

# ᑕᑭᑦᑎᑦᑕᑦ CLIMATE ACTION COURSE EVALUATION SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

Three 5-day courses were offered in February and March of 2020. Course 1 was oriented to looking at the Bedwell Harbour Basin around S'DAYES (Pender Island). Course 2 explored the Southern Gulf Islands archipelago and was focused on youth, and Course 3 explored the larger Salish Sea area. All 3 Courses explored the relationship of Traditional Indigenous knowledge and culture with the latest Climate Science.

A total of 48 participants took part in the 3 Courses, 13 in Course 1, 17 in Course 3 (which was offered second), and 18 in Course 2. The original goal was to have up to a maximum of 24 participants in each Course, but the extremely tight timeline, for designing, securing resources, and advertising Courses, as well as the Course cost without subsidy, made this very difficult to achieve. In reflecting back a maximum of 18 to 20 was logistically a suitable level, to allow everyone to participate fully in discussions.

Registration for each Course differed based on the Course content. Course 1 registrations were all women ranging in age from their early 20's to a number in their 70's, with the majority of residents from Pender Island with a smaller number from the WSÁNEĆ community and a couple from Vancouver Island. This was consistent with the theme to explore the Bedwell Harbour Basin. Course 2 registration consisted of a mix of male and female participants in their mid teens to mid 20's, with participants from Pender Island, other Gulf Islands, and the WSÁNEĆ community. Again this reflected the theme of the Course to explore the Southern Gulf Islands archipelago with a youth perspective.. Registration for Course 3 was the most varied, with participants ranging in age from early 20's to 70's, with a mix of male and females, with participants from a broad range of locations, including, Pender, other Southern Gulf Islands, Vancouver Island, other locations in BC, and some US participants. Again this reflected the theme to explore the much more expansive Salish Sea area which encompasses both Canadian and American Southern Gulf Islands.

At the beginning of each course, participants were asked to fill out a feedback form asking what attracted them to take the Course, how they heard about it, what their existing level of knowledge was about items ranging from climate action issues facing the Southern Gulf Islands to their knowledge of Indigenous traditions and culture, and what they hoped to get out of the Course. At the end of each course participants were asked to complete a more in depth evaluation asking for feedback on whether the Course met their expectations, what they most enjoyed and like least about the course, how they would improve the Course in the future, would they recommend the Course to others, and what action they would consider taking as a result of the Course. Participants were also asked to rate a series of 19 items based on course content, course instruction, course application and course organization and logistics. All 45 of the 48 participants filled out the evaluation forms providing an excellent response to evaluate the 3 Courses. The 3 that didn't left early before the form was distributed.

## INITIAL FEEDBACK

There were 5 main reasons why participants were attracted to the courses including:

- a desire to learn more about First Nations history, culture and traditional knowledge,
- a desire to learn more about the climate crisis and changes affecting us today, and how to make a difference in climate action both personally and collectively
- how to merge traditional indigenous knowledge with the latest climate science,
- increased learning about place, the land and waters we live on,
- networking with others and making new connections.

Participants first heard about the Course through connections with Steering Committee members (17) who actively sought out possible participants, from school and teachers and parents (10) who assisted in connecting with youth, community and environmental organizations (9), friends (6), and from online and webpage search (6). In most cases there was only a couple of weeks between the webpage and online searches being possible before courses commenced, so a lot of personal contact was required to make this process work.

Participant level of knowledge about climate action, place-based learning activities in the Southern Gulf Islands/Salish Sea, and First Nations knowledge and culture, ranged widely, with many participants having knowledge in one area but not the others. Some W̱SÁNEĆ participants had a lot of knowledge of their traditional knowledge others were eager to learn more. Those involved in climate action initiatives often had a limited understanding of traditional Indigenous knowledge and visa versa. Few participants had a good understanding of initiatives happening in other communities throughout the Southern Gulf Islands and Salish Sea area. There was however a lot of knowledge that participants had in their areas of interest, especially among the youth, many who were actively involved in climate action initiatives and groups, and actions to protect First Nations rights. This included plant knowledge, ocean pollution, cultural history, Salish art, song and language background, environmental stewardship, writing and filmmaking.

