

# MOVING CLIMATE ANXIETY TO ACTION

### **ENVIROLAB CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS COHORT FINAL REPORT**

**MARCH 2022** 



CityHive

### LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

CityHive would like to recognize the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the xwməθkwəýəm (Musqueam), the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), and the səĺilŵəta?ł (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations on whose land we live, learn and engage with youth through this virtual programming.

We thank our host nations for being stewards of their lands and for leading the conversations about environmental movements and relationship to land for settlers and newcomers to Turtle Island. CityHive recognizes that the civic institutions and decision making processes we seek to influence through our Envirolab program are colonial, and have actively perpetuated harm to Indigenous peoples. It is through understanding our own unique relationship to this place, host nations, and Indigenous youth working to make change that we are able to reflect and act on decolonial practices.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Envirolab is a knowledge and capacity-building think-and-do-tank for youth ages 18-30 from across Metro Vancouver. The program aims to enable youth to learn about urban sustainability and climate challenges from local government, sustainability leaders and organizations and to act on their learnings by collaboratively creating projects that address those challenges. Each Envirolab cohort focuses on a different issue, which is chosen based on insight from partners and youth. **The theme for this cohort was Climate Communications.** 

Youth who participate in this capacity-building think-and-do-tank **leave the program feeling more confident in their knowledge, skills and tools** to draw from the next time they engage with civic and sustainability issues they care about. Our hope is that youth who participate in these programs **become a part of a diverse group of youth who are eager to take action to drive climate action forward across Metro Vancouver.** 

This cohort of 24 youth was **bold**, **open and vulnerable** – they were challenged to create climate action activations with communities they were already connected to, and in doing so, found a community in each other. This cohort highlighted the gaps that are present for youth to have safe and brave spaces to explore their feelings and emotions related to climate change.

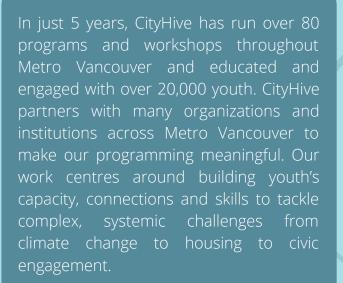
This report documents the program design, overviews of the community activations that emerged, as well as key learnings and insights from our fifth and final cohort in the Envirolab series. We are proud to have had the financial support of the Lawson Foundation and Vancity Credit Union to host the Envirolab, as well as the support of multiple partners, acknowledged through this and past reports, to bring the Envirolab to life.



### **OVERVIEW** WHO IS CITYHIVE

CityHive is a youth-led non-profit organization on a mission to transform the way that young people are engaged in shaping their cities and civic processes. We engage youth in urban planning, city making and decision-making processes in Metro Vancouver. As a youth-led and youth-run nonprofit, we harness the energy, experiences, and perspectives of youth to create projects and solutions to make our cities more sustainable, equitable and resilient. We work with civic institutions to transform the way that they engage youth to be more meaningful and inclusive.

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## WHAT IS THE ENVIROLAB

**The Envirolab was designed in 2019 to fill a gap** – while municipalities were seeking to address complex urban sustainability issues like zero waste & circular economies, climate adaptation, reducing household footprints, and climate communications, youth felt they had few opportunities to collaborate with decision makers to learn and codesign the solutions.

The Envirolab is a **think-and-do-tank for youth to explore complex and challenging urban sustainability and climate issues** with municipal partners, **while learning and practicing the skills needed to meaningfully engage in their communities** on those issues. It is a 12-week, **cohort-based lab** for youth ages 18-30 from a wide range of identities and backgrounds – cultural, academic, professional and lived experiences. Participants deepen their knowledge on sustainability issues and work collaboratively to create projects and activations in their communities. The program exists in partnership with local organizations, decision makers and thought leaders to enable the cohort to grow their network and deepen their knowledge on each topic. Working in this way ensures that each project that youth create in the program is relevant and meets real-world issues.

