Inside Education Society of Alberta Strategic Plan 2023-2028





Mission

Supporting teachers and inspiring students to better understand the science, technology and issues related to our environment and natural resources.

Vision

We envision future generations of engaged stewards thinking critically about our environment and natural resources, and their relationship with our economy and society.

Values

- Balanced education We believe in demonstrating the broad spectrum of perspectives to provide
 teachers and students with the tools to become active participants in conversations related to the
 environment and natural resources. We do not take a position on any topic other than the need
 for educating young people and challenging them to think critically and act responsibility.
- **Integrity** After nearly 40 years, Inside Education continues to be a trusted source of science, natural resources and environmental education.
- Professionalism Inside Education prides itself on maintaining a high degree of professionalism and expertise in our program, business, human resources and communications functions. We value the development of a professional staff and providing learning and growth experiences for our staff.
- **Fun** Whether in the office or in the field, science and environmental education is more effective when we're having fun creating lasting connections to important topics.
- Safety All Inside Education activities are conducted with priority placed on the safety of the students and teachers participating in our programming, and of Inside Education's staff delivering these experiences.

Guiding Principles

At Inside Education we believe in:

- 1. **environmental and natural resource education** *we seek to inspire citizens to explore our role as environmental stewards through the lenses of science, technology, innovation, careers and society.*
- 2. **enriching the curriculum through experiential learning** Our team of professional educators work directly with teachers and students to create meaningful first-hand experiences and hands-on learning opportunities that have a lasting impact.



- 3. **future thinking** We aim to give students and teachers the knowledge, skills and tools and to be leaders, to innovate, and to take action in topics related to the environment and natural resource development.
- 4. **multiple perspectives approach** Inside Education works with a network of credible professionals who may have disparate values on particular topics, engage in scientifically, socially and culturally-valid positions. We bring people together for the common goal of education allowing our program participants to become creative and critical thinkers.
- 5. **offering accessible programs** Inside Education offers a diversity of programs that are culturally inclusive and made available to all teachers and students, rural, urban, Indigenous and non-Indigenous for little to no cost.

Approach

Inside Education provides **environmental and natural resource education** programs and services to a K-12 school audience through:

- O Classroom presentations and field studies in urban, rural and Indigenous communities;
- O Teacher professional development programming;
- O Learning resource development;
- O Youth Learning Summits gatherings of students and teachers in common learning experiences;
- o Grants and action project support

Inside Education delivers programs related to the full spectrum natural resources and the environment topics, including (but not limited to):

- o Energy exploration, production, transmission, use and conservation
- o Water and watersheds
- o Forests and forestry
- o Climate change adaptation, mitigation
- o Energy transition, decarbonization, greenhouse gas reductions
- o Air Quality
- o Agriculture
- o Alberta's Natural Regions and Biodiversity
- o Environmental stewardship and personal action
- o Technology & Innovation
- o Careers in the environment and natural resources

Environmental Education Landscape Analysis

Since the previous Strategic Plan we have seen a growth in individuals and organizations adopting similar approaches to our long-standing program modalities. This has resulted in some confusion - notably amongst some of our funding partners - as to the relationship between Inside Education and these new entities. Generally speaking our approach has been to meaningfully engage organizations whose track-record is meaningful (GreenLearning Canada, Relay Education, Agriculture for Life, CAREERS, Work Wild). For organizations we view somewhat as *interlopers* it has been our approach to generally ignore them, to be aware but not wary, and to be honest when our partners make inquiries.



Success of our youth summits has created a bit of 'careful what you wish for' as they are so successful and 'splashy' - often attracting program partner participation - that the expectation is that we will have annual gatherings equally splashy. Expectations exist both on the part of schools (often hear "we want to come back next year") and partners. While recent years have shown it to be *possible* (though not necessarily *preferable*) to do multiple youth summits every year, we run the risk of saturating our own market and overwhelming our staff.

Coming out of the pandemic, there is an increasing sense of teacher burnout - resulting in many not pursuing opportunities that may be seen as additive. This includes (multi-day) professional development, project-based learning, field trips that require additional administrative work. We have seen challenges in new teacher recruitment for some of our major programs and have seen a downward trend in applications for programs like our extended summer teacher's institute.

