

Climate Change in the Salish Sea Archipelago – Lesson Learned

Based on participant evaluations and feedback the following are lessons learned and suggested recommendations for future course offerings.

- 1) **Presenters-Resource People:** Most of the participants (14) were very satisfied with the course and would recommend it to others. There were a few (3) who would have liked more focus and clear bridging on climate change and the intersection with First Nations knowledge. On the other hand, what participants enjoyed most from the course was the relationship building and connections formed with First Nations presenters and participants.

Recommendation: For the next iteration of the course, include more First Nation (FN)-facilitation and presenters who can provide examples of FN experience of climate change and environmental issues (impacts, mitigation and adaptation and relationship to culture change). If not enough FN presenters are available, invite alternative presenters who can provide examples of FN' experience of climate change. The TETACES Program can also research this info before the next course starts, connect (at least some) presenters as a team and develop a framework / provide resources which show the direct connection.

- 2) **Content:** Recommendations suggested by participants on how to improve the course include: more discussion-less sitting, more time on the “land,” more time for contemplation especially at sacred – special sites, more content on climate change and (as above) exploring solutions integrating FN knowledge. Several wanted better linkage of course materials and exercises. Many people mentioned that the cultural (music/poetry/video) sessions and informal sharing was also really key and bonded the group. It also informed / illuminated the need to weave community/inter-culture sharing into environmental and climate action. (e.g. Culture Change/ Climate Change).

Recommendation: For next time, allocate more time for discussion focused on exploring solutions to climate change integrating FN knowledge e.g. increased use of renewable energy sources, enhancing food security through increased local food production, form alliances with existing organizations already working on climate change related issues, create home based projects etc. Perhaps broaden the session with Shauna Johnson (local-WSANEC Indigenous planner) and Lorenzo Magzul (global Indigenous Climate Change researcher) to focus on actions in the Salish Sea. Create more space for creative reflection, home and Island actions and response. More time needs to be allocated after major/foundational presentations such that with John Price re: *Whose Land Is it?*

3) **Process/Approach:** Most participants commented positively on the experiential approach and nature of the course. As one participant described – it provided “Intergenerational cross-cultural, transboundary, multidisciplinary networking, connections, relationships and learning.” Outdoors learning and experiences were a major highlight by most with several suggestions for how to be out more and how to bridge in- and outdoor learning (e.g. reflective walk /mini-summits). Also unlearning, making mistakes, grieving-deep listening also needed careful facilitated space. Several people mentioned having time for more in-depth personal connection between participants etc. at the beginning of the course and possible sharing – more time for preparing / learning before the course started. Also, more time for group discussion and collaboration around issues raised by presenters.

Recommendation: Send out Intake-Feedback survey and maybe BIODs before the course starts which can then be shared with others who want to. Have experiential self and group sharing at beginning of course- on the first day as a foundation for the Indigenous learning (e.g. 13 Moons and Kairos Blanket exercise/Witness Blanket). Instructors need to focus on how to bridge personal and collective needs, process grief, and what emotional support people might need. Personal and cultural safety protocol and advice for sharing-listening would be good before the Witness Blanket. The Circles each day are a great vehicle for that, and a personal support person/ Elder can also be more deliberate. The brushing off / cedar brushing after the Kairos-Witness Blanket exercise and evening sharing sessions are great but need to be more deliberately integrated. Having separate FN and Settler debriefing might be helpful to respect the different experiences and issues arising.

4) **Logistics:** Four people said the room was too cold. More than half of the participants were dissatisfied with the course cost (7 out of 12 respondents). Several identified the accommodation cost (3 out of 13) as an issue. A couple of participants mentioned that they know of people who would have liked to attend the course but found it too expensive.

Recommendation: TETACES could explore less expensive accommodations/ options and hopefully continue to find funds to subsidize the cost of the course. There may be other kinds of mini-course offerings and on-line, place-based activities that TETACES leads, supports-promotes or partners with others to make happen.

Based on the evaluations, feedback and lessons learned a possible revised course description is provided here for future reference.

Climate Change in the Salish Sea Archipelago

The Salish Sea is one of the world's largest and biologically rich seas. Its name pays tribute to the Coast Salish people who were the first human inhabitants of this region. Protection of the ecological health of the Salish Sea is an issue of considerable concern to the more than eight million people who inhabit its shores and Islands and to many more beyond the region who value this unique ecosystem. The Salish Sea is an international ecosystem that is governed by laws and treaties of the United States, Canada, the Province of British Columbia, the state of Washington, many municipalities, and over 60 Tribes and First Nations.

What is currently called the Salish Sea¹ is the traditional homeland of Coast and Straits Salish indigenous peoples, which is now shared with a diverse community who have migrated to this region from around the world. Indigenous peoples, who were stewards of this vast basin for thousands of years, have profound eco-cultural wisdom and knowledge needed to design wholistic and sustainable solutions to the current environmental challenges facing the Salish Sea.

