and anchor

challenging conversations related to climate change and climate justice. Using criterion-based purposeful sampling, a large sample of children's picture books was first identified (N=159). A team of seven educational researchers then systematically reviewed each book using directed content analysis. For each book, they scored how visible each of the six principles of the Accord was, qualitatively coded CCE-related talking points, and identified potential triggers and protective factors for climate anxiety in children.

Based on the results, a curated list of picture books was created. This list responds to the call for CCE resources to support teaching and learning about climate change and will be shared widely when it is finalized. The results of this research will be published in a peer-reviewed journal and presented at an academic conference. The curated library of picture books purchased using the Accelerate grant is being used in VIU TEPs to introduce pre-service teachers to the principles of the Accord and climate change pedagogies and practices.



*Photo taken by Annette Lucas of some of the picture books.*

## Gaps & Needs Addressed

The Accord on Education for a Sustainable Future lays out the responsibilities accepted by Canadian Faculties of Education. This includes the responsibility to ensure that education for a sustainable future is a central and required component of course offerings in pre-service, in-service, and graduate level teacher education curricula. The problem guiding this research was that Canadian TEPs, including VIU's,

have been slow to respond to the Accord's calls to action. As a result, the overarching goal of this project was to help operationalize the Accord at VIU and other Canadian TEPs. The purpose of the research was to create a curated list of children's picture books that portray the principles of the Accord and anchor important conversations related to climate change education (CCE).

Other gaps that drive this work (Schwartzberg et al., 2022):

- Canadian teachers report limited (if any) class time spent on climate change.
- Only a third of Canadian teachers feel that they have the knowledge and skills needed to teach about climate change.
- Most Canadian teachers are looking for climate change resources to support them.

## Theoretical Framework/s or Guiding Concepts

The ACDE Accord on Education for a Sustainable Future was the primary framework guiding this work.

Other valuable frameworks & resources informing this project:

- [Climate Emotions Wheel](#) (Climate Mental Health Network, 2024)
- Hope Theory (Snyder, 2002)
- [The Hope Wheel](#): A model to enable hope-based pedagogy in climate change education (Finnegan and d'Abreau, 2024)
- [The HOPE framework](#) (Redmond, 2024)
- [The CLICK framework](#) (Oziewicz, 2023)

## Outcomes

**Research outcome:** The purpose of the research was to create a curated list of children's picture books that visibly portray the principles of the Accord. Between May and October, each member of the research team independently analyzed 159 picture books through three lenses: the principles of the Accord, CCE, and climate anxiety. A list of books that strongly portray one or more of the principles is being finalized. A proposal to present this research at the Canadian Association for Teacher Education (CATE) in June has been accepted. A manuscript is in preparation and will be submitted to the Canadian Journal of Education in the spring.

**Educational outcome:** The sample of 159 books and a class set of *Sila and the Land* have already been integrated into course-based learning activities, *Sila and the Land* is a book that scored very high on multiple principles of the Accord and represented an Indigenous worldview broadly (i.e., the teachings were not specific to one territory/place). The curated library of picture books, made possible thanks to the Accelerate grant, has been used in the VIU TEP this term to introduce pre-service teachers to the principles of the Accord and CCE pedagogies and practices. The books have been invaluable in anchoring important discussions (e.g., climate anxiety, constructive coping mechanisms, critically assessing educational resources, identifying

textual markers of hope, common precepts of an Indigenous worldview, designing class action projects etc.).



*A learning artifact that was created by VIU pre-service teachers in my course before they did a review of one of the picture books from the collection. The focus of this activity was to model safe spaces to acknowledge all climate emotions (i.e., CCE best practices).*

## Successes & Challenges

**Greatest successes:** (1) Many librarians, educators, and colleagues are awaiting publication of the curated list of picture books which suggests it has practical value. (2) Having a large and diverse collection of picture books to introduce CCE has proven very valuable, particularly having “good” and “not so good” resources for comparison. VIU pre-service teachers are critically assessing teaching resources for potential triggers and protective factors for climate anxiety and envisioning how they might use them to support best practices in CCE. (3) The BC Climate Action Secretariat heard about our project and an unexpected collaboration developed as they are working on a resource for K-3 teachers.

**Significant Challenge:** As a non-indigenous researcher, honouring and respecting Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing (one of the principles of the Accord) within the systems and structures that academic research is embedded proved challenging. We did our best to conduct this research in a “good way” (e.g., Indigenous researcher on the study team, actively ensured authentic Métis, First Nations and Inuit resources were represented, teachings from Elders, positionality statement). However,

many of us are still left feeling that assessing books for the visibility of Indigenous perspectives may have been counter to the very principle itself....(see below).



*A photo taken by Annette Lucas for a VIU “Expert Commentary” story that will be published on the VIU website within the next month.*

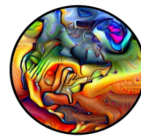
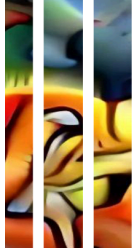
## Lessons Learned

As the primary researcher, I designed the data collection/analysis methods before inviting colleagues to be part of the research based on the different lived experiences and perspectives they offered – personal, professional, cultural. I did not want to ask these very busy colleagues for too much of their time. In retrospect, I should have involved the study team (and Elders) in the development of the research design. The lens that I brought to this research was that of a white, cis-gendered, educated, privileged, settler researcher, with a goal of publishing this work in an academic journal. I acknowledge this lens is visible throughout all elements of the research. If I truly want to dismantle power imbalances that contribute to climate injustices, I need to bring those voices into the research process much earlier.

As a non-indigenous educator, I look for common elements/precepts of an Indigenous worldview that can be used to anchor conversations about our relationship with Nature and each other (e.g., respect, reciprocity, relationality, gratitude). However, cultural teachings emerge from a specific place or territory. I learned from an Elder that teachings from a different territory can be harmful for Indigenous youth that are not from that territory.

## Advice & Resources

Based on what I have learned, I encourage other Faculties of Education to engage in this work for educational purposes, not research purposes. I encourage them to consult local Elders and Knowledge Keepers when looking for authentic Indigenous resources to ensure the teachings are specific to the territories they are learning on.



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