Following the 2023 provincial election, it is highly probable that the proposed revisions to the Alberta Program of Studies will proceed. Ultimately our programming is curriculum-**enhancing**, so to a large extent curriculum changes should not be a reason for huge concern. However, we are aware that some of our field-based programming (notably related to wetlands and forests) may become slightly less popular as the direct curriculum-tie likely disappears. Conversely, themes related to energy and climate change are clearly identified throughout the curriculum, so there is likely to be a net benefit for programming related to those themes.

This plan is intended to ensure Inside Education continues to pursue our mission and vision by engaging with teachers, meeting their evolving needs and ensuring our topics and themes. Our program direction will additionally reflect, but will not be governed by priority giving areas for our program funding partners. We will continue to be an employer of choice and will do our best to communicate program successes, opportunities, short and long term impacts of our work.

A. Program

Preamble

Inside Education will respond to changing needs of educators, evolving technologies and emerging environmental topics. In our annual programming plans we will ask one major, and five sub questions:

Major Question: Does the project meet all of our guiding principles? If so...

- What are we doing?
- Why are we doing it?
- Is there support?
- Do we have the capacity?
- Is it innovative?

Inside Education offers award-winning programs that are the envy of our peers. Moving forward, our strategies will grow and diversify our K-12 school audience. We will be more efficient and effective in our evaluation processes so that our programs remain relevant to current environmental and education realities. We will also demonstrate our expertise in developing programs that enrich curriculum based on evolving technologies, themes and issues.



At the same time we will be mindful of the ever-increasing demands placed on schools broadly and teachers specifically, so we will ensure our program offerings are supportive and additive, while removing barriers including additional costs.

Strategic Initiatives

1. We will support teachers, and work to achieve our mandate by focusing staff time and attention on our primary delivery models - classroom presentations and field trips, teacher professional development, regional and provincial youth summits and learning resources. Project-based learning programs (ie. grants and youth summit school projects) will be encouraged as possible, but will be monitored for practicality and popularity.

Major Activity	Measurable Outcome	Key Achievements/Status
Emphasize incorporation of Traditional Knowledge in all our program delivery, take program inspiration from TRC Actions and scale up program offerings in and for schools in Indigenous communities province-wide.	Create and secure a staff position dedicated to Indigenous outreach and content integration. Program participation numbers and uptake from Indigenous community schools will increase in our Youth summits, PD and field programs. Develop identifiable and overt mechanisms for Indigenous schools to access programs such as increased subsidies and specialized program delivery.	
Deepen program impact through focused attention on audience needs assessments, program development, and impact reporting.	Regular formal, informal check-ins with teachers on the Board of Directors, teacher participants and advisory panels.	
Diversify teacher professional development programs in theme, audience, duration and scheduling.	Delivery options to include connecting with existing Alberta Teachers Association Conferences and Conventions, and District PD opportunities. All programs to ensure a variety of target audiences - notably: - Pre-service educators - Teachers in Indigenous	



	communities - Teachers from outside Alberta - Career counselors, CTS/CALM/CTF teachers Develop formal relationships with Faculties of Education across Alberta - developing professional development opportunities specifically targeted at this audience. Work toward the development of a practicum placement and/or develop organizational prominence to increase access to seasonal employees.	
Scale up technology use in classroom and field programs through the use of real-world tools and technologies	Build upon programs that provide tools for hands-on technological learning (ie. video game/air quality monitoring program model). Engage with non-traditional funding sources (including technology companies) to continuously improve technology engagement in program delivery and operational practices. Suggested Microsoft, AWS, Epic Games	

2. Reassess classroom and field development topics and approaches given a new Program of Studies being implemented. New program area development 'phasing in' should be assessed alongside older programs being retired - avoiding continually being 'additive' to program offerings.

We will scale-up and/or modify some of our existing programs to develop a new, innovative approach to program delivery.	Our youth summits will continue to grow and diversify - including geographically and thematically.	
	We will investigate <i>national</i> youth summits.	
Program delivery approaches and curriculum relevance will be	New program delivery methods to be incorporated to support	



"Marketing" approaches to teachers to demonstrate curriculum ties of popular programs (especially field trips)	new curriculum - notably teacher professional development and new learning resources. Firm up our role as leaders in student experiential outdoor learning field trips using cross curricular connections - even if	
programs (especially field trips)	curricular connections - even if specific forest and wetlands curriculum ties are not as strong.	

