



# Youth Climate Justice Group 2022 Report

A youth perspective on  
climate action in our  
community

YOUTH FOOD  
NETWORK  
CRFAIR



# Summary

This report seeks to offer a summary of the interests and dreams of a small group of youth aged 16-23 on the topic of climate action and climate justice. The YCJG was a focus group of CRFAIR's Youth Food Network, a collaboration of youth with a mission to hold space for, offer resources for, and inspire youth to engage in their food systems and communities while exploring good food. Our intention with this report is to provide the City of Victoria Regional Government with our perspectives in order to encourage further climate action in our community. We hope that this material will help provide context and inspiration to present and future youth initiatives with the City of Victoria regional government.

# Introduction

The Youth Climate Justice Group is a gathering of youth with the purpose of creating a space where we can learn from one another and brainstorm solutions to the many issues that arise from the intersection of climate injustice, colonialism, racialized inequities, and gender-based violence. The Group was structured as a series of conversations and field trips that took place 1 to 2 times per week from early June to late August 2022. Conversations will be held in-person at a variety of locations (with the option to join remotely for some) and group-led, but will occasionally feature guest speakers and knowledge holders.

Our group was organized by Alistair Knox, CRFAIR's Youth Engagement Coordinator, with help from our Creative Director, Jacob LaRocque-Wall and our core members, Mackenzie Clark, Kasey Chen, and Matthias Spalteholz. Over the course of the summer we took part in a number of field trips to learn from the folks in our community who are helping to address climate injustice in our region. Whether through nurturing local food systems, carrying out land-based restoration, or educating youth on how to engage with the food they eat in ways that decenter colonialism and capitalism.

It was through these experiences that we also got to build relationships with the amazing people behind organizations such as the Compost Education Center, Farm to School BC, and Harvest and Share. We found that this opportunity to connect with community leaders and advocates was integral to our learning at each of these sessions, and it meant that we were able to discuss further calls to action to continue the work we were doing. These concrete calls to action, such as taking part in further workshops or volunteering with different advocacy groups, landed each of us in a larger system of accountability to our communities and gave us a chance to feel connected to these larger systems of mutual aid.

# What does Climate Justice mean to us?

At the end of the summer we came together to reflect on what climate justice meant to us. We agreed that Climate Justice builds on the idea of climate action to incorporate the understanding that climate change disproportionately impacts Indigenous and other BIPOC groups that are facing violence and disempowerment due to colonialism, racism, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy (misogyny, homophobia and transphobia), and capitalism. Seeking climate justice for our community requires that the other interlocking systems of oppression must also be dismantled in order for us to effectively take action on climate change. At its core, a climate justice framework recognizes that climate action must be anti-colonial, anti-patriarchal, anti-racist, anti-capitalist and centered around collective action.

## Outcomes

Over the course of our summer programming, there were a number of things we learned that we thought could benefit other youth programs and session leaders doing work in the climate justice field. First of all we found it really beneficial to have concrete and realistic calls to action and future steps outlined in order to maintain momentum and stay involved with actions that mattered to us. Second, we recognize the importance of building relationships with community members and session leaders and using those connections to prompt future action. It was this relationship building that allowed the Youth Food Network and the Compost Education Center to connect for our upcoming youth programming collaboration during the 2022/23 school year.

We also found that attending open forums such as the Victoria Climate Cafe and being vulnerable and open about our emotions surrounding climate change really helped us connect over these issues in a more meaningful way and it placed importance on healing our community as a form of climate action. These conversations also helped us focus on finding healthy ways to navigate our emotions surrounding climate change, instead of only focusing on solutions to very large scale problems. It was through this that we were reminded that change is a product of collective action and not of individual struggle.

At the beginning of the summer we collectively decided to create a zine as a creative project to work on over the course of the summer. The project was led by our creative director Jacob LaRoque-Wall and is a compilation of artwork, reflections, poems, and ideas that we came up with over the course of the summer. You can find a printable PDF version of the zine linked in the resources section below!

# Feedback from participants


There was positive feedback from both the Youth participants and many of the session leaders over the course of the summer. Many of the sessions, such as the tour of Harvest and Share at Government House, or the tour of the Compost Education Center were really well received by the youth and they all mentioned that they had never been to many of these places but had been meaning to check them out. One session in particular that stood out to the youth, as well as myself, was the Victoria Climate Cafe as it was unlike many of the other sessions but as described above, it gave us a safe space to discuss our emotions surrounding climate change. Overall we felt that the Youth Climate Justice Group achieved its goal of giving the youth a chance to engage with the community and learn more about initiatives related to climate action and climate justice.

We also were able to offer the youth volunteer hours as a way of compensating them for their time during their busy schedules. This was important to us because we felt that youth programming should benefit youth in more ways than just education. If we had space in the budget, we feel that it would have been best to offer honoraria to make it as beneficial as possible to the youth taking part in the program.

Some things that we also learned from the panel that we could have done better was putting more emphasis on our onboarding process and improving our scope of folks involved in the group. It's for this reason that the Youth Food Network is partnering up with the Compost Education Center so that we can deliver our otherwise very similar programming to a more diverse group of youth in our region. Similarly, we found that it would have been beneficial to connect with other youth groups in our area to collaborate on different sessions and conversations taking place. We will be working with other youth organizations in our fall programming this fall in hopes of broadening the community of youth in our area who are passionate about taking action.

## Resources

Here are some links to resources and programs discussed in this report:

- Tap the Tree - Youth Climate Justice Group Zine →  TalkingToTrees\_Zine.pdf
- Compost Education Center's youth programming → <https://compost.bc.ca/programs/>
- Harvest and Share → <https://harvestandshare.a2hosted.com/>