

A vibrant, stylized illustration by David La Touche depicting a whimsical landscape where various characters and animals are engaged in creative acts. The scene is composed of bold, flat colors and geometric shapes. In the upper left, a man with a purple hat and a yellow vest holds a paint palette. To his right, a woman with blue hair and glasses holds a large white flower. A large grey rabbit in the center holds a pencil, and a large pink hand on the right holds a red pencil. A large grey wolf at the bottom holds a red pencil, and a large grey bee in the center holds a red pencil. The background features a mountain, trees, and a bird. The overall style is playful and imaginative, with a focus on the creative process.

2023 SUMMARY REPORT

Thank You

We are deeply grateful to the members of the **Climate Justice Study Collective** for sharing their knowledge and time with us and for being a part of this exciting (and at times chaotic) experiment. We have put together this summary of our time together as a way to reflect on what we've learned, compile ideas for the future, and share some of our thinking with a wider circle. We're excited to keep growing the relationships we've built through this collective and to continue investing in community-centered climate justice in Vancouver.



The **Climate Justice Study Collective** is an initiative of the CCJ, in partnership with SFU's Community-Engaged Research Initiative (CERi).

The **UBC Centre for Climate Justice** (CCJ) is an cross-campus research centre situated on UBC's Vancouver campus, on the traditional and unceded territory of the Musqueam people. Inaugurated in November 2021, the CCJ supports collaborative, interdisciplinary, and community-engaged research that advances just and effective climate action. As a Centre for Climate Justice, the CCJ aims to utilize UBC's resources and capacities in service of those already working towards an environmentally just future.

SFU's **Community-Engaged Research Initiative** (CERi) is a project focused on extending community-engaged research to provincial, national and international communities. Based out of the 312 Main co-working space in downtown Vancouver, we function as an infrastructure that supports and advocates for community-engaged research rooted in values of reciprocity, collaboration, equity, justice and social transformation. We do this by strengthening the capacity of SFU's researchers and students to develop meaningful partnerships that are capable of making a positive difference in communities throughout British Columbia and beyond.

Cover imagery by Tanya Korniichuk

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Acknowledgments

1. What is the Climate Justice Study Collective?

The Climate Justice Study Collective (CJSC) was inaugurated in 2022 to support climate justice practitioners and knowledge holders from the greater Vancouver area to engage in collective study with UBC and SFU faculty on what climate justice means in our region, to identify and build connections among disparate climate- and justice-related issues locally, and to forge new research partnerships.

The Climate Justice Study Collective is motivated by the guiding questions:

- How do we build solidarities among diverse movements or initiatives engaged broadly in struggles for climate justice, in order to increase our collective power to make positive change?
- How do we cultivate shared desires and visions of a future world worth fighting for?

Toward these ends, our inaugural cohort of 10 community members and 8 SFU and UBC researchers met monthly to discuss and connect around local issues of climate justice over the course of six months. Members of the collective took turns both leading and co-creating the content of our monthly discussions. Details of our conversations can be found in section 03.

Our thinking together culminated in a community dialogue, *Where Do We Go From Here? Mapping Climate Justice Frontlines in Vancouver*, at the Harbour Centre on May 17th. At this event, members from the Climate Justice Study Collective shared their thinking around climate justice needs in the greater Vancouver area, how climate change is embedded in other systemic crises and oppressions, and what bridges are needed to be built locally – among people, movements, and issues – in order to ensure that justice is centered in climate action. More info can be found in section 04.

The insights from the Climate Justice Study Collective gatherings and public forum will be used to help advise the research agenda of the Centre for Climate Justice moving forward. The CCJ and CERi intend to continue collaborating to host future cohorts of the study collective, with recruitment for a second cohort to begin in Fall 2023.

2. Meet the CJSC

We received strong interest in response to our public call for CJSC cohort members in Fall 2022, with close to 40 applicants. Our cohort members brought a diversity of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives on climate justice to the collective.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS



Robert Nahanee

(he/him) is a Squamish Nation Elder, and has supported Jim Leyden in the Watch House, and with the nation to address the issue of the clear cutting of the forest 🌲 in Squamish traditional territory.



