

Climate literacy outreach in Vancouver

Lessons and reflections from UBC Ambassadors

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Land Acknowledgement



We respectfully acknowledge that the UBC Vancouver-Point Grey academic campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people, and that UBC operations in Vancouver more generally are also on the territories of the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səɫilwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations.

Disclaimer

This summary was produced as part of the UBC Sustainability Ambassadors program, a partnership between UBC and various local organizations to provide student with opportunities to engage in experiential learning to enrich learning and leadership experience related to sustainability.



The project was conducted under the mentorship of the City of Vancouver. The opinions and recommendations in this summary and any errors are those of the authoring team and do not necessarily reflect the views of the City of Vancouver or the University of British Columbia.

Vancouver's Climate Challenge & Response

Vancouver is facing increased climate hazards, including extreme heat, poor air quality, drought, extreme rainfall, and rising sea levels—threatening health, infrastructure, and the economy, with vulnerable communities most at risk.

To address these challenges, the City has implemented two key climate policies:

- **Climate Emergency Action Plan** – Targets a 50% reduction in carbon pollution by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2050
- **Climate Change Adaptation Strategy** – Focuses on reducing climate risks and protecting people, ecosystems, and infrastructure

Though 90% of residents are concerned about climate change, only 1 in 10 can identify its top local causes, underscoring the need for public awareness.



Bridging the Climate Knowledge Gap

The Role of UBC Sustainability Ambassadors:

- A leadership initiative for students passionate about sustainability
- Provides experiential learning through education and hands-on projects

The Climate Outreach Cohort is a specialized team within the Ambassadors Program focused on climate education. The Cohort:

- Was formed with support from the City of Vancouver
- Bridged this gap by educating the public on local climate causes and solutions



Climate Outreach Booth

Goals:

- Educate the public on local climate hazards, causes, and solutions
- Invite members of the public to participate in interactive trivia and discussions
- Improve climate literacy and inspire community action

Tools for outreach:

- Tri-Pillar Display – including key facts about climate change & trivia
- Informative climate action takeaways - with tangible local actions residents can take
- Climate action colouring sheets for kids
- Business Cards with ways to connect to the City for more climate news & events



Have you seen these climate actions around Vancouver?



Climate change is one of the top issues of our time and requires transformative change globally.

Governments, organizations, and individuals will all need to take part in bold climate actions. **But there's hope!** You can see evidence of local climate actions here and now. Do you see any of these climate actions as you walk or roll through Vancouver?



Heat pumps

They heat and cool buildings year-round, while using 33-50% less energy than electric baseboards or gas furnaces.



Car shares

Evo and Modo provide members access to many different types of vehicles that can be used when they're needed.



EV charging

Easily accessible electric vehicle (EV) charging stations allow more people to feel comfortable making the switch from gas to an electric vehicle.



Cooling and clean air centres

Cooling and clean air centres have filtered and air-conditioned spaces that anyone can visit during extreme heat and air quality events.



Rain gardens

Rain gardens capture and store rainwater, reducing the potential for urban flooding. They improve the water quality by cleaning rainwater before it enters waterways and provide habitat for birds, bees, bats, and bugs!



Complete Walkable Neighbourhoods

These communities are planned so daily needs (like housing, shops, offices, childcare, or community facilities) are nearby and more easily accessed without a car. Reduced vehicle travel means cleaner air and less carbon pollution.



Bus lanes

They give buses priority over regular traffic and parking, allowing our streets to move more people, more sustainably.



Trees

Trees capture carbon, keep us cool on hot days, and clean the air. The urban forest is also home to a range of birds and small animals.



Stay up-to-date with climate action in Vancouver by signing up for our Greenest City newsletter or follow us @greenestcity on Instagram, Facebook, and X.



