

Vancouver Map (Maps as Art, n.d.)  
South Korea Map (NASA's Visible Earth, 2004)

# **climate justice & the Asian diaspora in Metro Vancouver**

a zine for reflection

## **about the cover**

This cover contains map imagery of the South Korean peninsula (left) and the coast of BC, including Metro Vancouver and Vancouver Island (right). Thematically, this represents the clash of cultures as members of the Asian diaspora, our identities mixed between so-called "Canada" and the researcher's ancestral homelands of Korea, Malaysia, and Hong Kong (both of which are integrated in this zine). We also wanted to represent how past and ongoing climate disasters and rising sea levels uniquely impact Asian diaspora, who are connected to the coastal regions here and in Asia.

**lynne kim  
naomi leung  
jenica pong**

## about the researchers



### Lynne Kim (she/her)

I am a 22-year-old, second-generation woman of Korean descent who was born and raised in colonially named "North Vancouver, British Columbia," on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples. My parents are first-generation immigrants who moved to Vancouver in 1997, and since elementary school, it has always been my responsibility to be a "translator kid" because my parents spoke limited English. Now, I believe it is my job to stand up for first-generation immigrant parents like my own by amplifying and ensuring society values the opinions of marginalized communities.



### Jenica Pong (she/her)

I am a 19-year-old 2.5 generation Chinese woman and settler, born and raised on xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and Səliwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nation lands colonially known as "Coquitlam, BC." During my time working at a COVID-19 vaccination center, I witnessed first-hand with my grandparents and many Asian diasporic elders the lack of culturally nuanced science information. Informed by my lived experiences seeing linguistic, generational, and cultural barriers, I am driven within this project to find solutions for more equitable climate education beyond just language translation.

### Naomi Leung (they/them)

I am a 19-year-old Han Chinese Malaysian settler and guest on ancestral and stolen xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) and scəwəθən (Tsawwassen) territories in colonially named "Richmond, BC." I have a background in community organizing for climate justice education, harm reduction, and policy change with Climate Education Reform BC, Sustainabilityteens, and the Climate Justice Organizing HUB. From these experiences, I have witnessed how inaccessible climate justice resources are for the general public and how important Asian and racialized youth's voices are in the climate movement. This is why I am energized to invite the Asian diaspora into climate organizing.



## acknowledgments

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Manvi Bhalla

### Faculty Supervisor:

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### Community Partner:

Christina Lee

*(on behalf of Hua Foundation)*

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## about this zine

This zine aims to provide a plain-language summary of our research study. We have also included space for you to write self-reflections to questions that, throughout the research process, have inspired deep conversation and vulnerability among us three. We invite you to answer these questions and reflect on your own experiences and interactions with climate justice, especially considering your own cultural perspective and experiences.

# our study



## Community Partner

Our study was completed in partnership with the community organization **Hua Foundation** on their Language Access Program (LAP). LAP centres on resource building for topics such as climate justice and civic engagement to support "translator kids" who bear the responsibility of translating documents and information for their parents.

## Our Focus

1. Asian Diaspora in Metro Vancouver
2. Identifying barriers people of the Asian Diaspora living in Metro Vancouver experience that limit their participation in climate justice actions
3. Reflecting on ways community organizations, and local and provincial governments can promote their meaningful involvement in these efforts moving forward

# asian diaspora

This study focuses on people of the East Asian community due to the large components of the community partner's work grounded in Vancouver's Chinatown, and all three researchers are East Asian femme-presenting individuals with lived experiences only relating to our East Asian heritage and culture. However, our team acknowledges the privileges and limitations of our experiences, restricting our understanding of specific Asian Diaspora lives beyond ours, which identifies a gap in our research.

## definitions

**East Asian Diaspora:** Chinese, Hmong, Hong Konger, Mongolian, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese, and other East Asian origins not included elsewhere living outside of their homelands. The term "diaspora" means people who have chosen to, been forced to, or whose ancestors emigrated from the continent of Asia to another region

**Epistemic Justice:** rights of all people to reflect and contribute their own experiences and knowledge to communities (Byrnes et al., 2022; Fricker, 2007).

**Procedural Justice:** how fair people perceive systems or processes to be (ie: voting in the election) (Yale Law School, n.d.)

