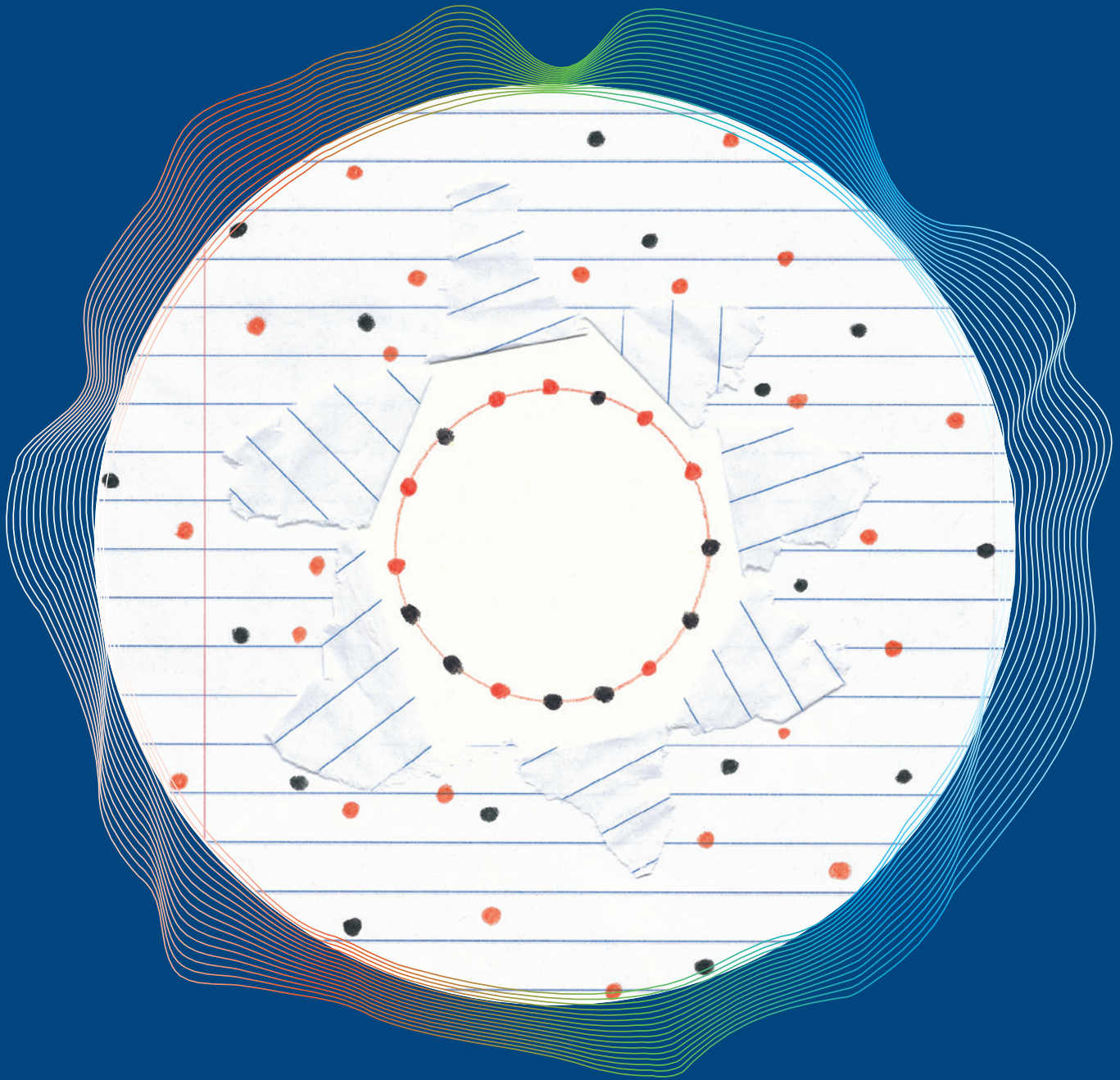




**LEVEL**  
YOUTH POLICY PROGRAM



## **POLICY BRIEF**

# Creating Safe Spaces for BIPOC Students in Post-Secondary Institutions

SHANIA SANDOVAL-CROSS

***The LEVEL Youth Policy Program takes place on the traditional and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) & sə́ilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Coast Salish peoples.***

