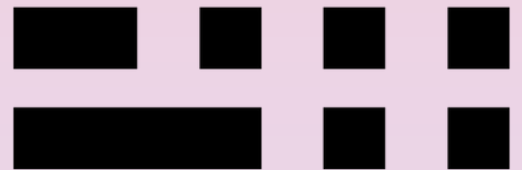




CLIMATE SKILLS & COMMUNITY BUILDING FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

2024 Report



BREAK THE DIVIDE



ABOUT BTD

As the world confronts the repercussions of the climate crisis, marked by events such as record-setting heat waves, wildfires, flooding, and melting sea ice, an increasing number of people are experiencing a correlated rise in mental health challenges. Young people, in particular, often experience emotions of anxiety, fear, helplessness, and other intense feelings that match the scale of the climate crisis.

At Break The Divide, we believe connection is a crucial element of climate action.

Our programming equips young people with resources to understand their climate emotions and connects communities with one another to build resilience and share knowledge amidst the climate crisis.

We create pathways for young people to build empathy for realities that they have never faced and empower them to transform that empathy into concrete actions that advance the creation of harmonious and abundant futures.

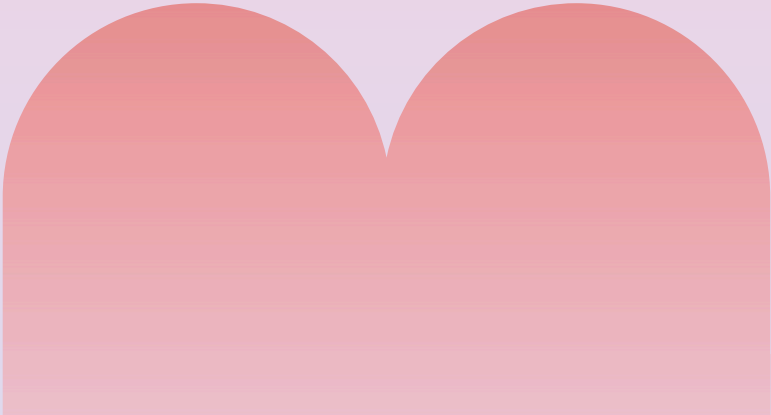


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship**, a partnership between Break The Divide, the Canadian CED Network, and the Synergia Institute, offered an innovative platform for international and newcomer youth in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). This free program provided a holistic blend of climate education, professional skill-building, and community engagement, culminating in participants receiving certifications from Break The Divide and the Synergia Institute.

The fellowship was designed to bridge critical gaps in access to climate education and empower youth to take actionable steps in addressing the climate crisis. Through a combination of online modules, interactive in-person sessions, and hands-on project development, the program cultivated a sense of belonging while equipping participants with the skills and confidence to make a difference.

Key Features of the Fellowship



Eligibility

Open to international students and newcomer youth in the GTA aged 18 to 30.



Educational Focus

Online modules covering systemic approaches to climate solutions, land stewardship, precarious livelihoods, and climate finance.



Interactive Engagement

Eight "climate cafés" (four virtual and four in-person) that provided spaces for dialogue, peer learning, and emotional resilience.



Action Projects

Participants developed and implemented two impactful community initiatives, receiving mentorship and funding support.

Program Achievements



40+ **international students and newcomer youth** participated in the program, overcoming significant barriers to engagement.



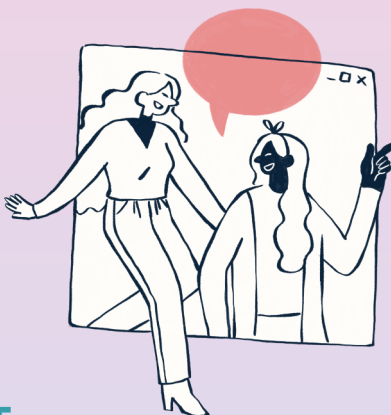
20+ **certificates awarded** to participants, enhancing their professional and academic profiles.



5 **volunteer dialogue facilitators** were trained and involved in the program.



2 **projects developed by participants and funded by Break The Divide:** A community garden initiative and a reusable cups campaign.



Social and professional networks strengthened through mentorship, collaboration, and community events.

MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

Message from the Executive Director

The Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship has been an extraordinary journey that embodies my passion for fostering connection and empowerment. This program emerged from a desire to support international students and recent immigrant youth, providing them not just with essential skills but also a genuine sense of belonging. This has very much come from a discussion we have had with our incredible Program Manager, Aria Kani, about what is lacking in Toronto community right now. I want to note that this program could not have been possible without Aria.

Reflecting on this past year, I am reminded of the power of conversation and the impact it has on our communities. Engaging with participants from diverse backgrounds has illuminated the unique challenges they face, as well as their incredible resilience. Together, we've created spaces where youth can express their hopes and anxieties about the climate crisis, allowing them to find common ground and inspiration in each other's stories.

Over the course of the Fellowship, I have had the privilege of working alongside a dedicated team of volunteers and partners. Their commitment to our mission has been nothing short of inspiring. From organizing workshops to facilitating discussions, they have played a critical role in ensuring our participants not only develop valuable skills but also forge meaningful connections.

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our sponsors, especially the Canadian CED Network and Christine Clarke. Your unwavering belief in our vision and your steadfast support have been fundamental to making this program a reality!

I also want to recognize all the volunteers and mentors who have contributed their time and expertise.

Your dedication has enriched the experience for our participants and has helped create a vibrant community.

As we look back on the achievements of the Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship, I am filled with excitement for what lies ahead. Together, we can continue to empower marginalized youth across Canada, building resilient and connected communities that thrive on diversity and collaboration.

