

UW Climate Justice Ecosystem

Public Resources

The University of Waterloo (UW) Climate Justice Ecosystem (CJE) is an **independent coalition** of undergrad/grad students that aims to build and mobilize student power for an intersectional, grassroots movement towards a **sustainable, resilient, and just** UW for everyone.

- Read our [open letter](#)! Show your support by signing on through our [Google Form](#).
- Follow us on [Instagram](#) to stay updated on our work and how you can get involved.
- Questions? Email us at climatejusticeuw@gmail.com.

A core principle of Climate Justice is **free, accessible, and public education**. As the CJE, we have compiled a repository of climate justice jargon across our communications to ensure everyone can understand and engage with our work. We have defined these terms as our coalition sees them. All credit is given to our fellow youth climate, environmental, and social justice organizations with whom we form solidarity and draw inspiration.

Important note: This is a non-exhaustive list of resources and definitions. We encourage all those curious to discover more and critically engage with the information in the document.

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UW Climate Justice Ecosystem

We are building and mobilizing student power for an intersectional grassroots movement towards a **sustainable, resilient, and just** UWaterloo for everyone.

Accelerated & decisive action on the climate crisis

Secure, safe, unionized jobs with livable wages

Affordable & accessible housing

Universal & comprehensive healthcare

We envision a campus that centers our safety and wellbeing, starting by addressing the most existential threat we face: **climate change.**

Fair tuition & opportunities for international & out-of-province students

End hunger on campus

Indigenous sovereignty & land back

Investments in transparent community-led safety initiatives

Liberation, equality, & inclusion for all

Reliable & convenient transit to and from Waterloo

UW CJE Values

Climate justice

- Climate justice is the belief that the climate crisis will not affect us all equally (i.e., it exacerbates existing inequalities along the lines of race, class, age, and geography, etc.) and thus we must center equity and justice in our climate action efforts. Climate justice is broad and encapsulates all other kinds of justice issues, since they all tie back to the central mission of achieving a livable planet.
- We as a collective draw connections between the fight for a livable planet and parallel struggles for economic and social justice. What that means is that we want to see climate action that is equitable and that helps to address other economic and social issues. It fundamentally believes that climate change is not an amoral issue, but has sociopolitical implications for all aspects of life. It also presents a rare opportunity to critique the status quo that got us into this problem in the first place, and reimagine a better path forward.

Accessibility

- Centering accessibility means ensuring everything we create can be consumed by the largest audience possible. Many folks are systemically excluded from conversations and movements they should be empowered to meaningfully contribute to simply because of accessibility barriers.
- Specifically within our ecosystem, accessibility is centered in the following ways:
 - **Materials:** All of our social media content, posters, publicly facing documents, flyers, etc. are screened for color contrast & makeup, font, text size, and assistive technology readability. Efforts have also been made to use plain language wherever possible and to provide resources (such as this document) to define words that may be new to some folks.
 - **At the rally:** The rally must be a space that is physically accessible to the best of our abilities. This means ensuring that it is held in a public space that can facilitate folks with mobility aids, our speaker system is loud enough for folks with hearing loss, masks are recommended, and a well-trained safety team is available.
 - **Community engagement:** Accessibility in this context means meeting people where they're at and specifically extending lines of communication to folks in underrepresented groups. Assertive and consistent efforts have been made to invite students from various equity-seeking groups to contribute in any capacity that they are comfortable with.

Anti-racism

- Anti-racism is the active practice of identifying and dismantling all systemic racism and oppression against Black, Indigenous, and racialized peoples.
- Anti-racism is the active process of identifying and challenging racism, by changing systems, organizational structures, policies, practices, and attitudes to redistribute power equitably. This goes beyond merely being "not racist" to proactively confronting racial

inequalities and injustices. Anti-racism aims to create a society where racial disparities are eliminated, and equitable opportunities and outcomes are a reality for everyone.

- [Center for Racial Justice in Education](#)

Accountability

- As activists, we know that we shouldn't and cannot speak for communities that aren't our own. We know that the issues we want to tackle extend far beyond our campus and our collective experience, so we are always humbly open to critique and constructive feedback. We strive to ensure our work is meaningful, relevant, and productive for equity-deserving communities.