**GRAPHIC DESIGN**

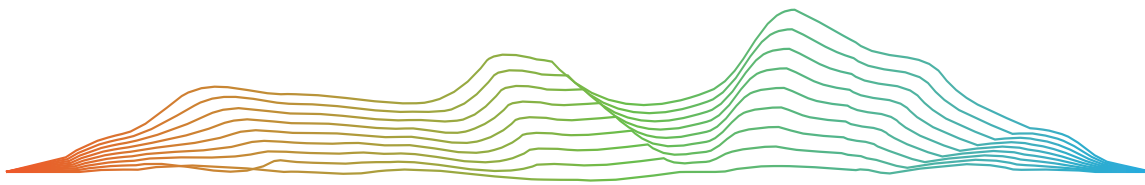
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**COVER ILLUSTRATION**

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# About the LEVEL Initiative

LEVEL is a youth engagement initiative of Vancouver Foundation that aims to address racial inequity. We do this by investing in the leadership capacity of Indigenous, racialized, immigrant, and refugee youth to create more opportunities throughout the non-profit and charitable sector.

Despite being the fastest-growing youth populations in British Columbia, Indigenous, immigrant, and refugee youth don't have the same opportunities as other young people. Race continues to be a factor that hinders their ability to have a say in decisions that impact their lives.

LEVEL empowers these youth by building their capacity to challenge and change those systems that hinder their ability to build a more just world.

## **LEVEL consists of three pillars of work to advance racial equity**

1. LEVEL Youth Policy Program
2. LEVEL Youth Organizing
3. LEVEL Youth Granting

## **About the LEVEL Youth Policy Program (LEVEL YPP)**

The LEVEL Youth Policy Program (LEVEL YPP) brings together young people between the ages of 19 and 29 from across British Columbia who identify as being Indigenous or racialized immigrants or refugees. Indigenous and racialized Newcomer youth are dispropor-

tionately impacted by certain public policies but are rarely included in the development and implementation of public policy process. The LEVEL YPP aims to provide these youth with equitable training and leadership opportunities to better navigate the public policy landscape, and to develop new tools and skills to influence, shape, and advocate for policy changes that are relevant in their own communities. Having young people directly involved in shaping policies that impact their lives is essential to creating systemic, meaningful change. The LEVEL YPP's training is grounded from and within Indigenous peoples' worldviews, which the program acknowledges, could vary from person-to-person or nation-to-nation. Indigenous worldviews place a large emphasis on connections to the land. This perspective views the land as sacred; where everything and everyone is related and connected; where the quality of the relationships formed are key in life; where what matters is the success and well-being of the community, and where there can be many truths as they are based on individual lived experiences.<sup>1</sup> As such, an important premise of this training is to centre and place a particular focus on the fact that the work that has gone into developing this training, as well as the training itself, has taken and will take place on unceded (never given away/stolen) territories of the hənq̓'əmin 'əḿ-speaking Musqueam peoples, of the Halkomelem-speaking Tsleil-Waututh peoples, and of the sníchimspeaking Skwx\_wú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

1. <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/indigenous-peoples-worldviews-vs-western-worldviews>



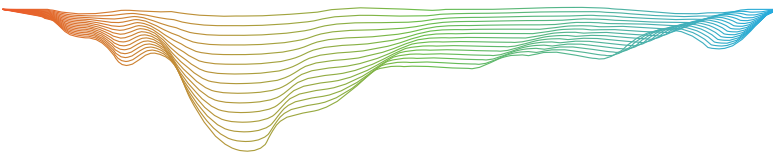
# Biography

## SHANIA SANDOVAL-CROSS



*Skén:nen sewakwé:kon. Shania Sontariakon iontiáts. Kanien'kehá:ka táhnon Maya niwakonhwentsiò:ten. Kahnawà:ke nitewaké:non. Tsi unceded x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>wə</sup>yəm, Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw, and sə́ililwətaʔ territories kenákere. I'm Shania Sandoval-Cross, I am Mohawk from Kahnawà:ke and Maya from Guatemala, but I grew up and reside in unceded x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>wə</sup>yəm, Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw, and sə́ililwətaʔ territories. I work and volunteer with Indigenous youth in creating/participating in culturally relevant art and activism-based curriculum and programming. I am also a student at the University of British Columbia (UBC), pursuing my BA with a major in First Nations and Indigenous Studies, and a minor in Gender, Race, and Social Justice.*

*Instagram handle: shania\_cross*





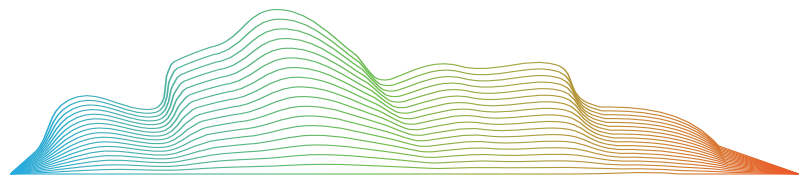
# Executive Summary

*The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has wildly impacted the social push for anti-racism work and accountability, as well as pushing marginalized conversations to the forefront.*

Black social-justice activists, academics, artist, politicians, etc., have done a tremendous amount of influential, intellectual, and emotional labour in terms of equity and anti-racism work. We here on unceded Skwxwú7mesh, Səlilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm territory have seen 2020 starting off with major Indigenous-led Wet'suwe'ten solidarity actions across the country, anti-Asian sentiment as a product of COVID-19, and now BLM actions happening across Turtle Island (so called "North-America") making its way here.