Thank you for being a part of this journey. Let's keep pushing forward and creating the opportunities that our youth deserve.

Sincerely,



Abhay Singh Sachal (he/him)
**Founder and Executive Director, Break
The Divide**



Message from the Program Manager, Aria Kani

Dear Readers,

It is with immense excitement and gratitude that I present to you the Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship report! This program holds a special place in my heart—it embodies everything I have ever dreamed of doing with my life and for the communities I have been passionate about serving.

When I arrived in Canada as a newcomer in 2019, it was an incredible experience but also an overwhelming one. I often felt like I wasn't integrating fully into Canadian culture, and I struggled to find a sense of belonging. Later, as I entered the workforce, I felt I lacked the skills and experiences needed to thrive. These challenges deeply influenced my vision for the communities I wanted to support—international students and recent immigrant youth in Toronto and the GTA. I wanted to create a program that could offer them not just the skills and tools to navigate the competitive Canadian job market, but also spaces for connection, belonging, and community building.

Managing this program has been a deeply fulfilling and transformative experience. It has been a dream come true, though not without its challenges. Meeting the incredible volunteers who supported this initiative with their time and talents has been a joy and privilege. Getting to know the bright, resilient newcomer youth who participated in the program has been the highlight of my career. Sharing virtual and in-person spaces filled with their energy, curiosity, and potential has reminded me why this work matters so much.

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our sponsors, particularly the Canadian CED Network and their program manager, Christine Clarke. Your belief in us, your trust in our ability to deliver on the STARCAP initiative, and your unwavering support made this program possible. Thank you for standing by us every step of the way!

I sincerely hope that this program has been a meaningful and impactful experience for all our participants, many of whom have become my friends. My hope for the future is that programs like this one will continue to grow and expand, offering opportunities to more immigrant youth across Canada. These young people bring so much value, diversity, and strength to our communities—they deserve all the support and resources we can provide.

With gratitude and love,

Aria Kani (she/her)
Program Manager, Break The Divide



ABOUT US

Organization Overview: Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission

Break The Divide is an international non-profit organization that empowers young people to navigate the emotional challenges of the climate crisis by fostering connection, empathy, and community engagement. Through safe spaces for dialogue and cross-community collaboration, we equip youth to transform climate emotions into meaningful action and build resilient, inclusive futures.

Vision

We envision a world where young people are emotionally resilient, empowered by connection, and inspired to transform climate anxiety into collective action. Through fostering empathy, dialogue, and community engagement, Break The Divide strives to create a future where youth lead with courage, building bridges across communities to shape sustainable and abundant futures! We envision a just and sustainable world where youth feel supported, empowered, and connected to achieve their hopes and dreams.

Values

The core values guiding our work are connection, authenticity, community, climate justice, and emotions.

Overall Satisfaction

100%

of participants reported being **very satisfied** with the structure and organization of the Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship.

Knowledge & Skills

90%

felt the program **significantly enhanced** their understanding of climate change mitigation and resilience-building.

Community Engagement

100%

appreciated the ample opportunities to connect and **build a sense of community** with fellow participants.

Team Introduction

Abhay Singh Sachal **(Executive Director)**

Abhay is a 23-year-old Canadian changemaker passionate about climate action, mental health, and spirituality. He founded Break The Divide in 2017 to connect Arctic communities impacted by climate change with his hometown of Surrey, BC. Now leading the organization, he drives strategy, fundraising, and partnerships while motivating an incredible team. Abhay also serves on national and international climate councils and is pursuing a Master's in Educational Psychology. A lifelong hockey player, pianist, and speaker, he believes empathy is at the heart of change.



Aria Kani **(Program Manager)**

Aria, a University of Toronto graduate from Kazakhstan, is a powerhouse in climate justice and mental health advocacy. She leads Break The Divide's programs, manages partnerships, and ensures smooth operations. Passionate about supporting youth and marginalized communities, she recently spoke at Canada's first Environmental Justice and Racism Symposium. With her intersectional perspective and leadership, Aria is dedicated to building a just and sustainable future.

Tariq Harney **(Director of Operations)**

Tariq, a 23-year-old climate activist and Master's student in Anthropology, oversees operations, communications, and program development at Break The Divide. A clarinetist and hockey enthusiast, he values creative expression and teamwork in fostering community resilience. From grant writing to social media, Tariq keeps everything running smoothly—while also perfecting his pasta recipes!

[READ FULL BIOS HERE](#)

THEORY OF CHANGE

In Canada, **immigration is one of the most vital threads** in the country's rich and ever-changing demographic tapestry. According to Statistics Canada's 2022 report, immigration isn't just a factor in population growth—it's the **driving force**. By 2041, immigrants could represent up to 34% of the population.

This rapid transformation is brimming with potential but also brings challenges. Among them: **How can immigrant and newcomer youth truly connect with their communities and environments in a meaningful way, especially in the face of a global climate crisis?**

The Problem

For many international students and newcomer youth, settling into a new country isn't just about navigating unfamiliar systems—it's about finding belonging and purpose. Climate education, an essential resource for today's youth, is often inaccessible to these communities. Many find themselves cut off from the tools and support networks they need to engage in climate action. Without these connections, tackling climate issues can feel isolating and overwhelming.

Our Approach

At Break The Divide, we believe that fostering belonging and a strong sense of environmental identity are essential steps for newcomer youth. Our Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship was created to bridge these gaps. Developed with the Canadian CED Network and Synergia Institute, the fellowship takes an inclusive, participant-first approach by providing:



Safe, welcoming spaces to explore climate topics.



Tools and resources to develop practical skills for addressing the climate crisis.