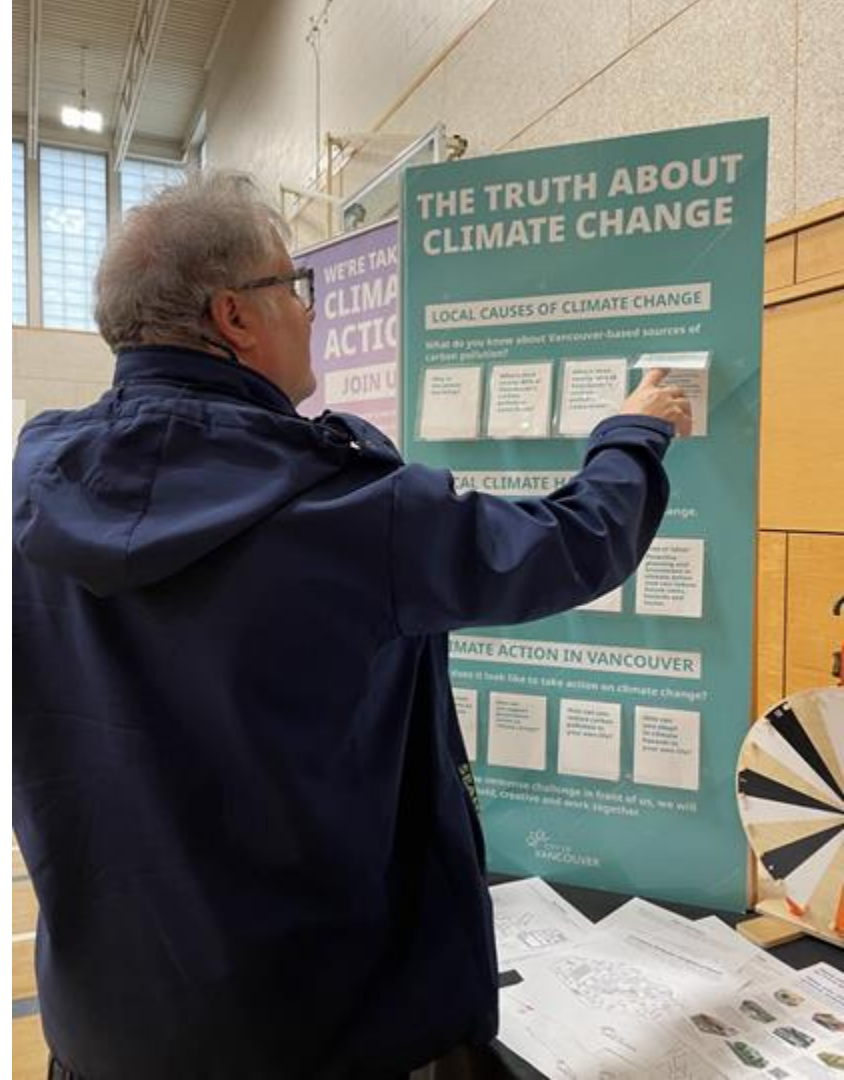
Where we went & who we spoke to

Between Oct 2024 - Now:

- We attended community centres and local events across the City
- Neighbourhoods included West Side, South Vancouver, Downtown, East & Central Vancouver
- 11 activations in total

We reached a diverse audience, including:

- Families
- Seniors
- Youth
- Those unfamiliar with Vancouver's climate policies, as well as the already-engaged



Observations: Climate Change Knowledge

Most Common Themes:

- Energy sources
- Electric vehicles and batteries
- Affordability

Existing knowledge:

- It's real
- Caused by humans
- Impacts they can see & feel (e.g. sea level rise & higher temperatures)
- Familiar with some solutions (e.g. walk, bike, bus more instead of driving)

Gaps:

- Less familiar with certain causes and solutions (e.g. building emissions, heat pumps)
- Benefits of some actions (e.g. complete walkable neighbourhoods)



Observations: About Ourselves & Surprises

- Surprised to learn elementary students were very knowledgeable
- It's hard to convey complex concepts simply!
- Parents with children were easier to talk to because of the kids activities
- Harder to have conversations with just adults



Successes and Challenges

Successes

- ~550 people reached
- Spoke with people from diverse backgrounds and knowledge of climate
- Trivia sparked conversations of all kinds