The Envirolab is rooted in community-based learning, relationship building, and action planning. The Envirolab is a **meaningful way for youth to collaborate with municipalities, civic institutions and community organizations, all while learning, building capacity, and creating bold actions to address pressing sustainability challenges.** 

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### WHY WE EXIST

This program was designed at a time when no municipality had yet declared a climate emergency. Since 2019, the Envirolab has been able to adapt to the changing landscape of sustainability and climate action work across Metro Vancouver. **This program has been able to package information in ways that make tackling urban sustainability challenges feel approachable and less daunting to reach a wide range of youth while also working to create solution-driven projects to address a range of sustainability challenges.** 

The magic of the Envirolab is the connection and relationships formed that empower participants to feel heard, understood and respected as sustainability and climate leaders. Youth who complete the Envirolab have gone on to pursue work in sustainability sectors, bringing new modes of thinking, a deeper justice-based understanding of urban sustainability challenges in their communities, and the ability to work collaboratively with peers on impact driven projects.

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photo credit: David Suzuki Foundation, 2023

### **PROGRAM GOALS** WHAT THE ENVIROLAB IS WORKING TOWARDS

The key objective of the Envirolab is to support youth from Metro Vancouver to create solutions-driven projects that address local sustainability and climate challenges. There are three key goals that drive this primary objective.



BUILD YOUTH'S CAPACITY, KNOWLEDGE, AND SKILLS ON IMPORTANT CLIMATE ISSUES WHILE PROBLEM-SOLVING AND TAKING ACTION WITHIN THEIR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE.



BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AMONG YOUTH AS WELL AS BETWEEN YOUTH, THEIR CIVIC INSTITUTIONS, AND ORGANIZATIONS ACROSS METRO VANCOUVER.



CO-CREATE CLIMATE ACTION PROJECTS WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS THAT ADDRESS URBAN SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES WITH A JUST AND EQUITABLE LENS.

By learning with and from experts and community leaders, youth feel equipped to design and lead activations in their communities, and take actions to impact the everchanging landscape of climate adaptation work happening across Metro Vancouver, all while learning and building relationships with peers and leaders.

The fifth cohort of the Envirolab was hosted virtually over 13 learning sessions between November 2021 and March 2022. The virtual program delivery model enables new opportunities for the Envirolab team to be creative in building an online community of engaged youth.



### THE FACES BEHIND THE LAB









KATHRYN TRNAVSKY

AARTI KAMAT

WILL CROLLA

MICHELLE XIE

### **DEVELOPING THE FACILITATION TEAM & PROCESS DESIGN**

After the initial program planning was complete, 4 youth leaders - including one Envirolab alumni - were brought together and tasked with leading, facilitating and delivering the program to the cohort participants. This program was co-led by Kathryn Trnavsky (CityHive) and Aarti Kamat (CityHive), and joined by two support facilitators: Michelle Xie and Will Crolla. We are grateful to the support of Grace Nosek and Em Mittertrainer of the UBC Climate Hub for their time and expertise as cohort mentors to support developing this cohort.



GRACE NOSEK



**EM MITTERTRAINER** 



### WHY CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS LANGUAGE AND CONTEXT MATTER

Each year, the alarm for urgent climate action gets louder, yet we don't see the massive systemic changes that we need to change our trajectory. The increase in extreme weather events throughout BC and Canada, the Fairy Creek blockades against old growth logging, the climate conversations leading up to the recent election, the disproportionate effects of the pandemic on vulnerable communities: all of these events, among others, heighten the eco-anxiety and grief about climate change being felt many people, particularly youth.

While our stories are deeply personal, they are informed and shaped by the communities we are a part of, by choice or otherwise; and we have opportunities to inspire climate action in these communities. Leading climate engagement research shows that when individuals are engaged on climate action in places they're already connected to – whether a workplace, place of worship or faith-based community, a sports team, family dinner table, classroom or elsewhere– they are more likely to actively engage. Based on this the cohort explored bringing in unique messaging to meet their communities where they're at.

"Climate action beats climate grief!" Envirolab Cohort Participant



### WHY CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS LANGUAGE AND CONTEXT MATTER

This Envirolab presents an opportunity for youth to **deeply understand the assets** and needs of the community or communities they are a part of to create a custom communication strategy and narratives for the greatest impact.

We know that **climate conversations cannot be had in isolation**, and they must draw on principles of justice, equity, and decolonization, as well as the impacts felt across a variety of social, economic and environmental levels.

While the climate emergency is urgent and it is exactly that – an emergency – we must also lead these conversations with HOPE and JOY.



