



MHCCA: A Year in Review

Annual Report, 2023-2024

About the MHCCA

The Mental Health and Climate Change Alliance (MHCCA) is a community of more than 50 interdisciplinary researchers, healthcare providers, and community organizers committed to identifying and addressing the adverse impacts of the climate change on mental health.

As a Canadian Not-for-Profit organization incorporated under the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, the MHCCA's purposes are to

- (1) conduct equity-based climate distress monitoring;
- (2) incubate novel interventions and policy ideas to address the mental health impacts of climate change; and
- (3) facilitate knowledge exchange and mobilization to support Canadian's experiencing climate-related ecological distress.



MHCCA

Letter from the President

Dear Members, Partners, and Stakeholders,

It is with great pleasure and a profound sense of responsibility that we present the annual report of the Mental Health and Climate Change Alliance (MHCCA) for the year 2024. As a beacon of interdisciplinary collaboration in Canada, our community comprises over 50 dedicated researchers, healthcare providers, and community organizers. Together, we strive to uncover and mitigate the profound impacts of climate change on mental health.

Our mission, defined under the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, is threefold: to conduct equity-based climate distress monitoring, incubate innovative interventions and policy ideas, and facilitate knowledge exchange to support Canadians experiencing ecological distress due to climate changes. This year has seen significant strides in each of these areas, reflecting our commitment to a healthier, more sustainable future for all.

Innovations and Progress

This year marked the establishment of our Youth Advisory Board, a dynamic group of young leaders from across Canada, dedicated to steering our programming and research on the mental health impacts of climate change. Their diverse academic, professional, and lived experiences enrich our initiatives, ensuring that the perspectives of racialized youth are heard and valued in these critical discussions.

Among the highlights of this year's work, our new Executive Director, Alexis Palmer-Fluevog, PhD, has brought fresh vigor to our projects. Under her leadership, we have embarked on new research endeavors and expanded our public engagement through quarterly knowledge exchange dialogues.

Groundbreaking Research and Community Initiatives

We have also made notable advancements in our research and community initiatives:

Our groundbreaking study, "Repairing the Social Contract," explored the emotional and psychological reactions of young people to climate change, emphasizing the need for robust community-academic partnerships.

The "Two-eyed perspectives on mental health interventions for climate change distress" manuscript provided an integrative scoping review of Indigenous and non-Indigenous approaches to managing climate distress.

Educational Outreach and Support

In response to the critical need for accessible information, we have developed a series of educational pamphlets and guides aimed at fostering climate resilience. These resources are designed to empower individuals and communities to engage in meaningful dialogues and actions concerning climate change and mental health.

Looking Ahead

As we look to the future, we are inspired by the passion and dedication of our community. We remain committed to advancing our understanding of the mental health impacts of climate change and developing effective interventions that can make a real difference in people's lives.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership in this vital work. Together, we are forging a path toward a more resilient and compassionate world.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kiffer Card', written in a cursive style.

Kiffer Card, PhD
Mental Health and Climate Change Alliance (MHCCA)



News & Updates

Establishment of Youth Advisory Board!

In January 2024, the Mental Health and Climate Change Alliance assembled a Youth Advisory Board to lead development of programming and guide research and practice related to mental health and climate change. The objectives of this youth council include a range of activities such as crafting resources to promote coping mechanisms in the face of climate change, guiding strategies for marginalized communities to mobilize and build resilient communities, and establishing support groups and outreach efforts for individuals experiencing the adverse impacts of climate change.

The Youth Advisory Board comprises young people from across Canada with diverse academic, professional, and lived experiences. As a board of majority racialized youth, the Youth Advisory Board will highlight and uplift the perspectives of racialized young people whose knowledge and experience are often erased and excluded from discussions surrounding mental health and climate change.

