



CityHive



YOUTH ADAPTATION LAB:

ACCELERATING COASTAL ADAPTION PLANNING
WITH YOUTH IN FALSE CREEK

A PROGRAM SUMMARY, EVALUATION AND CELEBRATION REPORT OF THE YOUTH
ADAPTATION LAB PROGRAM CO-DESIGNED BY CITYHIVE AND THE CITY OF VANCOUVER



AUGUST 2022

This report is a summary of the Youth Adaptation Lab hosted between September 2021- July 2022.



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land acknowledgement

CityHive recognizes the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam), the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), and the sə́lilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations on whose land we live, learn and engage with youth through this programming.

We thank the host nations for being stewards of their lands.

CityHive recognizes that the civic institutions and decision-making processes we seek to influence through our youth programs are colonial, and have actively perpetuated harm to Indigenous peoples. It is through understanding our own unique relationship to this place, learning from and about host nations in right relations, and learning from/with Indigenous youth working to make change, that we are able to reflect and act on our organizational commitments to decolonization.



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Executive Summary

The Youth Adaptation Lab was a capacity-building and experiential learning program for youth ages 18-30 who hold deep connections to False Creek to work alongside the City of Vancouver to plan for the future of coastal adaptation planning. In partnership with the City of Vancouver's Sea2City Design Challenge, this program aimed to enable youth to learn about key coastal adaptation challenges and better understand the impacts of sea level rise to the False Creek neighborhood.

The intent was for youth participants to leave the program feeling more confident in their knowledge, skills and capacity to engage with their communities and neighborhoods on climate and adaptation issues they care about. Our hope was that youth who participate in the Youth Adaptation Lab become part of a diverse community of young people who are eager to take action to drive forward impactful and community-driven climate adaptations in the City of Vancouver.

This cohort of 14 youth participated in a 10-month-long learning journey, beginning in September 2021 and wrapping up in July 2022. They were challenged to develop three unique project ideas to inform the future of coastal adaptation planning in the City of Vancouver.

This report documents the program design, summary of each project, as well as key learnings and youth insights about this partnership and program model.

CityHive is proud to have worked in partnership with dedicated team members from the Sea2City Design Challenge team within the City of Vancouver, and commend COV staff for prioritizing meaningful, deep youth engagement in the process.

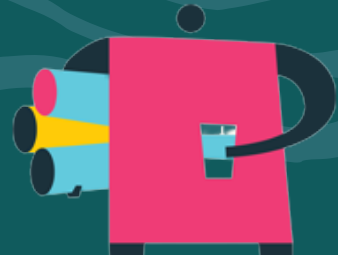


Veronika Bylicki
Executive Director & Co-Founder



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Partnership Overview



CityHive and the City of Vancouver have a long-standing relationship which allows both partners to create bold engagement opportunities for youth who are underrepresented in civic engagement processes. CityHive first collaborated with the City of Vancouver Sea2City team through co-delivering early youth engagement workshops to gain initial youth input.

The Youth Adaptation Lab was born from that relationship and CityHive's connections to youth in the City of Vancouver.

Both the City of Vancouver and CityHive worked collaboratively to determine the project outcomes, scope of projects and possible collaboration points in designing the Youth Adaptation Lab to keep learning rooted in community connection.



Program Overview

The Youth Adaptation Lab was **designed to fill a gap** in the City of Vancouver's third phase of the Sea2City Design Challenge phase, and was a way to **directly involve youth in shaping the future of coastal adaptation planning in the City of Vancouver.**

Creativity and diverse perspectives, in particular those that are more seldom included in civic processes, are needed to help prepare False Creek for sea level rise and coastal flooding. **By working directly with a cohort of youth, the City could begin to imagine our future shoreline and communities in ways that place youth at the centre of these design decisions for generations to come.** CityHive ran a broad recruitment process that resulted in 14 participants with a wide range of perspectives, experiences, knowledge and relationships to False Creek.

