



Greater Victoria Climate Forum

Post Session Debrief

ABSTRACT

The Greater Victoria Climate Forum, held on the unceded territory of the lək̓ʷəŋən (Lekwungen) Peoples, was a space created by and for community where cross-sectional climate-focused organizations / individuals across could gather, share, and collaborate.

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Land Acknowledgement

The Greater Victoria Climate Forum was organized and held on the unceded territory of the lək'wəŋən (Lekwungen) Peoples, known today as the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations.

While this gathering was named a *climate forum* – the challenge we collectively face is not fundamentally a climate crisis, but a crisis of relationship with / separation from, The Land, and from one another.

Colonialism and industrial extraction are ongoing systems of harm. Centering the truth that these lands were never ceded and continue to be exploited to the primary benefit of settlers must remain central to 'climate work' if a meaningful shift is to take place.

Overview

This document is a synthesis of reflections from event organizers, speakers, facilitators, and attendees based on post-session conversations and the debriefing survey. Contents include:

- A list of Invitations and opportunities for collaboration.
- A qualitative assessment of the event's impact.
- A short narrative summarizing notes taken during the workshops / speakers.
- A summary of the event and workshops (for reference).

Invitations

- [Plot your organization](#) local Climate Initiative Map.
- Browse through the current [network of local initiatives](#) and seek out opportunities to connect with and support the broader climate community. Regularly occurring community meetings include:
 - [Sustainable Fox Eco-Hour](#) (4th Wednesday of the Month)
 - [Common Horizons Victoria](#) (Regular + Varied Events Surrounding Climate Action and Politics)
 - Community Climate Leader Potlucks (Details TBD)
- Track and record any new projects that arise – Share successes broadly.
- Book a time to meet with me to communicate any continuing-support needs or ideas for future events.
- Join theDock – Center for Social Impact for a [free day of co-working](#) and explore avenues for bringing your project / event ideas to life.
- **Most importantly:** Take care of yourself, give when you can, and ask for help when it's needed.

Summary of Intended Outcomes

The greater Victoria Climate Forum was a space created by and for community where cross-sectional climate-focused organizations / individuals across could gather, share, and collaborate. Intended outcomes included:

1. Create a shared online map of Victoria's active climate initiatives.
2. Build local community network for sharing opportunities and success stories.
3. Develop a broad picture of our climate community's strengths and needs.
4. Identify new collaboration / project opportunities.
5. Cultivate plans for future Climate Forums.
6. Layering non-purposivity (i.e. relating to each other without the need for 'outcomes' in parallel to outcomes 1-5 by dropping expectation and listening for what is emerging in the space).

In addition to these outcomes, three broad intentions were offered to seed the quality interactions throughout the evening:

- Seek opportunities to defragment climate initiatives – building broad community cohesion.
- Embody a deeper sense of compassion for each of the unique approaches to addressing the climate crisis (polycrisis) – Witness each other as *necessary an insufficient part of a whole*.
- Move away from transactional relationships to relationships founded on giving, trust, and reciprocity (i.e. moving away from “what can we do, or get, from each other” to “how can we genuinely help / support each other”).

Impact Assessment

Abstract

The Greater Victoria Climate Forum was successful in meeting each of the intended outcomes. The most consistent reflections offered by event attendees included a sense of collective belonging, new-found empowerment towards collaborative action, and a shared hunger for continuing to invest in our community over time. Survey responses and debriefing conversations also showed that participants experienced:

- A sense of hope and renewed motivation.
- Greater awareness of the breadth of local initiatives.
- Emotional and intellectual nourishment through deep dialogue and community reflection.

Mapping Initiative

Overview

A group of folks representing the Roy Group, NatuR&D, and the University of Victoria hosted a mapping booth for local organizations to plot local climate initiative. A survey was sent out to the broader climate community before and after the event to collect additional data on active climate initiatives in the GVA. The data is now hosted on a site called [whatstheRUSH](#) under the 'save the world' tab. This map is powered by global mapping project called the [Green Maps Initiative](#). In addition to the mapping booth & survey, a community discussion centered around mapping opportunities was hosted during the forum to aid in making this work more accessible.