Abhay Singh Sachel (he/him)

Regina, Saskatchewan

Abhay is a 22-year old Canadian whose research and work resides at the intersection of climate change, ecoanxiety, mental health, and spirituality. He is the founder of Break The Divide, a non-profit organization based on principles of environmentalism, sustainability, and reconciliation that focuses on fostering empathy and understanding to inspire local action projects in communities. Abhay is one of 10 advisors in the inaugural Environment and Climate Change Canada Youth Council, and one of 20 advisors in the United Nations Environmental Programme Faith For Earth Youth Council. Outside of his activism, Abhay is currently a student at the University of Regina, completing a Masters of Education in Educational Psychology; a public speaker on environmental and climate issues; and, an avid ice hockey player and pianist. Abhay is the Chair of the Youth Advisory Board at the MHCCA.



Sidney Howlett Francis (she/her)

Orillia, Ontario

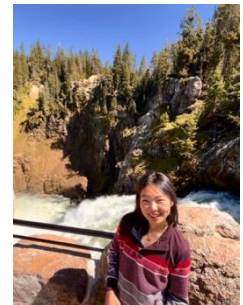
Sidney is a graduate student at Lakehead University completing her Master of Education for Change in Environmental and Sustainability Education. Under the supervision of Dr. Ellen Field, her research explores the strategies teachers use to address students' complex emotions about climate change in the classroom. With a background as a formal elementary teacher and years of experience in non-profit environmental educational settings, Sidney is dedicated to advancing climate change education and action across Canada's education sector. Combining academic depth with practical experience, she is passionate about creating a more just, beautiful world through the transformative power of education.



Emilie Wang (she/her)

Vancouver, BC

Emilie is currently pursuing her medical degree at the University of British Columbia (UBC). She completed her undergraduate degree at UBC, specializing in environmental health, with a strong foundation for interdisciplinary research, systems thinking, community engagement, and knowledge translation. She is dedicated to contributing to the field of planetary health through various avenues, and is passionate about equitable healthcare access, especially for newcomer populations.



Leonard, Leclerc (he/him)

Montréal, Québec

Leonard is a co-founder of CEVES, (the Student Coalition for an Environmental and Social Shift) which aims to bring together and mobilize Quebec's student population on climate justice issues. He has participated in the organization of many events and major climate strikes called Fridays For Future, including the historic one on September 27, 2019, which gathered half a million people in Tiohtia:ke (Montreal). In the last 2 years, he has been working as a trainer for the Climate Justice Hub, helping activist's groups on their strategy, structure, and conflict resolution. With a certificate in ecology and currently pursuing a certificate in psychosocial intervention, he aims to address the emotional work of the climate crisis and help individuals, groups, and communities to gain more resilience and adaptation.



Gina Malaba (she/her)

Edmonton, AB

Gina is a recent postgraduate from the University of Alberta who majored in English Honours and double minored in Philosophy and Political Science. She has always been dedicated to leading community initiatives that promote ideals of social justice, anti-racism and mental health awareness. In order to help counteract the negative effects that the pandemic had on the mental health of students, Gina volunteered to be a One-to-One Host for UNITEA, a student wellness organization

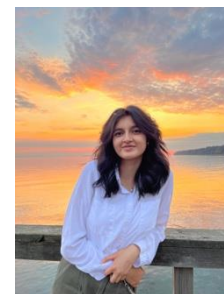


dedicated to creating safe spaces for students to gain a sense of belonging. As the President of her university's Black Students Association (UABSA) she also helped curate student-centred initiatives that educated target audiences on racial discrimination, dynamic allyship and cultural diversity. She is currently a Fellow in the 1834 Foundation's Global program, where she will be convening with public policymakers and advocacy practitioners from around the world to maximize her future capacity in civic leadership roles.