3. Design program staff model to ensure:

- Meeting program delivery while avoiding burnout
- Absence of 'message drift' when programs are delivered
- Program short and long-term evaluation is robust
- Providing variety of delivery opportunities and professional growth for core team growth in new areas

Measurable Outcome	Key Achievements/Status
Organizational plan in place by the time new Executive Director is identified	
Work with Universities to identify practicum/Co-op placements and seasonal staff. Work with partner organizations (Work Wild, CAREERS and others) to share program tasks especially, but not limited to field programs. Program leadership team engagement in regular program delivery monitoring and coaching.	
Increased quality and quantity of teacher program evaluations. Complete a long term impact report for youth summits,	
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development and A+ for Energy.	
Ensure each learning resource is updated/assessed every 3-5 years or removed from circulation.	

4. Inside Education will be **the** trusted conduit through which industry, government, academia and environmental/community groups interact in the common goal of promoting quality environmental and natural resource education for young people.

Major Activity	Measurable Outcome	Key Achievements/Status
Implement and utilize a program advisory committee for major programs.	Strike committees for Navigate/Generate (other major youth summits).	
Develop creative ways for partner engagement in regular (less 'splashy') program delivery.	Notable partner engagement in: - student outdoor education field trips - School-wide "Expos" - Regional youth summits/field trips - Speaking/tour hosts at professional development sessions - learning resource development (content and employee engagement opportunities)	
Engage with the political process - ensuring politicians at all levels are aware of our programming, approach, history.	Executive Director, senior staff and/or Board Chair to meet with (minimum) two senior political and/or senior government (ADM/DM level) figures annually. Politicians and senior government staff invited to major program delivery opportunities.	
Pursue (as appropriate) regional, provincial and national recognition for our programs.	Features in online publications, social and electronic media, awards, etc.	



5. We will continue to diversify the geographic reach of our field-based programming. Themes will be related to forests, wetlands, wildlife and careers.

Major Activity	Measurable Outcome	Key Achievements/Status
As the leaders in water education in Alberta, we will diversify and build on our 'own' water and wetlands education programs.	We will adapt to curriculum changes (especially removal of the Grade 5 wetlands unit), yet scale UP our delivery of wetlands programming making connections to agriculture, wildlife, and innovations.	
Adopt wildlife as a specific, identifiable program focus (on par with energy/climate, water/forests/agriculture)	Focus in-school presentations, teacher professional development and youth summit (regional and provincial) to include specific wildlife themes.	
Our network of field sites will be maintained at six (Fort McMurray, Kananaskis, Rocky Mountain House, Edmonton, Whitecourt, Grande Prairie) - while being open to new opportunities geographically and thematically.	A field site will be piloted in the Hinton/Edson region - this will include forest, water and wildlife focus.	

B. Governance

Preamble

The Inside Education Society of Alberta is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors - who also function as the Society's only members according to the Bylaws. The Board of Directors has traditionally acted in a combination of Advisory and Governance models of Boards of Directors - with some side committees of the whole tackling individual tasks (ex. Executive Director compensation, name change from FEESA to Inside Education, even logo suggestions). While this model continues to be successful, continuous improvement is important, especially related to board composition, engagement and recruitment.

Strategic Initiatives

1. Board of Directors to continue to diversify the skill set of individuals sitting on the board - make it a prestigious position to pursue - up to and including starting an application process.

Major Activity

Update terms of reference and 'on-boarding handbook' for Board of Directors - and challenge

Measurable Outcome

Pursue individuals connected with our organizations who possess some of the following:



current Board to engage with their networks for future engagement in our organization and ultimate Board recruitment.

- Legal expertise
- Financial/investment management
- HR management experience
- Institutional governance experience
- Connectivity to Indigenous community

Considering formalizing term limits and the creation of ex-officio role for Directors once they 'retire' from the Board.