Opportunities to build lasting connections and find shared purpose with peers.

Barriers to Engagement



Lack of Access

Climate education that speaks to the lived experiences of newcomers is rare.



Cultural and Language Hurdles

These challenges create additional layers of difficulty in connecting with environmental initiatives.



Social Isolation

Building relationships and finding a sense of community are significant struggles for youth starting fresh in a new place.



System Complexity

Understanding how to get involved in climate action—and navigating Canadian systems to do so—is daunting.

Empowering Newcomer Youth

The fellowship provides participants with more than just knowledge. It creates a safe space where they can be themselves—to reflect on their experiences, to express emotions like climate grief or frustration, and to dream about how they can make an impact. Our participants:

- Learn through accessible climate modules focused on creating greener systems.
- Share their thoughts and feelings in online and in-person study circles.
- Develop hands-on climate action projects that address local challenges while drawing on their unique perspectives.

For many, this is the first time they've felt their emotions validated or their ideas embraced. By connecting them with others who share their hopes and struggles, we help them channel their energy into meaningful action.

Goals & Objectives



Equip newcomer youth with **practical skills and knowledge** to thrive in Canadian society.



Foster a strong sense of **belonging and community** among participants.



Provide opportunities for **professional development** and leadership growth.



Create **safe, inclusive spaces** where youth can explore their emotions and transform them into actionable climate solutions.

Strategic Approach

We combine online modules, virtual and in-person climate cafés, and one-on-one mentorship to create a holistic, supportive program. By the end of the fellowship, participants not only gained certifications and honoraria but also saw their climate action projects brought to life with funding and guidance from Break The Divide.

Program Outreach

To ensure we reached as many newcomer youth as possible, our outreach strategy included:

- **Social Media Campaigns:** Platforms like Instagram and TikTok were pivotal in connecting us with young immigrants across the GTA.
- **SEO Optimization:** By tailoring our website to keywords like “international student opportunities,” we made the program easier to find.
- **Collaborations:** Partnering with universities, community organizations, and newcomer networks broadened our reach and helped us spread the word about the program.
- **Personal Connections:** Break The Divide’s network of volunteers and participants amplified outreach through word of mouth

With every connection we made, we took one step closer to ensuring that no immigrant youth feels left behind in the fight against climate change.





“It’s been a great opportunity to be a part of the Break The Divide community! It’s just wonderful to make connections when you are someone who has moved to a new city with people who have similar values. I have been able to learn about different backgrounds and careers in climate change and also have very important discussions about what we can do to fight against climate change.”

Fellowship Participant

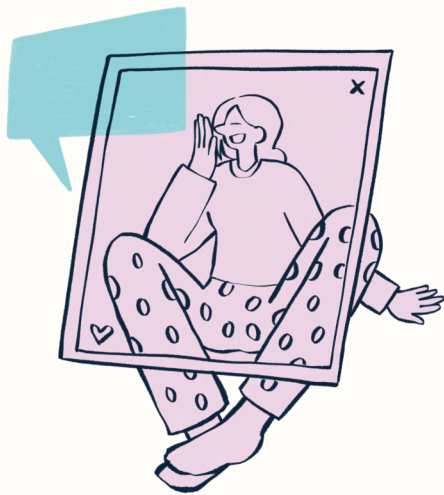
PROGRAM OVERVIEW

How It Works



Education

Participants delved into a series of online modules, developed by the Synergia Institute and Athabasca University. These modules covered vital topics like climate justice, systemic change, and sustainable alternatives for greener societies. By providing this foundation, the program helped participants understand climate issues deeply and prepare them to take meaningful action.



Dialogue

Through "climate cafés," small study groups that met in person and online, participants had a chance to share their thoughts, feelings, and ideas about climate change. These gatherings fostered a sense of community and offered a space to discuss not only solutions but also the emotions tied to the climate crisis. By connecting with others, participants built empathy, solidarity, and lasting friendships.



Action

The program culminated in participants working on tangible climate action projects. With guidance and mentorship from Break The Divide, they developed and launched initiatives aimed at addressing local environmental challenges. From reusable cup campaigns to community gardens, these projects showcased the creativity and determination of the participants while making a positive impact on their new communities.

The **Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship** was designed with a simple but powerful goal: **to equip international students and newcomer youth in Canada with the knowledge, connections, and tools to tackle climate change while fostering a sense of belonging in their new communities.** By combining online learning, in-person gatherings, and hands-on projects, the fellowship created an engaging and transformative experience for participants.



Program Structure

The fellowship spanned four months (April – July 2024), with participants completing four modules and attending in-person and/or online study groups every few weeks. This structure allowed for a gradual deepening of knowledge while ensuring participants had ample time to reflect, engage with others, and prepare their action projects.



Online Learning Modules

Each module took place over three weeks. The modules included both written theory as well as PDF and video resources provided by the Synergia Institute. There were also virtual activities and discussion forums included in the module.



Virtual & In-Person Climate Cafés

In-person study sessions, held every three weeks in Downtown Toronto, provided a safe space for participants to connect, discuss emotions, and share insights. Online study sessions were also available for participants preferring virtual engagement.



Climate Action Projects

As the program progressed, participants began brainstorming and developing their own climate initiatives. Some chose to work individually, while others formed teams to collaborate on projects. Regardless of the approach, the emphasis was on creating practical, community-focused solutions. Participants received ongoing support, including mentorship, funding guidance, and connections to local partners, ensuring their ideas could become a reality.



Social Events & Professional Development Workshops

Following the conclusion of the open online course in July 2024, the Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship participants engaged in several events to celebrate their achievements, enhance their learning, and showcase their climate action projects.