Tara Ehrcke

(they/them) is an educator, teaching secondary math in the Lekwungen speaking territories (Greater Victoria) and facilitating union workshops across the province to colleagues in the BC Teachers' Federation. Tara is currently a member of the BCTF Committee for Action on Social Justice, as well as the BC Federation of Labour Climate Justice & Jobs Committee. A life long trade union activist, Tara is excited to work with others to strengthen relationships between labour and the community so that we can collectively build the power to change the world.



Nicolas Crier

(he/him, Cree) is a Peer Co-Lead, Writer and Research Assistant with the UBC Transformative Health & Justice Research Cluster. This highly innovative group of academics, elders, and community members with Lived Experience are quietly helping to guide bold new conversations on how we as a society can change the outcomes of urgent health and justice determinants such as penal incarceration, social stigmatization and the criminalization of Indigenous Drug Users. In all these efforts, Nicolas realizes that Climate Change Justice is what is going to continue to make them possible for him at all.



Jim Leyden

(he/him) is currently the elder at Kwekwecnewtxw, the Coast Salish watchhouse on Burnaby Mountain as part of his resistance to the TMX Pipeline. He is also involved on a volunteer basis with the setting up of an Aboriginal Council at Oppenheimer Park in the DTES in an effort to support and find solutions for Indigenous people



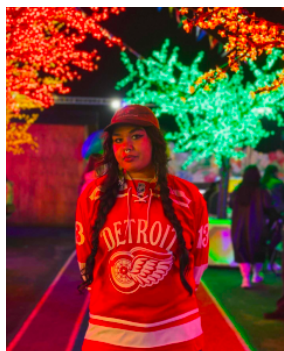
Christine Boyle

(she/her) is a second term City Councillor with OneCity Vancouver. In 2018 Councillor Boyle led Vancouver to declare a Climate Emergency, and since then has led the city's effort to act at the scale of the climate crisis, rooted in equity and justice. Before running for Council Christine spent many years doing climate justice organizing, particularly among diverse faith communities, including at COP21 and the Vatican. She is an ordained United Church minister, and a parent to a kid and a teen.



Cheryl Cameron

(she/her) is a veteran climate organizer, recently resigned from her role as Director of Organizing for Dogwood Initiative. She is well connected in the climate movement, and has taken part in designing and implementing a wide variety of politically oriented campaigns aiming to reign in fossil fuel extraction, ranging from ending fossil fuel subsidies to electoral campaign finance reform. In her youth, Cheryl spent five seasons working on a commercial salmon seine boat on the North Coast, the decline of which incited her passion for environmental activism. Cheryl has 3 adult children, two of whom are professionals focused on climate justice – one as a policy analyst with IISD, another a physicist working at General Fusion working toward longer term clean energy sources.



Janelle Lapointe

(she/her) is an Afro-Indigenous climate justice and Indigenous rights activist from Stelat'en First Nation, currently the interim Director of Public Engagement and Mobilization at the David Suzuki Foundation and a guest on Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) and xʷməθkʷəy̍əm (Musqueam) territories. She leans on her lived experience growing up on her small reserve in Northern British Columbia to ensure that intersectionality is at the forefront of environmental narratives, to build power and help others see their stake in fighting back against the status quo. She has spent the last few years Frontloading* a new mass movement organization, to unite everyday people from Canada, Quebec and many Indigenous Nations across the lands to demand a Green New Deal that takes power from the hands of the billionaires and returns it to us all. (Easy stuff!)



Zoha Faisal

(she/her) is a teenage climate and community organizer residing on the unceded lands of the Katzie, Semiahmoo, and Kwantlen First Nations, so-called “Surrey, B.C.” She is a co-founder of Climate Recentered, a local movement of BIPOC working to build long-term mutual aid projects and communities of care in order to grow climate resilience and action, with racialized and marginalized people leading the charge. She is also a core organizer with Sustainabiliteens, a grassroots organization bringing teenagers together from across the Lower Mainland to organize mass mobilizations and campaigns targeting those responsible for climate injustice.



Meesh QX

(they/them) is an interdisciplinary artist whose work spans visual arts, writing, and performance. Over the past year they’ve been exploring ways that “listening” is a part of their art practice across textiles, writing, drawing, and making music. They are currently studying voice and piano, and composing new music.