Board to decide on term limits - currently one year at a time with no limit on number of years roll-over.

Create a formal advisory panel that meets annually - ensuring ongoing connectivity for ex-Directors who wish to *formally* remain engaged. Combination of work, 'friendraising' and fun.

Bylaw updates as needed.

2. The Board will continue its transition to include 'reawakening' of more traditional *Executive* roles on our Board of Directors - including Past/Vice-Chair, **Treasurer**, etc. The development of an annual slate of new directors, Executive Director oversight will be firmly entrenched in the role of the Board.

Major Activity

Roles and responsibilities will be clarified and entrenched in the structure and function of our Board and our Society. As needed, in the interim - current Directors will have responsibility/oversight of some of these key areas (most crucially a more 'hands-on' fiduciary role for essentials like signing authority, etc.).

Measurable Outcome

A Board (or senior advisor) role to be created to continuously improve financial oversight.

Materials for Board of Directors to distribute.

3. Develop new means to connect to the organization in addition to serving on the Board - creation of somewhere new to 'go' after Board experience. Engage new associate members of the Society - teacher memberships, etc.

Major Activity

Develop additional means for formal public connections to the Society - including revisiting 'Associate Memberships' of the Society (already existing in Bylaws).

Develop friendraising opportunities.

Measurable Outcome

Determine the best route for engagement and hold semi-annual gatherings to engage more connections (teachers, partners, others).

Work with the Executive Director and Program team to ensure opportunities for partnership engagement with program delivery is prioritized.

4. As the Board of Directors is responsible for its Executive Director, formalize Executive Director



recruitment, review and compensation process.

Major Activity

A standing committee of the Board for Executive Director oversight, compensation, coaching will be developed.

Measurable Outcome

Committee struck for Executive Director recruitment (2023).

Review/coaching/compensation committee could be (but does not need to be) the Executive Committee. Consider the engagement of outside supporters to this committee.

C. Organizational Sustainability

Sustainability of our Society is focused on its financial, operational and human resources functions. We will work to ensure each of these intrinsically related themes are strengthened on an ongoing basis.

a) Fund Development and Partnerships

Inside Education is pleased to have the diversified funding support of nearly 30 partners annually. The majority of these partners are long-standing. Through targeted efforts of our fundraising process plus willingness and openness on the part of funders the majority of our major donations are multiple-year. Our reliance on Alberta's energy sector - with a recent uptick on the mid-stream oil and gas industry - will need to be monitored to avoid overly focusing on one particular sector.

For this reason, we plan on looking for alternative funding options that will alleviate the stress of annual fundraising and help ensure the sustainability of Inside Education in the long-run. We will also work diligently to expand our networks within government at the provincial and federal level moving forward with the aim of securing significant, multi-year, and operating support from all levels of government.

Strategic Initiatives

1. The organization will better define what we mean by 'partners' beyond the obvious providers of our funding - to include program partnerships, collaborations - notably with an eye to expanding and extending our reach into and engagement with First Nations and Métis communities as well as Traditional Knowledge.

Major Activity

The Board and Management Team will develop a *Strategic Partner Plan* not necessarily just for *funding* partners.

A component of this plan to include an organizational Indigenous 'plan' and commitment to Reconciliation

Measurable Outcome

Subcommittee of the Board struck - with connections to Indigenous community (Suggested: Indian Resource Council)

Strategic Partner Plan to be developed by the end of 2023.



2. Diversify the primary fundraising role beyond just the Executive Director - *value proposition* tools to be provided to the Board of Directors to build on the traditional 'door opening', to develop new (funding, but not only funding) partnerships.

Major Activity

Subcommittee of the Board developed for fund and partnership development (can include individuals external to Board of Directors).

Development of specific value proposition/Impact materials for Board (and others) to share around.

Measurable Outcome

Subcommittee of the Board struck (may be the same as above, may not).

3. We continue to pursue non-traditional (for us) sources of support for programs and operations.

Major Activity

Relationship development and increased prominence in:

- Municipalities (esp. Calgary)
- Environmental Foundations (nationally)

Consider adjustment of organizational structure to allow for connections with gaming (casinos).

Measurable Outcome

New funding sources from municipalities and private foundations to be earmarked for both program delivery and organizational sustainability.