Climate Action Project Presentation: Participants presented their climate action projects to peers, mentors, and the Break The Divide team in an online meeting. This event highlighted their innovative work, provided valuable feedback, and connected them with relevant organizations for further support. The event also included a seed funding award for the most impactful project, motivating participants to continue their initiatives.



Workshop on Colonialism and Environmental Justice: In partnership with [Shake Up The Establishment](#), this workshop explored themes of colonialism, climate justice, and responsible settler-immigrant practices. Participants deepened their understanding of systemic environmental inequities and gained actionable insights to promote justice in their communities.



Break The Divide Social: To conclude the fellowship, participants joined an in-person social gathering with the Break The Divide team. This celebratory event provided an opportunity to reflect on their journey, foster connections, and celebrate their accomplishments in a relaxed and supportive environment.

 **Program Reach and Impact**

Through extensive outreach efforts—including social media promotions, partnerships with community organizations, and in-person events—the fellowship reached over 7,000 people and enrolled 43 participants. Each module sparked important conversations, fostered meaningful connections, and laid the groundwork for lasting change.

This program would not have been possible without funding from the Canadian CED Network’s STARCAP initiative. Break The Divide extends its deepest gratitude for this support, which enabled us to empower the next generation of climate leaders.

 **Curriculum & Content**

Synergia Institute and Athabasca University have provided Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) for participants to go through. Materials included online modules, video resources, discussion forums, and climate cafés (offered online and in-person) aimed at fostering both individual and collective reflection.

 **Program Reach & Impact**

Through extensive outreach efforts—including social media promotions, partnerships with community organizations, and in-person events—the fellowship reached over 7,000 people and enrolled 43 participants. Each module sparked important conversations, fostered meaningful connections, and laid the groundwork for lasting change.

Massive Online Open Course Modules



Module 1: Framing the Journey

This module introduced participants to the foundations of climate action, exploring key concepts like planetary limits, grassroots movements, and intersectional approaches to tackling environmental challenges.



Module 2: Stewarding Land and Resources for the Commons

Participants examined the connections between land ownership, ecological restoration, and equity. Topics like land tenure, affordable housing, and sustainable resource management were explored through a lens of justice and collaboration.



Module 5: Precarious Livelihoods

Focused on the challenges of precarious work and job insecurity, this module explored solutions like Universal Basic Income and solidarity-based employment systems.



Module 7: Democratic Money

Participants learned about alternative monetary systems and the role of financing in building sustainable, equitable societies. This module tackled complex topics with an emphasis on practical applications, inspiring participants to think creatively about resource mobilization.

Dialogue Facilitator Training

The Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship sessions were supported by a team of passionate volunteers, who were recruited, onboarded, and trained by the Break The Divide team. To ensure facilitators were equipped to guide participants effectively, a synchronous one-hour Zoom training session was conducted, focusing on essential skills and strategies for fostering collaboration and inclusivity.

A total of 5 volunteers participated in the facilitator training, which emphasized creating supportive environments and managing group dynamics. The training included the following core components:



Code of Conduct

Establishing clear behavioural expectations to promote respect and accountability within the fellowship.



Facilitating Safe and Inclusive Spaces

Techniques for encouraging openness, trust, and meaningful collaboration among participants.



Conflict Resolution in Virtual and In-Person Settings

Practical approaches to resolving disagreements and maintaining positive group dynamics.



Addressing Discrimination and Micro-Aggressions

Tools for identifying and addressing harmful behaviours with sensitivity and care.



Handling Insensitive Remarks and Reporting

Guidance on responding to inappropriate comments and escalating issues when necessary.



Cultural Sensitivity Training

Building awareness and respect for diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives.



Interactive Scenarios

Hands-on activities to help facilitators practice responding to challenging situations and supporting participants' growth.

This training ensured that facilitators were not only well-prepared to guide fellowship participants but also capable of fostering a collaborative and empowering environment for learning and action. By prioritizing these skills, the program created a foundation for meaningful community building and impactful climate initiatives.



"For me personally, it was exciting to hear people's different and unique perspectives and how they were different from each other due to their geographical location, the field they work in or other aspects of their lives"

Volunteer, Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship was implemented from April to July 2024, marking its pilot run. This four-month journey was filled with learning, collaboration, and hands-on climate action, supported by innovative modules and climate cafés.

Despite facing challenges, the program achieved key objectives through adaptive strategies and the commitment of participants and organizers. Below is an overview of the timeline, key milestones, and the rich learning experience provided by the fellowship.



Module Summaries

Module 1: Framing the Journey (April 15 - May 5)

This foundational module introduced key concepts such as neoliberalism, doughnut economics, and planetary limits. Participants explored topics like climate justice, just transitions, and grassroots movements, gaining a strong understanding of climate challenges and the importance of collective action. The first in-person study groups fostered connection and dialogue among participants.

Module 2: Stewarding Land and Resources for the Commons (May 6 - May 26)

Participants examined land ownership dynamics, including land grabbing and alternative property rights models. Discussions focused on achieving ecological restoration, equity, and poverty reduction through sustainable land stewardship. The Just Transition framework provided tools for addressing these challenges effectively. Study groups offered a supportive space to discuss these complex issues.

Module 5: Precarious Livelihoods (May 27 - June 16)

This module addressed job insecurity and precarious employment, particularly in the context of climate change. Innovative solutions like Universal Basic Income and democratic ownership models were explored. Participants critically analyzed systemic drivers of job precarity and discussed solidarity-based approaches to creating secure livelihoods.

