



SAS Steering Committee

Tuesday December 6th, 2022

5:30 PM

Virtual Meeting

Public Comment Period:

No public comment will be received today

Main Agenda: *time allocations are estimates and subject to change*

1. Approval of November minutes (5 mins)
2. Presentation by Public Works on WTE Facility and Climate Commitment Act (10 mins)
3. SASSC Mission Statement (30 mins)
4. Workgroup Priorities for Implementation of the SAP (10 mins)
5. Potential January Agenda Items (5 mins)
 - 2023 Workplan
 - Water Resources Workgroup Presentation

Guest Speakers

none

Next Meeting

Tuesday January 3rd, 2023 5:30 – 7:00pm

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87160007703?pwd=TUhBbnVHVjQ1dnRDb2ppVlFtZG0xUT09>

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STANDING SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES
City of Spokane
Sustainability Action Subcommittee Steering Committee (SC)
November 1, 2022

Call to Order: 5:33 p.m.

Attendance

Steering Committee Members Present: Larry Luton, Mindy Howard, Sarah Burruss, Naghmana Sherazi, Pragya Rai, Michelle Howard, Erica Johnson, Jennifer Thomas, Dave Garegnani, Matt Hollon, Stacie Maier, Ryan Lok, Wyeth Larson, Rowena Pineda

Staff/Others Present: Giacobbe Byrd, Kara Odegard, Tony Newton, Alex Gibilisco, Carrina Farho, David Camp, Jeff Yirak, Monica Stenzel, Mike Peterson, Christine Reid, Jim Hedemark, Amber Abrahamson, Ian Cunningham

Absent: Brian Henning, Esther Angell

Note Taker: Tony Newton

Approval of September Minutes

- Naghmana Sherazi moved to approve the September meeting minutes. Mindy Howard seconded
 - Motion passed

Agenda Items

1. Roll-Call Vote to elect Officers (see attached for voting record)
The Steering Committee held a vote to elect officers via a roll-call vote. The following officers were elected.
 - Chair: Larry Luton (1-year term)
 - Vice Chair 1: Naghmana Sherazi (1-year term)
 - Vice Chair 2: Rowena Pineda (2-year term)
2. Discussion and Vote on Consensus Model
 - a. If a consensus model of government is adopted, non-voting members would still have an opportunity to speak on topics before a vote takes places
 - b. Do we need to outline values? Mission statement? How will the group foster community? How can there be trust within the group? Group activities? Meeting in person?

- i. Larry and Kara have begun to put together a document to address these items
 - c. VOTING ACTION: Should the SAS Steering Committee adopt the Consensus Model of governance?
 1. Motion: Wyeth Larson
 2. Seconded: Naghmana
 3. Roll-call vote was conducted, and the motion passed unanimously
3. Discussion: How will the Steering Committee interact with the workgroups?
 - Having steering committee members assigned to workgroups. They would not need to attend every workgroup meeting- but would be the liaison between the 2 groups
 - Workgroup could request time with the Steering Committee meeting for big conversations
 - Steering Committee can request times at workgroup meetings
 - SAS potentially moving to quarterly
 - SC should make sure to honor and respect the workgroup's current work and finding a way to ensure
 - Steering Committee meetings are scheduled monthly on the 1st Tuesday of each month from 5:30-7pm
 - Currently- the work groups have completed the task originally assigned to them. There is no expectation that workgroups will continue to have regular meetings.
4. OPMA question: Can SC members meet with workgroups outside of the Steering Committee meetings? OPMA rules dictate that if there are less than 7 members, it is not a public meeting
5. Discussion: December agenda:
 - 2 groups have approached Kara wanting to talk to the Steering Committee: Public Works and the Water Resources Workgroup
 - Hesitancy to have other City departments report directly to the SC
 - Could they instead go through the workgroups? As they are the experts and not to bog down Steering Committee meetings
 - Strengthening relationship with Public Works - this could help build trust between the Steering Committee and the Public Works Department
 - Water resources group would like to share some context on their priority actions
 - 2023 work plan: What will a workplan look like?
 - Co-created between Steering Committee and City Council
 - Do we want to record future SC meetings?
 - If they are recorded- the recordings become public record and would be uploaded shortly after the meeting. Less detailed notes would need to be taken.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