4. Hold regular partner recognition/'friendraising' opportunities - demonstrating our value of "fun, professional" programs, services and operations.

Major Activity

Design opportunities for partners to participate during programs. For example:

- celebration dinners at youth summits/teacher professional development
- participation in local field trips

Hold specific friend-raising experiences - considering the inclusion of fundraising opportunities (like golf tournaments?).

Use the 40th Anniversary of Inside Education (2025) as a major milestone.

Measurable Outcome

New funding sources from municipalities and private foundations to be earmarked for both program delivery and organizational sustainability.

Major fundraising event for 40th Anniversary of Inside Education.

D. Business, Operations and People



Preamble

Inside Education is one of Alberta's charitable leaders in our business procedures, operations and human resources. We will continue to monitor issues and changes related to charity accountability and proper business practices. We will further continue to develop and support a professional staff – providing challenges and opportunities for our team and promoting work/life balance for our staff.

Strategic Initiatives

1. We will develop a clearly articulated organizational structure - with roles and responsibilities clearly identified at all levels, ensuring sufficient resources are dedicated at each level.

Major Activities	Measurable Outcomes	
A formal organizational structure document will be further developed, to be implemented at the Board and staff level.	Senior levels of the program team to be articulated before the end of 2023. Organizational structure to include consideration of NFP Society model - is ED/Directors our only option or could we go to a CEO/COO/CFO (etc.) model	
Expanding current staff complement to give management team the opportunity to build relationships, creatively assess programs, develop professional networks and knowledge.	Increased core funding to make it possible to allow for senior staff to augment program delivery time with process/org development time.	

2. Inside Education commits to the fair compensation, lifelong learning and development of our staff. We further recognize and retrench the importance of a balance and flexibility between work and private life.

Major Activities	Measurable Outcomes	
We will continue our policy of third-party salary benchmarking in helping to set the fair-market salary, benefits and retirement savings of our staff.	Participation in regional, provincial and national not-for-profit and charity networks to share best practices.	
	Annual access of the 'Boland' report (or similar benchmarking report).	
	Consider including salary ranges for staff positions.	



Creative means of staff work assignments, compensation and retention will be enhanced.	Regional contractors, 10-month program positions, and automated administrative functions will all be considered and pursued.	
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3. Inside Education will develop a long-term strategy for our Edmonton and Calgary office operations - with the expectation that Edmonton will continue to be the 'home base'.

Major Activities	Measurable Outcomes	
A strategy for the Edmonton office will be developed. This includes financing options and opportunities, repairs and renovations, and decision on long term strategy for ownership of collaboration space.	Renegotiated mortgage to occur by September 2023 - with consideration to accessing equity to complete renovations. Annual application to the City of Edmonton and City of Calgary for waiver of property taxes (NFP exemption).	
Develop a strategy to maintain a brick and mortar office in Calgary or to move to remote home offices.	Researching options for space (in-kind or shared) prior to the current lease expiring in 2028.	

4. Inside Education will be open to partnerships with other organizations whose mission and vision are aligned with ours. This will be done only if there is clear benefit to Inside Education programs, services, business and operations.

Major Activities	Measurable Outcomes	
Pursuing regional, provincial and national collaborations, up to, and including formalized partnerships.	Any formal partnership to have terms of reference and/or MOU developed Continuously monitor Forestry Futures Alliance partnership and office-share arrangement with CAREERS in Calgary.	

5. Inside Education recognizes the importance of a workplace that encourages and supports diversity, equity and inclusion and will develop strategies to continue to demonstrate this commitment.

ajor Activities Measurable Outcomes



Continuously monitor and update organizational policies and practices to reflect the	Develop a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) statement.	
commitment to a diverse and inclusive workplace and that our	Statement appears on Inside Education website and job	
programs and services are equitable for all schools, students and teachers.	postings.	

Technology Component

- Remote work strategies will include an expansion of computer networks, equipment and the continued use of 'Cloud-based' work platforms.
- We pursue graphic design/technology assistance on a contract basis, though we commit to a Communications Manager to oversee and to do 'simple' graphics/web maintenance.