The vision of this policy ask is to implement a set of recommendations to hold post secondary institutions accountable for their anti-racism work. This would consist of Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC) student advisory boards and their recommendations, and an Indigenous- or BIPOC-focused course becoming mandatory and grounded in anti-racism, anti-ageism, disability, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two-Spirited+-inclusive frameworks (LGBTQ2S+). For this policy ask, I will focus my references on my lived experience at UBC because the call for this policy is to hold post-secondary institutions accountable to ensuring student and faculty safety, while bridging the gap of education and wellness resources that produce an environment inclusive of everyone impacted by colonial suppressive systems, and the intersections of BIPOC social justice and equity.

With the impact of the past year's social-justice movements leading the way for change, it has become impossible to ignore the work that must be done to affect and effect success, access, and accountability to and in systems and institutions that were founded in inequitable and cis-heteropatriarchal White-supremacist, settler-colonial intension. We must examine the ways in which we benefit from certain systems set in place to oppress certain groups of people. We must hold ourselves accountable to being actively anti-racist, as Ibram X. Kendi said in an interview with the *Washington Post*, "[W]hen an antiracist is called racist, they assess whether what they said or did or did not do was racist based on clear definitions, and if they did say something was wrong with a racial group, if they did support a policy that was leading to racial inequity,



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then they admit they were being racist.” Kendi’s quote puts into practice what being anti-racist is, but to be able to ensure we live in an actively anti-racist society we must first provide education of what racism looks like on a micro- and macro-scale. We must ensure students and staff are learning from people in their community who approach education from a decolonized framework, one that values lived experiences and provides a vocabulary to deconstruct systems of oppression. We need to bring about a well-rounded understanding of what racism is, so we can be secure in knowing that people going into the world are, in fact, well-equipped to hold themselves accountable, and that they continue the conversation and practices of being anti-racist with folks and systems they come into contact with throughout their lives. Anti-racism work and education always goes beyond the individual, and it upholds a standard to which one must keep themselves informed and accountable to their lifelong learning and unlearning processes to ensure an equitable and anti-racist world.

We need an advisory board of students who understand and experience racism at its micro- and macro-levels within the institutions in which they’re enrolled. We need to have the support and advocacy of those in positions of power within these institutions actively teaching anti-racist- and BIPOC-inclusive curriculum that competently addresses Indigenous content and local community involvement as the base of these mandatory courses, which would prevent Indigenous dispossession and erasure in BIPOC equity work.

**Demonstration in Brooklyn, NY to mark one year following the murder of Michael Brown, the Ferguson Rebellion, & the Black Lives Matter uprising. Photograph by the All-Nite Images, Wikimedia Commons**



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# Problem Definition and Background

*Academic institutions were created and founded on colonial oppressive and assimilative terms for BIPOC here in so-called “Canada.”*

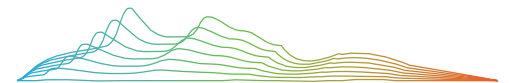
Though Canada deems itself multicultural and inclusive, we still see exclusionary, false, social-sciences and history being taught. This is a curricula that often dismisses, or quickly brushes over, the history and contributions of Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour, while being White-centric (Colour of Poverty, 2). The very institutions where racialized students attend, like McGill University, which was built from money donated by James McGill, who earned his wealth on the backs of enslaved Indigenous and Black people. Yet there is no acknowledgement of this institution’s roots on campus until this year after the Black Lives Matter Movement, and no reparations or support for Indigenous and Black students are set in place. And what about “The Free Speech Group” on campus at UBC, whose members are allowed to meet and set up tables where they wear “Make America Great Again” (MAGA) hats, and invite White supremacists to speak, yet UBC does nothing to stop or curtail the open nature of White supremacy and racism on that campus? As BIPOC students, we actively engage with what it means to be oppressed, silenced, and discriminated against every step of the way.

