

Appendix D

Climate Justice Backgrounder

The following backgrounder document was prepared by the Task Force's Climate Justice sub-working group to support the other working groups in embedding a climate justice lens through their recommendation development.

Defining Climate Justice

Climate justice refers to the inequities associated with the causes, impacts and solutions to climate change.

The climate crisis is rooted in the long-standing and ongoing exploitation of the planet and the world's marginalized communities, including but not limited to people in the Global South, Black, Indigenous and racialized communities and the poor. The degradation of our climate is a direct result of the systems of racism, colonialism and classism that neglect to value and care for these people.

Our economic system prioritizes profit over the wellbeing of people and the environment, allowing a small number of individuals to amass immense wealth at the expense of the many. By devaluing the lives of people of colour, racism has enabled corporations to inflict severe social and environmental damage because the impacts of natural resource extraction and extreme weather events primarily fall on Black and Brown communities. Colonialism has enabled climate catastrophe through the dispossession of Indigenous territories for extractive industries. In order to truly mitigate the climate crisis, we must work on undoing these systems of oppression that enable exploitation to occur.

Climate change has a "[multiplier effect](#)," meaning that its impacts, such as extreme weather, famine, forced migration and armed conflict, will exacerbate existing injustices and inequalities. The costs of climate change are unevenly distributed with already marginalized groups bearing the burdens while having contributed the least to the crisis. Climate justice must be considered within today's context of multiple intersecting crises - the pandemic, racial injustice and massive wealth inequality - which make certain populations increasingly vulnerable.

Climate solutions often threaten the same communities that are exploited by extractive industries and made vulnerable by climate impacts. Because of existing power imbalances, solutions will inevitably cause further harm to marginalized peoples if justice is not prioritized. Corporations seeking to profit from the climate crisis endanger these communities with "false solutions" and greenwashing. For example, carbon offset schemes often involve acquiring Indigenous land without consent so that companies can continue emitting carbon pollution. Another example of a climate solution with social consequences is carbon taxes. Without adjusting for inequities, carbon taxes disproportionately burden the poor because energy is a bigger proportion of their budget. Further, the extraction of minerals for renewable energy and battery production is often plagued with human rights issues, such as poor working conditions, health hazards, environmental degradation and violence towards local people opposing the extraction.

While the transition to new energy systems is already underway, justice is not guaranteed. Whether or not justice is prioritized will determine if climate action reduces or amplifies existing inequalities - a matter of life and death for more than a billion people.

Climate justice can be broken down into three components:

1. Distributive justice concerns the equitable distribution of the burdens and benefits of climate change and climate action. This includes:

- o Addressing the disproportionate impact of past and current fossil fuel extraction and climate change effects on marginalized groups, including climate migrants and refugees, Indigenous, Black and People of Colour (BIPOC) communities, low income people, [women](#), [LGBTQ+ people](#), people with disabilities and those on the frontline of environmental devastation.
 - o Mitigating the impacts of current and future climate action and the energy transition on affected groups, especially systemically marginalized groups, so as not to exacerbate inequalities. This includes ensuring that no one is left behind during the transition away from the fossil fuel economy and that climate action does not lead to further exploitation of communities during the development of new projects. Climate solutions must respect communities' rights to free, prior and informed consent and ensure human rights and working conditions are respected across the supply chain. The biggest impacts will naturally fall on those already most vulnerable; this must be avoided.
 - o Assigning costs of climate mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage to the countries and groups that have contributed to and profited most from the crisis, including Global North countries, corporations and the wealthy.
2. Procedural justice highlights the right to a fair process for stakeholders to take part equitably in the decision-making process. Those most impacted by climate change and climate action should participate in decision-making, especially around issues that affect them directly. Decision-making processes should be representative of marginalized communities.

Procedural justice also requires preventing interests that run counter to the community's interests from influencing decisions. Corporations should be removed from decision-making relating to the public interest.

It is important to recognize that representation can cause much harm if it is disingenuous. Procedural justice is not just about giving communities a seat at the table. The process must give communities actual power over decisions made. If done improperly, representation can be tokenizing, insulting and exclusive of critical voices and can create a false sense of legitimacy. Real procedural justice requires:

- o Willingness from the beginning to truly listen and make significant changes as needed.
- o Not sidelining perspectives that are contrary to the status quo or raise challenging questions and demands.
- o Accountability mechanisms to follow up on points raised and commitments made.
- o Adequately compensating people for their time and contributions.

