



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COHORT

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PARTNER ORGANIZATION: FALSE CREEK FRIENDS, RAINCOAST CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

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Introduction

Once a key location of social gathering and spiritual connection, and source of sustenance for the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples, False Creek is much more than a waterbody that cuts through the heart of downtown Vancouver. Rather, it is an area which continues to hold considerable social and cultural value for residents of so called “Vancouver”, but which is simultaneously characterized by a complex history of **Indigenous displacement, rapid industrialization, colonial disruption, and marine degradation**. False Creek continues to face multiple threats today; **rising sea levels, pollution and rapidly degrading water quality** to name a few. An estimated 674,000 cubic meters of raw sewage and runoff is drained into False Creek annually, raising concerns regarding the spread of water borne diseases. Moreover, results from a water quality test conducted by local marine researchers found that over 25,000 microplastics were detected within samples from the waterbody (Cruickshank. Li, 2018). Despite the social and environmental challenges that continue to affect False Creek, the area is beaming with possibility and potential for achieving increased **socio-ecological justice via conservation through reconciliation, increased youth and community engagement**, and a radical reimagination of the city’s ecological and infrastructural relationship with water, land and community.

The Environmental Justice cohort’s pedagogical approach is grounded in critical engagements with knowledge production that reflects a commitment to social, environmental and epistemic justice, and is rooted in **place-based learning, public engagement, and ecological rehabilitation**. It is within this context that ambassadors in this cohort will examine the entangled histories and impacts of **knowledge production, epistemic violence, and environmental racism**, with a key focus on how Western epistemologies have systematically erased Indigenous and local knowledges in False Creek and beyond.

In collaboration with ‘False Creek Friends Society’ and Raincoast Conservation Foundation, this cohort shall engage in activities oriented around place-based learning, strategic community engagement, and citizen science, to promote the rehabilitation of False Creek, increase the public’s understanding of area’s long and complex history, and cultivate more reciprocal and traditionally informed relationships with the water. By liaising with local educators, scientists, Indigenous representatives, community mobilizers and researchers, the cohort will support the central goal of achieving ‘**Urban Marine Park**’ status for False Creek by 2030, contributing to a future for the area that is ecologically and socially just!



False Creek Friends Mission Statement

False Creek Friends Society works to restore the False Creek marine environment in alignment with First Nations principles of land stewardship, reciprocal values and marine science, with recognition and respect for the presence and rights of all people to enjoy and use False Creek in sound and healthy environmental ways. The work of the Environmental Justice Cohort will support the activities, goals and initiatives of False Creek Friends, with the goal of achieving 'Urban Marine Park' status for False Creek by 2030.

Raincoast Conservation Foundation Vision & Mandate

Raincoast Conservation is a team of conservationists and scientists empowered by their research to protect the lands, waters and wildlife of coastal British Columbia. They use rigorous, peer-reviewed science and community engagement to further their conservation objectives. The foundation calls this approach informed advocacy. The Raincoast mandate is to investigate, inform and inspire. They; **investigate** coastal species and processes; **inform** by bringing science to decision-makers and communities; and **inspire** action to protect wildlife and wildlife habitats. The vision of Raincoast Conservation is for coastal British Columbia to protect the habitats and resources of umbrella species, and believe that this approach will safeguard all species, people, and ecological processes that exist at different scales.

UBC Context

Several key frameworks and action plans have been used to form the foundation for this cohort's curriculum, learning objectives, and pedagogies. While this list is not exhaustive, it provides a structure to better understand how this cohort of the Sustainability Ambassadors program will support the advancement of specific the following goals and targets:

Sustainable Development Goals

SDG 4 - Quality Education: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

- Target 4.7: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development



SDG 6 - Clean Water & Sanitation: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

- Target 6.3: By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally
- Target 6.6: By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes

SDG 13 - Climate Action: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

- Target 13.3: Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning

SDG 14 - Life Below Water: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

- Target 14.1: Prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution
- Target 14.2: Sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration to achieve healthy and productive oceans

Sustainability Hub Strategic Plan

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

Research Excellence:

- Goal 10: Advance scholarship and disseminate knowledge on climate emergency action, biodiversity, resilient communities and the circular economy

