

Fall 2023 Sustainability Scholars Program Internship Opportunity

The UBC Sustainability Hub is pleased to offer current UBC graduate students the opportunity to work on funded sustainability internship projects. As a Sustainability Scholar, you work under the broad guidance of a mentor at one of our partner organizations. Through your project work you are immersed in real world learning where you apply your research skills and contribute to advancing the sustainability goals of your mentor's organization.

The program provides a unique professional and educational experience for UBC graduate level students. It is open to currently registered Masters (including JD) and PhD students from all academic disciplines.

- Visit the [Sustainability Scholars Program website](#) to learn [how the program works](#) and to [apply](#).
- Be sure to review the application guide on the [Apply page](#) to confirm your eligibility before applying.

Applications close at midnight on Sunday September 17, 2023.

Project title: Research to understand the links between homelessness and climate change, and identify opportunities for action

Project Background & Overview:

Climate change is getting worse around the globe and in BC as green house gas emissions continue to rise. Homelessness is also worsening, especially in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES).

British Columbia's June 2021 heat wave was the deadliest disaster in provincial history—619 lives were lost.

Extreme heat events, some of the most visible impacts from climate change, are projected to increase. Climate models indicate that sustained temperatures like the 2021 heat wave have a 10 per cent chance of reoccurring in B. C. within the next two decades (Philip et al. 2022). By mid-century, B. C. could experience temperatures similar to the heat wave an average of three out of every ten years if global greenhouse gas emissions are not substantially reduced.

The people who suffer most from climate change are those least equipped to take action to reduce impacts. This is particularly obvious with precariously housed or unhoused people who cannot avoid extreme heat, for example. A disproportionate percentage of Indigenous People in B. C. (40 per cent) are unhoused or live in precarious housing conditions that are not conducive to protection from extreme weather (Homelessness Services Association of BC 2021).

Union Gospel Mission (UGM) works in the DTES and provides support services to people facing poverty, homelessness and experiencing addiction. They are planning a public awareness campaign on homelessness and climate change to increase understanding of the links between these two topics and are seeking a Sustainability Scholar to undertake a literature and policy review to inform the information they put forward through their campaign.

Project description

UGM is planning a multi-pronged communications and community engagement campaign to influence multiple audience groups (including the public, policy makers, media outlets, donor segments, advocacy groups, and ENGOs) that will focus on how climate change impacts those who are experiencing homelessness and precarious housing, highlighting both short term and long-term implications within local and wider contexts. Ideally, UGM will also provide potential recommendations and actions that the research supports.

This topic is important because climate change intersects with everything, and we cannot compartmentalize other social issues, such as homelessness, from its impacts. People who are in precarious housing situations are disproportionately vulnerable to the repercussions of climate change.

The intention is to raise awareness that whoever is concerned about homelessness should also be concerned about climate change. This campaign would seek to increase public prioritization of and funding for climate change-related efforts, which will improve living conditions for society, but especially the communities and people UGM serves.

We want to make sure the campaign is informed by evidence and seek the assistance of a Sustainability Scholar to assist us with the research base for our campaign.

The focus of the project is on specific climate impacts faced by people who are precariously housed or experiencing homelessness within Vancouver, specifically the DTES. Furthermore, it will include an analysis of the available policies and programs from the City of Vancouver, Metro Vancouver, and provincial and federal governments to address these impacts, identify gaps in programming, and propose solutions based on the research literature.

The research will explore:

- How climate change currently impacts precariously housed and homeless populations in Vancouver and the DTES
- How these impacts are likely to change over time based on projections of future climate events
- Local, provincial, and federal policies and programs that address homelessness and climate change.
- Gaps in research and understanding within the Canadian climate context, as well as specific British Columbia policies and programming.
- Identification of current recommendations to minimize these impacts (such as recommendations resulting from the 2021 heat dome deaths). And a summary of the status of implementation of these recommendations.
- What new recommendations/actions does the research support – that can be implemented within Vancouver, BC recognizing the unique challenges of the city.

Project scope

Activities

1. Literature review on homelessness and climate change in BC, Vancouver and the DTES (e.g., city plans for the DTES neighbourhood, how the City of Vancouver's Climate Emergency Action Plan relates to the DTES, reports on extreme heat and the heat dome from the BC Coroner and [Canadian Climate Institute](#), and relevant literature from other similar jurisdictions other places (e.g., Kidd, Sean A., et al. "[A response framework for addressing the risks of climate change for homeless populations.](#)").

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2. Research on government policies designed to address impacts, including desk research and information interviews with key subject matter experts such as at the City of Vancouver and Vancouver Coastal Health.
3. Recognize that key subject matter experts include those who are directly impacted, such as those currently experiencing precarious housing or homelessness within the DTES and ensure that their perspectives and lived experience inform the research and recommendations. This can involve interviews, surveys or other forms of data collection, provided it is done in a dignified manner that follows the recommendations laid by the DTES Research Manifesto.

Deliverables

- A final report containing a summary of the work completed for the online public-facing [Scholars Project Library](#).
- Summary reports in the form of stories or news articles consolidating the research in an accessible format for readers of Megaphone (for example), the news media, and for policy makers at the City of Vancouver. Number and length of the stories/articles to be determined in discussion between the Scholar and project mentor.
- A document comparing impacts, recommendations, and progress on implementation across the various levels of government and highlighting where more needs to be done.
- A presentation to key stakeholders
- Time permitting, a story for Megaphone magazine to support the larger goal of making climate change research accessible.

Time Commitment

- This project will take 250 hours to complete
- This project must be completed between October 16, 2023 and March 15, 2024
- The Scholar is to complete hours between 9 am and 5 pm, Monday to Friday, approximately 10 to 12 hours per week.

Required/preferred Skills and Background

- Excellent research and writing skills.
- Demonstrated interest in sustainability.
- Familiarity with research methodologies and survey techniques
- Strong analytical skills
- Ability to work independently.
- Deadline oriented
- Comfortable interacting with strangers to conduct interviews.
- Design and layout skills, an asset
- Familiarity with climate change impacts on marginalised people, an asset
- Familiarity with issues impacting marginalised and homeless people, particularly in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) an asset.
- NOTE: The successful candidate for this position must be located in the Lower Mainland and able to attend meetings in the DTES, if necessary.**

More background information:

UGM is a project partner in the Climate Equity Activation and Resilience (CLEAR) project, which aims to make climate change research accessible to residents of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES). The

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CLEAR project will build the capacity of the university to understand how to share its research, and define useful research projects, while building the capacity of local organisations and disproportionately impacted residents to advocate for climate justice policy reform and action. Making climate research accessible and useful to vulnerable communities will improve lives and increase direct participation in a just transition to a net zero world. The goal of CLEAR is to amplify under-represented voices to improve climate policies and outcomes.

Applications close **midnight Sunday September 17, 2023**

Apply here: [Click here to apply](#)

Contact Karen Taylor at sustainability.scholars@ubc.ca if you have questions

Useful Resources

Below are some links to useful resources to help you with your resume and cover letter (there are many more online). Some of these resources also provide information on preparing for your interview.

<https://students.ubc.ca/career/career-resources/resumes-cover-letters-curricula-vitae>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/graduate-pathways-success>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/cover-letter-cv-resume-templates-ubc-career-services>