When asked what participants hoped to get out of the course the most common responses were:

- to deepen understanding of Indigenous knowledge, culture and traditions.
- to develop strategies and practical skills to become involved and help solve the climate crisis.
- to learn about and develop a greater awareness of local land and water stewardship throughout the Gulf Islands and Salish Sea.
- a hope to meet other like-minded people, to strengthen cross cultural ties, to learn from one another and make strong connections and relationships..
- to develop leadership skills in tackling the climate crisis and developing new ideas for global awareness and compassion.

Participants were excited to be taking the course, to learn from elders and presenters, and excited to have the opportunity to collaborate and learn from each other, to visit sites on the Southern Gulf Islands.

## POST COURSE EVALUATION

Participants were asked if the course they participated in met their expectations. The response was a resounding “YES”. 41 of the 45 that participated said “YES”. All 13 of the participants in Course 1 said “YES”, 17 of the 18 participants in Course 2 said “YES” with one saying no – indicating that too much of the Course took place inside. 11 of the 14 in Course 3 said “YES” with 1 saying no – indicating that they had an expectation the Course was more about the intersection of climate change with First Nations knowledge and did not fully meet that expectation, however indicated that he/she adjusted expectations and thoroughly enjoyed the Course. 2 left the response blank, saying they did not come into the course with any expectations. All 45 of the respondents said they would recommend the course to others.

When asked what they most enjoyed about the Course, the 3 things that stood out for participants of all 3 Courses were:

- the connection with First Nations presenters and participants – learning about W̱SÁNEĆ culture, language, and traditional knowledge.
- An opportunity to meet and network with presenters and like-minded participants.
- Time spent on the land (and morning baths in the sea) and the hope and empowerment that resulted.

Course 2 also mentioned travelling and visiting the various Gulf Islands (Galiano, Mayne, and Saturna as well as Pender) learning about initiatives on each Island connected to the land, native plants, and conservation work. Course 3 expanded on the second response to include exploring , exploring intergenerational, cross cultural, transboundary, and multidisciplinary community building.

There were no overriding things that participants didn’t like about the courses but a number of responses by individuals including: not enough hands on activities, too much time spent inside, not enough time on the land, not enough time for discussion, a need for better organizational management of time, too long standing in the rain, the use of plastics for some meals, and the coolness of the meeting room. When asked how they would improve future courses, the most frequent suggestions included:

- more effective use of time including more group time for participants to debrief, discuss the learning from each day, and share with each other with more brevity in sharing, and more break time between sessions.
- more time spent on the land and in hands on activities.
- more attention on climate science and how to effectively braid Indigenous knowledge with climate science.
- More time spent in collaborating with each other and developing action plans.

When asked whether the Course had changed or transformed participants way of thinking there was a very positive “YES”. Participants were moved by the increase in understanding of W̱SÁNEĆ history and cultural practices, concerned about the urgency around the climate crisis, and excited to put into action and share what they learned. The youth especially felt more connected with the land. When asked what actions they would consider taking as a result of the Course, it ranged from personal initiatives to reduce their footprint on the planet earth, including such actions as cleaning up the beach, eating more

sustainably, pulling of invasive species, food self reliance, reducing carbon footprint and as one participant summarized it “ many small steps in all directions”. On a community scale there was renewed interest in spreading the word to friends and schoolmates, volunteering in the community, working together with existing groups especially with restorative and conservancy issues, forming new alliances dedicated to working in cooperation with the WSÁNEĆ community and climate action advocates as well as pursuing ongoing connection and action on reconciliation with First Nations including learning their language, and planning a tribal journey paddle.