# ENVIROLAB PROGRAM OVERVIEW

#### **COMMUNITY COLLABORATION & HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN**

The project component for this cohort differed from past cohorts, where participants were tasked to create stand-alone projects in teams that could live on beyond their time in the cohort. This cohort was tasked to identify a community that they are connected to (ie workplace, faith-based space, school) and design a community activation.

**Community Activations** are designed for the communities - groups of people who are within our own personal spheres of influence and networks - and **are meant to meet a need that community has when it comes to taking climate action**. These activations could be things like leading a art night to explore creativity and its connection to climate anxiety, a mini workshop about the role of sustainable investing, or hosting an experiential nature walk to deepen one's connection to nature.

### Collectively, this cohort was able to design 14 unique community activations to host in their communities and focused in five key themes:



THE ROLES OF ART & DESIGN IN CLIMATE STORYTELLING.



HOW WE CAN ENGAGE WITH GROUPS WHO HAVEN'T BEEN CONNECTED TO CLIMATE ACTION BEFORE AND WHAT Types of messaging work best in these scenarios.



UNDERSTANDING HOW WE NAVIGATE OUR OWN CLIMATE ANXIETIES AND BUILDING PERSONAL STRATEGIES TO NAVIGATE FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE.



BUILDING A CONNECTION TO LAND AND FOOD SYSTEMS WHILE EXPLORING THE WAYS PERSONAL NARRATIVES INTERSECT THESE SYSTEMS.



THE ROLES OF SUSTAINABLE INVESTING AND FINANCE IN BUILDING A MORE RESILIENT AND JUST FUTURE FOR ALL.



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# LAB DESIGN PROCESS

#### LEADING WITH HOPE AND JOY TO DESIGN COMMUNITY ACTIVATIONS

The Envirolab program structure ensures that youth with different levels of knowledge and experience in the sustainability field can participate and bring in their lived experience and expertise. **The framework we have developed is rooted in community-based learning, relationship building, and partner-supported action-planning.** This framework builds a learning arc that enables youth to come to the Envirolab with any level of understanding or knowledge about this topic and develop bold actions to address these challenges.

#### LEARN

Conversations with industry leaders (including from municipal governments, community organizations, businesses, associations and beyond) to level up knowledge to consider where we are at and where we want to be as we drive learning forward

### **EXPLORE & IDEATE**

Identifying problem statements, key climate change issues and challenges to ideating solutions which meet the needs of that community.

#### APPLY

Developing a plan to bring community project ideas to life testing and running those activations - in communities to have a real world impact.





## THE LEARNING JOURNEY

#### **ENVIROLAB COHORT TIMELINE**

### COMMUNITY BUILDING

Session 1: Welcome Night & Program Kickoff

"We are building momentum!" - Envirolab Cohort Participant



Session 10: Climate Comms 201 Session 11: Leaning with your community Session 12: Deepening the Activation Session 13: Preparing for the Community Event • LEARN Session 2: Climate Comms 101 Session 3: Personal Narratives Session 4: Community Climate Stories

Session 5: Sharing your narrative Session 6: Understanding your community Session 7: Building a shared vision Session 8: Understanding your impact Session 9: Developing your community activations



**EXPLORE & IDEATE** 

**Community Event & Program Showcase** 





### COM·MU·NI·TY

### /KəˈMYōONəDĒ/

a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, values, and goals

photo credit: Lia Shultz, Galentine's '22 Community Activation, Feb 2022

### MEET THE COHORT



ALEX







ALLISON

ETHAN



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FELIPE



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AMES

















SOPHIE



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# COHORT COMMUNITY ACTIVATION SPOTLIGHTS

AN OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY ACTIVATIONS DEVELOPED DURING THE ENVIROLAB

### **CLIMATE ART NIGHT**

Climate Art Night was designed for friends who are already working in the environmental, social and food justice realm. This community activation combined art with focused discussion about climate justice, climate change and climate action while highlighting self care tools we can utilize as workers in this industry. **Combining art with discussion enabled this community to deepen the tools and coping mechanisms used to manage climate anxiety in a safe space with friends.** Through holding space to intentionally connect in this way, we were able to:

- Validate each other's feelings and find comfort in our shared community
- Lean into **art as a form of expression** and therapy
- Listen to good news and **highlight the positive stories** that are happening
- Envision a bright future for ourselves and future generations

This night provided a **sense of relief** for my friends as well as a **space to let out grievances about the current climate** (and world) state. It also provided a space for them to **reflect** on why they are doing the work that they do as sometimes people working in the 'environmental field' are exhausted from constant negative news; the reflection really **helped reignite the passion and the drive** that people had and reminded them why they are in this field in the first place.