Between **September 2021 - July 2022**, this cohort expanded their knowledge to investigate critical questions like:

- *What is climate adaptation and what are current priorities for municipalities, like the City of Vancouver?*
- *Who is missing from conversations around climate adaptation and how do we embed a strong equity lens within this work? How can we centre those who are most impacted by rising sea levels?*
- *What opportunities are there for environmental, economic and social interventions when we think about coastal adaptation planning?*
- *How can youth voice their concerns and meaningfully engage with local governments to put forth innovations that create change at the local level?*
- *What opportunities are there to develop coastal adaptation plans that are responsive to ecological, social and economic needs?*



Program Overview

The Youth Adaptation Lab followed CityHive's knowledge-to-action framework. This process enables deep learning and provides an opportunity for youth to flex their civic engagement muscles and gain key skills by working on projects that directly impact their city, in this case that directly impact the coastal False Creek community in anticipation of sea level rise.

The Knowledge-to-Action framework consisted of the following modules:

- **Learn & Create:** Conversations with key climate leaders and knowledge holders (including Indigenous knowledge holders, municipal governments, community organizations, equity-centered design experts and beyond) to level-up knowledge and consider where we are at and where we want to be in our understanding of sea level rise. This also included learning about municipal governments and the jurisdictional responsibilities of cities in the context of the City of Vancouver
- **Ideate & Design:** Identifying problem statements; learning about design thinking and performing community research to root their project ideas in community experience and need; ideating solutions based on those insights.
- **Implement & Take Action:** Working with project mentors to develop a plan to bring project ideas to life for implementation by the City of Vancouver.

Further, this program utilizes **human centered design thinking** to encourage learning and a systems approach to unpacking complex problems faced by our communities. Youth who joined this program were able to **build civic literacy skills** and **place themselves at the center of learning, relationship-building and providing direct input** to shape the future of coastal adaptation planning in the City of Vancouver.

Program Methodologies

Hands-on learning:

Provide an opportunity for Vancouver youth (18-30) to learn about sea level rise in the context of their city, including learning about the history of False Creek as it relates to the Host Nations. In addition, youth gain critical civic literacy skills, including improving their understanding of cities, planning processes, design processes, key players, and ways that they can continue to be engaged city residents.

Relationship-building:

Through direct contact with City Staff on the project team as well as other advisories, youth develop and build relationships with one another, with City Staff, as well as opportunities to learn from other community advisory members and design teams through informal mentorship opportunities while sharing and discussing program goals.

Youth-centred input:

The YAL provides ongoing opportunities to provide helpful input and feedback to the Design Teams to ensure youth ideas are centred in the process. Key points of input include providing feedback on site-specific approaches and concept diagrams, as well as other opportunities for input as identified by the City team.

Youth civic agency and youth-led engagement:

The YAL participants have an opportunity to co-design and deliver one or more output(s) so that they can engage other youth, flex their own civic engagement muscles, and apply their learnings.

Session Summary

By learning with and from experts and community leaders, youth feel equipped to design and lead the development and design of these project solutions in their communities, and take actions to impact the ever-changing landscape of climate adaptation work happening across Vancouver, all while learning and building relationships with peers and leaders.

This cohort was hosted over 11 months, beginning in September 2021 and wrapped up in July 2022.

A summary of sessions and session objectives follows:

Learn & Create

Session 1 [September 28]

- Program kick off and opportunity to build relationships and new connections

Session 2 [October 5]

- Overview of Indigenous perspectives and municipalities 101; the cohort hosted group discussions to reflect on decolonization workshops hosted through the City

Session 3 [October 19]

- Intro to sea level rise and adaptation 101 featuring speakers from the City of Vancouver and Sea2City team

Session 4 [November 4]

- Equity centered designing with Pause + Effect to build awareness for a range of design considerations in

Session 5 [December 5]

- Intro to design thinking and project component

Ideate & Design

Session 6 [January 6]

- Project deep dive and outputs brainstorming

Session 7 [February 8]

- Project team creation; this session was dedicated to building a strong team agreement and learning about each other

Implementation & Take Action

Session 8 [March 8]

- Refining project outputs & project development

Session 9 [April 5]

- Project development session

Session 10 [May 10]

- Project development and event prep

Engagement Event [May 29] Sea Change

Session 11 [June 7]

- Project presentations to City of Vancouver

Program Outputs & Project Component

The Youth Adaptation Lab cohort was challenged to work on one of three distinct projects, all of which were intended to compliment one another. The cohort participants were able to choose which of the three project tracks they wanted to work on, and CityHive YAL program facilitators grouped the project teams based on expressed interests, skills, perspectives and knowledge - ultimately creating three balanced project teams. Based on the design of the projects, the intent was that participants could implement/pilot some version of their projects, and then create something to be implemented or utilized by the City of Vancouver to address the future of coastal adaptation planning.