E. Communications

Preamble

Inside Education prides itself on its public image, brand and communications with our publics. This includes a stated desire to 'over-report', to find creative means of partner recognition and involvement and to *look* like the professional organization we are. This will continue to expand and grow as technology expands and a focus on social media continues.

An additional focus is to broaden brand recognition within our publics - including the general public. Broadening the profile beyond 'just' our normal audience.

1. We will develop a formal Communications Strategy with overall goal setting augmented by annual communications plans.

Major Activities	Measurable Outcomes	
With the support and input of Communications professionals	Annual plans ongoing each year.	
on our Board and elsewhere, develop a Communication Strategy with annual plans developed by Communications Manager and Executive Director, with support from senior program team members.	Strategic Communications plan - commencing upon Chloe's return from parental leave - completed by end of 2024.	

2. Inside Education will be viewed (and identified) by our external audiences – teachers, students, partners – as **the** leader in environmental and natural resources education in western Canada.

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Capitalize on our existing networks (Board, supporters, government officials and others) to broaden reach and engage in public outreach opportunities (conferences, traditional and social media, others)	ED, Staff (even Board Chair) regularly invited to speak at conferences, conventions and in the media. Track media uptake in urban and rural publications.	
Promote our network of experts - amplifying our connectivity to Alberta/Canadian leaders from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Using our education programs as the hub to bring together leading experts in environmental and natural resources themes.	Develop outreach opportunities built upon the prominence of youth summits, national teacher professional development programs, expertise of Board members, etc.	

3. We will continually monitor ways to make our communications more suitable and relevant to our various audiences. We will ensure that we 'market' our programming to as diverse an audience as possible - avoid 'overselling' to a particular audience.

Major Activities	Measurable Outcomes	
Develop key messaging for staff, board and champions written for prioritized awareness as part of an information sharing strategy	ED, Staff (even Board Chair) regularly invited to speak at conferences, conventions and in the media. Track media uptake in urban and rural publications.	
Pursue opportunities for third-party recognition - including (but not limited to regional/provincial/national awards)		

4. We will ensure our forward-facing communications 'look' and approach is current, modern and adopts a combination of traditional and new media approaches.

Major Activities	Measurable Outcomes	
Continuous maintenance of the	Engage with graphic artists to	



insideeducation.ca website - including a major redesign over the next 5 years.	ensure continuous improvement of look and functionality of the website. Redesign of entire site by 2026.	
Update visual identify of Inside Education (logo/brand) Hold discussions of organizational name change/modification	Upon the occasion of the 40th anniversary - undertake a complete redesign of the brand identity and logo.	
Engage evolving social media technology, ensuring we are meeting our broad variety of audiences. Consider social media (especially YouTube) advertising 'buys'	New technology approaches mirroring our success on the Instagram platform.	

F. Strategic Plan Tracking/Reporting Planning

This document will be regularly revisited throughout the entirety of the 5-year plan. We will adjust and update as required, though our annual program plans, budgeting, HR policies and communications will all be developed with these major themes, goals and strategies in mind.

Annual Program Plans

Inside Education's Program Director, Program Lead(s) and Executive Director will meet annually to strategize on program themes and delivery mechanisms to come in the subsequent year. The Program Director (or equivalent) will present the annual plan to the Board of Directors for input, suggestions and approval of the program direction.

Annual Budget

Based on the varying costs of each year's programming, and with consideration for the 'fixed' costs associated with Society Operations, Inside Education's Executive Director, Director of Business and Operations (or equivalent) and Board Liaison will develop an annual Budget for approval by the Board of Directors. Regular reporting on income and expenditures will be made to the Board.

Audit/Financial Review

Inside Education will continue to demonstrate exemplary financial tracking and reporting. This will include an annual financial audit by a third-party accountant (as required by the Canada Revenue Agency).

Annual Report

In addition to our CRA-required year-end public financial reporting, each year we will develop a detailed Annual Report to the Community. This will be made available to our partners and supporters, and the public through the Inside Education website.



Executive Director Reporting

At each Inside Education Board Meeting, the Executive Director will use the Strategic Plan as the basis for quarterly reporting. These reports will ensure the work of the Society is firmly based in the strategy laid out in this document.