Prepared by:

Tony Newton & Kara Odegard

Approved by:

Council Member Lori Kinnear
PIES Committee Chair

Voting Record from the November 1st, 2022 SAS Steering Committee Meeting

Name	Chair	Vice Chair Pos 1	Vice Chair Pos 2	Adopt Consensus y/n	Notes
Brian Henning					absent
Dave Garegnani	Larry	Mindy	Rowena	yes	
Erica Johnson					non-voting member
Esther Angell					absent
Jennifer Thomas	Larry	Mindy	Rowena	yes	
Larry Luton	Larry	Naghmana	Rowena	Yes	
Matthew Hollon	Larry	Mindy	Rowena	Yes	
Michelle Howard	Larry	Naghmana	Rowena	yes	
Mindy Howard	Larry	Mindy	Rowena	yes	
Naghmana Sherazi	Larry	Naghmana	Rowena	yes	
Pragya Rai	Larry	Naghmana	Rowena	yes	
Rowena Pineda	Larry	Naghmana	Rowena	yes	
Ryan Lok	Larry	Naghmana	Rowena	yes	
Sarah Burruss	Larry	Mindy	Rowena	yes	
Staci Maier					Non-voting member
Wyeth Larson	Larry	Naghmana	Rowena	yes	

Approval of September Minutes: yes

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR CONSENSUS-BASED DECISION MAKING

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- **Optional Stances for Participants**
- **Comments on Facilitation**

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London, Ontario**

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WHAT IS CONSENSUS-BASED DECISION MAKING?

Consensus-based decision making is based on a *deliberate process of consensus building*, whereby members of a group actively participate in finding a decision together that all members can feel comfortable with. A consensus decision does not necessarily reflect complete unanimity. However, decisions reached by consensus do reflect the thoughts and feelings of the group *as a whole*¹, rather than just the majority. Effective consensus building results in decisions that have been thoughtfully deliberated, incorporate diverse experience and views, and may produce the best possible decision given the configuration of interests that have come together for a given purpose.

The advantage of consensus-based decisions as compared with majority rule voting is that it avoids a fundamental problem often associated with voting. Voting may unintentionally result in a split or division in a group, a satisfied majority and disgruntled minority, a sense of winners and losers. Moreover, in the interest of efficiency, there may be a propensity to rush to a vote without full deliberation when opinion seems to be going in a certain direction. The consensus-building process is based on thoughtful, respectful, fulsome deliberation and an intention to find the best possible decision that suits the group as a whole.

Consensus decision making is based on the premise that everyone's voice is worth hearing and that all concerns that come from a place of integrity are valid. If a proposal is deeply troubling to even one person, that concern is respected; if it is ignored, the group is likely to make a mistake. Various practical procedures and optional stances that group members can employ in navigating the sometimes unsettled waters of consensus-building are discussed in this document.

A group committed to consensus may utilize other forms of decision making (e.g., executive decision, majority rule) when appropriate; however, a group that has adopted a consensus model will use that process for items of strategic importance, related to core values, or around which there is a common perception that "the stakes are high."

WHEN TO USE THE CONSENSUS MODEL

Making decisions by consensus may be more or less appropriate depending in part on what's at stake with a given decision.

¹ What makes a coherent group different than a mere collection of individuals? Complexity theory suggests that when individuals come together for a common purpose, under favorable conditions a qualitative "phase shift" may occur. The whole becomes greater than the sum of parts. This phenomenon is called "emergence." A collection of individuals becomes a community, as problems are solved, work is accomplished, relationships deepen, common values are affirmed, trust builds, traditions develop, and a story is told. Community members are willing to set aside certain vested interests based on a more encompassing set of values or interests, without sacrificing their core values or individuality. This is neither "collectivism" (in which individuals unthinkingly surrender themselves) nor "individualism" (in which self-interest always remains the overriding consideration).