Module 7: Democratic Money (June 17 - July 14)

Participants demystified monetary systems, learning about debt-free money and financing alternatives that support sustainable development. Topics included energy descent, degrowth, and the Green New Deal. This module inspired participants to advocate for equitable monetary policies and strategies to mobilize resources for climate resilience.

Module 8: Reflecting on the Journey (Optional, July 15 - July 28)

Participants reflected on their learning journey, identified key takeaways, and envisioned their future contributions to systems change. Insights shared in the Module 8 Synthesis Forum enriched collective learning and discussions about the path forward.



Solutions Implemented & Lessons Learned

To address these challenges, we implemented a series of targeted strategies that not only mitigated immediate obstacles but also laid the groundwork for future program improvements. These included:



Expanded Outreach

We tapped into newcomer centers, international student bodies at universities and colleges, newsletters, and partnerships with local organizations to broaden our reach.



Enhanced Social Media Presence

Amplifying our activity on platforms like Instagram and TikTok allowed us to connect with a younger audience more effectively.



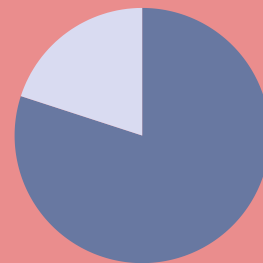
Expert Advice

Seeking guidance from Christine Clarke, the program manager of the STARCAP project, allowed us to refine our approach and incorporate best practices from similar initiatives.



Strengthened Relationships

Building trust and rapport with participants ensured continued engagement throughout the program, even during demanding periods.



Future Climate Action

80%

expressed a strong likelihood of continuing work on their climate action projects beyond the fellowship.

Challenges Faced

While the Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship achieved significant milestones, it wasn't without its challenges. These obstacles offered valuable lessons that allowed us to adapt and improve in real-time, ensuring the program could deliver meaningful outcomes for participants. Key challenges included:



Recruitment of International Students and Newcomer Youth

Reaching this demographic required persistent and creative outreach efforts, as traditional advertising methods often didn't resonate.



Accessibility for Beginners

Some content required a pre-existing interest or knowledge of climate issues, potentially deterring those new to environmental topics.



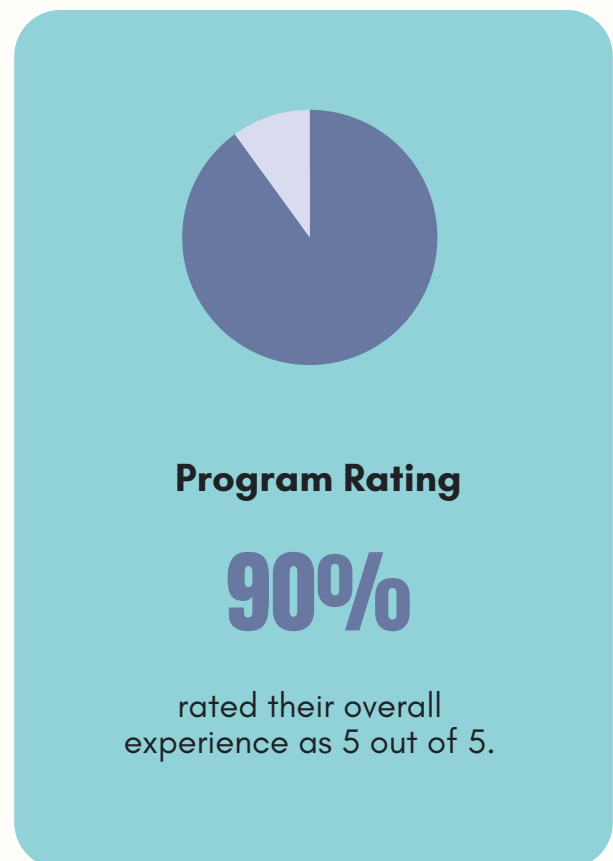
Theory-Heavy Content

While the program's academic rigour was a strength, some participants found the materials overly conceptual, with limited advice on everyday implementation.



Time-Intensive Nature

Balancing the demands of the program with personal and professional responsibilities was challenging for many participants, leading to periods of disengagement.



Suggestions for MOOC Improvement

While the program provided a solid foundation, enhancing participant engagement remains a priority. To make learning more dynamic and enjoyable, we propose the following additions to the MOOC:



Gamification

Introducing a points or rewards system where participants earn stars for completing activities, quizzes, or reflections. A weekly leaderboard could add an element of friendly competition and encourage consistent participation.



Interactive Content

Incorporating games or quizzes at the end of each chapter to make reviewing key concepts more engaging.



Shorter, Personalized Videos

Creating more accessible and relatable video content tailored to the interests of participants.



Community Recognition

Highlighting participants' achievements and contributions in online forums or during study groups to foster a sense of accomplishment and pride.

By implementing these solutions, we adapted to challenges and provided significant value to participants, ensuring that the program remained impactful and meaningful, even in its pilot phase.

Enjoyment & Experience

100%

of volunteers **greatly enjoyed** their participation and described working with Break The Divide as a pleasant professional experience.

Skill Development

100%

reported **improved dialogue** facilitation skills through the fellowship.



"I have decided to volunteer here [at Break The Divide] because I have been really inspired by working with younger people, especially those that want to make an environment a better place for them and every one"

Volunteer, Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Program Budget

The Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship was developed and implemented with a budget of \$22,700 CAD, generously awarded to Break The Divide by the **Canadian CED Network and Synergia Institute** as part of their Synergia Transition and Resilience Climate Action Program (STARCAP). This funding played a crucial role in enabling the program to empower youth leaders and foster collective action on climate resilience.