Robert Patterson

(he/him) is a lawyer and tenant advocate with the Tenant Resource & Advisory Centre (TRAC). The focus of his work is on protecting tenants’ right to safe, adequate, and accessible housing, primarily through direct legal representation at the Residential Tenancy Branch and BC Supreme Court, as well as through systemic advocacy to different levels of government about housing issues that affect residential tenants. TRAC’s recent work with the UBC Centre for Climate Justice has turned our attention towards the intersection of the climate crisis and the housing crisis.

COORDINATORS



Sara Nelson

(she/her) is the Research Manager at the UBC Centre for Climate Justice, where she works with CCJ leadership, faculty, and students to manage and support the Centre’s ongoing research and programming, and to build new research partnerships. Her research has focused on the social histories and political economy of ecosystem management; justice claims in industrial and energy transitions; and the labour politics of environmental stewardship.



Annika Ord

(she/her) is a master’s student in Geography at UBC. Her research seeks to learn from place based knowledge of glacier retreat and landscape change in Lingít Aaní (Southeast Alaska) and support local climate concerns through community engaged initiatives.

Special thanks to Naomi Klein and Rafi Arefin for moderating our public panel discussion, and to Joanna Habdank for supporting the CJSC meetings at SFU’s space at 312 Main.

FACULTY MEMBERS



Mohammed Rafi Arefin

(he/him) is an Assistant Professor and member of the Centre for Climate Justice at UBC. His research and teaching are focused on urban environmental politics inspired by scholarship and activism in environmental and climate justice.



Tara Mahoney

(she/her) is the Research and Engagement Lead with SFU's Community Engaged Research Initiative (CERi). As a practitioner, educator and researcher in emerging modes of public engagement, she believes the best engagement meets our deep human need for belonging, creativity, meaning and connection.



Jess Dempsey

(she/her) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography at UBC. She studies why biodiversity loss continues despite growing law, policy and science about it, you can read more about that project at the extinctionparadox.org.



Gastón Gordillo

(he/him) is a Profesor of Anthropology at UBC. He is looking at how deforestation by agribusiness in the Gran Chaco region is racialized and made possible by the infrastructures of the soy supply chains and how this project is challenged by campesino and Indigenous social movements who are generating agro-ecological territories in the name of defending life and the commons.



Lorien Nesbitt

(she/her) is an Assistant Professor of urban forestry and environmental justice at UBC's Faculty of Forestry. Her research interests revolve around urban green equity, green gentrification, and supporting the diverse urban forest stewardship activities of urban residents.



Taco Niet

(he/him) is an Assistant Professor (Practitioner) in the School of Sustainable Energy Engineering at SFU. Taco's research deals with energy systems modelling, energy storage technologies, integration of renewable/variable technologies and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

3. What we did together

Below, you'll find monthly summaries of our time together and key ideas that emerged during our discussions.

JANUARY

Introductions, Principles of Engagement, and Key Themes

During our first meeting we discussed and identified principles of engagement to help cultivate a safe, inclusive, and respectful space. The principles included the [Center for Climate Justice's Guiding Principles](#), as well as the following ideas identified by the group:

- Honoring and acknowledging Indigenous peoples at all points
- The responsibility to be in relationship with Indigenous Nations regardless of politics
- Staying with the hard questions
- Showing up, making time, coming prepared
- Remaining calm and level-headed despite the chaos
- Engaging with principles of disability justice, identifying needs and taking care of ourselves
- Exploring harm reduction: "We're all here because we don't think it's too late"
- Bringing a generosity to meetings
- Defining terms to help ensure everyone is included
- Respecting COVID safety needs, sharing dates in advance, and providing ample time to digest materials and readings

Next, as a group we brainstormed key themes that we wanted to explore around the topic of climate justice in the broader Vancouver area. From this list, we worked to distill ideas into monthly discussion topics that were led by CJSC community members and assisted by one faculty participant. Recaps of the monthly themes and discussions follow.

“STAYING
WITH THE
HARD
QUESTIONS”

Building Power: Organizing and Strategy

In February's meeting Tara E asked, where is the movement? Can we align on the problem if we don't agree on what the problem is? Broadly the group seemed to feel that there was enough consensus that complete alignment wasn't necessary for forward movement. Gaston discussed how he draws inspiration from past revolutionary traditions and Jess expressed optimism in the ability to institutionalize solutions without needing full consensus.

Janelle followed this up by engaging the group in a power mapping exercise. She pointed out that we often focus on the active supporters or active opposition, but we also need to focus on those who occupy the contested space. What narratives do they need to be excited by us? How do we engage with them?