Three key projects were delivered to the City of Vancouver:



Youth Manifesto

A set of youth led and youth informed design guidelines and manifesto demands.



Community Engagement Event

A community event for youth by youth to learn about sea level rise in False Creek.



Communications Toolkit

A digital walking tool to engage new youth and community members in learning about False Creek.

YAL Projects

Youth Manifesto

A youth manifesto and set of youth-friendly design principles for adaptation (or a Youth Adaptation Policy Brief)

This project was put forward to fill a gap in the City of Vancouver's coastal adaptation planning process - to have a set of youth designed and youth informed guidelines for this process in the future. This project team spent time learning about the existing design guidelines and principles that the Coastal Adaptation planning team already references in their work to inform new possibilities and key principles that were missing. Ultimately, this Design Manifesto team created a living document that any department within the City of Vancouver could reference when doing work related to adaptation planning (engineers, real estate, procurement, sustainability departments, etc) and get a clear sense of youth perspectives.

Key demands put forward in the Youth Manifesto include reference both values, opportunities to support building stronger connections and calls for change. Key recommendations put forward by the Manifesto team (as referenced in their final report and highlighted as priority areas include):

- **Youth opportunities to get involved are more abundant:** Provide opportunities where youth can play an active role in leadership and decision-making
- **Continue to invest and build stronger relations with local, youth-led organizations:** Collaborate with schools at all levels to bring climate change education to classrooms and generate engagement through workshops, activities and events held on campuses
- **Transparency and accountability:** We ask that the city be more transparent in their planning process

Project Team:



Adjoa Quainoo



Sayemin Naheen



Shalen Chen



Jasmin Ogilvie

YAL Projects



Community Engagement Event

Community engagement and hosting an event to further engage the broader youth community in the Manifesto.

This community engagement event was an opportunity for youth to reach other youth in learning about sea level rise in False Creek. This project team spent time learning about different engagement tactics that can work, and reflecting on their own experiences as youth to center these needs throughout the event planning process. The event “Sea Change: A Community Workshop for the Future of False Creek” was an opportunity to highlight the work of the Youth Adaptation Cohort over the last year and celebrate their role in working towards meaningful impacts to coastal adaptation planning in the City of Vancouver. This project team was able to build relationships with community members, and create a space focused on community togetherness and learning.

This event highlighted seven key learnings - as shared by the project team:

- Events have a direct applicability when located right in the heart of False Creek;
- Engagement rises when the venue is both indoors and outdoors;
- Outreach to youth should be increased (via schools, universities, jobs, sports, etc.);
- More opportunities mean youth-planned, youth-led and youth-evaluated;
- In-person events help create a sense of community and lowers eco-anxiety;
- Funding and remuneration are needed for youth-led events in the future; and
- Youth engagement is a starting point for larger decision making processes.

Project Team:



Emma Griggs



Lisa Iqbal



Lia Schulz



David Minic



Gary Ip

YAL Projects

Communications Toolkit

Creating communications tools (ie. video, blogpost, social media post series, etc) that engage the broader community on Sea2City and sea level rise.

The communications toolkit was designed as a project stream to build out new tools and materials to further engage the False Creek community in learning about this place and the impacts of sea level rise. The creation of a Digital Walking Tour encourages users to interact with 5 key sites around False Creek and taps into their senses, connection to place and key actions they can take to further their learning. This project team considered how we can reach new youth, families and community members who have not already been exposed to sea level rise & coastal adaptation planning related work.

This project has been designed using a Canva template, all resources and links have been shared with the final report and include a series of next steps to implement this project around False Creek.

