

Cub Reporter Corner

Youth Test the Climate in Court



By Sadie Vipond

My name is Sadie and I am 14 years old. I am one of the youth engaged in the *La Rose, et al. v. Her Majesty the Queen* lawsuit that seeks to hold the federal government accountable for contributing to climate change and violating my Charter rights to life, liberty, security of the person, and equality.

I was born to be in nature. It is my true home, just like it used to be for all of us. I spend my winters skiing in the mountains, my summers roaming the prairies, badlands, and high alpine in caves, on mountains, and backpacking.

I am already seeing the effects of the climate crisis in nature. Ski seasons are declining due to warm weather and rain when there is supposed to be snow. The bitter orange mark of the pine beetles scar entire mountainsides. Smoke from this year's California fires, more than 1500 kilometres away, hangs in the air of Calgary, changing the colour of the light and the sun and worsening the air quality. The smoke is more than just a visible reminder of the destruction of forest life, it impacts my health. Two years ago, the smoke limited me from biking to school, forcing me to take city transit.

In 2013, my family had to evacuate our home because of flooding and stay with friends. That flood was the most damaging in Alberta's history. I remember waking up in the middle of the night by my grandmother, and she told me that we have to evacuate. We stayed with a friend who lived outside of the valley until the flooding subsided, and the rest of school (about a week) was cancelled. Every day we saw the images of the local zoo, and downtown being flooded. Thankfully, the flooding did not reach our house, but I worry as the Climate Crisis gets worse, the flooding will have an even bigger impact.

I know the effects of climate change will get worse as time passes and our carbon emissions pile up. Storms, floods, fires, destruction of the natural world -- all will become more common and more extreme during my lifetime.

Some people think that climate change is something to worry about in the future, but they are wrong. We see it now increasing in deadly fires, the 2013 Calgary flood, the melting glaciers, the recurrent and increasingly damaging hailstorms.

A recent report says Canada has warmed almost twice as fast as the rest of the world. And yet, the sad reality is, our country

continues to contribute to the climate crisis. Especially here in Alberta, most of our economy is from the oil and gas industries.

This crisis will affect my generation and younger generations much more than the current generation of adults. The ones in the government today -- those who are making decisions that will affect my future -- might not have to worry about all this, but their decisions affect me. Being 14, I am too young to vote, just like most of my co-plaintiffs in the lawsuit. Joining this lawsuit is a way to get my voice out there.

The federal government has been worsening the crisis, and is even trying to keep our lawsuit from going to trial. By allowing dangerous levels of greenhouse gas emissions, the Canadian government is responsible for the climate change impacts we are all experiencing. We want the government to put a plan in place that will reduce those emissions, decarbonize the country's energy system, and protect the rights of its young people. I want to live in a world where I don't have to worry about my future burdened by Climate Crisis.

In a developed country like Canada, we all need to focus on long-term safety. The government needs to treat the changing climate like the crisis that it is.



PHOTO: © I. URQUHART

Hey young conservationists! Tired of adults dominating conservation discussions, discussions about your future? If so, pitch a story idea for this Cub Reporter Corner to the editor at iurquhart@abwild.ca. Stories should be approximately 250 to 500 words long and may report on any environmental or conservation issue you feel is important to Albertans.