As of January 2020, UBC’s Equity and Inclusion Office (EIO) started an Equity Student

Advisory Committee. This committee is composed of students who have been told their Advisory Committee will:

- Provide feedback on EIO practices, policies, and actions that affect students;
- Influence equity-enhancing decisions from EIO campus partners that promote the social, political, cultural, and mental well-being of UBC’s student population;
- Take a leadership role in grant-making and allocation of the Equity Enhancement Fund (EEF).

This committee was, in-part, the motivation behind this policy ask. These students provide invaluable information, and yet the intensive work they do in addressing these topics has no real accountability behind it. There is no policy set in place at UBC, or at a Provincial level, that would mandate post-secondary institutions to follow through with action for the well-being and equity of BIPOC students’ campus life, or in-curriculum.



***As BIPOC students, we actively engage with what it means to be oppressed, silenced, and discriminated against every step of the way.***



# Policy Options

## RECOMMENDATIONS, NEXT STEPS, AND IMPLEMENTATION

### **1 Development and implementation of either an Indigenous-Studies-related course or Anti-Racism required course for all undergraduates at UBC.**

This course would hold UBC accountable to their Memorandum of Affiliation (MOA) with the Musqueam people, by ensuring that they are honouring their due diligence, and this course would also be in-line with Article 35 of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP), and Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) Calls to Action, such as the *Professional Development and Training for Public Servants #57*, *Education for Reconciliation #62 ii*, *#63 ii-iv*.

Ta7taliya Michelle Nahanee, who is from the Squamish Nations, has created cultural competency, anti-oppression, and anti-racism educational resources grounded in Indigenous methodologies and ontologies of one of the Host Nations. Nahanee has created a "Decolonize First" workbook for post-secondary institutions, as well as and "Sínulhkay and Ladders," which is a fun and interactive activity that can be utilized, at any level, to start these dialogues in Indigenous Ways of Knowing.

The Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) "Anti-Racism Toolkit" also outlines the ways in which to go about hiring appropriate staffing for this course, a yearly-review to ensure it is reflective of the evolving epistemologies, methodologies, and ontologies of these communities (25-28).

### **2 Implementation of cultural-competency training, which can include, but is not limited to, anti-oppression and anti-racism for all administration and faculty.**

- a) San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training is an example of a resource available to staff.
- b) I'd like to push taking on this cultural competency, anti-oppression, and anti-racism work done by Ta7taliya Michelle Nahanee, who is from the Squamish Nation. Nahanee's work is also relevant to this recommendation, as there is an "Organization Development" to implement this decolonial work in the workplace, and "Sínulhkay and Ladders," is equally good to asses or reassess cultural competency. It is important to prioritize the voices of the Host Nations, whose lands we find ourselves on, when we approach anti-oppression and anti-racism work because to exclude these Nations' experiences in, and knowledge of, this work would continue to perpetuate settler-colonial erasure and dispossession of Indigenous people.



### **3 BIPOC Supports.**

BIPOC-oriented service centres which provide counselling, safe spaces, and creative spaces where inter-community building is accessible. These spaces must simultaneously be LGBTQ2S+, disability accessible, and friendly for all BIPOC students. The diversity and intersections of BIPOC students must also be met with the appropriate staffing, to embody and be reflexive of the spectrum of folks that make up the community.

These BIPOC spaces need to have regulations for self-accountability to ensure lateral violence, and internalized and externalized forms of racism, are not being reproduced. This staffing can look like student job employment under the advisory of BIPOC staff who possess a level of lived experience as well as having previously received anti-racism, and anti-oppression training. The employment of BIPOC students in these spaces would ensure community-led and focused programming, peer supports, and community accountability. These student jobs would also allow institutions to take accountability in ensuring that their most-vulnerable students would be properly compensated for the time and labour needed to sustain this community space.

### **4 Establishment of a BIPOC Advisory Committee that is mandated to ensure that UBC is building upon the recommendations of said committee.**

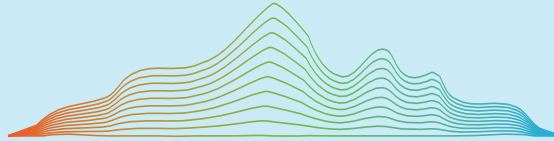
- a) The staff and administration need to be versed on the experiences of BIPOC, otherwise the services and resources for BIPOC students will create barriers that continue to perpetuate harm in educational institutions (CFS Anti-Racism Toolkit, 25-26);
- b) Student BIPOC consultation;
- c) BIPOC students on Advisory Committee need to be compensated for their time, contributions and experience.