A full consensus-building process may be most appropriate for:

- Strategic² decisions
- High stakes decisions
- Decisions for which a strong, united front is important

A full consensus-building approach may be unnecessary or less appropriate for:

- Operational or tactical³ decisions
- Decisions which have relatively minor impact and affect relatively few

NECESSARY CONDITIONS

Certain fundamental conditions need to be met in order to conduct an effective consensus-building process, including:

- Agreement on core values
- Willingness of members to both express interests as well as assume a “disinterested”⁴ stance
- Willingness to make it work – belief in the value of consensus-building
- Active listening
- Sufficient time
- Patience
- Trust
- Succinct expression of views and concerns
- Skilled facilitation
- Conducive setting – properly bounded

A group intending to employ consensus-based decision making would do well to carefully consider the extent to which it can meet these conditions. Most formal groups go through foundational exercises when forming, such as

WHAT CONSENSUS-BUILDING IS NOT:

Having worked as a Community Developer in various settings for more than 35 years, I have been part of many groups, teams, and organizations that have nominally adopted “consensus” as their decision-making procedure. Very often when a group decides to use a consensus model, there is little or no discussion of what that means, and little knowledge about how to conduct an effective consensus-building process. What tends to happen in such cases is that the voices of the most assertive individuals or those with the most power (informal or formal) dominate and shape the discussion, often with many voices unheard, and without careful deliberation or full consideration of alternatives. This is especially likely when organizations have full agendas and feel pressure to move quickly to get things done. After brief discussion, a decision is proposed by the chair or other powerful member, who, after glancing around the room asks, “Do we have consensus then?” Showing little receptivity and giving scant time for alternatives to be voiced, “consensus” is quickly declared. At the other end of the continuum are groups that, though seeking to follow the true spirit of consensus, are rudderless and seem to get bogged down in endless conversation loops, rehashing the same material over and over, with little sense of progress or movement to a fruitful decision. This primer seeks to assist groups to avoid these of kinds of *pseudo-consensus* traps, and to practice more effective consensus-based decision making.

² Strategic: of great importance within an integrated whole or to a planned effect.

³ Tactical: of or relating to small-scale actions serving a larger purpose; made or carried out with only a limited or immediate end in view.

⁴ Disinterested: Free from selfish motive or interest: unbiased. (See also comment in footnote ¹.)

developing vision and mission statements, and undertaking exercises to build trust. There are many resources readily available to assess a group's readiness along these lines, and to assist groups with such processes. When consensus-building breaks down, it usually points to an absence or shortage in one or more of these conditions. Further comment with respect to some of these conditions is offered throughout this guide.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING A CONDUCIVE SETTING

I have on occasion quipped after an unsatisfying meeting that community development training programs should include a required course solely devoted to how to arrange chairs for a meeting. The point is to highlight the importance of careful attention to conditions that are conducive to good group process. Just the impact of the type of room and seating arrangement on group dynamics are often overlooked and underestimated. Seating should be arranged so that all participants can make good eye contact and readily hear one another. It is amazing to me how much this one factor affects meeting process. Long, narrow boardroom tables are not conducive. Like good hosts at a dinner party, meeting conveners should welcome and encourage participants to connect informally as they begin to gather. Refreshments help. If participants aren't well known to one another, name tags are important, and newcomers should be introduced and warmly welcomed. Extraneous distractions should be minimized so the group can focus. Almost like a formal ceremony, the facilitator should signal a clear opening to the meeting, which includes welcome and introductions, an overview of the purpose/agenda, and in early stages at least, a reminder about process guidelines. The idea is to deliberately create a "container" of dedicated time, space, and purpose, devoted to evoking the emergent process of consensus building.

Making decisions by consensus can be challenging. It asks participants to be mindful and bring their best intentions to the process. When a group begins to work together in this way it may feel awkward at first and take time to develop a group culture conducive to the process. When it works well, it is a very satisfying and energizing process. As group members begin to experience the difference it can make in terms of creativity, quality, commitment to and enthusiasm for decisions and planned actions, it builds the confidence and strength of the group.

DEVELOPING PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES

Developing participation guidelines is a very useful exercise for any group to undertake when forming itself. When a group collaboratively develops guidelines for how it wishes to conduct itself, intentionality and commitment to the group's efforts increases. Here's a suggestion for how to conduct such a process. Pose the following two scenarios, asking each group member to jot down their ideas individually. 1) *Think of a group you have participated in, that you found to be especially dysfunctional or unproductive. What were the factors that you think contributed to the dysfunction.* 2) *Think of a group you have participated in, that you found to be especially effective,*

productive, and satisfying to be part of. What were the factors that you think contributed to its success? Facilitate a group discussion, seeking to build consensus around a set of participation guidelines. Revisit these guidelines regularly, especially when the group is about to undertake a challenging consensus-building process.