### **GALENTINE'S '22**

The Galentine's '22 community activation took place in mid-February under the theme of "sharing love with the land and one another". Born out of the desire to connect with fellow women, show gratitude to our environment and celebrate the annual day of love in a reflective, meaningful and non-romantic way, the event took place on Wreck Beach and invited friends old and new to come together and hold space to connect with one another. Several women joined this gathering and participated in a beach clean-up, dipped in the ocean during the sunset and held a sharing circle around the bonfire. The combination of shared values and bonding activities allowed all of us (friends and strangers) to feel connected as allies, explore the meaning of eco-feminism and be vulnerable with one another. We spoke of feeling empowered in the outdoors, but also disempowered, sad and scared due to climate change. We challenged each other to let go of our anxiety and other emotions by writing them onto paper and allowing the flames of the fire to claim them - releasing ourselves from those burdens. The event formed a supportive community, activated agency within each woman and inspired new climate action ideas.









### **COMMUNITY CLIMATE ANXIETY QUILT**

My activation is a community quilt that stitches together old fabrics from friends & strangers to create a collective narrative about textile waste, circularity, and our relationship to the natural world. This is a process-focused initiative that will be actively shaped through community participation and my own creative exploration. I'm currently in the gathering phase, and in the coming weeks, I'll shift my focus and begin designing

#### **COMMUNITY QUILT**

A STUDY OF /

COMMUNITY ART-MAKING AS ACTIVISM OLD TEXTILES AS NEW NARRATIVES CURIOSITY AND IMAGINATION AS SELF-CARE FRAGMENTS AS PART OF SOMETHING WHOLE











### CLIMATE STORIES Shaped in the outdoors

The outdoors are a space for healing, adventure, exploration and nourishment. It's also where we can experience firsthand the impacts of climate change from forest fires, shifting seasons, flooding. Sharing stories in this space allows for a deeper connection with the land and the community. Climate Stories Shaped in the Outdoors is a community activation in collaboration with Mountain Mentors that centres around building climate narratives in relation to outdoor recreation. Their program offerings seek to energize, deepen, strengthen and grow community within the cohort and the broader outdoors community. The community provides a strong connection with the outdoors and they are collecting story submissions in a variety of mediums (art drawings, poetry, short stories, photography, etc) that will be hosted and overlaid onto a GIS story map which shows Indigenous lands and territories.

Through this activation, we seek to create a space for climate grief while deepening our connections to the community. We are also hoping that it allows for more reflection and connection to the lands we recreate on, our impact, and to the stewards who have cared for the land for generations. It will also be something that people can come back to and reflect on.

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Climate Stories Shaped in the Outdoors will launch in Summer of 2022.

#### Climate Stories in the Outdoors

Why the outdoors?

- The outdoors is a space for healing, adventure, exploration, and nourishment
- It is also where we can experience firsthand the impacts of climate change
  - Forest fires, changing seasons, warmer winters, etc.
- Sharing stories allows for a deeper connection with the land and community





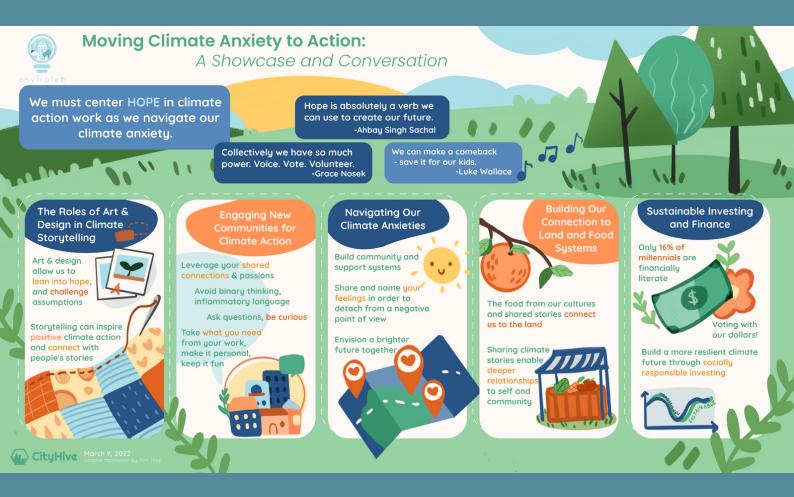
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# MOVING CLIMATE ANXIETY TO ACTION