Project Team:



Pierce Burns



Natasha Birdi



Alex McHugh



Corrina Tang

The YAL by the numbers

Program Length

- 10 month program
- 11 sessions + 1 debrief session
 - 3 additional decolonization workshops
 - 3 additional collaboratorium sessions
 - 1 additional community event

Program participants

- 15 participants offered (and accepted spots in the program)
- 3 officially withdrew from the program (after 1 month, 3 months and 7 months)
- 2 participants completed most of the sessions, but ultimately ended up leaving Metro Vancouver and were unable to support their peers for the last 2-4 months through the key project development phase of the program
- 10 committed participants who produced the 3 project reports shared back with CoV
- Of the 15 offered spots
 - 67% live in Vancouver
 - Others in North Van x 2, Richmond x1, Surrey x 1 and Burnaby x1 and either worked, studied, recreationally used or previously lived in False Creek
 - Age of participants = between 22 - 29
 - Average age of participants was 24

Program Applicants

- Received 23 applications for the program
 - Represented a range of identities, lived experiences and connections to False Creek
 - Had a range of levels of understanding of sea level rise and climate initiatives happening across Metro Vancouver

Reflection from the Learnings in the Lab

After 10 months of learning alongside youth leaders, it became clear that this cohort was ready to see their projects in action and are eager to continue to support the implementation of their project ideas and stay further engaged in their communities. Through dialogue during the sessions and through a final evaluation survey, several themes emerged from this cohort:

- By having chances to explore and unpack personal values, experiences, existing knowledge, and feelings related to climate adaptation, youth found more meaningful and authentic connections to their community. Building this foundational element enabled participants to carry that learning with them through the remainder of the program and were able to deepen their relationship with False Creek.
- The project component is the most valuable part of this experience, and allowed youth direct access to their decision-makers. Cohort participants wanted to see a stronger alignment with the Sea2City design challenge: having more conversations directly with the Design Challenge teams and Advisory groups to help inform their understanding of sea level rise in False Creek, and also to have more direct input into the Design Challenge process.
- The opportunities to learn directly from and with city staff, engagement professionals and other advisory groups were beneficial, and in the future we should continue to amplify those learning experiences, creating more explicit lines of communication to key staff members, to build stronger connections and relationships between youth and civic institutions.
- Youth learners felt they had direct access to City Staff members but wanted to have opportunities to connect with a wider range of staff members to learn across a range of perspectives.
- The additional learning opportunities didn't feel youth-friendly and did not feel designed with the Youth Adaptation Cohort learners in mind - these were crucial learning moments that many youth missed out on due to timing and scheduling conflicts.

Program Impacts

The Youth Adaptation Lab has been shaped and steered by comments received from previous engagements with the City of Vancouver team as well as additional learnings and insights from CityHive's climate innovation lab models. **We are proud of the ways in which we've been able to adapt to meet our cohort along their learning journey and ensure that each participant walks away with the tools and knowledge they need to carry forward their coastal adaptation work and connection to the False Creek community.** Based on responses to the final evaluation survey:

- Youth who completed the program are walking away with **greater confidence** to engage with their municipalities and decision makers as well as have an understanding of the continued engagement opportunities that are possible.
- The program was a **good learning opportunity for youth with limited knowledge** about the opportunities, resources and initiatives they can access related to climate change and coastal adaptation, and supported them to engage on these issues in the future. Youth shared they felt the information was presented in a way that was accessible to them and met them where they were at.
- The program **served as a place of connection** to other youth leaders in the False Creek community, where at the start of the program youth felt disconnected from one another, they reported on the end of program survey a greater feeling of connection to other youth leaders. The sense of community and connectedness was further deepened at in-person learning sessions.
- Youth **feel the weight and impact of their voices** in the engagement space and understand the power that comes from collective youth engagement.
- Youth **are seeking opportunities for continued engagement** with the City of Vancouver and are curious to deepen their ability to tackle complex and systems level problems by applying a stronger justice and decolonial mindset.

