

Certificate in Climate Studies and Action: Indigenous Strategic Action Plan

We acknowledge that the Certificate operates on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) People.

Introduction

This plan emerged out of the Self-Assessment process of the Indigenous Strategic Plan (ISP)¹ (<https://isp.ubc.ca/implementation/implementation-tools-resources/>). It reflects what we learned in the process and what work we are committed to that supports the goals and actions of the ISP going forward. The first section provides framing and summarizes the ISP goals and actions that our work can most directly impact. The second section is more mechanistic and breaks down the actions we are working on under the ISP and identifies calls to action at higher levels for work that would support our efforts. We completed the Self-Assessment process in the context of **developing** the Certificate program; many of the opportunities and challenges outlined in this plan reflect this context of creating a new unit at UBC.

Section 1: Framing

Who are we? | What is our Mission?

The Certificate in Climate Studies and Action is a new 18-credit certificate that is a direct response to the Climate Emergency (<https://geog.ubc.ca/undergraduate/climate-certificate/>) and to consistent student advocacy for climate action oriented curriculum. The Certificate launched this year (2022-23). It is open to all undergraduate students and intended as something that can be tagged onto any undergraduate degree program. The program's mission is to offer a core structure where students can develop an evidence-based, interdisciplinary, practice for climate action.

What is our role? | What is our scope of impact?

The Certificate is a small undergraduate, interdisciplinary program, co-coordinated by the Department of Geography (Faculty of Arts) and the Department of Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Sciences (Faculty of Science). The program is currently capped at 60 students/cohort, which translates to a maximum of 120 students across the three year levels in the program. The program reports to a small advisory committee composed of non-UBC community members, faculty and Certificate students² and then to Department Heads. The program plays three roles: (1) coordinating and delivering climate change curriculum, (2) creating a gathering space for students interested in climate and (3) acting as a core curriculum that other UBC units can build from as they respond to the Climate Emergency³.

¹ UBC Indigenous Strategic Plan - <https://isp.ubc.ca/>

² This year (2022) is the first year of the program and the advisory committee is still being created but its composition will reflect what's outlined here

³ <https://climateemergency.ubc.ca/>

Our scope of impact is focused on: (1) how we support people in the program (students, faculty and staff) and (2) what we teach. The action items laid out in this plan are organized by these two frames (*Supporting People* and *Certificate Curriculum*). We have some power to stimulate curriculum change in other UBC units and advocate at higher levels on issues where the ISP intersects our work - these advocacy calls have been placed in their own section (see very end of document) because they reflect items that are not within our power to change but do challenge our unit.

What does meaningful engagement with the ISP mean for our work?

For us, in our work, we answered that it means:

1. Creating a supportive space for Indigenous students.
2. Building out course content to:
 - foreground the relationship between Indigenous rights and title, self-determination and climate change
 - complicate and denaturalize stereotypes about Indigenous Peoples, including universalizing, romanticizing and victim narratives
 - connect climate change to colonial processes and better understand those connections from a range of scholarship, including that of Indigenous scholars
 - introduce the tensions of what reconciliation and decolonization are, or should be, and the limits and pitfalls of those frameworks

ISP Goals and Actions Our Work Supports

This summary moves inward from the ISP to our work – identifying which ISP Goals and Actions⁴ our work can support (directly or indirectly).

People Focused

Goal 6 - Recruiting Indigenous people: Position UBC as the most accessible large research university globally for Indigenous students, faculty and staff.

directly support	Action 28: Increase Indigenous student access to needs-based financial aid for tuition, child-care and housing.
indirectly support	Action 27: Integrate competence or interest in developing competence in teaching Indigenous content and working with Indigenous students and colleagues into university job descriptions.

Goal 8 - Creating a holistic system of support: Provide exceptional and culturally supportive services for Indigenous students, faculty, staff and communities.

directly support	Action 42: Complete, on a regular basis, service level reviews with Indigenous students, faculty and staff to ensure campus wellness programs and other services increasingly meet their needs.
indirectly support	Action 43: Expand upon UBC’s discrimination and harassment policies to clarify and uphold UBC’s zero tolerance for racism, cultural violence, sexual violence or any form of discrimination against Indigenous students, faculty, staff and community members.