We must understand that building reciprocal relationships built on trust with Indigenous communities will take time given the ongoing and violent history of colonialism. We need to be prepared to take the time to build trust and be open to engaging in complex and, at times, uncomfortable conversations. We must create space for the heterogeneity of Indigenous perspectives, which may in some cases conflict with one another. Part of the role of the Indigenous Engagement working group will be to provide guidance to UBC on how to appropriately engage Indigenous communities around climate change and climate action. Working Groups should consider how to incorporate opportunities for

Indigenous engagement into recommendations and allow flexibility in recommendations to ensure this engagement can be integrated.

Procedural justice will also need to be considered in the long-term implementation of the Climate Emergency recommendations.

3. Restorative justice aims to repair the harm done to individuals and groups by undoing existing inequalities and existing systems of oppression. Climate solutions can simultaneously reduce emissions and contribute to:
 - o Transferring power and autonomy to local communities over corporations, including respecting self-determination for Indigenous peoples and supporting community ownership of climate solutions.
 - o Ensuring peoples' basic needs are met, including food, water, housing, healthcare and education.
 - o Addressing existing wealth inequalities (e.g. redistributing wealth) and racial inequalities (e.g. reparations to BIPOC communities and the Global South).
 - o Addressing flaws in the dominant economic system by prioritizing the needs of people and planet over profit and moving towards a more democratic, regenerative and sustainable economy.
 - o Amplifying BIPOC leaders and communities.
 - o Respecting Indigenous knowledge systems and supporting Indigenous solutions.
 - o Contributing to collective health and wellbeing.
 - o Improving inclusion and accessibility for disadvantaged groups, such as immigrants and people with physical and mental disabilities.
 - o Creating opportunities for decent work with livable wages, including historically undervalued work such as care work.

Just climate solutions must also align with the science of a 1.5°C world. Keeping warming within 1.5°C is necessary to prevent tipping points that will lead to irreversible warming and mitigate widespread drought, flooding and resource depletion which would make many parts of the global South uninhabitable. This requires:

- o Drastic emissions reductions across all economic sectors: Globally, the 1.5°C pathway means we need a 45% reduction in net global emissions by 2030 and to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050; all relative to a 2010 baseline. Below 1.5°C is possible but requires radical action now to avoid reliance on risky technology. Staying below 1.5°C requires rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban, infrastructure, and industrial systems. These transitions are unprecedented in terms of scale, but not necessarily speed, and imply deep emissions reductions in all sectors.
- o A transition to a fossil free economy: Current policies related to fossil fuel extraction and production place the world on a trajectory to [more than double](#) the allowable emissions that would be compatible with a 1.5°C scenario in 2030 (see the [Production Gap Report](#)). Climate leadership requires an end to the exploration and expansion of fossil fuel projects, a managed wind-down of fossil fuel production and a just transition that puts workers and marginalized communities first as we move towards alternative energy sources. [Research](#) shows that the carbon embedded in existing fossil fuel reserves will take us far beyond safe climate limits. Not only is new exploration and production incompatible with limiting warming to well below 2°C and 1.5°C, but much existing fossil fuel infrastructure will need to be phased-out long before the end of its lifespan. In order to allow a transition to a fossil free economy, fossil fuel companies must be stripped of their lobbying power and influence over policy decisions.

A note on complexity: We want to acknowledge that climate justice is more complex and multifaceted than can fit into any one document. The information we have presented above derives from a Western framework, and we must be open to other frameworks that challenge our thinking. In order to truly practice climate justice, we need to support peoples' capacity to understand and critically engage with its complexity. Throughout the process, we will need to preserve space to dive deeper into these complexities and paradoxes with integrity, so that the discussions do not settle in simplistic solutions.

Climate Justice at UBC

At UBC, climate justice cannot be limited to campus populations but must extend to all communities impacted by our activities. UBC is not isolated from the world around us; what we do on campus has far-reaching impacts on broader society. Some examples of this include the way in which UBC's public communications influence societal discourse, the sourcing of materials and products used on campus, UBC's approach towards engagement with external communities and partners, the University's investments and donor relationships and the application of research findings.

