Climate Education Fellowship Program: Call for Applications

Through the generous support of Dr. Mildred L.G. Shaw and Dr. Brian R. Gaines’ Education Endowment Fund, the Climate Education Fellowship Program (CEFP) was established within the Faculty of Education in July 2023. Over the next five years, CEFP will facilitate the collaborative work of a diverse cohort of 10 fellows per year, including faculty, students, sessionals and staff, in an immersive collective inquiry focused on climate education and resilience. Each cohort of fellows will engage in a year-long interdisciplinary collaborative inquiry situated at the intersection of STEM, Art, Land/Place, and Indigenous Education, with a specific focus on addressing the Climate and Nature Emergency (CNE) and building the profile and capacity of the Faculty of Education around principles and practices of Climate Education. CEFP will also feature a public-facing speaker series organized and chaired by the Dean of the Faculty of Education.

The objectives of the CEFP are as follows:

- Enhance the capacity of the Faculty of Education in the field of Climate Education and Climate Resilience research and educational practice, increasing our potential for attracting excellent graduate students interested in Climate Education.
- Promote inter-academic unit collaboration among interested faculty, sessionals, students, and staff and, over time, create a wider community of practice around Climate Education.
- Support Indigenous leadership and aspirations in Climate Education and Climate Resilience efforts.
- Foster critically engaged, complexity-informed, and AI-assisted approaches to Climate Education and Resilience.
- Expand our capacity to support our students and wider community to become more familiar with the CNE.
- Evaluate progress and provide guidance for the expansion of Climate Education and Resilience initiatives, including embedding Climate Education in the Faculty of Education’s strategic plan.
- Promote the conditions in the Faculty of Education, and across the university in general, for genuine actions to address CNE both in our daily lives and roles as researchers and educators.

Program rationale

The pressing challenges of climate destabilization and biodiversity loss are intricately linked and require urgent attention. The scientific consensus is clear: human activities, particularly the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, overconsumption, overproduction of waste and unsustainable land and water use practices, have significantly contributed to the rise in greenhouse gas emissions and the unprecedented extinction of species. As time is running out to prevent irreversible damage and secure a livable planet for future generations, it is important to recognize that the challenges posed by climate change and biodiversity loss constitute an emergency (i.e., the CNE) that could set humanity on a path of premature extinction.

Responding to the CNE requires transformative changes in policies, mindsets, lifestyles, behaviours, and systems to transition towards more responsible and resilient pathways for the future of humanity in a finite planet. The urgency lies in the need to protect the integrity of the Earth’s ecosystems, safeguard human well-being, and ensure a livable planet for current and future generations of all beings.

As a new field of study and practice, Climate Education is crucial for fostering climate literacy and catalyzing scientifically- and critically- informed and responsible collective action to address the CNE. Climate Education employs a collective inquiry-based transdisciplinary approach to education that invites polyvocal conversations to address the CNE. It contributes to building a more resilient future by expanding our collective capacity to see ourselves as part of nature (rather than apart from nature), and to redefine our relationships and responsibilities within the planet’s ecosystem.
also supports learners to navigate the complexities of the CNE, to process climate grief and anxiety, and to approach problems, collaborate across differences and coordinate action in innovative ways.

**Program overview**

CEFP will implement a cohort-based model, accepting 10 participants each year. The selection process will secure representation of all Faculty of Education units and of at least 2 faculty members and 2 Indigenous fellows in each cycle. After fellows have successfully completed one-third of the program in a specific cycle (including a 6-week course), they will receive a research grant of $4,000 (subject to statutory source deductions if taken as a stipend) to undertake an individual or collaborative climate action and reflection experimental initiative. These initiatives will emerge through interdisciplinary conversations within each cohort of fellows, fostering emergent approaches to addressing climate challenges. Whether working individually or collaboratively, fellows will have the flexibility to explore areas of interest and take meaningful action in their respective fields. To further support collaboration and outreach, each cohort will also have access to a pool of funds of $10,000 specifically designated for these purposes. This resource will enable participants to collaborate on joint initiatives and engage with wider communities.

The CEFP cohort will meet for two-hour sessions once a week on designated days during lunchtime over three terms. These meetings will serve as a platform for curated programming, self-organized activities, and meaningful conversations. Additionally, the program will feature two weekend retreats and two public engagement sessions, providing opportunities for immersive experiences, deeper connections, and broader public involvement. To ensure the effectiveness and continuous improvement of the CEFP, an advisory group will be established. The advisory group will meet twice a year to select applications, evaluate the progress of the program, provide guidance and recommendations, and advise on the expansion of activities and collaborations.

The combination of research stipends, collaborative funding, regular cohort meetings, curated programming, self-organization, retreats, and public engagement sessions ensures a rich and diverse experience for participants in the CEFP. By supporting interdisciplinary dialogue and action, the program aims to generate impactful projects and foster meaningful connections with various stakeholders involved in addressing the CNE.