⁴ Goals and actions are directly from the UBC Indigenous Strategic Plan, <https://isp.ubc.ca/>

Curriculum Focused

Goal 4 - Indigenizing our curriculum: Include Indigenous ways of knowing, culture, histories, experiences and worldviews in curriculum delivered across Faculties, programs and campuses.

directly support	Action 15: Undertake university-wide, Faculty-level curriculum reviews to ensure Indigenous histories, experiences, worldviews and knowledge systems are appropriately integrated and that all Faculties are fully compliant with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. Action 16: Ensure all academic programs, undergraduate and graduate, include substantive content in at least one course which explores Indigenous histories and identifies how Indigenous issues intersect with the major field of study of the Faculty. Action 17: Provide equitable and timely financial compensation to Indigenous people who support the Indigenization of curriculum.
indirectly support	Action 18: Continue to partner with Indigenous communities locally and globally to develop accredited post-secondary Indigenous knowledge programs that can be delivered in communities and on campus.

Goal 3 - Moving research forward: Support research initiatives that are reciprocal, community-led, legitimize Indigenous ways of knowing and promote Indigenous peoples' self-determination.

indirectly support	Action 13: Co-develop research protocols and community-specific ethical research guidelines with interested community partners to ensure students and Faculties are approaching research opportunities with communities in a respectful and formalized manner. This includes the imperative of free, prior and informed consent and protocols on the ownership, control, access and possession of Indigenous data.
---------------------------	---

Section 2: Action Plan

This section breaks down the actions the Certificate is committed to in an adapted format of the ISP Performance Measurement Framework⁵. It moves outward from our actions to the aligned ISP Goals/Actions and beyond that the section finishes with calls to action for work that needs to happen at higher levels to support our work. We anticipate this plan to be a relevant guide for five years but in some places there are performance measures that have shorter timelines.

Feedback and assessment are built-in in three places: an annual student survey, an annual teaching and learning seminar for faculty and an annual curriculum review. The student survey and seminar are relied on heavily because feedback from these sources reflects real experiences and how we learn and evolve as a unit.

Note: The I/D for each ISP Action are short for indirectly supporting (I) and directly supporting (D).

Area 1: Supporting People

Program Actions	Outputs	Outcomes	Performance Measure	ISP Goals/Actions
Assist in establishing a fund to support students from Indigenous, black, racialized and other equity deserving communities (IBPOC+) studying climate at UBC ¹	Partial or full tuition cost of Certificate (18-credits) covered for successful IBPOC+ applicants	IBPOC+ students better supported, a greater diversity of student perspectives in the classroom and in required courses	Donations secured for a fund to support 1-2 students for 2023W term. Actively work to support more students from there with new targets as appropriate. # of students supported	Goal 6 Action 28 (D)
Support faculty in program with aligning their curriculum with ISP goals and supporting Indigenous students in their classes by (1) holding an annual teaching and learning seminar focused on this theme (aligned with annual curriculum review - see table below) and (2) facilitating the exchange of resources and experiences on an ongoing basis	Annual teaching and learning seminar	Faculty are supported and challenged in continual advancement of curriculum that aligns with the ISP plan; faculty are better able to support Indigenous students in their classes Increased familiarity with relevant resources and Indigenous student services in faculty and program administration	Feedback from faculty at annual teaching and learning seminar and annual student survey	Goal 4 Action 15 (I) Action 16 (I) Goal 6 Action 27 (I) Goal 8 Action 43 (I)
Conduct annual Certificate student survey and include section that assesses (1) Indigenous student experience and (2) advancement of curriculum goals	Annual student assessment to improve Indigenous student support and curriculum in Certificate	Co-directors and advisory committee have knowledge of Indigenous student experience and reflections on the program	Annual survey conducted	Goal 8 Action 42 (D)
Notes				
1. This fund is being led by the Climate Action Committee in the Department of Geography and the Climate Emergency Committee in the Department of Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Sciences. It is aligned with the Certificate but enrolment in the Certificate is not required to be eligible; students studying climate more broadly at UBC are also eligible.				

⁵ Available here: <https://isp.ubc.ca/implementation/implementation-tools-resources/>