Zoha continued by discussing the need for diverse representation in the climate movement. She called for centering action around direct community needs and building opportunities to engage in creative and accessible ways (examples from Climate Recentered's work included basketball tournaments and festivals). Lastly Cheryl discussed the tactic of deep canvassing as a way to build genuine connection and help connect with those occupying "the moveable middle".

Throughout the discussion, the group's general sentiment was focused on the need to base the climate justice movement in direct community needs, engage across political and ideological differences in sincere ways, and build a more inclusive movement.

Housing Justice, Climate Justice

March's meeting was an interactive brainstorming session exploring the linkages between housing justice and climate justice. The group found common ground in challenging the commodification of housing, expanding public transportation especially in lower-income communities, and taking on the ideological and political discipline imposed by housing markets - for instance, the way making workers into 'homeowners' may change the terms of solidarity or collective action. Paths forward focused on housing reform addressing community needs, and moving from individualist towards collective initiatives promoting solidarity.

In this context, Tara M. brought up connection of climate and housing via the experience of home (and its loss): she pointed out that in the housing and climate crisis, people are being kicked out of both home and planet.

We ended our session in small groups, tasked with imagining what a utopian community might look like 20 years from now at the intersection of climate, equality, and the housing crisis. Examples included a car free Kingsway, community centres supporting collective and autonomous community education, equitable rent to own housing, co-ops and non-market housing models. Expropriation of vested property interests for communal benefit was a major theme across policy priorities!

Indigenous Sovereignty, Worldmaking, and Decolonization

April's meeting was led by Robert N., who shared with us oral histories from the Squamish Nation, and Jim, who shared teachings about Indigenous natural laws. Robert N. shared worries about the land and his peoples' ability to practice ceremonies and traditions, "We use the water, we use the fire, we use the earth, we use the air. We can't do that with our children today. Guess why? All the trees are gone. All the water is gone. Some of the creeks in North Van, I can't find them anymore. They're not there anymore... They'd clear a whole mountainside. That's our climate and that's not justice. That's all about money."

They emphasized the importance of generosity and value systems that sustain the earth and each other. As Robert N described, for Squamish people, to be rich is to share. Jim described the harm of extraction and the need to recognize spirit in all things: "We take these things out. The trees to meet our needs, the oil to meet our needs, the water to meet our needs. We corrupt all these things because we're about us, we're not about spirit."

Through the teachings of the legend of the Rainbow Warrior, Jim called on the need to unite, to reach out to Indigenous nations and learn from their ways of being and living with the earth, "We're not here to divide today, we will not make it if we divide. We need to unite."

What sustains you?

May was a busy month! We held two public events on May 17th in addition to our monthly CJSC meeting. At our CJSC gathering, Meesh asked us to reflect on what grounds or sustains us through our work, and they invited everyone to bring an example of something in their life that serves these needs. Participants reflected on the value of community connection, grieving together, finding abundance in what we have, open-ended creative activity, breath and movement in a non-product-oriented way, learning and respecting our cultures, respecting the natural laws of the earth, creative and non-judgmental practices, slowing down to observe the world around us, cooking and exploring ingredients, storytelling, building a sense of place, and finding imagination and playfulness with each other. Afterwards, we discussed how the values represented in these sustaining practices also have the potential to transform larger systemic issues in the climate crisis.

This meeting was a really special opportunity to hear from everyone and share stories from the heart. The conversation strengthened our connections as a collective.

Public Event: *Community-Engaged Climate Research Idea Jam*

The first public event was a workshop in collaboration with SFU's Community Engaged Research Initiative (CERi) that invited climate justice practitioners to brainstorm what a Community-Engaged Climate Research Shop might look like. The ideas that came out of this workshop will be used to help inform both CERi and the CCJ's effort to build out research services in support of community-based climate needs. See the full report of the workshop [here](#).

“WE WILL NOT MAKE IT IF WE
DIVIDE. WE NEED TO UNITE.”

4. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Public Event: *Where Do We Go From Here? Mapping Climate Justice Frontlines in Vancouver*

The workshop was followed by a community dialogue that same evening, led by members of the CJSC and moderated by Naomi Klein and Rafi Arefin. At this event we asked, what are the frontlines of climate justice in the Vancouver area? How is climate change embedded in other systemic crises and oppressions? What are the bridges that need to be built locally – among people, movements, and issues – in order to ensure that justice is centered in all climate action?