Impact

21 new organizations have identified themselves on the map and we have collected 16 new individuals interested in helping to support future mapping initiatives in varying capacities. Momentum is continuing to build around this initiative which has the potential to spark new collaboration and community engagement long into the future.

Do not forget to [plot your organization](#) on the map!

Climate Organization Network

Most forum attendees expressed interest in staying connected via recurring events. This signaled strong support for shared knowledge infrastructure and coalition building. The current plan is to host an event comparable to the Greater Victoria Climate Forum every 6 months.

Tentative date for the next forum will be *October 9th*.

In the process of building + debriefing the Climate Forum several other organizations who are doing similar network building were identified including:

- [One Planet Saanich](#)
- [South Island Climate Action Network](#)
- [West Coast Climate Action Network](#)
- [Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions](#)
- [Coastal Climate Solutions Leaders](#)

Plans are in development for bridging aspects of these climate networks into a coalition that spans across a comprehensive list of industries, demographics, and communities in the GVA.

Community Strengths

The following list identifies core strengths related to active climate initiatives in the GVA as identified by forum attendees:

- A diversity of initiatives across research, grassroots organizing, regenerative business, industry innovation, decolonization, and cultural healing.
- A shared commitment to decolonial and relational approaches to climate action.
- Willingness to engage in mutual aid, knowledge sharing, and experimental collaboration.

These strengths are indicative of well-developing practical application of resilience within the climate initiative space. In other words, there are a wide range of voices capable of speaking to the root systemic issues underpinning modern systems of oppression and the climate crisis.

Opportunities

The following list identifies core gaps / opportunities relevant to the web active climate initiatives in the GVA:

1. Extension of the resilience that has been built within the 'climate community' to spaces that lack access to the experiences of an event like the Climate Forum.
2. Development of a central online hub for events, resources, and contact points.
 - There is still a lack of collaboration between individual organizations and a need for cross-posting events and opportunities.
3. Increasing the number of opportunities for intergenerational dialogue and culturally grounded education.
4. Development of accessible entry-points for newcomers to volunteer their energy to local climate initiatives. Concepts for accessible entry-points include:
 - Sharing the local climate initiative map broadly within community networks.
 - Developing a collective community project centered on engaging a broad subset of the GVA population in climate work.
 - Carrying messaging and lessons learned from the Climate Forum out into your close-knit communities and relationships (i.e. talking about the work that is being done, directly to those who are unlikely to be exposed to it).

Identification of Collaborative Projects

Six new project opportunities have been identified in the immediate wake of the Climate Forum from the survey and debriefing conversations. As details of these projects take form and consent is given, updates and opportunities for engagement will be shared with the community.

Speaker and Breakout Reflections

A grab bag of thoughts.

The following reflections are drawn from notes taken during and after the Climate Forum. They are not a comprehensive set of takeaways, nor are they meant to be absolute or complete. Let them wash over you like an opinion piece or blog, noting that every idea presented below could be expanded into a thesis—with context, rebuttals, references, evidence, and justification. If nothing else, enjoy how your mind twists, turns, and relates to these ideas in whatever way feels meaningful to you and your work.

On Inclusion and Relational Work

Different communities have vastly different capacities to cope with climate change and the polycrisis. We must intentionally include marginalized voices in projects and decision-making—not as a token gesture, but through deep relational inquiry. This requires time, trust, and humility, ensuring no one feels extracted from or spoken over. Inclusion must feel like belonging, not burden.

On Resilience

The Climate Forum itself was an act of resilience where community came together to creatively blend knowledge systems, form new relationships, and identify avenues for mutual support.

It is worth remembering that showing up to this work is a unique form of privilege. Most people are unable to attend events like this due to lack of time, capacity, energy, confidence, connection, or desire. Building climate resilience means carrying this work on behalf of those who are not in the room.

Building climate resilience is a nontrivial task and requires continuous intention. Practicing resilience means continuing rise-up every time we are knocked down. Living resilience involves adaptively seeking regenerative ways of existing and relating amongst systems of oppression designed to keep us in cycles of consumption, growth, and self-interest.

Building resilience is about holding an adaptive mindset and recognizing what's 'right' even when dominant messaging, and sometimes our own communities, pull us toward normalized colonial and consumptive ways of relating to life.

