

Tools for Change: Understanding the Needs of Climate Justice Organizers In Canada

By Amanda Harvey-Sánchez





Acknowledgements

This report is produced by the Climate Justice Organizing HUB, a project of the Small Change Fund. The author would like to thank the organizers who participated in interviews for sharing their stories, challenges, and aspirations for the climate justice movement across so-called Canada, and for their tireless work in making the movement what it is. Any and all errors are the author's.

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Cite as: Harvey-Sánchez, A. (2024). Tools for Change: Understanding the Needs of Climate Justice Organizers in Canada. The Climate Justice Organizing HUB, Montreal, Canada.

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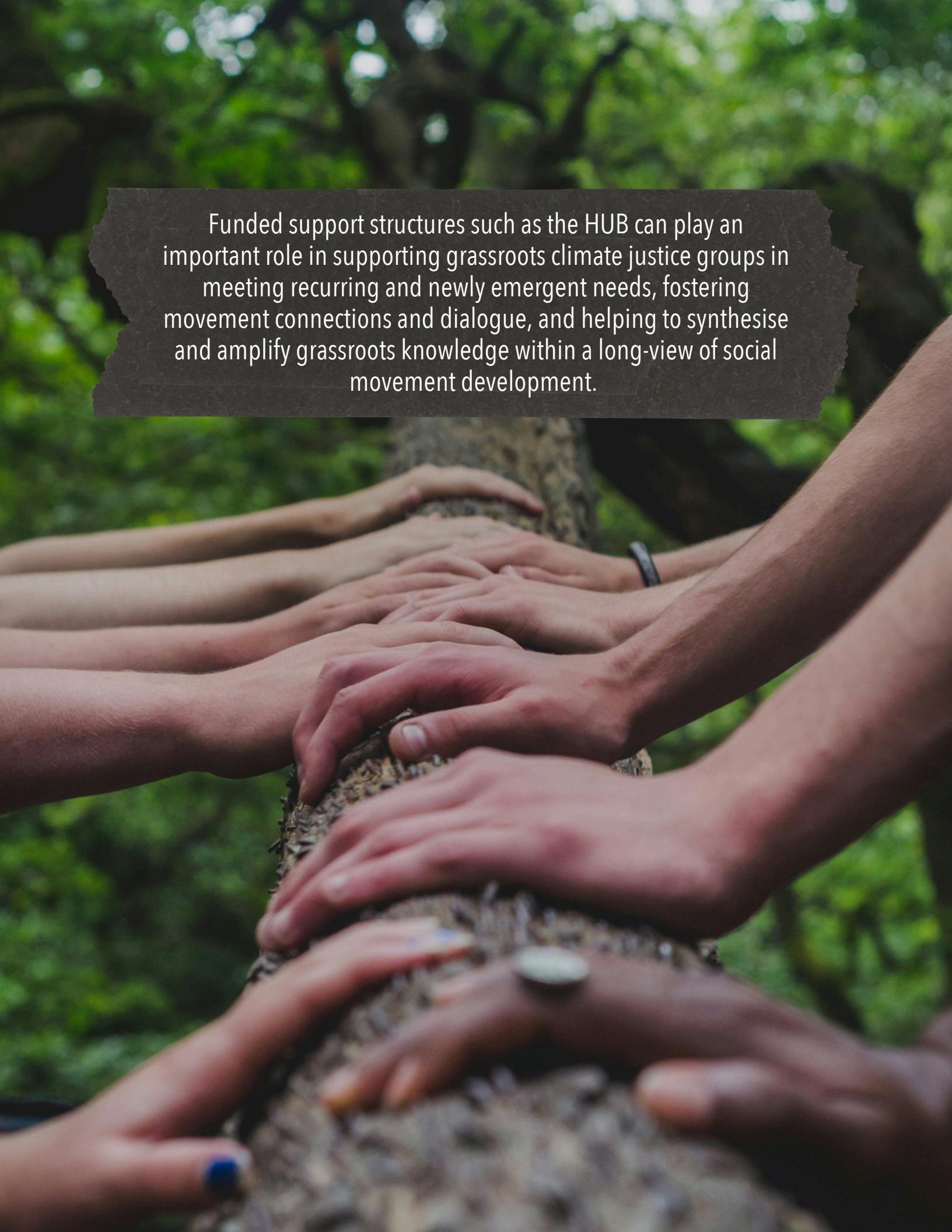


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The daughter of a climate scientist and a teacher, Amanda was called into the climate justice movement through working on her campus fossil fuel divestment campaign at the University of Toronto in 2015. Since then, she has had the opportunity to take part in community-based and justice-focused campaigns and projects across Canada, the US, India, and France. She is currently completing her PhD at the University of Toronto, on the social and political life of climate justice organizing in Canada. She is the HUB's Activist Resource Person.

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Funded support structures such as the HUB can play an important role in supporting grassroots climate justice groups in meeting recurring and newly emergent needs, fostering movement connections and dialogue, and helping to synthesise and amplify grassroots knowledge within a long-view of social movement development.

Executive Summary

During the summer and fall of 2023, the Climate Justice Organizing HUB conducted a needs assessment process through in-depth interviews with organizers in climate justice groups across Anglophone Canada. The intent was to hear directly from organizers in the climate justice movement about their current activities and projects, biggest challenges, and ideas for more tailored support and resources.