The budget was thoughtfully allocated to the following key areas to ensure maximum impact:



Staff Hours

Supporting program coordination, facilitation, and mentorship to guide participants through the fellowship and ensure its seamless delivery.



Participant-Led Climate Action Projects

Providing seed funding to support the implementation of climate action initiatives developed by participants, enabling them to put their ideas into practice and create tangible community impacts.



Guest Speakers and Workshops

Hosting expert-led workshops and inviting guest speakers to provide participants with insights, inspiration, and practical tools to enhance their climate action projects.



Community Building and Event Spaces

Booking rooms and providing snacks for activities such as climate cafés, social events, and community-building sessions to foster connection and collaboration among participants.



Honorarium for Participants and Volunteers

Recognizing the time and contributions of participants and volunteers, ensuring accessibility and equity in participation.

This strategic allocation ensured the program's success in building a supportive network, equipping youth with actionable skills, and fostering meaningful climate action. Break The Divide extends its heartfelt gratitude to the Canadian CED Network and Synergia Institute for their generous support, which made this transformative fellowship possible.

Quantitative Metrics

Participant Reach

Over 40 international and newcomer youth participated in the program, reflecting its appeal and accessibility (considering how difficult it can be to engage international students and recent immigrants in a program of this kind). Outreach efforts reached more than 7,000 individuals through targeted social media campaigns, partnerships with community organizations, and word-of-mouth.

Volunteer Training

Five dedicated volunteers were trained in dialogue facilitation, playing a crucial role in fostering meaningful discussions and supporting participants throughout the program.

Engagement Levels



Hosted **8 dynamic study circles**, with an equal balance of 4 in-person and 4 virtual sessions, to accommodate diverse participant needs and preferences.



Supported the successful development and implementation of **2 participant-led climate action projects**.



Recognized the achievements of over **20 participants** with completion certificates, celebrating their commitment and growth.

Funded Projects

1 Community Garden Initiative

With \$750 in funding, this project established a sustainable garden, providing hands-on experience in urban agriculture and benefiting the local community by promoting food security and ecological awareness.

2 Reusable Cups Campaign

Allocated \$300 to a waste-reduction initiative that focused on minimizing single-use plastics in Toronto, showcasing innovative approaches to environmental sustainability.

Qualitative Insights



Emotional Resilience:

Participants reported feeling less overwhelmed by the magnitude of the climate crisis. Many expressed newfound hope and confidence in their ability to contribute meaningfully to climate action.



Cultivating Hope:

Through shared experiences and collective action, participants felt empowered to envision and work toward a more sustainable future.



Community Building:

The program fostered a supportive network, with many participants forming long-term connections and collaborations that extended beyond the fellowship.



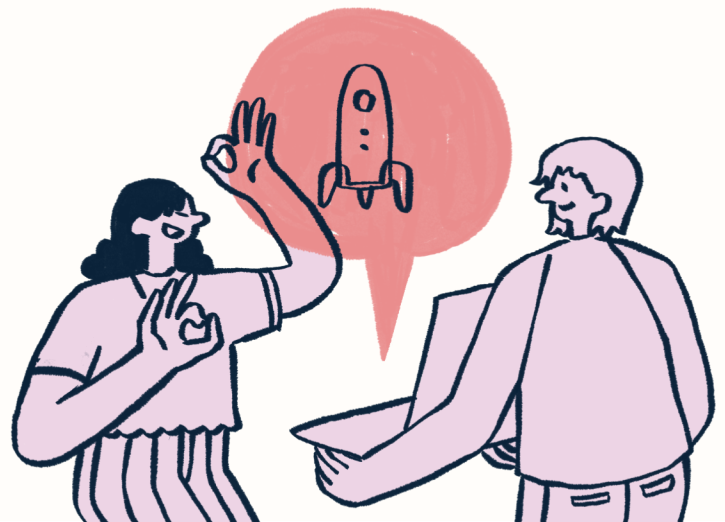
Professional Development:

Participants gained practical skills in project management, dialogue facilitation, and systems thinking, enhancing their career prospects and capacity to drive change.



Leadership Development:

Participants demonstrated notable growth in their ability to lead and inspire climate initiatives, gaining confidence in public speaking, project planning, and community engagement.



Survey Feedback Highlights: Participants



Overall Satisfaction

100%

of participants reported being **very satisfied** with the structure and organization of the Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship.



Knowledge & Skills

90%

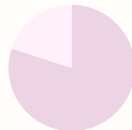
felt the program **significantly enhanced** their understanding of climate change mitigation and resilience-building.



Community Engagement

100%

appreciated the ample opportunities to connect and **build a sense of community** with fellow participants.



Future Climate Action

80%

expressed a strong likelihood of continuing work on their climate action projects beyond the fellowship.



Program Rating

90%

rated their overall experience as 5 out of 5.

Survey Feedback Highlights: Volunteers



Enjoyment & Experience

100%

of volunteers **greatly enjoyed** their participation and described working with Break The Divide as a pleasant professional experience.



Skill Development

100%

reported improved **dialogue facilitation skills** through the fellowship.



Cultural Awareness

100%

appreciated how the program **expanded their understanding** of diverse communities across Canada.



Skill Development

100%

expressed **interest in volunteering again** and would recommend the experience to a friend.

Ease of Onboarding

All volunteers found the process to become a dialogue facilitator quick and easy to follow.

Climate Knowledge

Every volunteer agreed the sessions deepened their understanding of the climate crisis and related themes.



"Thank you for opening this safe space to talk about our climate emotions. I hope more programs like this one spread around the world!"

Participant

TESTIMONIALS

* Quotes are gathered from in-person interviews and online surveys, names are not revealed to maintain participants' privacy.