Zoha Faisal (she/her)

Surrey, BC

Zoha is a teenage climate justice and community organizer ancestrally from Punjab, Pakistan. She is a co-founder of Climate Recentered, a movement of BIPOC based on the unceded lands of the Katzie, Semiahmoo, and Kwantlen First Nations, working to build long-term mutual aid projects and communities of care in order to grow climate resilience. She was also previously a core organizer with Sustainabiliteens, a grassroots organization bringing teenagers together from across the Lower Mainland to organize mass mobilizations and campaigns targeting those responsible for climate injustice. Her work in climate justice is inspired by the resilience of her home village in Pakistan that has borne the brunt of the climate crisis for decades, and she is an advocate for centering cultural and ancestral practices in justice-based organizing.



The Youth Advisory Group (YAB) has developed a robust Strategic Plan & Vision, emphasizing the critical intersection of climate change and mental health. Our primary focus areas, as identified by the YAB, include leveraging existing resources and research to create accessible educational content, organizing community engagement and capacity building events, and collaborating with the Mental Health and Climate Change Alliance (MHCCA) on ongoing initiatives. Specifically, the YAB aims to transform available resources, such as climate emotions PDFs and MHCCA research, into engaging short-form educational content like TikToks. Additionally, the group intends to host climate cafes and informational sessions to foster community involvement, prioritizing capacity building among participants. Furthermore, the YAB seeks to consult with the MHCCA to contribute to existing projects and research initiatives.

New Executive Director!

An Executive Director for the Mental Health and Climate Change Alliance joined the team in January, 2024. Alexis Palmer-Fluevog, PhD, is a Research Scientist with experience in program management, leadership and knowledge dissemination. Alexis will be facilitating and hosting Quarterly Knowledge Exchange Dialogues, managing the MHCCA's research portfolio, developing the knowledge synthesis resources for coping with, and talking about, mental health and climate change and supporting the Youth Advisory Board. She will support students, youth advisory board members, staff, other trainees, and community partners in conducting primary and secondary research related to the mental health effects of climate change. As the point person for the MHCCA, she will liaise with local, national and international partners to develop relationships and collaborate on projects. The appointment of an Executive Director will ensure that projects are developed and completed in an appropriate manner and on schedule.



Other Exciting Outputs!

Information Brief: An Introduction to Efforts Aiming to Address the Mental Health Effects of Climate Change

Climate change invokes a wide range of existential, emotional, and psychological responses. These responses can severely reduce an individual's quality of life. As such, it is important to support individuals who experience adverse effects as they learn about and grapple with the realities of climate change. *We developed a brief to provide a short introduction to interventions targeting the adverse mental health effects of climate change.* We divided the document into two sections. The first section of the brief introduces broad categories of mental health interventions specifically tailored to address the effects of climate change on mental health. Section 2 introduces key principles and concepts that underlie these interventions. This type of document is an important information piece for those new to the topic.

Repairing the Social Contract: Undertaking the Co-Design of Climate Distress Services for Young People in British Columbia

This study explored the emotional and psychological reactions of young individuals (ages 16-24) to climate change based on online focus group interviews with 11 participants (two interviews per person). Aiming to comprehend their distress and collaboratively design solutions, the research emphasized community-academic partnerships and youth leadership.

Key Findings

- Respondents echoed the heightened feelings of anxiety and distress due to climate change of global youth as reported by previous studies.
- From the perspectives of young people, climate change appears to prescribe an uncertain and undesirable future.

- A prevalent sentiment was one of betrayal, with the participants associating their climate distress to the perceived inadequacy of societal leadership in addressing climate change.
- Ideas about what would be helpful centre on enhanced education and community-based events and activities.

Thematic Breakdown

- Feelings towards Climate Change: An overwhelming 82% of the themes recorded in interviews expressed different forms of emotional reactivity about the climate crisis including anxiety and hopelessness about the future (38%), feeling overwhelmed (20%) and feelings of frustration and resentment (15%).
- Participants felt that education, at all tiers, was not adequately addressing climate change and its repercussions, as is reflected in 38% of the themes. A substantial 28% called for more mental health support and 21% advocated for community programs and activities.

Our findings underscore the urgent need for robust community-academic partnerships to address climate-induced distress amongst the youth. The onus lies not only on governmental bodies, but also on educational and community-based organizations to act decisively and provide the necessary support mechanisms for the younger generation grappling with the ramifications of climate change.