In many ways, resilience simply means creating systems to soften the fall for those facing intersectional struggles. It also means humbly softening fall for those in power who are slowly choosing to confront the patterns of fear, greed, exploitation, certainty, and entitlement that have governed their lives for decades. We may never see the fruits of our labor, but that does not diminish the value of the energy and intention spent. Several specific methods for building resilience were spoken to at the Forum:

- Cultivating an intergenerational community.
- Bridging disciplines that rarely meet.
- Infusing creative and artistic practice into daily life.
- Practicing self-care as activism (widening our window of tolerance to care for others).

Continuing to build this scaffolding together will help newcomers to land gently in the community.

On Transforming Relationships

There was a powerful insight that emerged during a long period of silence in one of the breakout rooms. This silence was not performative, prescribed by the facilitators, or uncomfortable to sit with. It was a true stillness, without agenda. Participants sat quietly together, listening both inwardly and outwardly. This active inaction shifted the group dynamic. The period of silence invited a different quality of listening and spoke magnitudes about an alternative way of communicating that did not involve the voice of those in the room.

A takeaway from this experience was that presence matters as much as, or perhaps more than performance or the literal 'what is being said' in a group setting. In moments of group process like this, participants are better able to let go of the need for outcomes. Letting go of outcomes while holding an intention is a paradoxical act of doing, through undoing—making space for the unexpected, for hope, and for actions that carry real change.

On Climate Action in a Time of Crisis

Many noted the growing challenge of sustaining climate work amid mounting economic and political instability. Climate change is slipping from the spotlight as survival-mode thinking is taking hold. While this shift may feel like a setback, *in some cases* it is both valid and necessary. Holding an overly rigid focus on our historical missions / activities means risking the loss decades of research, cultural reform, and hard-won victories over systems of greed and oppression. **More directly: addressing rising polarization, geopolitical tension, and the risk economic collapse may serve the climate in the long arc, by preventing the clock from being turned backwards on our efforts.**

This said, we must hold this idea with delicate care. A shift in focus means potentially allowing certain IPCC goals to slip. There are no comfortable-one-size-fits-all answers to this challenge. Shifts in focus from climate to politics and imminent care needs will need to be reasoned with on a case-by-case basis.

These decisions require *deep listening, embodied sensing, adaptive reasoning*. We're walking through a threshold of societal transition. Change is here. This is not the time to look down.

On Coalition Building and Community

Change often takes hold at a relational level in communities like ours; communities built on trust, reciprocity, and mutual aid. Change occurs when ideas incubated in spaces like the Climate Forum make their way to the masse, forcing those in power to listen. The Climate Forum was born from a shared longing to affect meaningful change and embody the qualities of an effective coalition. As the ripples from the event to define the edges of our pond, maintaining momentum and learning to move in step must remain softly in our collective focus.

Building large-scale movements and coalitions requires time, energy, and stamina. Crafting a shared message grows harder with rising polarization, growing economic pressure, and countless interwoven issues to pay attention to. These challenges make development large scale movements even more essential. Coalitions have always been a strong catalyst for systemic change—forcing institutions and political bodies to act in the public interest, rather than relying solely on incremental reform.

This said, large movements only represent one piece of a grand puzzle comprised of resilience building, tending to relationships, caring for the vulnerable, and innovating industry-level change. *Our* individual and collective actions matter, no matter how small; permitting that in pursuing these actions, we continuously check in on ungrounded motivators such as guilt, superiority, saviorism, and grandeur. **We are fighting against extractive systems that have been gathering momentum for thousands of years. Meaningful shifts will take the energy stored in thousands of lifetimes, fortunately, you are not alone.**

Recommendations for Future Events

- Create more space for dialogue between speakers and breakout groups (necessitating a longer event).
- Maintain a diverse speaker lineup that blends emotional, intellectual, and practical perspectives.
- Structure breakout groups to rotate or allow harvesting of cross-group themes during intermission.
- Launch a community portal for event promotion, asset mapping, and ongoing dialogue.
- Prioritize co-creation: Invite participants early in planning to shape the agenda and space.