From Participants



"I think the BTM team did a great job in building a sense of community among participants"



"It's been a great opportunity to be a part of the Break The Divide community! It's just wonderful to make connections when you are someone who has moved to a new city with people who have similar values. I have been able to learn about different backgrounds and careers in climate change and also have very important discussions about what we can do to fight against climate change."



"Thank you for opening this safe space to talk about our climate emotions. I hope more programs like this one spread around the world!"

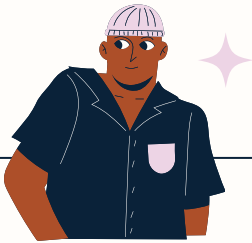


"I believe that connection with people is very important to do anything about climate change because there is no other way to do it. Climate change issues are so complex, so there is no just one way to approach them and there is no other way to have different prospects but connecting with other people from different backgrounds and expertises."



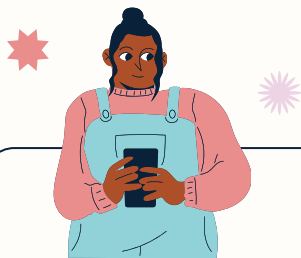
"I came to the fellowship with a specific goal of gaining more tools and knowledge about climate change and ways we can address it and that is exactly what I gained from participating. On top of that, connecting with other people in the program has been extremely rewarding! Climate cafés has easily become my favorite aspect of the program"

From Volunteers



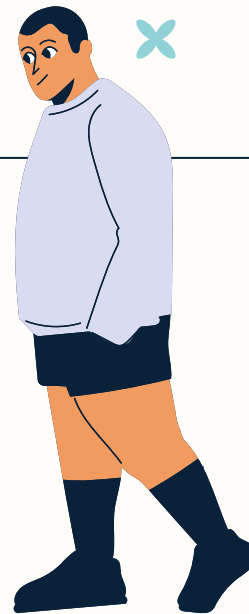
“For me personally, it was exciting to hear people's different and unique perspectives and how they were different from each other due to their geographical location, the field they work in or other aspects of their lives”

Volunteer, Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship



“Working at Break The Divide has been an incredible experience because it's allowed me to meet and interact with a lot of people who has have similar experiences in climate spaces and dealt with similar frustrations. It allowed me to connect and create a community and feel less alone and less isolate which I feel is a big reason why we struggle to take climate action in the first place”

Volunteer, Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship



“It has been especially heart-warming to see how these conversations [about climate change] has left people feeling more hopeful about the future and I really think that's what organizations like Break The Divide can do – provide hope.”

“We share different perspectives and ideas and it's really nice to know that there are other people who feel the same way.”

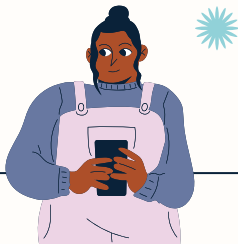
Tariq Harney, Director of Operations at Break The Divide

From Volunteers



"I have decided to volunteer here [at Break The Divide] because I have been really inspired by working with younger people, especially those that want to make an environment a better place for them and every one"

Volunteer, Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship



"Each and every person is impacted by climate change in their own ways. We all have stories to tell and we all come from unique places. Being able to unpack that and connect with other who may have their own stories can really inspire us and can really make us feel like we are not alone in this. We are bigger as a community."

Volunteer, Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship



"The program has given me so much! I think it has given me a sense of community and a sense of purpose in my career moving forward. I think Break The Divide and the climate cafés this program has offered have been able to provide spaces where we can talk about climate emotions, climate change and involve people around the world to break divisions in sometimes controversial topics, which has given me a sense of hope for the future."

Volunteer, Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship



"Being a part of the Break The Divide community has been so incredibly special to me! You don't really get an opportunity to talk to and meet like-minded people who are as passionate about climate change and environmental issues as you are in your day-to-day life, so it's been really special to me to have this space where I come once a month and have really meaningful conversations about these topics."

Volunteer, Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship



“It has been especially heart-warming to see how these conversations [about climate change] has left people feeling more hopeful about the future and I really think that’s what organizations like Break The Divide can do - provide hope.”

Tariq Harney, Director of Operations at Break The Divide

PROGRAM SUCCESSES



Empowering Marginalized Voices

Engaged underrepresented communities, especially international students and newcomer youth, in climate action.



Developing Practical Solutions

Funded and supported impactful projects that addressed local environmental challenges.



Fostering Community & Belonging

By facilitating in-person programming like climate cafés and study circles, we cultivated a sense of belonging and community among participants. These sessions created a space for participants to share experiences, connect with peers, and collaborate on climate-related issues.



Emotional Resilience

Our “climate cafés” were particularly impactful, helping participants explore the emotional dimensions of climate change. These cafés provided tools for emotional resilience and coping with climate anxiety.



Building New Partnerships

STARCAP allowed us to build partnerships with universities, community centers, and organizations that amplify immigrant voices. This broadens our network and strengthens our long-term impact.



Professional Growth

Enhanced participants' skills and career prospects through certifications and hands-on experience.

Overall, STARCAP allowed us to connect with a new community, build vital partnerships, and enhance our climate education programs through in-person engagement and emotional support.

VISUAL DOCUMENTATION

Program Video

Check out our Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship Program video, which tells the story of our participants and volunteers.