Challenges

- Lower foot traffic at some locations
- Difficulty getting people to connect to City channels for news and updates (newsletter, social media)
- Occasional misinformation





Difference made in the Community

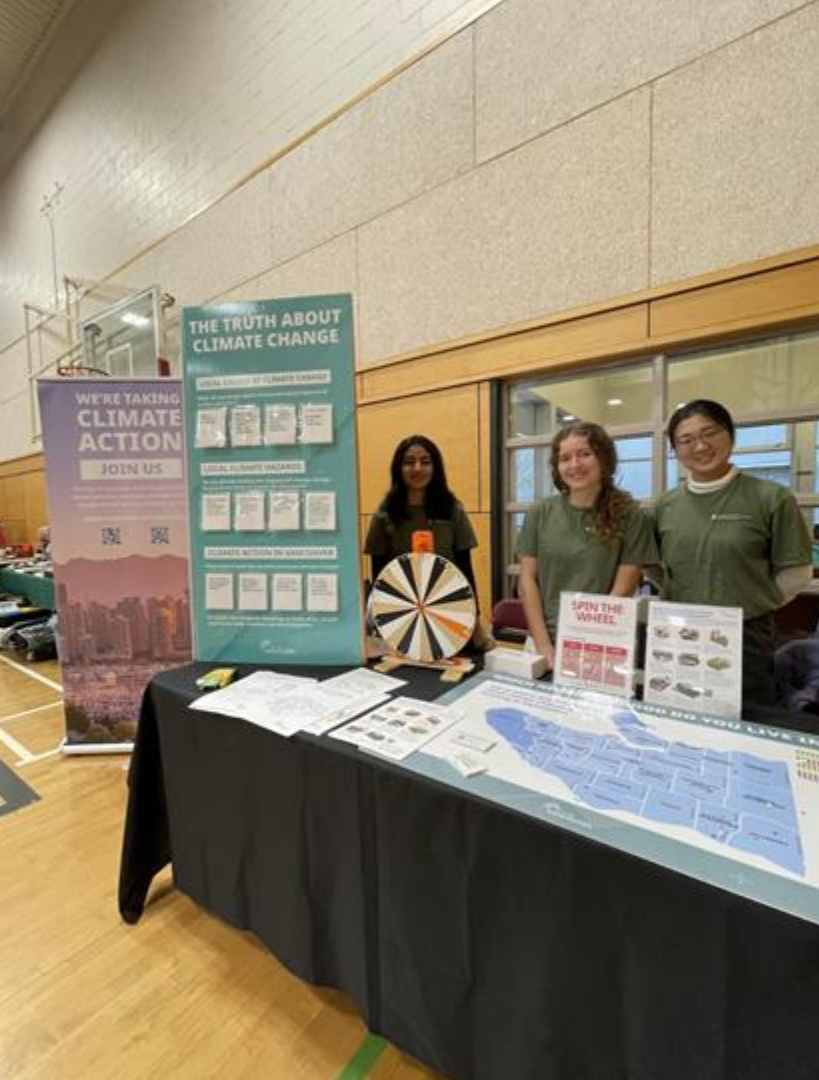
1. Increased Awareness

- Causes of carbon pollution in Vancouver
- What climate actions are
- City of Vancouver's Climate Emergency Action Plan & Climate Change Adaptation Strategy



1. A step in the right direction

- Planted the seed on actions they can take in everyday life & their communities
- Offering hope



Value Gained

- **Courage to start conversations with anyone**
- **Knowing when to elaborate & when to give key takeaways**
- **Understanding various stances on energy sources, climate change, climate action**
- **Inspiration to pursue climate-oriented careers**



Our Key Takeaways

1

Any conversation
about climate change
can be a good starting
point

2

Benefits of having
climate change
conversations go both
ways

3

Climate change
requires systemic
change; but everyone
can play a role



Key Recommendations for the City of Vancouver

- 1 Communicate more about how climate change and affordability intersect
- 2 Educate about energy sources
- 3 Bring more conversations to youth (ex. university students) & encourage climate-related educations & careers



Thank You!

Any Questions?





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