I have distilled the following participation guidelines from many years of experience.

In order for the group process to be:

- Enjoyable
- Constructive
- Productive
- Cooperative
- High Quality

Each member agrees to:

- Take responsibility for helping group achieve a positive outcome
- Listen very carefully to what others are saying
- Monitor his/her level of participation (neither dominate nor withhold)
- Be aware of the purpose, stay on topic
- Engage with, build on, respond to the ideas of others
- Express disagreement or concerns constructively and with respect
- Be aware of how both verbal and non-verbal signals impact group dynamics
- Avoid side conversations when we are conducting business in the group as a whole
- Be fully present, for example avoid unnecessary use of smart phones.

PROCEDURES FOR CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING

Consensus-building does not follow a recipe. It is not a mechanical process – there is no algorithm to guide it. It is a quintessentially *dialogical*, emergent human process that incorporates thought, feeling, knowledge, imagination, and lived experience. Nonetheless, it is a process that can be undertaken deliberately, mindfully, and whose broad contours can be mapped and navigated as follows.

1. An issue will emerge, in a meeting, from an agenda item, from a general discussion, or from a member. First, the people connected with the issue explain it. The facilitator ensures that the issue is stated in clear and positive terms.
2. Those present discuss the issue. The facilitator ensures that everyone has an equal opportunity to speak and that the discussion stays focused on the issue at hand. (See *Comments on Facilitation* section.) Members express their thoughts and feelings honestly and succinctly; rather than repeating what has already been well-expressed, a member can simply indicate agreement with others.
3. A common answer to the issue may emerge during discussion with a self-evident decision presenting itself. The decision is stated in positive terms and the facilitator *canvasses each member* to see whether all questions and concerns have been satisfied to the point that all can agree. If so, consensus has been reached and is noted in the minutes (together with an indication of who will take what actions and when, if appropriate).
4. If consensus is not reached, a round may be initiated by the facilitator. In a round, each member in turn has an equal amount of time to comment on the issue, without interruption and without comments from the others (although questions may be asked for clarification only, when the person is finished).⁵ When the round is over, the facilitator summarizes what was said and clarifies the current status of the issue.
5. Individual differences may have merged during the round into a common answer. If so, the facilitator canvasses the group for agreement and the consensus is noted in the minutes.
6. If consensus is still not achieved, a second round may be undertaken.
7. If consensus is still not achieved, the group has to decide:
 - a. Whether progress is being made and further rounds may result in consensus, or
 - b. Whether one or more of the necessary conditions for consensus are not currently being met and if so whether an adjustment can be made to accommodate, or
 - c. If there is some fundamental split in the group, such as a divergence among some members around core values. The matter under contention would likely point to the value(s) in need of clarification.

⁵ In larger groups (e.g., more than 12 to 15), members need to be particularly disciplined and attentive to good group process. Members need to be as economical as possible in their comments, while still expressing what is essential in their view. Members are encouraged to simply indicate agreement if another member expresses well their view, or briefly qualify a viewpoint previously expressed. If issues arise that seem to require more deliberation, one option is to table the item, and charge a working group to go away and further deliberate and bring options back to the larger group.

THE POWER OF THE *ROUND*

A “round” (as described in the *Procedures* section) is a simple and amazingly powerful technique that, when utilized at an appropriate moment, can help open-up and move along a discussion that has bogged down, or seems to be bouncing around between just a few of the more assertive members of the group. It is especially useful for bringing into the discussion the perspectives of more introverted group members. Whereas more extraverted individuals develop their ideas and get energized by “thinking out loud,” introverts work their ideas through on the inside. Their thorough internal processing often results in more fully formed, richly nuanced perspectives. Introverts tend to need to have some space deliberately opened up for their views to be expressed in the group discussion. More introverted participants can be encouraged to assert themselves and extraverted members reminded to contain themselves as part of the general process guidelines, but it is also incumbent upon the facilitator to be attentive to this dynamic. This is not to disparage extraverts. Both energies are needed, but without deliberate attention to this dynamic, extraverts tend to dominant, and introverts’ contributions are often lost. I have found that deliberately slowing things down and making space for quieter voices by using a “round” has introduced the new idea or creative element that breaks the logjam, synthesizes divergent threads of the discussion, and reconciles apparent contradictions.