The Southern Gulf Islands in British Columbia, and the San Juan Islands, in Washington State together lie at the heart of the Salish Sea. The separation of these interconnected Islands and their surrounding waters by the international boundary serves as one of many challenges to the collaboration and cross boundary cooperation that is urgently needed for the protection and restoration of the ecological integrity and resilience of Salish Sea. Other challenges include the use of the waters as an international shipping channel by commercial vessels heading for major ports such as Vancouver, BC and Seattle, WA – an example of the high stakes economic activity that often pits jobs against environmental protection. These international waters are home to several endangered species including Southern Resident Killer Whales and their prey, Chinook salmon.

Limited regional cross-border decision-making has made it increasingly challenging to manage the inter-islands bioregion that stretches across multiple government entities— local, state, tribal and federal. However, power dynamics between governments and within any given population are not uniform, resulting in inequities that place particular peoples in this region at greater risk to be impacted by environmental degradation. Such degradation also has detrimental cultural implications for the continuity of language and learning in place for indigenous communities.

Course Description

Overall: In this course, participants will explore the history of changing lands and waters of the Salish Sea to understand challenges of climate change impacts on the region and to cocreate new opportunities for personal and collective transformative mitigation and adaptation efforts. This offering includes specific strategies and programs that can support community resilience, reconciliation and community building between settler and Indigenous peoples, and inter-island coordination and cooperation, both locally and internationally.

Indigenous-Settler Lens: Throughout this learning experience, we will explicitly engage, and weave Indigenous-based eco-cultural worldview and climate knowledge with other traditions of climate science research and activity to deepen participants' learning. We will explore how to foster US-Canadian-Indigenous cross-national communication and collaboration to foster a wholistic approach to the protection and restoration of the ecological integrity of Salish Sea lands and waters. We will use an historical and decolonizing lens and approach, learning about how First Nations lived sustainably within this archipelago in the 5,000 plus years before colonization. This lens includes participation in the Witness Blanket Exercise, a participatory history lesson focused on the reality of colonization in what is now called Canada, and exploration of the 13 Moon Calendar created by the WSÁNEĆ nation which represents their eco-cultural worldview - offering a guide for sustainable living with all species in this region. Additionally, we will explore solutions and opportunities for hope and innovative actions, to increase collaborative efforts for sustainability and Indigenous- Settler reconciliation.

Learning Foundations - Our Stories and Home Places: Specifically, the course uses an experiential learning and place-based approach which draws upon the lived experience stories, asset-gifts, and visions of each person as part of creating collective action. Experiences during the course will include

¹ A map of the Salish Sea was produced by Stefan Freelan in 2009 (<http://maps.stefanfreelan.com/salishsea/>)

land and ocean learning with local community organizations, government agencies, and First Nations peoples. Additionally, we emphasize action-centered learning. To support learning around collective action we bring together a diverse array of people from a wide variety of contexts who are focused on the sustainability – both environmental and cultural, of the Salish Sea to explore cross border strategies, local-global perspectives, community resilience programs, and efforts towards inter-island cooperation in this time of rapidly changing lands and waters. Roles that individuals, communities, and organizations can play in taking climate action will be central to this conversation. This course will promote ongoing engagement with and support of existing environmental programs as well as encouraging course participants to identify existing or new climate action projects and priorities that they can design and/or contribute to going forward.

At the end of the course participants will be able to:

- Share, connect and grow their personal knowledge and experiences with others
- Understand important changes that have occurred over time in the culture and environment of the Salish Sea.
- Identify the ecological system of the Salish Sea, specifically the challenges and opportunities present in the health of this system.
- Identify and prioritize individual and collective actions for just climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience of the Salish Sea and its residents.

This course is part of the TETÁCES Climate Action Project and as such works to also:

- Connect people to current climate actions and science informed by the Traditional Ecological Knowledge of the WSÁNEĆ people to inform decision-making at the community level.
- Provide an Indigenous perspective on WSÁNEĆ cultural history and its application to current climate change challenges while respecting and protecting Indigenous intellectual property.
- Promote inter-island dialogue to develop efficient collective climate change actions through shared expertise and common resources.
- Create long term collaborative relationships and partnerships with education and community organizations and institutions in Canada, the US and Indigenous - Tribal nations.

This course is intended for all those interested in the long-term health of the Salish Sea region, both adults and youth. Specifically, this course is geared at community members, educators, government, and business staff, , those working in environmental education or management, eco-cultural restoration and older youth or college-university students seeking place-based learning within the Salish Sea.

Timing and Outline

This course is organized around the driving questions listed below that integrate Indigenous and non-Indigenous understandings, worldview and experiences of history, culture, and place in the Salish Sea. These questions are:

- What is my experience and understanding of climate change and what skills and perspectives do I bring to my community ?
- What is sustainability and well –being to me?
- What do Settlers (or non-Indigenous peoples) need to learn, un-learn and transform in our ways of being and seeing (our behaviour and cultures) in order to have true Reconciliation that addresses historic injustice and support Indigenous land rights and sovereignty?
- How has the Salish Sea changed over time?
- How do we know changes are occurring?
- What are the economic and political reasons for changes in the Salish Sea?
- What actions are happening, locally-globally and by community, Indigenous and governments to address climate change?
- What solutions are possible to mitigate changes and/or adapt to changing environment ?
- What are the priority actions we can take individually and collectively to improve the resilience of the Salish Sea to climate change impacts?
- How can we build community and weave arts-based ways of expression into our work and relationship building?