Manuscript for peer review: Two-eyed perspectives on mental health interventions for climate change distress: An integrative scoping review

This manuscript reviewed Indigenous perspectives on climate change and mental health with the overall goal of supporting a Two-eyed seeing approach to addressing climate anxiety. To accomplish this aim, we conducted a scoping review that synthesized concepts from published studies exploring Indigenous experiences with climate distress. In doing so, we reviewed 61 studies and identified three key themes. Theme 1 highlights the disruptive nature of climate change by emphasizing the intricate interconnectedness of Indigenous peoples wellbeing, culture, and environment. Theme 2 highlights the Indigenous communities' role as knowledge stewards and collaborators in mitigating climate change's mental health effects. Theme 3 explores Indigenous knowledge related to managing climate distress, and emphasizes the value of both (a) Indigenous specific programs focusing on traditions, self-governance, intergenerational learning, cultural practices, reconnection, and (b) generalizable approaches like climate hope, social connectedness, and therapeutic emotion regulation techniques. These results are interpreted using the Medicine wheel to inform a Two-eyed seeing approach, which calls for further efforts to engage Indigenous peoples in programs aiming to resolve climate distress.

The "Talking About Climate Change" project

- A pamphlet series was developed to share information with defined communities of interest. Each pamphlet provides a guide for how to talk to different groups about climate change. The pamphlets highlight why climate change is important to discuss and then they lead the reader to a number of topics and how-to-engage strategies.

For example, the pamphlet *"Discussing Climate Change with Friends and Family: A Guide for youth and young adults,"* outlines topics of importance such as: Starting the Conversation; Communicating Effectively; Addressing Common Misconceptions; Discussing the Impact of Climate Change; Focusing on Solutions and Actions; Dealing with Climate Anxiety and Despair; and Leveraging Social Media and Technology. To date, there are tailored pamphlets for the following groups: parents, media, policy and decision-makers, educators, health and social care providers, spiritual leaders, Indigenous communities and youth peers. (see attached example)

- A group intervention facilitation guide entitled, "How to Run a Climate Resilience Group: A Field Guide' Climate and Mental Health Curriculum for Professionals" was developed for community members experiencing climate distress. The workshops are held in order to foster community and to lead people to engage with these complicated topics in a thoughtful manner.

This guide will equip readers with the knowledge and tools to successfully host Climate Resilience Groups, fostering discussions and actions that contribute to a greater understanding and responsiveness to climate change issues. It aims to inspire and facilitate grassroots climate dialogues, empowering communities to be part of the global conversation on climate action.



Financial Statement

Financial Overview

In the fiscal year of 2023/2024, the Mental Health and Climate Change Alliance (MHCCA) faced a challenging financial landscape characterized by the absence of incoming funds. Our financial activities were primarily dominated by essential start-up and operational expenses that are integral to establishing our footing as a not-for-profit organization under the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act.

Expenses

Our expenses for the year were incurred through necessary administrative procedures to ensure legal and operational compliance. The details of these expenses are as follows:

- 2023 Corporate Filing Annual Return: CA\$12.00
- Incorporation Fee: CA\$200.00
- Name Search Fee: CA\$13.80

These expenses total CA\$225.80, which constitutes our debt as we have not yet generated income to offset these costs. The debt is held with 0% interest and will be repaid as soon as we are able.

Financial Position and Outlook

As we look ahead, the MHCCA is actively seeking funding opportunities and partnerships that align with our mission to support and expand our initiatives. Our focus remains on securing grants, donations, and other funding sources to sustain and grow our efforts in addressing the mental health impacts of climate change.

We are committed to transparency and fiscal responsibility as we navigate these early stages of our development. We appreciate the ongoing support of our members and partners, and we are optimistic about strengthening our financial position in the coming year.

Partnering Organizations

Academic Partners



Community Partners



Funders





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