**Program principles**

The CEFP principles are grounded in the following:

**Emphasis on Educational Inquiry and Complexity:** The program approaches the CNE as an educational collective transformative inquiry. Rather than focusing on predetermined outcomes or technical solutions, the program recognizes that meaningful change emerges from engaging with the complexities of the social, relational and cultural roots of the CNE.

**Courage to Face Reality:** The program cultivates the courage to confront and address the difficult and painful aspects of the CNE. Participants are encouraged to resist the temptation to escape into idealizations, simplified narratives and simplistic solutions. Instead, they receive guidance in expanding their capacity to face the harsh realities and complexities of multiple crises. The program provides tools to prevent feelings of overwhelm and/or immobilization, equipping participants to navigate the difficulties with increased resilience.

**Honesty, Humility, and Discernment:** The CEFP promotes an environment that encourages honesty, humility, and discernment. This involves recognizing and setting aside human exceptionalism, heroism, techno-salvationism, saviourism and feel-good approaches that may hinder a deeper understanding of the CNE. Participants are encouraged to critically examine their own assumptions, biases, and complicity in systemic harm, fostering a more nuanced and honest perspective.
**Amplifying Indigenous Leadership**: Participants are guided to recognize and honour the analyses, resilience, wisdom, and leadership of Indigenous Peoples in relation to climate change, the protection of lands, waters and biodiversity. This principle underscores the importance of centering the role of colonialism and of Indigenous knowledge worldviews in the collective inquiry on the CNE.

**Activating Visceral Responsibility**: The program also emphasizes the activation of visceral responsibility towards the planet and all beings affected by the CNE. This visceral responsibility encourages a profound sense of interconnectedness and a commitment to taking meaningful contextual action, even when it goes against one’s perceived self-interests.

The CEFP principles prioritize complexity and inquiry, courage to face reality, honesty, humility, discernment, Indigenous leadership and the activation of visceral responsibility. By embracing these principles, participants are equipped to engage with the CNE in a transformative and responsible manner, fostering deep understanding, meaningful action, and collective change.

**Call for Applications**

We invite students, faculty, sessionals, and staff to apply for the Climate Education Fellowship Program (CEFP). By participating in the CEFP, you will have the chance to deepen your understanding of the complexities of the CNE and contribute to the development of responsible and resilient pathways for the future of humanity on a finite planet. Whether you are a student seeking to expand your knowledge, a faculty member or sessional looking to enhance your research and educational practice, or a staff member interested in promoting inter-academic unit collaboration, the CEFP will provide a supportive and intellectually stimulating environment for transformative inquiry. Join us in this un/learning journey at the intersections of STEM, Art, Land/Place, and Indigenous Education.

**Eligibility requirements:**

- Active status as a student, faculty member or staff at the Faculty of Education at UVic. Continuing sessionals or sessionals with a workload of 7.5 units (0.50 FTE) or greater across two terms in the year of the award are also eligible to apply.
- Affinity with the program intent, approach, principles and objectives, including openness to engage in transformative inquiry without having outcomes predetermined from the outset
- Intent and availability to participate in at least 80% of the weekly meetings (24 out of 30) and both of the retreats, see meetings schedule below.
- Intent and availability to participate in the online course “Facing Human Wrongs: Climate complexity and social accountability”

**Cohort Composition Criteria**

- A diversity of interests and disciplinary areas, including, but not limited to, traditional subject areas like science, English, art, technology and mathematics, but also a range of other areas like, place-based, eco-literacy, ecological health, and Indigenous education.
- Demonstrated commitment to justice, equity, decolonization and Indigenization (JEDI).
- Balance of participants who identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and “people of colour”) and non-BIPOC.
- Balance of students, faculty, sessionals and staff.
- Different career stages and streams including, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Professors, Teaching Professors and Indigenous practitioners.
- Potential for synergies and interactions between applicants.
- Collective ability to interact constructively through conversation and intellectually challenge each other.
Application schedule and process

Call for applications: released on July 10 2023
Applications deadline: August 20 2023
Selection process: First week of September 2023
Applicants informed about application outcomes: September 11
Confirmation of acceptance of placement expected for: September 14
Application submission: complete the application form online by August 20
Information: for further information, please contact Jasdeep Randhawa at edcrc@uvic.ca

Program schedule: Tuesdays 12:00 - 2:00 pm, starting on September 19.
September 19, 26*; October 3*, 10*, 17*, 24*, 31*; November 7, 21, 28; December 5, 12; January 9, 16, 23, 30; February 6, 13, 27; March 5, 12, 19, 26; April 2, 9, 16, 23, 30; May 7, 14. [30 meetings, already taking into account the reading breaks of Nov 13-15 and Feb 19-23]
*Tutorial dates for the course: Facing Human Wrongs: Climate complexity and social accountability
Retreat 1: November 4, 5 (Saturday, Sunday, family friendly)
Retreat 2: May 4, 5 (Saturday, Sunday, prep work)
Public facing final event: May 25 (Saturday)
Location of meetings: TBD
Location of retreats: TBD
Location of public facing event: TBD
Please note that the first half of the program will be in person only, which is important for relationship building, the second half will be decided by the cohort.