I would actively look for this type of opportunity again

- Youth Adaptation Lab cohort participant

Our Learnings

As the Youth Adaptation Lab comes to a close, we are eager to continue to create opportunities for youth to collaborate with other youth leaders and decision makers to co-create climate action in their communities. Our YAL Program team is taking away the following learnings to help shape and inform the future direction of youth lab programming at CityHive and for the Sea2City (and broader City of Vancouver) staff to learn to take away for future youth engagement:

The Youth Adaptation Lab was a place for community and connection.

- Youth are motivated to participate in opportunities to learn, collaborate and explore new ideas with their peers, and value in-person learning opportunities to work collaboratively and share ideas. We also recognize that connecting to community in the face of the global pandemic, heightened climate anxiety, and disconnection has had a significant impact on our own understanding of belonging and place within communities we feel a connection to. CityHive's programming will continue to act as a hub for connection, shared learning and exposure to other climate leaders through relationship-building to empower youth to feel mobilized to take action.

The City of Vancouver should continue to work with youth to reach other youth.

- Youth reflected back that this was one of the most impactful elements of their youth engagement event to connect with the False Creek community and would encourage more opportunities for youth to lead these processes with and for their municipalities in paid capacities.

Our Learnings

These programs are valuable spaces of co-creation to advance climate action so that youth understand the critical pathways of input. It is important to support youth at the end of the program to keep their engagement momentum.

- The Youth Adaptation Lab has been a place of co-creation to ideate and think critically about complex problems through a civic lens. Part of the program model should outline the direct engagement pathways that youth can take on after the program, so that youth participants feel supported and empowered to continue to flex their civic engagement muscles (ie making informal civic engagement opportunities, Civic Advisory committees, City Council etc explicit).

Accountability is an important factor in youth participation, and youth participants want clarity on how their projects will be used or continue to live on.

- Youth have shared that they would have liked more clarity on what the commitment of the City was to carry on their projects upfront. The cohort felt connected to the Sea2City team, and understood they could connect with them as a resource, but wanted to have a clearer sense of who else they would be able to connect with to support the project development process (ie. what other team members were involved with coastal adaptation planning and climate work at the City).

Youth have a desire to stay involved with their projects after their time in the lab.

- Youth value continued access to decision-makers and intend to deepen their own relationships with staff members. The program and its participants could have benefited from learning from a wider range of city staff team members and others associated with the Sea2City design challenge including the various advisory committees or more explicit and direct mentorship opportunities from the design teams themselves.

Our Learnings

Youth have a desire to stay involved with their projects after their time in the lab.

- Multi phase design projects could benefit from placing youth and community insight ahead of iterative design processes. The outputs from this year-long learning process - including the Youth Manifesto and the Engagement Event Report Findings could have more directly informed the Design Team visions and designs as well as allowed for a more youth friendly approach to additional coastal adaptation community engagement throughout the False Creek Neighborhood.

The year-long learning process facilitated a range of connections and learning opportunities, and would have benefited from a stronger hybrid approach to learning (had the challenges with the pandemic permitted).

- While youth in the cohort were generally committed to this process, the length of the program did pose a challenge as some participants had unpredictable shifts to their work or housing situations that took them away from learning. Coupled with the persistent challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic and changing Public Health Orders to keep our community safe, online learning and virtual sessions were necessary even while youth were beginning to engage with their peers, colleagues and friends through in person discussions.

Although participants overall shared positive feedback, through additional refinement to a multi-phased engagement process and evaluating key learning outcomes and direct opportunities for youth input to existing processes, a future year-long youth engagement process can have even greater impact.

With Thanks

The Youth Adaptation Lab Facilitation and Program Design Team



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We are proud to work alongside the dedicated team from the City of Vancouver and EcoPlan in hosting the Sea2City Design Challenge, and many others who shared their time and insights with this cohort.

Thank you to:

Marga Pacis
Angela Danyluk
Jordan Konyk
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Amanda Mitchell
Alexandra Turnbull
Holly Schmidt
Sabrina Meherally
Tiro Okamoto

Stay Connected

As we plan, design and deliver upcoming climate action programs through 2022 and beyond please stay connected with us!

Reach out to connect about partnerships, collaborations or learning more about our programs!

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