#### A CONVERSATION AND SHOWCASE IN CELEBRATION OF THE COHORT

On March 9th, 2022, **CityHive hosted Moving Climate Anxiety to Action**. This event was a conversation and showcase celebrating our fifth Envirolab Cohort focused on Climate Communications. This cohort designed and led 13 activations in their own communities. You can tune in to listen to guests from UBC Climate Hub and Break the Divide and learn alongside these youth leaders by watching the video <u>here</u>.

CityHive is fortunate to have worked with program alumni and graphic recorder **Kim Nipp** to create the below illustration, in summary of the March 9th event.







## REFLECTIONS FROM THE LEARNINGS IN THE LAB A SUMMARY OF CONVERSATIONS AND ACTIONS

After 13 weeks of learning alongside youth leaders, it became clear that this group was craving more spaces to explore and share their thoughts and feelings about climate change and how they are experiencing the impacts first hand in their daily lives.

Several themes emerged from the conversations and dialogue with this cohort, and with their communities:

- Climate messaging needs to be developed with specific communities in mind. Through research by OneEarth, this cohort was exposed to the 7 motivations for lighter living, and research on individual behaviour shifts that can impact collective actions.
- Leading climate conversations with hope, as we've learned through sessions with Cohort Mentors Grace Nosek and Em Mittertrainer are key to taking climate action that feels purposeful, joyful and fun.
- By exploring and unpacking personal values, experiences and feelings related to climate change, we can find more meaningful and authentic connections in new communities that are more strongly aligned and encourage us to continue to bring hope and joy with us on our learning journeys.
- Our climate stories are deeply personal, and inform the ways in which we choose to engage on issues that we care about, this is a powerful exercise in becoming attune to the experiences we've had and how those have shaped our lives.
- Leading with vulnerability and sharing our climate stories with close personal connections in our existing spheres of influence helps enable us to feel connected to a broader community and network (where we may not have considered those relationships previously).

"Emotions don't just paralyze, they also **ENERGIZE**!" - Lab Cohort Participant



## PROGRAM IMPACTS

The Envirolab has been steered by the feedback and comments we receive from each cohort of the program. We are proud of the ways in which we've been able to adapt to meet our cohort along their learning journey and ensure that each participant walks away with the tools and knowledge they need to carry forward their climate action work and connection with their communities.



YOUTH WHO COMPLETE THE PROGRAM ARE WALKING AWAY WITH GREATER CONFIDENCE TO ENGAGE WITHIN THEIR OWN NETWORKS AS WELL AS AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHERE ELSE THEY CAN SEEK OUT OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT AND DEFINE THEIR COMMUNITY.



THE ENVIROLAB ACTS AS A SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE FOR YOUTH WHO ENTER THE PROGRAM WITH LIMITED KNOWLEDGE OF THE OPPORTUNITIES, RESOURCES AND INITIATIVES THEY CAN ACCESS TO ENGAGE ON CLIMATE ACTION ISSUES .



THE ENVIROLAB ACTS AS A PLACE OF CONNECTION TO OTHER YOUTH LEADERS IN THE REGION, AT THE START OF THE PROGRAM YOUTH FEEL DISCONNECTED FROM ONE ANOTHER (THIS IS ALSO WHERE WE SEE THE BIGGEST SHIFT BETWEEN BASELINE AND END OF PROGRAM EVALUATIONS).

YOUTH ARE SEEKING SPECIFIC SKILLS THAT CAN SET THEM UP FOR FUTURE CAREERS IN THE SUSTAINABILITY Sector and are curious to deepen their ability to tackle complex and systems level problems, while growing their confidence to become leaders and manage complex problems and projects in their communities.



