



Resilient Communities Cohort

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Introduction

Traditionally, climate resilience has been associated with a “bounce back” narrative that focuses on a return to *normal* post-crisis, but it has since grown to encompass and acknowledge the political and socioeconomic dimensions of climate change (Manyena et al., 2011; Muñoz-Erickson et al., 2021). Exploring **climate resilience** requires our collective ability to adapt to, mitigate, and build capacity around responding to the climate crisis — specifically in ways that prioritize community wellbeing and lived experience as expertise.

Climate adaptation refers to the designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating of solutions that aim to *minimize* and *respond* to the harms caused by the climate crisis (Zhao et al., 2018; IPCC, 2022). These strategies can range from governments investing in more social housing, to the adoption of strong and accessible disaster preparedness plans.

Climate mitigation places emphasis on actions that *prevent* climate-induced harm from occurring, typically by tackling root causes (Kumar, 2022; IPCC 2022). These strategies can range from the use of emerging technologies to capture, transport, and store greenhouse gasses, to policies that end fossil fuel subsidies and hold corporations accountable for their contributions to global emissions.

Capacity building is the process of empowering and equipping individuals, groups, institutions, and systems with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to partake in climate justice and collective action. In the context of building climate resilience, this means not only implementing adaptation and mitigation strategies, but also creating spaces for knowledge sharing, community care, and ways of knowing like traditional ecological knowledge.

Though climate resilience is widely embraced as a positive concept, it is important to enact nuance in understanding its usage — particularly given its lack of universal definition. Some have suggested that labeling communities as “resilient” upholds colonial agendas by praising marginalized communities for withstanding injustice in place of transforming systems that perpetually disadvantage these same communities, leaving them vulnerable to the impacts of climate chaos (Grant, 2021).



UBC Context

Climate Emergency Task Force Final Report and Recommendations

- Support community wellbeing in the face of the climate crisis
- Build capacity for mental health, resilience and community care strategies
- Update emergency preparedness and response plans
- Collaborate to expand public discourse around climate change and public health impacts

Sustainability Hub Strategic Plan

- Goal #8: increase number of students and learners from diverse communities on and off campus who participate in co-curricular and curricular sustainability experiences at UBC
- Goal #10: advance scholarship and disseminate knowledge on resilient communities into the broader community

Climate Action Plan 2030

- 75% of UBC faculty, staff and students will be aware of UBC's climate action goals and participate in UBC's evolving and expanding culture of sustainability by 2030
- 100% reduction in operational greenhouse gas emissions by 2035

Program Approach

Node #1: Urban Resilience and Climate Policy

Urban resilience is a subset of climate resilience that revolves around the adaptive capacity of cities and their inhabitants (MacKinnon, 2015). It includes everything from bolstering local food systems and municipal wastewater reuse, to investing in green infrastructure and public transit. To facilitate this, governments must commit to passing bold climate policies that equitably distribute social services, strengthen local infrastructure, and support the work already being done in communities.

The threat of climate-induced extreme weather events like floods, wildfires, and heatwaves, necessitates an updating of emergency preparedness plans to address accessibility concerns and develop early warning systems that work to minimize the harms caused by these disasters.

Node #2: Implications for Health and Wellbeing

Planetary health is intimately connected with human health. Thus, accessible, justice-oriented, and culturally competent healthcare that holistically tends to one's mental, physical, and social wellbeing is essential for building climate resilient



communities. Rising global temperatures will lead to an increase in vector-borne diseases and infectious outbreaks (Rocklöv & Dubrow, 2020). Air pollution via the ongoing burning of fossil fuels is responsible for 1 in 5 deaths globally and toxic waste sites continue to wreak havoc on the health of predominantly racialized communities (Vohra et al., 2021; Fuller et al., 2021)

In recent years, a growing number of youth have also reported experiencing **climate anxiety and grief**, which is characterized by hopelessness, doom, loss, and distress about the future (Cunsolo et al., 2020). More support, like climate-informed counseling and the cultivation of spaces for climate hope and joy, are needed to adequately respond to the toll climate change is having on people's mental health.

Node #3: Community Care

Another crucial component of climate resilience is nurturing our collective capacity to engage in radical acts of care that expand our imagination for what is possible. **Community care** can be defined as all the ways we meet each other's needs and create thriving, interdependent communities through practices like mutual aid. These acts are inherently political, as they challenge capitalist narratives that teach us to compete with one another and adopt scarcity mindsets that result in the gatekeeping of who is and is not deserving of care.

Resource extraction and the legacies of colonialism have fractured community cohesion — shared values, trust, and feelings of connectedness — detaching us from not just the lands we live on, but each other (Wise, 2020). In building climate resilience, we must ask ourselves how we can repair this disconnect by fostering cultures of abundance, sustainability, and care that exist beyond times of crisis.

Node #4: Technological Innovation

Climate technologies like renewable energy and heat pumps function as a source of much-needed hope in tackling the climate crisis and shifting away from fossil fuel dependency. However, these innovations should not be used as an excuse for maintaining the status quo through continued extraction and profit-driven mindsets.

An over-reliance on technology in mitigating climate change can be dangerous. Big Tech has poured millions into the development of speculative and exploratory technologies that have no guarantee of working or will take years to develop (McLaren & Markusson, 2020). Such funding could be better allocated towards initiatives that actively support frontline communities, finance nature-based solutions, or build capacity around the implementation of holistic climate education in school curricula.



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