Participants were asked to rate 19 items related to Course content, Course instruction, Course application, and Course organization and logistics. They were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 was poor, 3 average and 5 excellent) Responses have been rated based on a formula that gives a value of 1 to 5 for each response divided by the number of responses. The responses were extremely positive and are detailed in Appendix 1. The only items that didn't receive a rating between very good (4) to excellent (5) were:

- two items in Course 1 related to potential work/employment opportunities and course cost at 3.1 (average)
- one item in Course 2 related to Course instruction presented in a clear and concise manner at 3.9 (above average)
- two items in Course 3 related to course cost at 2.5 (below average) and accommodation at 3.6 (above average).

The course cost was a barrier for many to attend without subsidy, and accommodation was criticized by some for its location on a former First Nations village site and being rather lavish and out of keeping with the theme of the course.

There were a lot of written comments and ideas shared by participants at the end of the evaluation. Most reiterated comments already made, but there were a number of specific recommendations. Many people took the opportunity to give thanks for the opportunity to take the Course, for the organizers for putting it all together, for the community building that took place. Many of the youth mentioned it was a once in a lifetime experience, an amazing transforming experience for them.

### **POST COURSE OBSERVATIONS**

The sharing of First Nations wisdom and knowledge from elders and increasingly from participants made all the difference in the success of the courses. Sharing the 13-moon calendar knowledge, the emotional blanket ceremony, the early morning brushing and sea baths, the salmon pit cook, cedar rose making, all added immensely to each Course. Taking time to spend on the land also added to each course – whether visiting and doing restoration work on Hay Point, visiting Medicine Beach, Brooks Point or visiting Galiano, Mayne, and Saturna even though it made for long days and some logistical challenges. Many of the presenters made excellent contributions to the overall theme of each Course – sharing Indigenous knowledge and wisdom or reflecting on the latest climate science. The challenge in future course planning will be to keep these parts, and structure the Courses to allow the expertise and contributions that each participant brings to the Courses to be shared early on in the process, to allow more time for sharing and debriefing on a daily basis, and to look for presenters who can bridge the link and help braid climate science with Indigenous knowledge, and do this in a way that is affordable for participants. It's a tall order but can be done. These courses were developed as models to demonstrate the validity of the concept of braiding First Nations knowledge with climate science. The overwhelmingly positive response from the participants is a testimony to their success.

## APPENDIX 1: DETAILED RATINGS SUMMARY RESPONSE

The following items were rated on a scale of 1 to 5 by each participant where 1 is poor, 3 is average and 5 is excellent. Included is the average rating given by all participants. The number was arrived at by taking each individuals actual response, adding them together and dividing by the total number of participants to give an average response rating It is noted that all items received a very good to excellent rating except where noted in the report for each Course.

- A) **COURSE CONTENT:** The Course content:
- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| Was well organized  | 4.2 |
| Was interesting and informative                                   | 4.6 |
| Was relevant to the overall theme                                 | 4.5 |
| Offered a balance between field experience & classroom discussion | 4.3 |
- B) **COURSE INSTRUCTION:** The instructors and resource people:
- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| Were knowledgeable about the course material they presented | 4.7 |
| Presented in a clear and engaging manner                    | 4.4 |
| Encouraged dialogue and exchange of views                   | 4.6 |
| Encouraged and supported individual action plans            | 4.2 |
- C) **COURSE APPLICATION:** The course:
- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| Fostered interaction with a diverse group of people                      | 4.8 |
| Helped structure and conceptualize ideas                                 | 4.4 |
| Fostered communication and presentation skills                           | 4.3 |
| Provided resources and contacts for further exploration/ research/action | 4.5 |
| Provided ideas for potential work/employment opportunities               | 3.9 |
- D) **COURSE ORGANIZATION:** Rate the quality of:
- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| Course background information and outline | 4.4 |
| Course length                             | 4.5 |
| Course cost                               | 3.6 |
| Transport and support                     | 4.6 |
| Accommodation                             | 4.5 |
| Food                                      | 4.5 |