



# CLIMATE WELLBEING COHORT

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## Introduction

The climate crisis is a public health emergency. Extreme weather events such as heatwaves, forest fires, air pollution, flooding, and rising sea levels cause mental distress, trauma, anxiety, depression, and PTSD (Wise, 2020). Indigenous land defenders, transnational youth movements, and Global South communities across the globe are voicing their eco-grief, fears, hopes, and calling on policy and decision makers to take urgent action. The climate crisis is already here. Still, most populations lack mental health services, funding, and accessible spaces for social and emotional support for their climate grief, anxiety, and hopelessness. These gaps are identified for youth, educators, and aspiring change-makers to (un)learn, reflect, and mobilize to tackle the root causes of climate change. Moreover, communities vulnerable to climate change require social support, cohesion, well-being strategy and policies to care for their overall health and mental well-being. As climate change worsens existing social inequities, the mental, emotional, and cultural loss continues to fall on lower income, Indigenous, Black, racialized and Global South communities disproportionately.

Climate well-being is an emerging framework integrating coping strategies with a climate justice approach. This framework centers systems change, collective advocacy and action, and community care. A **climate justice (CJ) framework** describes how the root causes of climate change are interconnected to systems of oppression such as colonialism, capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, and ableism (Xie, 2021). Furthermore, the CJ framework highlights that climate solutions require dismantling systems of oppression to create livable and liberated present and future realities for all people. This is especially important for IBPOC (Indigenous, Black and People of Colour) and systemically disadvantaged people who are least responsible for climate change but bear the worst of its impacts, including mental health struggles (Xie, 2021).

## UBC Context

At UBC spaces to feel, discuss, understand, and provide education on climate emotions can help people overcome climate doomism, build hope, and mobilize for action (Wise, 2022). A variety of UBC Sustainability staff and scholars such as Judy Wu and Meghan Wise created comprehensive, care-centering, and trauma-informed resources on climate well-being, climate grief, climate anxiety, and mental health ([accessible here](#)) and ([here](#)). In addition, [UBC Wellbeing](#) and [Student Health Services](#) are in place for support.



Following student advocacy, [UBC declared a Climate Emergency in 2019](#). A variety of nation level and campus-wide key strategic plans related to the climate well-being cohort are listed below.

### Sustainable Development Goals

- SDG 3: [Good Health and Well-being](#)
  - 3.9 Environmental health - By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination
- SDG 4: [Quality Education](#)
  - 4.7 Education for Sustainable development and global citizenship

### Sustainability Hub strategic plan (2022-2027)

- Transformative learning GOAL (7): Cultivate the use of transformative pedagogies, including a variety of enriched, experiential and applied learning approaches, for sustainability education across UBC and beyond.
- Transformative learning GOAL (8): Increase the number of students and other learners from diverse communities on and off campus who participate in UBC-wide co-curricular and curricular sustainability experiences every year.
- Local and global engagement GOAL (15): Foster engagement that invites courageous dialogue and motivates urgent and intentional action to address pressing sustainability challenges.

### Climate Emergency Task Force Report

- Support community well-being in the face of the Climate Crisis.
- Build capacity for mental health, resilience and community care strategies
- Collaborate to expand public discourse around climate change and public health impacts
- Foster a culture of engagement & advocacy on climate action
- Expand climate education opportunities and resources for the UBC community and broader public

### UBC Climate Hub

- Vision: Speeding the transition towards a just and sustainable low-carbon future.
- Mission: Connecting and empowering university and community stakeholders to take bold climate action for a just future.

### UBC Well-being Strategic Framework

- Collaborative leadership
- Mental health & resilience
- Social connection



## Learning Objectives

Throughout the Sustainability Ambassadors program, participants will develop their self-awareness, systems awareness, interdisciplinary thinking, interpersonal and collaborative working skills, and strategically apply their learnings on emotional resilience.

1. Ambassadors learn to process, hold, and understand climate emotions such as climate grief, critical hope, solastalgia, and anxiety while moving from doomism to action.
2. Ambassadors can identify how systems such as colonialism, capitalism, class, and race create an unequitable emotional distribution of climate grief and stress on marginalized communities.
3. Ambassadors better understand their own position within systems of oppression and identify their agency to practice hope, take actions, and accomplish their goals.
4. Ambassadors will collaborate with UBC Climate Hub, UBC Sustainability Hub, and their team members.
5. Ambassadors implement ideas and projects related to their climate emotions learning and advance their personal problem-solving skills and organizing tactics.

## Ambassador Projects

### 1. Cultivating Climate Justice Camp

The Cultivating Climate Justice Day Camp is a free five-day camp for pre-teens and teens to learn about climate action, solutions and collective action. Climate wellbeing ambassadors will support curriculum facilitation, and field trips on the UBC campus for youth in grades 6-10. Participants can apply their learning about trauma-informed practices to host and facilitate a safe space for high school aged youth to learn about climate justice, climate emotions, and building climate resilient communities. The program will advance accessible education of climate justice on individual, community and system levels. Furthermore, the camp will provide social and emotional coping support, and insights into historical and present day youth activism.

### 2. Climate Well-being workshops

Ambassadors will mobilize workshops related to climate emotions, resilience, healing, and environmental psychology. These prepared workshops will target UBC and university-aged audiences in classroom, club, and event settings. By facilitating interactive activities, ambassadors will learn how to communicate about climate change, hope, and action.



### 3. Intercultural toolkit

The intercultural toolkit is a research project aiming to compile culturally meaningful and relevant resources for UBC students and intergenerational audiences. This project is aimed at mobilizing culturally relevant well-being and climate-preparedness resources for racialized populations in Metro Vancouver and beyond. The toolkit team will explore current non-Anglocentric conceptions of the land, climate change, and justice. Simultaneously, events regarding intercultural climate action and knowledge will be facilitated.

The format of the intercultural toolkit will be further determined by Ambassadors and can include but are not limited to – a literature review of current resources and gaps in climate justice resources for non-English speaking audiences, compiling existing culturally relevant resources, poetry, artwork, creating social media graphics, videos, a zine, and more. Ambassadors are welcome to accept submissions from the public on their conceptions of climate change and justice from a non-Eurocentric perspective.

### Works Cited

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