## **OUR LEARNINGS**

As the Envirolab wraps up its fifth and final cohort in this series, we are eager to find ways to continue to create opportunities for youth to collaborate with other youth leaders and decision makers to co-create climate action in their communities. Our Envirolab team is taking away the following learnings to help shape and inform the future direction of Innovation Lab programming at CityHive:

- The Envirolab is a place for community and connection. Participants are motivated to participate in opportunities to learn, collaborate and explore new ideas with their peers. We also recognize that connecting to community in the face of the global pandemic, heightened climate anxiety and disconnect from many of the connections we've been exposed to has had a significant impact on the ways in which we are able to connect with each other, and also our own understanding of our belonging and place within communities we do feel a connection to. CityHive's programming will continue to act as a hub for connection, shared learning and exposure to other climate leaders to empower youth to feel mobilized to take action.
- The Envirolab creates magic by hosting spaces to ideate and think critically about complex problems. While this cohort was challenged to explore urban sustainability and climate issues directly connected to communities they are a part of, the program model should tackle more defined problems that are contained within the length of the program. This provides opportunities for youth to flex their climate action, civic engagement and systems thinking muscles in creative ways without being tied to projects after the lab has finished.
- Youth need a safe place to explore new ideas, thoughts and feelings related to climate change. Many youth had not been exposed to safe or brave spaces to explore those thoughts or feelings prior to joining the Envirolab. In collaborating with program mentors who actively model vulnerability in their work, this cohort was became engaged in sharing their own stories and connecting on a more personal level. Our program model will continue to model hope and joy in leading dialogue about climate change.
- Youth understand the range of networks they have, but lack clarity or connection to the communities they most identify with and are unclear how to deepen or realign those connections based on their personal values. Activities at the onset of the program to explore one's positionality, understanding personal climate stories and scope of existing network can help position youth who complete the program to feel confidence in taking the next steps in their climate journey.



### WHAT'S UP NEXT?

### CityHive, alongside our partners, is looking to expand and deepen the impact of the Envirolab.

We are looking for organizations, municipalities, businesses, associations and individuals who want to help CityHive better meet the needs of youth and see more youth leaders in the climate space while working to support climate targets across Metro Vancouver to co-create climate action.

#### Please reach out to envirolab@cityhive.ca to connect and collaborate with us.

With your support, we can create lasting relationships between youth and decision makers to support ideas that will have meaningful impacts in communities across Metro Vancouver.

### INTRODUCING: THE YOUTH CLIMATE INNOVATION LAB

As the Envirolab wraps up and CityHive does a full scale review of the Envirolab and it's impact over the last three years, we are adapting to shifting needs in the climate action and engagement realm.

Each cohort of the Envirolab has shared increasing feelings of climate anxiety. We are also increasingly hearing that municipalities and institutions need increased citizen support to implement climate emergency action plans.

Our new program - the Youth Climate Innovation Lab will fill that gap - acting as the co-creative space for collective action while being able to apply newly developed skills that can be used as participants transition into the sustainability sector. This is a program for youth to collaborate with municipalities, civic institutions and community organizations, all while learning, upskilling, and creating bold actions to advance a just transition and address climate challenges.

Stay tuned for updates and official launch of the Youth Climate Innovation Lab later in 2022.



## WITH THANKS

The Enviorlab is made possible with generous support from the Lawson Foundation, Vancity Credit Union and the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions.

# LAWSON Vancity

We are proud to work alongside an amazing set of partners who make up our Steering Committee to provide guidance and support to the development of this program and the cohort projects. We extend this thanks and gratitude to Vancity Credit Union, Vancouver Economic Commission, Social Purpose Institute , OneEarth, The Share.Reuse.Repair. Initiative, and the City of Vancouver.













### CITYHIVE IS GRATEFUL TO OUR COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS FOR THEIR TIME:

Grace Nosek & Em Mittertrainer UBC Climate Hub

Dagmar Timmer & Vanessa Timmer OneEarth

> **Cate Burton & Shalen Chen** Be the Change Earth Alliance

**Jim Boothroyd** Boothroyd Communications **Sophia Yang** Threading Change

**Max Lindley-Peart** Coeuraj, Envirolab Alumni

**Abhay Singh Sachal** Break the Divide

Luke Wallace Artist & Musician