FUTURE PLANNING

Moving Forward	Innovations	Long-Term Vision
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand the fellowship to other regions, prioritizing areas with greater climate vulnerability.• Develop new program elements, such as arts-based workshops and creative writing sessions, to enhance emotional processing.• Strengthen partnerships with additional organizations to diversify funding and outreach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gamify learning experiences through interactive modules, quizzes, and leaderboards to sustain engagement.• Establish an alumni network to provide ongoing mentorship and support for participants' climate action efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Break The Divide envisions scaling the fellowship nationally and internationally, empowering thousands of youth to lead climate action efforts in their communities while building a global network of changemakers.



CONCLUSION

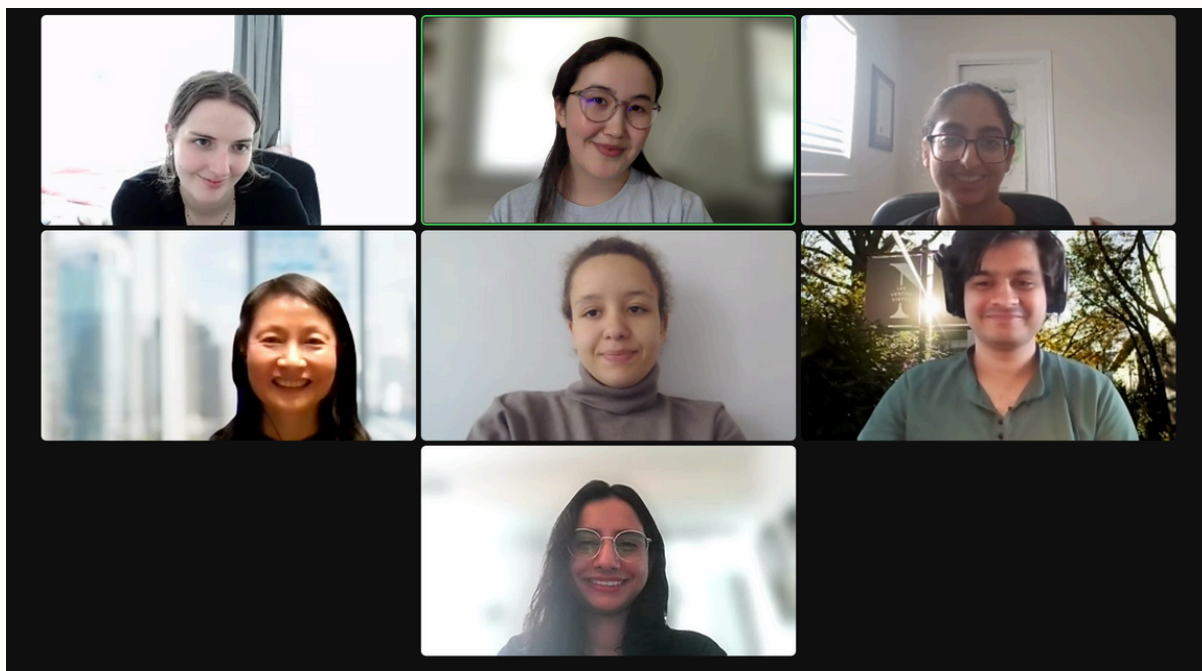
Program's Importance

The Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship successfully bridged gaps in climate education, emotional support, and community action for newcomer youth. By equipping participants with tools to navigate the climate crisis, the program inspired leadership, resilience, and hope for a sustainable future in a demographic that is often underrepresented but extremely important for a sustainable Canadian future.

Join us in expanding the fellowship to new regions and communities. Together, we can ensure youth are equipped to lead the fight against climate change and build a more inclusive, resilient future for all. Visit www.breakthedivide.net to support our work & for more information.

Connect with BTD

- Volunteer Opportunities
- infobreakthedivide.net
- Website
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- Facebook
- TikTok
- Twitter



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Funders & Sponsors

Break The Divide would like to express our gratitude to our community partners that made this program possible through their support and funding: Canadian CED Network, Synergia Institute, and Synergia Transition and Resilience Climate Action Program (STARCAP).



Volunteers & Staff

A deep thank you to all volunteers and staff who dedicated their time and energy, including **Abhay Singh Sachal, Aruzhan (Aria) Kani, Tariq Harney,** and many more. Their efforts were critical to the successful facilitation of the Climate Skills & Community Building Fellowship Program.

**Abhay Singh Sachal
Tariq Harney
Aruzhan (Aria) Kani
Christine Clarke
Neha Sarraf
Wendy Chan
Amartya Biswas
Diljot Badesha
Aesha Shehzad**

Partners & Collaborators

Acknowledgment of organizations and individuals that have been key contributors to the program's success, including:

Organizations:

Canadian CED Network, Climate Reality Project, Shake Up The Establishment, Northeastern University - Toronto, Diverse Nature Collective, Brighter Immigration, Environmental Defence Canada

Individuals:

Christine Clarke, Deniz Toker, Patricia Wilson, Manvi Bhalla, and others that have supported us throughout this program



APPENDICES

Resources

A comprehensive list of widely accessible resources provided to participants, including reading materials, mental health tools, websites, and volunteer opportunities.

Module 1: Framing the Journey

[Climate Justice](#)

[Commons](#)

[Doughnut Economics](#)

[Framing the Journey - Review of Key Concepts](#)

[Framing the Journey](#)

Module 2: Land & Resources

[Land tenure](#)

[Multi-level perspective](#)

[Land grabs](#)

[Stewarding Land and Resources for the Common Good](#)

[Summary](#)

Module 5: Precarious Livelihoods

[Precarity](#)

[Universal Basic Income](#)

[Worker Co-operatives](#)

[Summary](#)

Module 7: Democratic Money

[Alternative Currencies](#)

[Modern Monetary Theory](#)

[JAK Bank](#)

[Summary](#)



BREAK THE DIVIDE