Culture of care

- We care for each other by generously sharing time, energy, and resources. We have an abundance mindset, where we trust in the inherent value of paying things forward. We are both proactive and reactive in responding to student issues.
- Care for each other and the society we wish to create needs to be at the centre of all things. Care is not just an abstract value, but an active practice of showing up for each other, even if something may not affect us personally.

Decolonization

- We believe that decolonization and Indigenous resurgence are fundamentally inseparable from the pursuit of climate justice. We recognize that the climate crisis is largely the direct result of white supremacy, imperialism, global capitalism and the broader colonial project. In an effort to dismantle these systems of oppression we commit to being accomplices within movements towards Indigenous sovereignty and climate action that honor the traditional ways of knowing of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples.

Intersectionality

- Intersectionality is the belief that we all hold multiple, intersecting identities. We all carry a combination of unearned characteristics that give us either privilege or oppression in our society (e.g., white cis men have historically held power in Canadian society, which has led the laws and social norms of today to benefit other white cis men). However, having one privilege doesn't negate an oppression you face (e.g., you can be a citizen but also trans), thus we must see humans in their full and multidimensional selves.

Solidarity

- We gather around a recognition that there are systems that cause us harm (e.g., capitalism, colonialism, White supremacy, imperialism) and that affect people differently. We believe that these harms can only be addressed together, thus we must stand united against ALL forms of injustice.
- Solidarity is the belief in the "power of the people" being stronger than those in power and the systems of harm created to divide us. We are better collectively than we are individually.

Terminology

Climate crisis

- “The climate has always changed. However, modern anthropogenic activity, rooted in fossil-fuel-based energy consumption, has caused the collapse of the Earth’s system - leading to sudden, accelerated, and unforeseen changes in the climate due to global warming.
- This notion of collapse/crisis refers to the unsustainability of human and nonhuman life on Earth due to the dominant patriarchal, racist, anthropocentric, androcentric, speciesist and colonial organization of modern social structures, to the detriment of biodiversity, water, soil, and other elements of nature. In recent years, this has accelerated and affected ecological cycles, leading to changes in ecosystems, some irreversible.
- These multiple, linked crises - economic, health, political, and care, among many others - heighten the need for an approach to life that reorganizes, regenerates, repairs, and heals the bonds between humanity and Nature to halt the collapse.”
 - Definition from the [Climate Justice Glossary](#)
- “Climate justice is a movement that recognizes that climate change is unequally affecting people in the Global South, Indigenous Peoples and the most marginalized communities in the Global North. These unequal impacts are the result of our governing systems; systems that exploit land and bodies, which are capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, extractivism, racism etc.
- Because those who have contributed the least to climate change are the most affected, the climate justice movement calls for centring those who are most marginalized. This means following their leadership, centring their realities, concerns and demands. It requires the liberation and emancipation of all from systems of oppression.”
 - Definition from the [Climate Justice Organizing HUB](#)

Building student power

- We are students advocating by and for ourselves. We build student power by organizing from the grassroots level: bottom-up, not top-down. Students hold valuable lived experiences and perspectives on some of the world’s most pressing issues. We believe that while one voice is powerful, a collective of voices together becomes an unstoppable force.

Campus ecosystem

- Our campus ecosystem includes the students, staff, faculty, organizations, and governance structures (and the relationships between them) that contribute to our experience at Waterloo.

Climate adaptation

- “Adaptation refers to human interventions that minimize the impact of climate change on human beings and the planet. An example of climate adaptation is designing

disaster-resilient infrastructure which reduces the likelihood of damage to human beings from extreme weather events like floods, storms, heat waves, and others.