**Climate Justice Framework:** considering climate change not only as an environmental issue, but while also thinking about racial, language, educational, or accessibility injustices people face.

# climate justice

**Climate justice** is defined as acknowledging that the roots of climate change are grounded in systems of oppression and that experiences of climate change are distributed inequitably. Therefore, how action on climate change must work to dismantle systems of oppression and integrate the knowledge and experiences of those impacted hardest by climate change in order to build a just and livable future (UBC Centre for Climate Justice, n.d.; Xie, 2021).

## implications

- There is limited research and resources in the space of climate justice education for non-fluently English-speaking Asian Diaspora
- Non-fluent English speakers in the Asian Diaspora may have a greater risk of experiencing digital disinformation due to:
  - use of unmoderated platforms for political and social discussions (Barias et al., 2022)
  - high trust in getting information from social networks, which may worsen the spread of disinformation (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017).
- Metro Vancouver climate justice organizations and community groups are often White-dominated spaces (Faisal, 2022).
- Hua Foundation has published the Asian Community Convener Project, which is one, if not the only research work that examines the intersections of community organizing, anti-racism, and equity in Metro Vancouver (Hua Foundation, 2022)



# barriers to climate justice engagement

Satellite photo of Hong Kong (Geocarto, n.d.)

Through a self-reflection process followed by an open conversation discussing what existing barriers prevent our families of East Asian heritage from engaging in climate justice action, we identified the presence of two types of barriers:

## procedural barriers

The common procedural barriers to engaging in climate justice the researchers experienced are:

- Our families' survival mentality
- Generational gaps
- Language or information accessibility

### **Survival Mentality:**

The hardships of immigrant families (e.g. finding economic security, lifestyle stability, and adapting to Canadian institutional structures) and limited mental and emotional capacity often limit engagement, learning, and understanding of climate justice.

### **Generation Gaps & Information Accessibility:**

A commonality the researchers have identified is that no one grew up in their household learning about climate change from their family members because our parents/grandparents did not have the same education about climate justice throughout their upbringing, creating differences in perceptions of climate justice.

## emotional barriers

The climate-related emotions that we have experienced causing barriers to engaging in climate justice the researchers experienced are:

- Fear
- Stress
- Worry
- Helplessness
- Grief
- Loneliness

We noted how it felt easier (less emotionally exhausting) to disengage or avoid overwhelming negative emotions prompted by climate change. This avoidance and lack of resources and space to process climate emotions created barriers to initiating action or self-education on climate solutions and the local climate context.

## reflection question:

*What is the biggest barrier for you when approaching or interacting with climate justice?*

how does Asian identity  
inform understandings of  
climate justice? *autoethnography excerpts*

### **environmental action informed by cultural values**

*“There were many sustainable practices we did at home, such as not wasting food, recycling paper and empty containers, composting, or reusing plastic bags and Tupperware containers, but these actions were never done with the intention of taking care of our planet; this was a cultural norm in my neighbourhood in North Vancouver, and my parents were encouraged to take these individual sustainable actions in Korea as well.”- Lynne (22)*

### **climate change as a systems issue**

*“I was not raised explicitly discussing about climate change, environmentalism or climate justice... However, throughout my childhood, my mom has grown fruits and vegetables, brought me outside a lot and facilitated my relationship to the outdoors when I was younger...I hadn't had access to movement or systems thinking knowledge, so these concepts were radical and powerful.” - Naomi (19)*

### **whiteness in climate movement**

*I think I struggled to reconcile the urgency I felt for the planet with the sadness I felt scrolling through news stories about Asian hate. As many friends as I had made in my time as a climate organizer, very few were Asian, and very few I felt I could connect to talk about the nuances of these feelings.” - Jenica (19)*

### **racial experiences in organizing**

*“I felt included and understood when my friend, a Bengali organizer, invited me to Sustainabiliteen's BIPOC caucus to discuss our experiences...The group was comprised of mostly South East Asian, South Asian and East Asian people discussing tokenism, our place in the environmental movement, frustrations with White fragility, and our relationships to White supremacy. It was powerful to discuss these systems of power, and to feel like I could without making a White person uncomfortable” - Naomi (19)*

Satellite photo of Malaysia's coast (Science Photo, n.d.)