The discussion focused on how to build broad coalitions for climate justice and ground climate action in struggles that go beyond the ‘environmental’ movement. The panel discussed the ways in which the climate crisis intersects with the other crises and injustices that characterize the Vancouver area, such as housing insecurity, and emphasized how closing and healing social divisions can make our responses to climate change stronger and more durable.

Cheryl spoke for the need to engage a broader swath of voters and engage with the “moveable middle” in order to build greater support for climate justice. Zoha spoke to the need to recenter the environmental movement around people, specifically BIPOC experiences that have been largely dismissed within the mainstream ‘environmental’ movement. Tara E advocated for a symbiotic relationship between the labour movement and the climate justice movement. They spoke of the need to connect climate justice researchers and activists with the BC Federation of Labour’s Climate Jobs & Justice platform in order to make sure this program is science based and addresses intersectional crises.



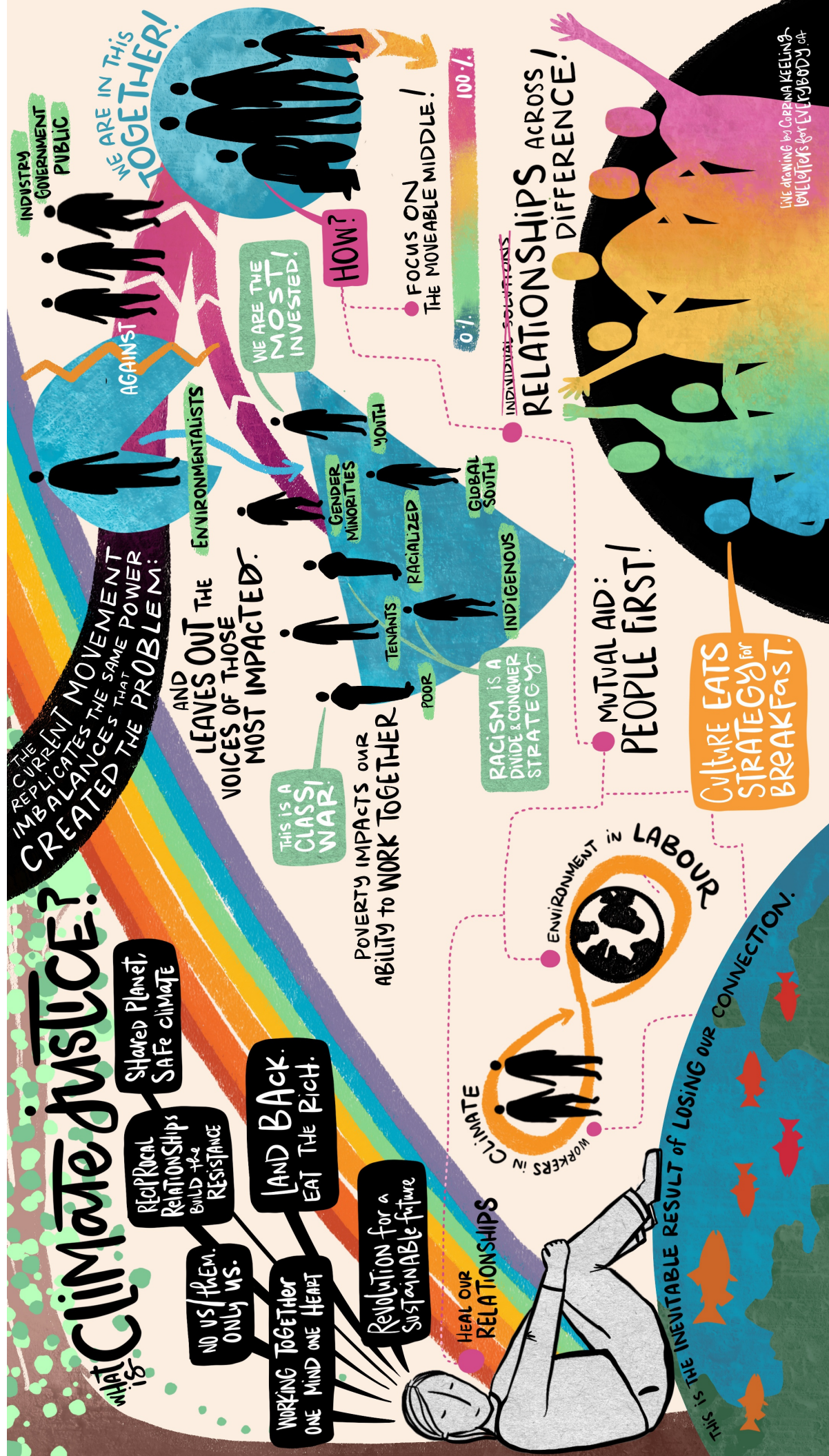
Photo of CJSC community members and coordinators at the community dialogue in May