OPTIONAL STANCES MEMBERS CAN TAKE

A critical ingredient for success in consensus decision making is the conscious intention of members to participate in a spirit of consensus building. This process is greatly facilitated when members keep in mind and deliberately express themselves in terms of the following optional stances.

Expression of concern: Rather than taking a hard-and-fast negative position, members express their concerns and the reasons for them. This allows room for proposals to be modified to meet the concerns.

Reservations: After fulsome deliberation, one or more members may find a concern has not been satisfactorily addressed, but that they consider that concern relatively minor. The member(s) would then indicate that they have reservations. They might say “I still have some unresolved concerns; I have reservations but I can live with it.”

Non-support or standing aside: This stance allows a member to be clear that they do not agree with or support the proposed decision, without leaving or blocking the group from proceeding. The member might say, “I personally don’t support this, but I won’t stop others from doing it.” The member explicitly states that they are *standing aside* and this is noted in the minutes. If two or more members stand aside, perhaps additional work is required to conceive a more mutual solution.

Blocking or withdrawing from the group: Blocking means "I cannot support this or allow the group to support this. I perceive it to be in contradiction of our core values and/or unethical or immoral." Blocking can only be used very rarely without threatening the viability of the group. It should be a last resort. For blocking to be a viable option, an individual taking such a stand must be very clear, operating from deep conviction, and enjoy the trust and respect of the group. An individual may decide they do not feel justified in blocking the group, but neither can they continue to be a member based on the direction the group has taken.

If consensus breaks down: If several people express non-support, stand aside or leave the group, it may not be a viable decision even if no one directly blocks it. Some groups decide to take "blocking" as an optional stance off the table, and instead opt for a steep super-majority decision rule, such as two-thirds or three-quarters majority, in the event the consensus process seems to have become intractable. Some practitioners of consensus-building argue that to allow this option negates the spirit of consensus. In some situations (e.g., a group or team operating within a hierarchical organizational structure), failure to achieve consensus may result in the decision-making authority defaulting to a "higher authority." Either way, the group needs to decide what they will do if it is unable to achieve consensus. It must be emphasized however, that if the necessary conditions are met, and procedures described in this guide are followed, the prospects for success are very good!

COMMENTS ON FACILITATION

The role of facilitator is very important in consensus-based decision making. Facilitation is a learned skill that can be cultivated with practice, though some people seem to have a knack for it. Personal characteristics of good facilitators may include: experienced with group process, strong intuition, sensitivity and empathy, ability to summarize and synthesize elements of the discussion in clear and succinct terms, humour, and appropriate assertiveness.

The group may have among its membership, and choose to call on to serve the group, someone who is a highly skilled facilitator. If a number of members are skilled facilitators, or if the group wants to assist members to cultivate facilitation skills, it may want to experiment with co-facilitation or rotating the role.

The Role of Facilitator:

- Create a safe and conducive environment for group process – physical space, opening the meeting, providing context, setting tone, establishing participation guidelines.
- Use the agenda to frame discussion points, manage time and help group achieve the meeting's objectives.
- Facilitate the process without unduly influencing the content of the discussion.

- Moderate the discussion as necessary with the “right touch” to ensure everyone has a fair opportunity to participate.
 - Use a “lighter touch” in earlier or emerging phases of a discussion
 - Use more assertive interventions as discussion gets more energetic
- Track and periodically articulate the terms of the discussion as it evolves, seeking validation from the group that the issue is being framed accurately.
- Notice and articulate for the group at opportune moments, points of convergence and divergence in the ongoing group deliberation.
- Stay aware of and remind the group if necessary about consensus procedures, optional stances members may take, and participation guidelines.
- Make appropriate use of the “round” or other instant feedback techniques⁶ as a means of getting a reading on the developing sense of the group.
- Keep the meeting focused and moving at an appropriate pace –
 - Use intuition, pay attention to the energy associated with a discussion point.
 - Make group aware of time, check in to determine whether to continue on a point, table it for later discussion, or move on.
- Reinforce and support both “expression of concerns” and efforts by members to accommodate concerns through propositions that incorporate and synthesize divergent threads.
- Articulate and test for elements of consensus as it begins to emerge.
- If necessary, conduct one or more “rounds,” reminding members to speak economically while encouraging them to express all views relevant and essential to the decision.
- At the decision point, summarize the discussion, formulate the consensus statement in positive terms, and test for consensus.
- If the facilitator feels too emotionally involved in a particular discussion and has difficulty remaining neutral, s/he should ask someone to take over the task of facilitation for that agenda item. (Any group member may suggest that the facilitator consider yielding the chair for a particular discussion or decision point if the facilitator is perceived to be too personally invested in the outcome.)