## **reflection question:**

*When you think about climate change in what ways is it different or the same as your parents? Your grandparents? Your peers?*

**family  
future  
land  
knowledge  
food  
fear  
access  
change\***

**\*8 top words from our discussion notes**

## opportunities to get involved

*What are opportunities for people of the Asian diaspora in Metro Vancouver to get involved in climate justice?*

### **organizations for BIPOC youth**

Climate Recentered: Asian youth and femme-led climate justice non-profit founded in 2021 focused on supporting BIPOC youth to learn, mobilize, and organize for climate justice through mutual aid and community connection initiatives. Serve as a physical community space that centers joy, empowerment of racialized youth to de-center Whiteness in the climate movement, and hosting of events and educational workshops,

#### lessons from outside of metro vancouver

1. Introduce climate justice with familiar and common values, interests, or priorities identified within the community
2. Organize intergenerationally
3. Learn from elders as much as you teach
4. Educate to encourage political action
5. Need for translation services in civic spaces

## metro vancouver

### **general climate organizations**

- Sustainabiliteens
- UBC Centre for Climate Justice
- SFU 350
- CityHive
- Shake Up the Establishment

### **organizations for Asian diaspora**

Hua Foundation: Non-profit organization founded in 2014 that serves Asian Diasporic youth to build skills, conduct community-based research, and take actions for community resilience through racial equity and political engagement initiatives in Vancouver, Chinatown and beyond. Offered language translation resources and feedback to Vancouver's Climate Emergency Action Plan and equity group.

Yarrow Intergenerational Society for Justice(世代同行會): Founded in 2015, the organization serves low-income immigrant seniors and youth in Vancouver Chinatown, the Downtown Eastside (DTES) and the Strathcona area. They address oppression and violence their communities face and help Chinese and other seniors access good food, translation and interpretation support, and community.



## organization highlight:

*Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) in California, USA*

**Since 1993, Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) has been serving low-income Asian immigrants in Richmond and Oakland, California, as one of the only Asian climate justice groups in North America. Their three physical centers serve as community hubs that offer Asian people of all ages the space during climate emergencies and to attend workshops about environmental problems directly impacting them. APEN shares climate information with culturally informed ways of knowing and communicating, connecting intergenerational communities together and encouraging engagement in local politics.**

**Further, in light of past and ongoing extreme weather in Metro Vancouver, specifically the deadly heatwave of June 2021, APEN's model for community-led, culturally informed emergency response is transferable to our city. APEN has and continues to pioneer work in Asian climate justice organizing.**

*Lipo and Saeng Chtanasak. Lao immigrants and APEN members of Richmond, California (APEN Media, n.d.)*

## future opportunities

### **situating culture: intentionality**

While exploring our initial interactions with the environment, we found common experiences of growing up around vegetable gardens and valuing individual actions like recycling; the concept of acting intentionally surfaced. For example, when introducing climate justice concepts, focus on how the issue at hand impacts individuals and families in terms of cost of living or housing security. This may be more tangible than emphasizing broader political campaigns, as in our own experiences, our families are more receptive to learning new concepts when discussing familiar topics.

### **resources and representation**

Critically, all three researchers noted that growing up and now, there is a lack of resources, media, or public representation of the Asian diaspora in community organizing. Although it's incorrect to say we should *only* focus on creating Asian community spaces and content, the representation gaps point towards the need for more resources and research to bridge the gap between the Asian diaspora and climate justice.

### **mobilizing social community organizing**

All three researchers related to the importance of social community when interacting with climate justice. Our reflections point towards building accessible resources and spaces specifically catered towards fostering the social aspect of Asian climate justice communities.

*How can community organizations and local and provincial governments support the Asian Diaspora in Metro Vancouver to build their knowledge and understanding of climate justice?*

## key takeaways

- Local organizations and governments must **acknowledge the values** of Asian immigrant families, which include caring for family and survival of the day-to-day when supporting or working with the Asian diaspora.
- Although limited, **there is successful and longstanding work** in the field of climate justice organizing for the Asian diaspora, proving the **potential for future opportunities**.
- **More research must be done** in the field of the Asian diaspora and climate justice to encourage a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to climate justice, particularly for these underrepresented communities.

## reflection question:

*How can **you** take steps to tackle barriers for the Asian Diaspora in Metro Vancouver?*