Climate justice needs to be integrated across all aspects of the university, from how decisions are made to how research and teaching is conducted and how students, staff and faculty are treated, as well as how the University presents itself to the world and its external partners. Climate justice must be embedded within operations, integrated across academic disciplines and championed by community members with diverse roles and backgrounds.

Support for climate justice must go beyond education, towards personal understanding and action. It requires equipping people with the capacity to recognize their own complicity and to engage in difficult conversations that challenge existing structures, as well as learning how to enact change and shift power dynamics within society.

Climate justice cannot be limited to supporting new projects but must also involve phasing out harmful initiatives. This will involve uncomfortable conversations and decisions around ending relationships with exploitative institutions such as fossil fuel and mining companies.

UBC can advance climate justice by supporting students, staff and faculty already working on climate justice; encouraging and supporting more people to understand and work on climate justice; mandating climate justice to be considered in relevant policies and processes; and building relationships with climate justice experts and organizations beyond campus.

All Climate Emergency Working Groups should incorporate into their recommendations as many of the following strategies as possible:

- o Giving license to student, staff, faculty and departments to work on climate justice projects, activism, advocacy and community engagement. This requires ensuring community members are supported rather than silenced for speaking out about controversial issues and creating space for difficult conversations about UBC's complicity in climate injustice.
- o Adequately compensating students, staff and faculty working on climate justice - especially BIPOC individuals - through appropriate compensation, such as honoraria, course credit, reductions in other duties and consideration

in tenure and promotion processes.

- o Resourcing climate justice research, education and engagement projects through funding opportunities and awards with a focus on projects that have BIPOC leadership.
- o Providing resources for students, staff and faculty to develop the capacity to apply a climate justice lens through training resources and learning modules.
- o Embedding requirements to use a climate justice lens into existing structures and processes such as applications for research and teaching grants, curriculum approvals, performance reviews, partnership agreements and decision-making frameworks.
- o Hiring climate justice experts, with expertise being understood to include traditional knowledge, lived experience and community engaged scholarship; priority to BIPOC folks.
- o Listening to Indigenous, Black, racialized and other marginalized communities, both on and off campus, and responding to their demands and requests for support. This includes making space for these communities to be heard even when the topic may be controversial or uncomfortable.

Guiding Questions for Working Groups

Research

- o How can our research with BIPOC communities be reciprocal rather than extractive of their knowledge and labour?
- o What resources or training can be developed to support faculty in applying a climate justice lens to their research?
- o How can a climate justice lens be integrated into applications for research funding?
- o How can we increase funding and support for climate justice research projects?
- o How can we prioritize climate justice research in tenure, promotion and hiring processes?
- o How should we approach existing research projects that are counter to climate justice? (e.g. projects in partnership with fossil fuel companies and other extractive industries)
- o How can we better support research based on traditional knowledge and community engaged scholarship?

Teaching and Learning

- o How can we integrate climate justice into the curriculum across all disciplines? How can we better prepare students for careers that contribute towards a just and sustainable future?
- o What resources or training can be developed to support faculty in teaching students about climate justice and civic engagement?
- o How can a climate justice lens be integrated into applications for educational grants and curriculum proposals?
- o How can we increase funding and support for climate justice education projects?
- o How can we prioritize climate justice education in tenure, promotion and hiring processes?
- o How should we approach courses and programs that are counter to climate justice? (e.g. mining and geological engineering programs)
- o How can we incorporate traditional knowledge and lived experiences into education as a valid form of knowledge? (e.g. hosting guest lectures)
- o How can we give students course credit for community engagement and climate justice activism?

Community Engagement and Wellbeing

- o How can our community engagement move towards reciprocity and relationshipbuilding?
- o How can we work towards an understanding of wellbeing that is grounded in a decolonial and intersectional approach to health? How can we support culturally appropriate forms of healing?
- o How can we shift our focus from the individual towards collective health and wellbeing?
- o How can we amplify the leadership of communities we are engaging with in ways that aren't tokenizing?
- o How can we ensure students, faculty and staff - especially BIPOC individuals - are adequately compensated for climate justice work?
- o What type of resources can be developed to support students, staff, faculty and departments in understanding climate justice (including its complexities) and being empowered to take action? How can we hire or partner with climate justice experts to develop these resources?
- o How can we support civic engagement and activism?
- o How can UBC support community members impacted by climate events?
- o How can we empower community members to engage in climate justice? How can we create incentives and give license for students, faculty and staff to engage in climate justice?
- o How can we create space for community members to engage in conversation with one another to process climate grief, reconcile with UBC's and their own complicity in climate injustice, and explore ways to take action?
- o How can we support grassroots climate solutions and community involvement in decision-making?