⁶ For example, ask participants to indicate how they are leaning on a question using by show of hands for pro, con, or noncommittal; thumbs up/down; “clicker” polling technology, etc.

LEARNING THE SKILL OF FACILITATING CONSENSUS BUILDING

Probably the best way of becoming a skilled facilitator of consensus building is to attentively observe the process being conducted by an already experienced and skilled practitioner, while vividly imagining oneself in the role. And then, practice, practice, practice. Early in my career I had the good fortune of observing several skilled consensus builders. The most memorable instance was at the North American Bioregional Congress, which was held in the Grand Traverse Bay area of Michigan in August 1986. A group of about 80 ecological activists from across North America met daily over the course of a week to deliberate and come to consensus on a set of principles and actions to advance the Bioregional movement. Our facilitator was Caroline Estes, who had learned consensus building over the course of 25 years as a practicing Quaker and social activist. In an article published about that time that is still available on-line (<http://www.context.org/iclib/ic07/estes/>), Caroline describes the origins and history of the practice, including a long history and ongoing tradition within indigenous communities. Another excellent practical guide to assist in learning consensus building can be found on the website of the Wiccan social activist Starhawk (<http://starhawk.org/short-consensus-summary/>).

CONCLUSION

In this guide I have tried to offer practical suggestions as well as some more philosophical reflections on the process of consensus-based decision making, based on 35 years experience as a Community Developer.

Whereas a full, formal, consensus-based decision making process is not always necessary or appropriate, the spirit underlying consensus building can be brought by any individual to any group process. In my experience, these attitudes, skills, and stances applied in virtually any setting tends to help a group move in a more creative, inclusive, and healthful direction.

Please direct any comments or feedback on this guide to j.madden@sympatico.ca.

SASSC

**Values/Mission/Vision
Development**

From the Sustainability Action Plan

SAS Vision for 2050

As a community, Spokane ensures the well-being of all our people and the ecosystems of which we are a part. We do this by investing in our neighborhoods and caring for our natural habitats while building an equitable, regenerative, carbon-free economy that is resilient and sustainable.

From the Sustainability Action Plan

Page 9 - SAS Guiding Principles

- 1. Improve quality of life for future generations**
- 2. Involve community in work toward resilience re: climate change**
- 3. Address historic inequalities and environmental injustices and undo racist actions and systems**
- 4. Equitable inclusion is imperative**
- 5. Environmental programs and policies should benefit everyone**
- 6. Protect the right to a healthy environment for humans and nonhumans**
- 7. Every action should be evaluated for its impact on climate**
- 8. Urgent action is required**

From the Sustainability Action Plan

Page 15 - Sustainability Action Plan Goals

- 1. Reduce community-wide ghg emissions from 2016 baseline by:**
 - 45% by 2030**
 - 70% by 2040**
 - 95% by 2050**
- 2. Build resilient neighborhoods by investing in our local communities, systems, and economy with these key areas in mind:**
 - Healthy Ecosystems**
 - Economic Opportunity**
 - Equity**
 - Health and Wellbeing**
- 3. Prioritize people and communities most exposed to health impacts and economic downturns related to climate change.**

From the Sustainability Action Plan

**Pages 20-21 - Alignment with Eight Sustainable Development Goals
(developed by the UN and signed on to by 193 nations)**

Zero Hunger

Clean Water ᑭsétkw

Industry, Innovation, & Infrastructure

Sustainable Cities & Communities

Responsible Consumption & Production

Climate Action

Life Below Water nx^wyx^wyetkw

Life On Land