- It is important to recognise that the impact of climate change will be felt differently by different segments of the population based on their geographic location, economic prosperity, available resources and access to relevant information like forecasting systems, among others. Thus, adaptation pathways must be designed in consultation with affected communities and must be equitable in nature.”
 - Definition from the Justice adda [Climate Justice Lexicon](#)

Climate mitigation

- “Mitigation refers to actions that slow down the pace of climate change and its resultant adverse impacts. The primary mitigation pathways are through a reduction/prevention of human emissions of greenhouse gasses (e.g., renewable energy) and through storage of carbon, either naturally (e.g., reforestation) or artificially (e.g., direct air capture).
- Mitigation responses are relevant to climate justice because although seemingly equal, they are not always equitable. For instance, consider people living in a developed country who might easily be able to switch to a renewable form of energy because (a) they can afford it, (b) it is likelier that their governments have the technology to make an efficient energy transition.”
 - Definition from the Justice adda [Climate Justice Lexicon](#)

Collectivity

- The understanding that we are part of something bigger than ourselves - a community - and that we owe something to each other (we should take care of one another).

Global North

- “‘Global North’... refer(s) to States, territorial border institutions, corporations, elites, oligarchic agribusinesses, and financial institutions as well as individuals and entities that facilitate and/or profit from the exploitation, plundering, and hoarding of wealth. This definition encompasses Global North entities that happen to be physically located in Southern countries.”
 - Definition from the [Climate Justice Glossary](#)

Global South

- “‘Global South’... refer(s) to a) local communities, Indigenous groups, peasants, and territorial organizations that are victims of the impacts of capitalism, patriarchy, colonialism, structural violence, and extractivist development policy; and b) vulnerable populations displaced, sacrificed, polluted, politically persecuted, intimidated, and threatened by corporations, the financial system, and States. Therefore, this definition encompasses Global South communities in the U.S. and Europe that experience these conditions as well.”
 - Definition from the [Climate Justice Glossary](#)

Mutual aid

- The creation of student and community systems that support our well-being by exchanging resources and services independent of external organizations.
- Engage further:
 - Ismatu Gwendolyn [@ismatu.gwendolyn](#) (essayist, therapist and thinker in praxis)
 - [Mutual Aid x Dean Spade: Critical Questions](#)

“The Personal is Political”

- Everything is inherently political because we have created a society in which our bodies, land, food, housing, etc., are governed by political systems. Therefore, the phrase “The personal is political” reminds us that the choices we may make out of instinct or without critical thought are inherently political.
- Engage Further:
 - Mariam Kaba - (organizer, educator, librarian, writer)
 - Books: We Do This 'Til We Free Us Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice
 - [Sandy and Nora Talk Politics](#) (podcast)

Fossil Fuel Financing:

- “Since 2016, the big 5 Canadian banks have provided over \$1.1 TRILLION in fossil fuel financing to fossil fuels through loans and investments. Globally we are set to burn 50% more fossil fuels than is consistent with staying below 2 degrees warming. But our banks continue to finance fossil fuel expansion. Without enormous loans from banks, (as well as support from big insurance firms) the destructive projects they finance would not be possible. This is why we demand the banks divest, because they are responsible for enabling fossil fuel production. Without their support, the fossil fuel industry will fall” - [bankingonabetterfuture.com](#)

Free Prior and Informed Consent:

- Free Prior and Informed Consent Protocol by [Unist’ot’en](#)
- “FPIC is a principle protected by international human rights standards that state, ‘all peoples have the right to self-determination’ and – linked to the right to self-determination – ‘all peoples have the right to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.’” [United Nations](#)
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People - [UNDRIP](#)

Resources

- Climate4Palestine: <https://linktr.ee/climate4palestine>
- Corporate Accountability: [Climate Justice Glossary](#)
- Climate Justice Organizing HUB: [Wiki](#)
- Justice adda: [Climate Justice Lexicon](#)
- Pachamama Alliance: [Climate Action Now course](#)

- Generation Green: [Environmental Liberation room](#)
- Sacred Earth Solar: [The Just Transition Guide](#)
- [Rania El Mugammar](#) (Sudanese artist, liberation educator, Abolitionist, anti-oppression consultant, multidisciplinary performer)
- [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#)
- [How We Can End the Violence Against Trans Women of Color](#)
- Source: @diasporaexpress
 - [Black History & Activism](#) Google Drive by Charles Preston
 - Bilphena's [Online Library](#)
 - [The End of Policing](#) by Alex S. Vitale (free e-book)
 - [Radicalize Reading List](#) by @shainanyc & @weaponsnfros
 - "[It's Not Enough to be Non-Racist](#)" by Sagal Muse