How to apply:

Step 1: Complete an anonymous online questionnaire to determine if the Facing Human Wrongs course is suitable for you at this point. The questionnaire takes approximately 20 minutes to complete.
Step 2: Complete and submit an online application form for the Climate Education Fellowship Program. Please make sure to respond to all of the questions in the form.

Application questions

Please create a document with your responses and then copy and paste them in the online application form.

1. Please describe your understanding of the underlying causes and consequences of the Climate and Nature Emergency (CNE) and why you believe addressing it is imperative for the future of humanity and the planet? (max 100 words)

2. In your opinion, what are the key qualities and attributes that an ideal participant of the CEFP should possess? How do you embody or align with these qualities? What do you anticipate to be challenging for you in this program? (max 100 words)

3. Climate Education encourages learners to redefine their relationships and responsibilities within the broader ecosystem of the planet. How do you personally connect with and view yourself as part of nature? How do you see this perspective influencing your approach to Climate Education and resilience efforts? (max 100 words)

4. Indigenous leadership and aspirations in Climate Education and resilience efforts are prioritized in the CEFP. How do you value and support Indigenous perspectives and knowledge in this context? What steps would you take to promote Indigenous leadership and integrate Indigenous perspectives into your work? (max 100 words)
5. Envisioning a large project around the CNE (max 300 words)

If you were granted $1M in funding to develop an educational program addressing the Climate and Nature Emergency (CNE) through collective transformative inquiry and an exploration of the social and cultural drivers of the CNE, please write a brief outline of the project including the following:

*Program Title:* Craft a concise and compelling title for your proposed educational program that conveys its focus on collective transformative inquiry and understanding the social and cultural aspects of the CNE, rather than technical solutions.

*Objectives:* Outline three specific objectives that your program aims to achieve in addressing the CNE through collective transformative inquiry and an exploration of the social and cultural drivers. Consider the desired outcomes for participants and the broader impact on their understanding, actions, or engagement with the CNE.

*Program Development Team:* Identify the key individuals or groups you would want to involve in the creation and implementation of the program. Consider collaborators, experts, community representatives, or other stakeholders who would contribute to the program’s emphasis on collective transformative inquiry and the exploration of social and cultural drivers.

*Target Audience:* Describe the specific audience or demographic you intend to engage with through your program, considering those who would benefit from a deep understanding of the social and cultural dimensions of the CNE. This may include diverse communities, policymakers, educators, or other relevant groups.

*Educational Approach:* Outline the key elements of your educational approach that fosters collective transformative inquiry and the exploration of social and cultural drivers of the CNE. Consider methodologies, activities, or strategies that encourage participants to critically examine and challenge existing systems, structures, and narratives contributing to the CNE.

*Desired Outcomes:* Describe the outcomes you envision for participants engaged in your program. How would their understanding, perspectives, or actions be transformed as a result of their involvement? Consider the long-term impact on their ability to address the CNE by recognizing and addressing the social and cultural drivers of the crisis.

Please provide a thoughtful and concise response to each element, ensuring that your proposed educational program aligns with the given funding and the focus on collective transformative inquiry and the exploration of social and cultural drivers of the Climate and Nature Emergency.

6. CEFP aims to bring people together to work at the interface of STEM, Art, Place-based and Indigenous Education. Use AI (e.g. ChatGPT) to generate a response that explains why each of these areas, and the combination of these areas, are important in addressing the CNE. Complement the AI generated response with your own thinking on this issue. (max 100 words)

7. To what extent are you prepared to engage in difficult conversations that involve examining your own complicity in systemic social and ecological harm, as it pertains to addressing the Climate and Nature Emergency (CNE)? (max 200 words)

Please reflect on your readiness and willingness to delve into conversations that explore how societies, institutions (including universities), and individuals (including yourself), have contributed to the creation of the CNE. This may involve acknowledging and critically examining your own involvement in perpetuating systems and behaviors that have contributed to social and ecological harm.

Consider how your positionality, including factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, and other aspects of your identity, has influenced your perspective on the CNE and your recognition of your complicity in perpetuating a system that contributes to the emergence
of the CNE. Reflect on how your lived experiences and social and geographical locations have shaped your understanding of the issues at hand and your commitment to addressing them.

Finally, consider your ability to confront uncomfortable truths, challenge deeply ingrained perspectives, and actively participate in collective inquiries that seek to foster cultural shifts towards more historically and systemically accountable action in addressing the CNE.

8. Check all the boxes that apply in relation to the criteria for eligibility:

☐ I have active status as a student, faculty member, staff, continuing sessional or sessional with a workload of 7.5 units (0.50 FTE) or greater across two terms in the year of the award at the Faculty of Education at UVic

☐ I am excited about the program’s intent, approach, principles and objectives, including being open to engage in transformative inquiry without predetermined outcomes from the outset

☐ I have the intention and availability to participate in at least 80% of the meetings of the program and the retreats

☐ I have completed the questionnaire “Is the Facing Human Wrongs” course for me at this point?”. I am available and have decided to take the course in the first six weeks of the program.