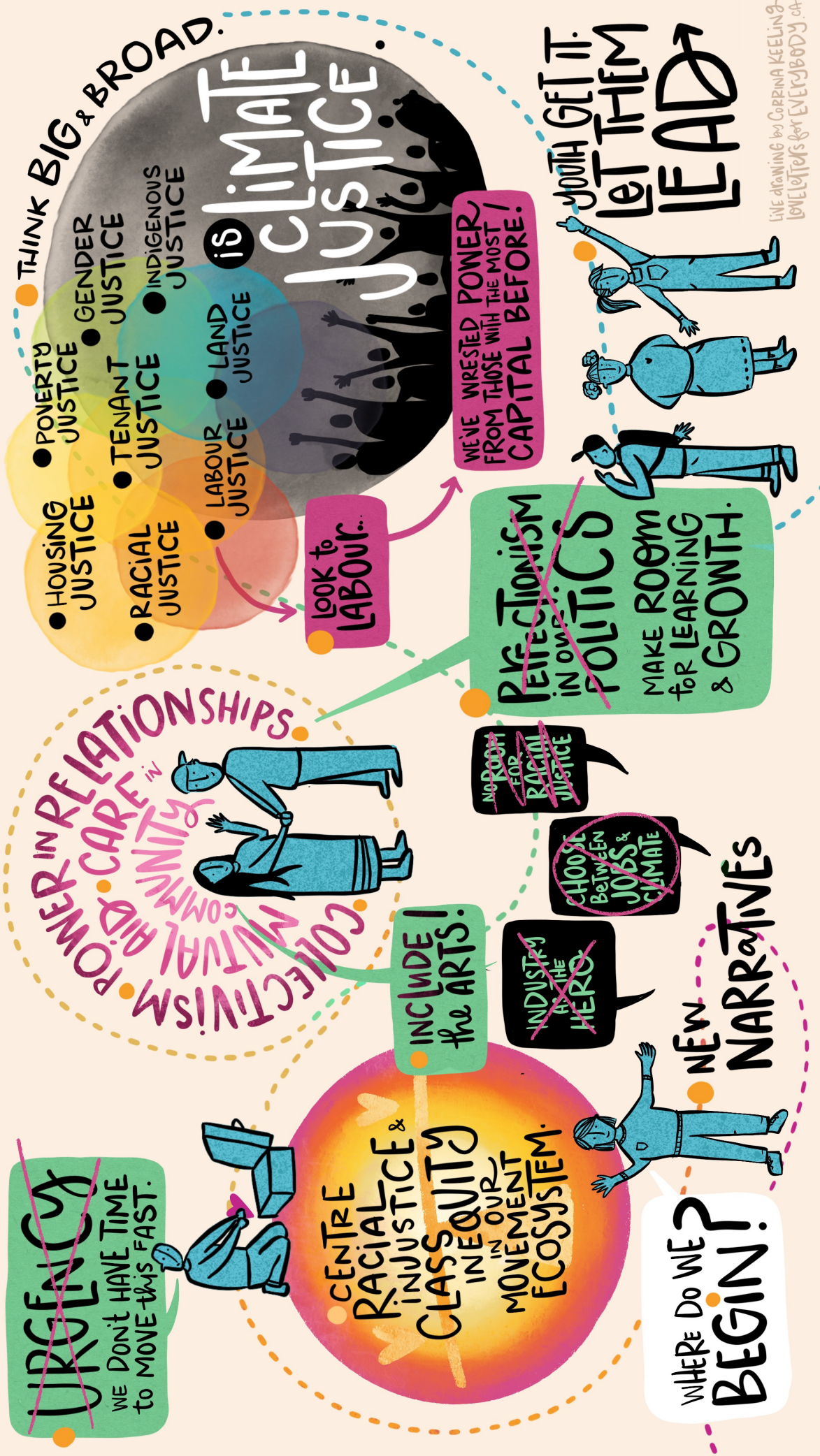
Janelle emphasized the strategic importance of anti-racism for creating the world we want, in addition to its moral importance. Jim spoke to the need to learn from Indigenous ways of knowing and living and how they can teach us to move from the head to the heart. Robert N spoke to the relationship of the Squamish people to the land and the violence that colonization has enacted on Indigenous lands and peoples. Nicolas committed to continue to work in the Downtown Eastside community, to listen to the voice of the people and to amplify those messages which uplift the spirit of grassroots community activism and community respect.

