



Environmental Justice Cohort

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Introduction

The current decade has been characterized by devastating **natural disasters**, heightened levels of **carbon emissions** in the atmosphere, and industrial activities that have left bodies of water, land of cultural and historical significance, and the atmosphere significantly damaged and **ecologically degraded**. The climate change intensified **heat dome** that covered Vancouver in the summer of 2021 and claimed the lives of 619 people, and the “**zombie fires**” that continued to burn underground from the summer of 2023 through to the spring of this year provide evidence for the need of urgent and pivotal action to be taken. Although some actions have been taken by the local government to mitigate these issues, comprehensive assessments on the impacts these climate disasters have had on the water and natural world, as well as continued **human-related activity** in **False Creek**, remain limited. This, alongside the propagation of false information regarding the supposed “lack of life” in the Creek, have resulted in the increased vulnerability of the water’s health and quality, and that of the various species that live below the surface.

In collaboration with ‘**False Creek Friends**’, and aligned with key principles of **Indigenous land stewardship**, this cohort shall engage in activities oriented around **research, strategic community engagement and advocacy, and policy recommendation, all in a bid to rehabilitate and protect the water of False Creek**, and the vast array of life that lives below its surface. Alongside the main projects that the cohort will participate in (see below), they will also engage with local educators, climate enthusiasts, and organizations to; develop key skills and competencies that will further their engagement in this field; aid in achieving the goals and objectives of ‘Friends of False Creek’, and gain key theoretical knowledge on the **social, political and economic dimensions that affect environmental justice in False Creek** and Vancouver at large.

False Creek Friends Mission Statement

“We work to restore the False Creek marine environment in alignment with First Nations stewardship 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”.



UBC Context & Connections

Several key frameworks and action plans have been used to form the foundation for this cohort's curriculum and 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 aid in the advancement of the targets and objectives of UBC's Climate Action Plan, the Sustainability Hub, and False Creek Friends.

Sustainable Development Goals

- **SDG 6: 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: 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: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development**
 - Target 14.1 - By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution
 - Target 14.2 - By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order 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
- **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

Learning Objectives

It is anticipated that by the completion of the program, Sustainability Ambassadors in this cohort will have:

1. Gained key factual, theoretical and conceptual information on:
 - a. The social, political and economic history of False Creek, and the implications these factors have had on the local environment
 - b. Traditional Indigenous principles on land stewardship and water management to cultivate more balanced and reciprocal relationships with the natural world
 - c. The biodiversity and various forms of life that live below the surface of False Creek
2. Developed and sharpened key skills and competencies oriented around leadership, community engagement and environmental advocacy to:
 - a. Use the knowledge and information gained to educate the public on the life that exists within the creek, and debunk other false narratives regarding the supposed "lack of life" in the water
 - b. Raise awareness on the urgency required in taking action to protect and partially restore False Creek
3. Deepened their understandings on the processes, considerations and planning that is invested toward policy recommendation and enforcement, urban planning, and water management and sanitation – specifically within the context of the City of Vancouver, and the prospective plans 'False Creek Friends' have for this area

Ambassador Projects

1. Contextualize

- The cohort will conduct a comprehensive multi-stage research project on the social, environmental and economic history of False Creek, and the implications industrial and human-related activities have had on the water, and life below. This report shall additionally consolidate existing content and literature to create a future action plan for rehabilitating the Creek
- This research project could entail:
 - A literature review of existing content regarding the subject
 - Conducting focused group discussions with various community stakeholders and residents around the Creek



- Analysis of data from physical scopes and explorations of the species, biodiversity, pollution, etc. that can be found below the surface of the Creek

2. Engage

- Using the knowledge acquired from their investigation and report, the cohort will:
 - Engage with various local communities to gain insight on the roles Traditional knowledge, place-based oral histories, and lived experience play within an environmental justice context. These will include:
 - First Nations communities, particularly Indigenous youth, whose traditional lands so-called “Vancouver” are situated on
 - Communities surrounding False Creek, particularly China Town, Hogan’s Ally and the Down Town East Side
 - Curate sharable media content, educational/informative resources, and other community-based engagement strategies to:
 - Inform the public of the life that exists within the Creek, dissolving popular narratives that the water is completely dead
 - Incentivize care and a sense of protectiveness for the water and various species that are affected by industrial activities surrounding the Creek
 - Provide clear and realistic steps for various demographics to either, create or engage in various campaigns and projects centered around protecting False Creek, and environmental justice at large

3. Inform

- Support False Creek Friends in conducting baseline research to aid in the creation of a “Pre-Feasibility” report which will support the organization's goal of achieving park status by 2030. The contents of this report will include information and analyses on:
 - The social and environmental history of False Creek
 - An assessment of the ecosystem health, including; baseline studies of the marine environment, water quality, human impacts, and more.
 - Community and stakeholder involvement
 - Adaptive Management
 - Public media for community engagement and as a channel for community awareness, and feedback



Reference

Crawford, T. (2024). "Climate change intensified heat dome, firestorms in Pacific Northwest: study". Available at: <<https://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/climate-change-intensified-heat-dome-firestorms-in-pacific-northwest-study>>. [Accessed: June 14th, 2024]

False Creek Friends. (2023). "False Creek Friends". Available at: <<https://www.falsecreekfriends.org/#>> [Accessed: June 13th, 2024]