

Climate Emergency at UBC

Executive Summary 2021-22



Land Acknowledgment

UBC is situated within the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the x^wməθk^wəy^əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wxwú7mesh (Squamish), Sel̓íl̓wítulh (Tsleil-Waututh) and Syilx (Okanagan) Nations.

COVER IMAGE

There is no planet B / Respect your mother

Credit:  Chris Yakimov

Introduction

UBC's response to the climate emergency has grown in 2021/2022 across its operations, academic initiatives, and partnerships.

Progress includes material reductions in UBC's direct greenhouse gas emissions and ambitious new plans to tackle indirect emissions. New hiring, hiring clusters, courses, certificates, programs, public events and faculty-led action show the increased academic emphasis on the defining challenge of our age. Climate-related partnerships and collaborations are flourishing within the university community and between UBC and the wider world. Work to embed climate justice within the university's fabric is proceeding.

That said, there is still much to do in implementing the recommendations made in the 2021 Climate Emergency Task Force (CETF) report. As the climate crisis continues apace, exacting its toll locally here in BC, and globally — most brutally on those who have done the least to contribute to global warming — the timeline for action must be accelerated if we are to make enough of a difference in time. As António Guterres, the United Nations Secretary-General of the United Nations, [says](#), "We need decisive action now to avert climate catastrophe. And for that we need solidarity. Saving this and future generations is a common responsibility."

This executive summary is the tip of the iceberg, a distillation of scores and scores of climate-change related initiatives across UBC. Climate change has been a priority for UBC for many years, and many initiatives began well before the CETF and its report. Many other initiatives are a direct result of the added urgency from the Declaration and CETF. For a more comprehensive view of work being done at UBC in response to and related to the climate emergency, please read the full report [Climate Emergency Task Force Report: Report on Progress 2021-22](#).

Summary of Progress

UBC declared a Climate Emergency in 2019, after which a Climate Emergency Task Force (CETF) made up of students, faculty, and staff from both campuses undertook an extensive community consultation process and produced the CETF report. This report identified nine strategic priorities and 28 recommendations. Select examples of 2021-22 actions for each priority area are listed below, drawn from the full report.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY I - Operationalize UBC's commitments to climate justice: Support climate leadership and initiatives led by Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour (IBPOC)

- UBC intensified its work on a suite of anti-racism actions, including the establishment of an Anti-Racism and Inclusive Excellence Task Force.
- Multiple public events from the Climate Hub and Sustainability Hub showcased IBPOC climate initiatives on and off campus.
- The Sustainability Hub's Climate Emergency Senior Co-Managers strengthened relationships and collaborations with IBPOC community members.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY II - Demonstrate institutional leadership on climate justice

- UBC Investment Management Trust developed the Responsible Investing Strategic Plan with the goal to reduce the portfolio's carbon emissions by 45% by 2030, and increased fossil fuel free and low carbon investment strategies to over \$400 million — representing approximately 40% of the portfolio's public equity holdings.
- Disbursement of a \$1.5 million Climate Emergency Fund accelerated seven student focused projects including a new Climate Emergency Scholars Group in the Public Scholars Initiative; a new Collaborative PH.D. on the Climate Emergency; and an expanded Social Impact Lab at the Centre for Community Engaged Learning. An enhanced climate focus was developed for existing programs such as SEEDS, Sustainability Scholars and Sustainability Fellows. Grants also supported student led work at the Climate Hub and Climate Justice UBC.
- The Department of Geography unveiled the Centre for Climate Justice led by noted activists and climate leaders Naomi Klein and Avi Lewis.