The talented graphic recorder Corinna Keeling created a live visual recording of the conversation.



5. DRAWING THE STORY





Final group dinner at Machete

We met one last time as a group to share dinner and reflect on and celebrate our time together. We were grateful to share delicious, ancestral Mexican food prepared with care by the wonderful team at Machete Healthy Foods!

6. Final Reflections

This was an exciting first year of programming for the Climate Justice Study Collective. The group that came together was diverse – composed of activists, policy makers, Elders, artists, scholars, organizers, and legal professionals. Together, we dreamed and strategized. We worked to identify key needs within the movement and shared perspectives from our communities. We imagined policy reforms and new ways to widen the circle. We were reminded to speak and act from the heart. This year, we purposely left our purpose wide and expansive. We sought to leave space for participants to co-create the direction and content of our time together and to learn from the collective knowledge of this community of experts.

We warned each other about replicating the same power, class, and racial imbalances within the climate movement that created the climate crisis in the first place. We recognized that the movement needs to reach broader constituencies not typically represented in 'environmental' spaces. We discussed our desire to build connections with municipal workers, foreshore maintenance workers, faith based groups, migrant workers and labour advocates, disability justice advocates, Indigenous organizers, and climate change first responders. Two key ideas that surfaced regularly were the need for more attention to poverty as a key issue - for Indigenous people in particular - within the climate movement and the importance of connecting climate justice with the labour movement.



We learned a lot! Our time together felt precious and too short. We contended with the challenge of coordinating 18 people's schedules and creating a space that felt welcoming, responsive, and adaptable. It was both a strength and a challenge that our topics roamed widely from month to month. In exploring different monthly themes, participants were able to bring the content and share their expertise, but we were also limited in our ability to dig more deeply into ideas and build upon them. In many ways, our conversations were just beginning when our structured time together came to a close.

For future cohorts, we will explore ways to provide a flexible but supportive structure that can focus our thinking together and serve diverse needs and norms of engagement. We also hope to lengthen the time we spend together and to leave space for gatherings to get to know each other, balancing our facilitated discussions with meals or walks.

The Climate Justice Study Collective was an adventure in building relationships by bringing together a diverse group of people and leaving space to see where the conversation led. We've learned so much from everyone in the CJSC and have built relationships that we will enthusiastically carry forward into the future. We are also thrilled to build upon this program and widen the circle as we welcome a new cohort in January 2024.



Thanks to everyone who made the first cohort of the Climate Justice Study Collective possible

Acknowledgements

The Climate Justice Study Collective would not have been possible without the generous and dedicated work of those involved. We'd like to extend a huge thank you to:

The **community members** whose generous contributions and unique perspectives made this study collective possible.

The **faculty** from UBC and SFU who supported this collective and joined us throughout our time together.

The **program coordinators**, Sara Nelson and Annika Ord, for their dedication to the details.

Corinna Keeling for their incredible, live illustrations at our community dialogue, Where Do We Go From Here?

Maya Nelson-Rowntree and **Jack Suchodolski** for their fabulous event planning and administrative support.

Our **colleagues** at SFU CERi who were essential in co-creating this program and who generously donated their space for our gatherings.

The UBC Centre for Climate Justice is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the hə́hǵəmiǵə́m-speaking xʷməθkʷə́yəm (Musqueam) people. These lands have been a place of learning for the Musqueam people for thousands of years.

Please visit www.musqueam.bc.ca to learn more about the Musqueam Nation and their continued stewardship of their ancestral lands.

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