Beyond Campus

- o How can we ensure UBC's partnerships beyond campus align with climate justice?
- o Do UBC's current partnerships embody the principles we need to enact for a climate just future? What partnerships do we need to end?
- o What partnerships can we build to move us quickly towards a just and sustainable fossil fuel free economy? How can we work with Indigenous communities, non-profit organizations and community organizing groups?
- o How can we mobilize our community to take action on advocacy issues related to climate and justice beyond our campus? How can we support the translation of climate justice research to policy?
- o How can UBC influence social and political discourse around climate justice through its external communications?
- o How can UBC advocate for policy change to support climate justice?
- o How can UBC share its research and teaching materials (and other resources) with communities beyond campus?

Operations (Climate Action Plan)

- o How can we ensure construction and building materials are ethically sourced? (e.g. respecting human rights, good working conditions and community consent)
- o How can we ensure any carbon offsets respect local/Indigenous communities' consent?
- o How can we procure alternative energy from community- and Indigenous-owned sources?
- o How can we support affordable housing at/near UBC as a strategy for low carbon transportation?
- o How can we move towards a 100% fossil free campus?

How Does the Climate Emergency Declaration relate to Climate Justice?

- o Aligning with the science: “The need for drastic emissions reductions and a decisive shift away from fossil fuels toward alternative energy sources, as laid out by the science of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the UN Production Gap Report and the Paris Agreement, to be achieved via rapid and far-reaching transformations across all economic sectors.”
- o Indigenous rights: “That meaningful climate action must take active steps to support and amplify Indigenous Peoples’ human rights. This includes respecting Indigenous self-determination and implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). British Columbia has become the first province to adopt and commit to implementing UNDRIP, which outlines the minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of Indigenous Peoples. As an institution located within BC on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy’əm (Musqueam) and Syilx (Okanagan) Peoples, the University has a responsibility to align its policies, actions, and investments with UNDRIP and the BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.”
- o Disproportionate impacts on marginalized communities: “That Indigenous and marginalized communities bear the harmful impacts of fossil fuel extraction and climate destruction while being least responsible for the global acceleration of the climate crisis.”
- o Ongoing and far-reaching impacts: “Therefore, we join with other universities and communities in declaring a climate emergency, while recognizing that this emergency has been experienced for decades by communities around the world, in particular by Indigenous Peoples. UBC acknowledges the urgency of the climate crisis and will directly face its challenges. At this pivotal moment, the decisions and actions we take today will reverberate beyond our own borders and lifetimes.”
- o Scope of the consultation: “The purpose of this consultation will be to provide the UBC community with opportunities to come together to consider the full scope of our impact and align UBC’s emissions reductions plans with 1.5oC; to embrace the need for a managed decline of fossil fuel use and a rapid and just transition to a sustainable economy that also aligns with UNDRIP; to infuse climate justice throughout our activities, priorities, and decision-making frameworks; and to support community coping and adaptation in the face of climate crisis.”
- o Procedural justice: “The process must exemplify dignity, justice, and equity. In doing so, we will create intentional spaces for UBC’s marginalized communities on campus and centre their voices in the development of recommendations.”
- o Integration into policies: “Embedding climate justice into other UBC wide policies and plans that have not previously used a climate justice lens, such as policies related to health and wellbeing and investments.”
- o Restorative justice: “Enacting climate solutions that reflect our commitment to UNDRIP and the human rights of Indigenous Peoples,” and “Building just and inclusive climate solutions that work towards dismantling historic and existing barriers faced by marginalized communities.”

Additional Resources

- o <https://ubccclimatehub.ca/project/climate-justice-101/>
- o <https://climatejusticealliance.org>
- o <https://www.peoplesdemands.org/>
- o <https://decolonialfutures.net/>