### **5 BIPOC Committee: Strategic planning and three-to-five year implementation of these recommendations on the basis of the committee.**

The BIPOC Student Advisory Committee will set a standard that will hold the institution accountable for meeting the expectations of a strategic equity plan within a specific time frame.



# Conclusion



*“The Black test’ simply suggests that any policy that does not meet the requirement of ameliorating the dire conditions of Black peoples lives is not a policy worth having. By that it should meet the test of ameliorating Black dispossession and making Black life possible, if the policy does not meet the Black test then it is a failed policy from the first instance of its proposal.” –Rinaldo Walcott*

Walcott’s quote is one that absolutely needs to be implemented into policy, and one we can use as an example in building policy for Indigenous and POC-student inclusion, as well. The framework Walcott suggests provides a basis for equity inclusion in policy, and that is what I think not only UBC, but academic institutions across the province and country should aim for in implementing a policy framework such as this. This policy ask is meant to be accessible to and inclusive of BIPOC students who currently have no specific policy protecting them. This policy ask strives to hold institutions accountable for inclusive student wellness and success from a culturally relevant, anti-racist, and anti-oppression frame of reference. It holds the institution responsible for implementing BIPOC-focused supports and for properly compensating the emotional and intellectual labour of the students.

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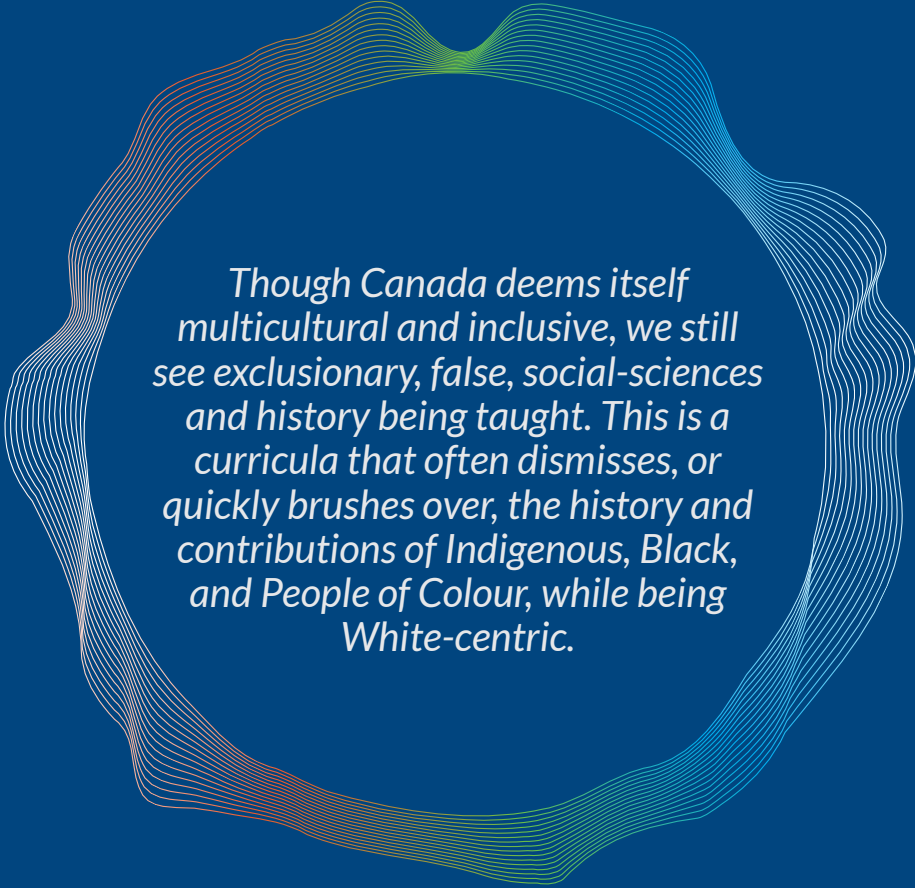
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Vancouver Foundation is Community Inspired. We are a community foundation that connects the generosity of donors with the energy, ideas, and time of people in the community. Together, we've been making meaningful and lasting impacts in neighborhoods and communities since 1943. We work with individuals, corporations, and charitable agencies to create permanent endowment funds and then use the income to support thousands of charities. We recognize that communities are complex and that collaboration between multiple stakeholders is needed to help everyone thrive and evolve. Vancouver Foundation brings together donors, non-profits and charities, government, media and academic institutions, local leaders, and passionate individuals to build meaningful and lasting change in the province of British Columbia. We see young people, their voices and experiences as part of that vision to building meaningful change.

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