Summary of Progress

STRATEGIC PRIORITY III - Establish mechanisms and processes that ensure Indigenous perspectives, communities and worldviews shape the development and implementation of climate-related initiatives and policies

- Inaugural Indigenous Strategic Initiatives (ISI) Fund launched to implement the UBC Indigenous Strategic Plan (ISP), increasing capacity for Indigenous perspectives to shape climate policies through new grants.
- Sustainability Hub's Strategic Plan 2022-27 weaves ISP Actions throughout, highlighting intersections between Indigenous rights and climate justice, one example of how to integrate these linked issues.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY IV - Expand, strengthen and centre climate research at UBC

- Climate Emergency research initiatives from faculty included a 2-day symposium and the UBCO Climate/Justice Teach-In.
- Student Climate Emergency research initiatives included the Student Climate Research Slamposium and Climate Justice Research Collaborative.
- More and more research groups and centres addressed climate change and climate justice.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY V - Foster a culture of engagement & advocacy on climate action

- UBC conducted its first open delegate selection process for the climate Conference of the Parties (COP), and hosted public events before and during COP26.
- UBC's first Climate Emergency Week organized by the Sustainability Hub, Climate Hub, and AMS engaged the Vancouver campus with a pop-up tent, webinars, nature and wellness walks, art events and seminars.
- The Sustainability Hub launched the popular Climate Justice Series examining climate justice from local and

global perspectives and reaching thousands of students, faculty, staff, and community members. A spectrum of students, professors, alumni, elected politicians, writers, and activists spoke at ten webinars.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY VI - Support community wellbeing in the face of the climate crisis

- UBC Climate Hub's climate anxiety work included a Climate Wellbeing Engagement Network, Community Chats, Climate Wellbeing Resource Kit and a Climate Wellbeing Series.
- UBC Wellbeing's annual Move UBC campaign highlighted the intersections between physical activity, climate action and social justice, encouraging UBC communities to explore ways of moving that positively impact our minds, bodies, and the planet.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY VII - Expand climate education opportunities and resources for the UBC community and broader public

- Sixteen Climate Education Grants were awarded in 2021 - 2022 to UBC Vancouver faculty members, Climate Teaching Connectors completed its second successful year, and new online resources became available including the Sustainability Dashboards, Climate emergency course listing, and a Climate Justice Toolkit.
- A new Climate Studies and Action Certificate, available to all undergraduates in all disciplines, was approved and started in the fall of 2022.
- An Interdepartmental Climate Action Team was formed, building on and uniting Climate Action Committees or Teams in the UBC Library and Departments of Earth, Oceans and Atmospheric Sciences, Geography, and Asian Studies.

Summary of Progress

STRATEGIC PRIORITY VIII - Develop new and strengthen existing partnerships to tackle the climate emergency

- UBC's President and Vice Chancellor, Santa J. Ono, led the University Climate Change Coalition (UC3), and created a new UC3 Fellows network.
- Community partnerships on the climate emergency significantly expanded through Community-University Engagement Support projects; Living Lab (LL) competition awardees and the first off-campus LL project with Vienna House in east Vancouver; a Build Back Better in the Climate Emergency Roundtable with multiple partners; and expansion of the Sustainability Scholars graduate student internship program with numerous NGOs led climate action projects.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY IX - Accelerate emissions reductions at UBCV and UBCO in response to the climate emergency

- In 2021, UBC achieved a combined 25% reduction in total offsettable greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions at both campuses since 2007. The Vancouver campus recently invested in an expansion of the Bioenergy Research and Demonstration Facility (BRDF). Once the BRDF is fully functional, it is forecasted that campus operational GHG (Scope 1 and 2) reductions will achieve an estimated 60% reduction from the 2007 baseline.
- UBC's two ambitious Climate Action Plans 2030 (CAP 2030) are aiming for an operational GHG (Scope 1 and 2) reduction of 85 for the Vancouver Campus and a 65% reduction for the Okanagan Campus by 2030. Both plans also include a 45% reduction in emissions from extended impact sources (Scope 3 - including commuting, food, business air travel, embodied carbon, waste and materials, and paper) to align with the intent of UBC's Climate Emergency Declaration.