

Summer Sustainability Kick-Off

Summary

The summer season in Kelowna presents us with extended days filled with opportunities for learning, fun, and productivity. However, the rising temperatures, wildfire smoke, and increased demand for electricity serve as a reminder of how closely our comfort is tied to the environment. This week marks the beginning of our journey, brightened by sunshine and a sense of responsibility.

Whether we are studying under the shade of the orchard, teaching in climate-controlled classrooms, or working remotely with an open window, Simple actions we can take that will benefit both ourselves and our region. Let's start by being mindful of how our daily activities, like cooling, hydrating, and powering devices, can contribute to a greener Okanagan and Central Okanagan.

- **Practical actions:**

1. Keep our thermostat at 25 °C or above and use fans or awnings to block peak heat.
2. Carry reusable bottles and use refill stations. Kelowna's hometown pride includes cutting single-use plastic.
3. Plan appliance uses outside peak hours (4–9 PM) to lower energy fees and grid strain.
4. Make our home cooling efforts as sustainable as possible.
5. Choose local, eco-friendly travel options when exploring Kelowna and beyond.

1. Keep our Thermostat at 25°C or Above

- **Why it matters:** Keeping homes and offices cool in the summer is among the largest energy demands in the area. Using air conditioning can greatly raise energy costs and lead to heightened electricity demand, putting pressure on the grid and affecting our environment.
- **What we can do:** Adjust our thermostat to 25°C or higher if we are comfortable with it. This minor change can significantly lower energy usage. If air conditioning isn't available, consider using ceiling fans, portable fans, or natural ventilation to cool our space. When outdoors, seek out shaded areas or utilize awnings to shield

ourselves from direct sunlight. It is good to open up a window to take advantage of fresh and cool air at a certain point of the day. It helps to maintain air quality inside.

- **Local Tip:** Numerous local enterprises and outdoor locations, such as nearby vineyards, parks, and patios, offer shaded spots or misting systems for cooling, which can serve as an excellent option instead of indoor air conditioning.
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2. Use Reusable Bottles and Refill Stations

- **Why it matters:** At a time when disposable plastics significantly harm our oceans and landfills, opting for a reusable water bottle can greatly lessen our environmental impact. In Kelowna, we are fortunate to have convenient refill stations available throughout the city and at Okanagan College.
 - **What we can do:** Always carry a reusable bottle and utilize the various water refill stations available throughout the city and campus. This practice will lessen the dependence on bottled water, which is harmful to the environment and costly. By declining single-use plastic bottles, we are contributing to the reduction of pollution in our local lakes, parks, and other areas.
 - **Local Tip:** Numerous outdoor pursuits in the Okanagan, such as hiking or enjoying a picnic at Kettle Valley Rail Trail or Okanagan Lake, feature refill stations, and certain local businesses may provide discounts to customers who use their bottles.
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3. Plan Appliance Use Outside Peak Hours (4 PM to 9 PM)

- **Why it matters:** During the summer, peak electricity usage generally happens between 4 PM and 9 PM, a period when a lot of people are at home, trying to cool off, preparing dinner, and utilizing their devices. This increased demand results in higher energy expenses and carbon footprints, particularly during heatwaves when the electrical grid faces additional strain.
- **What we can do:** Schedule our laundry, dishwashing, and cooking earlier in the day or later in the evening. For example, if we can, aim to do our laundry or use the dishwasher in the morning when energy consumption is typically lower. Many modern appliances are equipped with timers that let us set them to operate at designated times. Additionally, think about utilizing solar-powered outdoor lighting or energy-efficient cooking techniques like slow cookers or pressure cookers.

4. Keep our Home's Cooling Efforts Sustainable

- **Why it matters:** It's not merely about regulating the temperature; it's also about ensuring our home's thermal efficiency. Poorly sealed homes can release cool air and allow hot air to enter, causing our air conditioning or fans to operate more than required.
- **What we can do:** Block any openings around windows, doors, and walls to maintain the cool air indoors and prevent heat from entering. Using insulating curtains or blinds can effectively shield our home from the sun's rays during peak heat hours, especially from noon to 3 PM. Moreover, if we are in an area that faces extreme temperatures, cool roofs or reflective coating can assist in keeping our home cooler without depending too much on air conditioning.
- **Local Tip:** Kelowna's arid climate allows dust and debris to enter our home more readily. Make it a point to routinely inspect seals and insulation, particularly in older structures, and maintain clean AC filters to guarantee they operate effectively.

5. Explore Local Sustainable Travel Options

- **Why it matters:** While summer escapades are enjoyable, traveling frequently leads to excess emissions, especially when driving long distances to reach natural areas. Opting for local travel alternatives minimizes our carbon footprint, boosts the local economy, and enables us to discover nearby areas that might not be well known.
- **What we can do:** Rather than driving our car to a local park, how about cycling to one of Kelowna's numerous natural areas? If biking isn't appealing to us, think about carpooling with friends or utilizing public transit. For weekend trips, choose local eco-friendly tourism options, like booking green-certified lodgings or visiting nearby provincial parks and vineyards.
- **Local Tip:** Kelowna's Okanagan Rail Trail serves as a prime illustration of a sustainable travel choice. Whether we prefer biking, strolling, or jogging, it's a fantastic method to explore the area without the ecological impact of driving.