Area 2: Certificate Curriculum

Program Actions	Outputs	Outcomes	Performance Measure	ISP Goals/Actions
Build-out core course offering to meet the two program learning objectives that relate to the ISP curriculum goals and continually reflect on and update course curriculum to better achieve these goals ¹	Core Certificate courses include curriculum that meets these goals	Students leave program meeting or exceeding the learning objectives ¹	Syllabus content directly relating learning objectives ¹ increases over 2 years and actively maintained Feedback from annual student survey assessing these objectives	Goal 4 Action 16 (D)
Invite and compensate Indigenous partners, faculty and experts to teach in Certificate.	Indigenous developed and led content a part of core course offering	Student learning enriched by teaching from Indigenous partners, faculty and experts	Mechanism to facilitate invitations established in year 1 of program (2022-23) Where relationships are formed, Indigenous partners, faculty and experts teaching in core courses, with fair reimbursement	Goal 4 Action 17 (D) Action 18 (I)
Develop workshops and course content in Climate Action Labs (CALs) and Capstone related to ethically engaging with Indigenous communities, as well as reflect on and continually update these courses	Workshops and content integrated into CAL and Capstone	Students leave program with introductory exposure to ethical community engagement as a foundation to work with and for Indigenous communities	Workshops and content are developed over 2 years and then actively maintained and updated Feedback from annual student survey and community partners in CALs and Capstone	Goal 3 Action 13 (I)
Actively contribute to anti-discrimination work by complicating and denaturalizing stereotypes about Indigenous Peoples in core curriculum, including universalizing, romanticizing, and victim-narratives	Course content, assignments and discussion focused on identifying and avoiding these stereotypes	Increased awareness of discriminatory stereotypes in Certificate faculty and student body	Feedback from annual student survey	Goal 8 Action 43 (I)
Conduct annual curriculum review to assess progress and encourage faculty to revise and update their courses to better meet program and ISP goals	Annual curriculum review	Certificate leadership and instructors equipped with understanding of programs status and progress on curriculum goals related to the ISP and associated learning objectives ¹ Curriculum continuously improved	Annual curriculum review (using this document as an assessment framework) completed every year	Goal 4 Action 15 (D)
Notes				
1. These learning objectives are: (1) “Apply an intersectional lens (including but not limited to processes of racialization, patriarchy and colonialism) to analyze social drivers and impacts of climate change”; (2) “Ethically engage Indigenous worldviews, epistemologies and ontologies to interpret climate change and relate these ways of being and knowing as distinctly valuable alternatives to dominant paradigms”				

Where support is needed to fully implement the ISP

In developing the Certificate, we struggled with two key areas that intersect climate change studies and the ISP. Remedies to these issues sit outside our scope and so they are framed as calls to higher level units (Faculties, VP Offices). Both calls already exist as **explicit** recommendations in the Climate Emergency Final Report and

Recommendations⁶ and including them here is meant to put them on record - the need is still there, in this case negatively impacting the program we offer, and needs to be addressed.

1. There are not enough faculty (particularly Indigenous faculty) that teach at the intersection of climate change, Indigenous studies and anti-racism - three core university priorities that each have their own strategic document⁷. This intersection is a key part of the curriculum we imagined but we are not able to offer this curriculum in full because teaching resources are insufficient.

Call: Create new faculty and postdoctoral positions in Indigenous climate studies

2. Funds to recruit Indigenous students to UBC need more attention. We have been working to establish a fund that would support students from Indigenous, black, racialized and other equity seeking communities (IBPOC+) studying climate at UBC. The work of establishing the fund has thus far fallen on us - this seems inadequate given a fund meeting this exact description is an explicit priority of the University and inefficient because funds are well outside our scope of work/expertise.

Call: Coordinate and support funding for Indigenous students in climate studies at high levels with dedicated resources

Document info and contact

The ISP Self-Assessment process and writing this document occurred between winter 2021 and fall 2022.

Certificate team: Co-Directors (Dr. Tara Ivanochko, Dr. Jessica Dempsey), Geography Climate Action Committee Chair (Dr. Nina Hewitt) and Worklearn students/research assistants (Rachel Cheang, Hanno Southam, Brendan O’Callahan and Holly Denson-Camp).

For questions, please email: jessica.dempsey@geog.ubc.ca or tivanoch@eoas.ubc.ca



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Certificate in Climate Studies and Action

⁶Climate Emergency Engagement Final Report and Recommendations, <https://climateemergency.ubc.ca/>. For Call 1 (hiring), see Strategy: “Expand, strengthen and coordinate climate research at UBC”/ Recommendation 3: “Conduct climate focused faculty hiring” (pg. 15). For Call 2 (IBPOC+ student climate funding), see Strategy: “Operationalize UBC’s commitments to climate justice: Support climate leadership and initiatives led by Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour”/ Recommendation 1, “Support Fair Compensation and Representation for UBC’s IBPOC Community Leading Climate Initiatives”/ Sub-recommendation, “Create a dedicated scholarship fund to support IBPOC UG [undergraduate] & Grads working on climate change” (pg. 33).

⁷ UBC Climate Emergency Engagement Final Report and Recommendations, <https://climateemergency.ubc.ca/>, UBC Indigenous Strategic Plan, <https://isp.ubc.ca/>, UBC Inclusion Action Plan, <https://equity.ubc.ca/about/inclusion-action-plan/>