Event Organization Summary (For Reference)

The event was open to both established organization and individuals driven by climate action. The event space was generously sponsored by [theDock - Center for Social Impact](#). Speakers, facilitators, and organizers all contributed with varying in-kind sponsorship capacities.

Event Structure

5:00 - 5:30 PM: Community Mixer

5:30 - 6:10 PM: Speaker Session 1

- [Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures Collective](#) (Azul Carolina Duque & Kyra Royo-Fay)
- [Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions](#) (Ian Mauro)
- [Climate Fresk](#) (Justin Steinburg)

6:10 - 6:45 PM: Breakout Session #1

6:45 - 7:00 PM: Break

7:00 - 7:30 PM Speaker Session 2

- [Victoria Community Social Planning Council](#) (Lorenzo Magzul)
- [Creating Climate Resilience](#) (Sabrina Guzman Skotnitsky)
- [Dogwood BC](#) (Ashley Zaratany)

7:35 - 8:10 PM: Breakout Session #2

8:15-8:30 PM: Closing Circle

Breakout Group Descriptions

Breakout Session 1

Open circle: *Hosted by Colin Richards (theDock Center for Social Impact)*

Group members take turns introducing projects and stories as to how they currently relate to the climate crisis through their life – Come ready to share what currently excites or inspires you.

BR1 - Transforming the Way We Relate: *Hosted by Nick Couture (Climate Paradigm Collaborative), Azul Carolina Duque (GTDF Collective), and Kyra Fay (GTDF Collective)*

Discussion centered on shifting transactional and competitive ways of relating into systems of mutual aid and giving within the climate movement.

BR2 - Identifying Opportunities for Project Collaboration: *Hosted by Dan McNeill (Delightful Design Bunch / theDock)*

Leveraging design thinking to innovate new opportunities for inter-organization collaboration.

BR3 - Mutual Education and Inspiration: *Hosted by Jade Chicorelli (theDock – Center for Social Impact)*

Question - What do you wish the broader climate community knew about your work and the power it has to create change or deepen our collective understanding of what is going on?

BR4 - Climate Work Amidst Socio-Political Unrest: *Hosted by Kristi Fairholm Mader (Scale Collaborative)*

Question - With global political tension, conflict, and social unrest climate has fallen out of the limelight despite being critical in the long term. What does this mean and how can we adapt our missions to the modern political landscape?

Breakout Session 2

Open circle: *Hosted by Colin Richards (theDock Center for Social Impact)*

Group members take turns introducing projects and stories as to how they currently relate to the climate crisis through their life – Come ready to share what currently excites or inspires you.

Lounge - Community Resource Accessibility: *Hosted by Sadie Fox (The Sustainable Fox)*

Open discussion on improving the 'accessibility of + engagement with' community initiatives relevant to the climate crisis and social change.

BR1 - Defining Climate Resilience through Story: *Hosted by Nick Couture (Climate Paradigm Collaborative) and Sabrina Guzman Skotnitsky (Creating Climate Resilience)*

Participants take turns sharing stories of what 'Climate Resilience' means to them with respect to the lives, work, or community in the form of short stories.

BR2 - Localized Movement Building: *Hosted by Savannah Barratt (Dogwood BC)*

Conversation centered on identifying gaps in our community related building large scale movements / coalitions related to the climate crisis.

BR4 - Climate Fresk Quiz: *Justin Steinburg (Climate Fresk / Common Horizons)*

The Fresk Quiz serves as a "sneak peek" to the Climate Fresk workshop, a collaborative, serious game based on the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

Community Guidelines

We're committed to creating a space where everyone can contribute meaningfully, this is inclusive of but not limited to the following practices:

- Uphold Truth and Reconciliation as the foundation of climate action.
- Welcome diverse perspectives and approaches to climate action.
- Noticing when cultural biases are present in our perception.
- Practice curiosity and compassion in our discussions.
- Share the space and listen deeply.
- Embrace learning and unlearning together.
- Ask questions and seek clarity when confronted with challenging language.
- Support each other's growth and initiatives.
- Ask for consent prior to giving direct advice.
- Recognize when ego is presenting itself as a barrier to collaboration.
- Recognize when ingroups and outgroups are forming and work towards inclusivity.
- Recognize and celebrate our collective wisdom.