Local and Global Engagement

- Goal 13: Build strong, diverse, supportive and reciprocal relationships with local and regional communities to mobilize for climate action and sustainability
- Goal 15: Foster engagement that invites courageous dialogue and motivates urgent and intentional action to address pressing sustainability challenges
- Goal 16: Through research, learning and engagement, work in service with equity seeking individuals, communities and groups to reduce risk and accelerate climate and sustainability solutions for collective and global wellbeing

UBC Indigenous Strategic Plan

Goal 3: Moving research forward

Support research initiatives that are reciprocal, community-led, legitimize Indigenous ways of knowing and promote Indigenous people's self-determination

Goal 4: Indigenizing our curriculum

Include Indigenous ways of knowing, culture, histories, experiences and worldviews in curriculum delivered across faculties, programs and campuses



Government of Canada “Commitments for Nature”

Alongside 195 other countries, Canada signed the [‘Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework’](#) in 2023, formally committing to protect 30% of the planet’s marine and terrestrial waterbodies by 2030. The government of Canada has committed to achieve this same goal within Canada, and the Environmental Justice Cohort will support the actualization of this goal by facilitating community-based learning and engagement activities to eventually attain formal park status for False Creek; subsequently providing it with federal environmental protection.

Learning Objectives

Over the 8-month period, ambassadors in this cohort will engage in skills-based workshops, collaborative resource production and educational module development, and place-based learning activities, designed to; develop their intersectional and critical thinking; strengthen their interpersonal skills (i.e. communication, collaboration, adaptability); and strategically apply their learnings and competencies to meaningfully contribute to community education and environmental justice in False Creek. It is anticipated that by the end of the program, ambassadors will have developed knowledge and skills across the following areas:

1. **Critical and Intersectional Understanding of Environmental Issues**
 - a. Demonstrate a strong understanding of environmental justice as an intersectional issue, particularly exploring how the climate and environmental crises are intimately connected to Indigenous displacement, colonialism, capitalism, race, gender, etc.
 - b. Analyze how urbanization and industrialization have affected marine bodies and aquatic ecosystems, with a focus on False Creek.
 - c. Form critical and nuanced perspectives on academia, knowledge production and educational pedagogies, especially regarding;
 - i. How, where and by whom knowledge is produced
 - ii. The impacts of epistemic violence (this being the intentional destruction and suppression of knowledge and history, especially that of marginalized communities, by dominant institutions or oppressive regimes) on social and environmental justice in local and international contexts
 - iii. How to balance Western science and non-Western/Traditional knowledge systems within academia and climate-related efforts
2. **Development of Social and Ambassadorial Skills**
 - a. Sharpen key skills including leadership, communication, interpersonal engagement, resource production and more
 - b. Form more complex understandings of their own positionalities, and how their lived experiences shape their understanding of justice-related concepts and engagements within the field



Ambassador Projects

1. Creation & Facilitation of Place-based Engagement Activities & Workshops

Ambassadors in this cohort will research, co-develop, and support the facilitation of engagement and educational-based community programs and activities, including

1. Guided and Digitized Tours of False Creek
2. Interactive Community Workshops
3. "Creaky Cruises" of False Creek
4. Water Testing Activities

These activities will cover the social, political and ecological dimensions of False Creek's extensive history, and the impacts these histories have had on the land, water and communities surrounding False Creek. Working in teams, ambassadors will create and facilitate place-based engagement and learning opportunities for the local community within three key focus areas, these being:

1. Traditional knowledge: False Creek Before Contact
2. Environmental Racism: False Creek Under Colonial contact
3. Science and Community Engagement: Environmental Rehabilitation & Building a Vision for the Future

2. Development of K-12 Environmental Learning & Engagement Modules

Embedded within the workshops, tours and activities mentioned above, ambassadors in this cohort will develop key learning modules that will supplement science and environmental-based learning modules within the provincial learning curriculum

Applying various learning frameworks and pedagogies, Ambassadors will explore the BC Curriculum learning objectives and core competencies through a mapping exercise that highlights connections to environmental learning for K-12 educators.

DISCLAIMER: The projects undertaken by this cohort may change in response to shifting partner interests and evolving goals.





References

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