HUB team members spoke with:



organizers
from

organizations across

provinces

(Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba).



Executive Summary

The top challenges, areas of focus, and areas where support is needed are summarized in the table below. Detailed exposition, analysis, resources, implications, and possible future directions follow in the main report.

Top Challenges, Areas of Focus, and Areas Where Support is Needed	
Topic	Description
Campaign development	The process of ideating, developing, and carrying out a campaign, including elements such as creating a theory of change, aligning on a strategy, and choosing effective tactics.
Hard organizing skills	Basic skills that are transferable across campaigns and may be useful to organizers across a wide variety of contexts, such as one-on-one conversations, house meetings, canvassing, meeting facilitation, and event planning.
Media & communications	Knowledge, resources, and tips on developing a media and communications plan, including basic skills such as writing press releases, doing pitch calls, and developing a social media presence, and more advanced skills such as developing a cohesive and impactful public media story that propels campaigns forward.
Security culture	Skills, roles, and best-practices for maintaining the safety, security, and well-being of organizers at actions, including skills in marshalling, de-escalation, and effective direct action planning.

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Executive Summary

Top Challenges, Areas of Focus, and Areas Where Support is Needed	
Topic	Description
Recruitment & retention + base building	Recruiting, onboarding, engaging, and retaining new members into an organization and/or campaign role or project while building a base of supporters beyond already-committed activists.
Structure optimization	Developing an equitable and effective organizational structure that fosters membership development and supports organizational purpose.
Community care & organizing culture	Practices and conditions for fostering a healthy, grounded, and empowering organizing culture and a broader sense of community care.
Conflict transformation	Processes, skills, and best practices for navigating organizational and interpersonal conflicts in generative ways.
Space for convening	Accessible physical space for organizers to convene, gather, learn, share knowledge, and work together.

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Executive Summary

Top Challenges, Areas of Focus, and Areas Where Support Is Needed	
Topic	Description
Multi-racial organizing	Practices, skills, and conditions for working across difference, geared towards fostering a multi-racial movement where historically marginalized groups and people feel empowered to lead and enact change.
Funding	Reliable, sustainable, and non-restrictive sources of funding for grassroots organizing.
Polycrisis	Multiplicity of overlapping social, economic, political, and environmental crises which create barriers to organizing in terms of time, energy, motivation, focus, and morale.
Canada-specific resources	Organizing resources, knowledge, and frameworks that are tailored to the Canadian context and speak to its political, geographical, and economic conditions and systems of governance.

While many of these challenges may apply across grassroots groups and non-governmental organizations, it is not surprising that they emerge as top needs amongst grassroots climate justice groups in particular.

In contrast to the work of many salaried environmental advocacy organizations, grassroots climate justice organizing is a much more dynamic, emergent, and experimental process. The pandemic context has also created new

Executive Summary

challenges and barriers to organizing, while spurring the development of new ideas and practices.

Funded support structures such as the HUB can play an important role in supporting grassroots climate justice groups in meeting recurring and newly emergent needs, fostering movement connections and dialogue, and helping to synthesise and amplify grassroots knowledge within a long-view of social movement development.

Findings from this study reveal that while organizers across so-called Canada are making use of resources and support from the HUB, many organizers are still seeking additional support. Meeting these needs will require expanding the capacity and reach of funded support structures across so-called Canada, either through the HUB and/or through the creation of new support structures in other parts of the country.





Photo courtesy of Gabriel Pelland

Introduction

The Climate Justice Organizing HUB was founded in April 2020 in recognition of the critical role that under-resourced grassroots organizations play in driving climate justice. The main goal of the HUB is to nourish, support, and develop the grassroots through needs-responsive trainings, knowledge libraries, and capacity-building tools. More than three years after its founding, the landscape of climate justice organizing across so-called Canada has changed amidst deepening and overlapping crises, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, it was time to reassess what new challenges and needs have arisen for grassroots groups and where and how the HUB and other funded support structures can work to best meet those needs. This report serves as a snapshot of common themes across grassroots groups in the HUB's network and preliminary avenues for intervention.



Photo courtesy of Jacqueline Lee-Tam

Methodology

During the summer and fall of 2023, HUB team members conducted a needs assessment process through in-depth interviews with organizers in climate justice groups across Anglophone Canada. The intent was to hear directly from organizers in the climate justice movement about their current activities and projects, biggest challenges, and ideas for more tailored support and resources from the HUB.

Participant Recruitment

HUB team members reached out to organizers at 27 climate justice groups within its existing network and 16 of them agreed to take part in an interview. Most interviews involved only one representative from the group, but a handful had two or three representatives, meaning that HUB team members spoke with 21 organizers in total. Grassroots groups were prioritized in a first round of requests for interviews, as this is the primary base of the HUB's work; however, two non-profits were included in a second round of interviews to achieve greater geographical diversity across Anglophone Canada. In total, the HUB team spoke with organizers working across six provinces: Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, as illustrated in the image below.

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted over zoom video conferencing software and lasted between 40 minutes to an hour. Interviews were not audio recorded, but HUB team members took notes on Cryptpad, an end-to-end encrypted platform. The HUB offered an honorarium of \$50 to Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) or otherwise marginalized organizers (eg. disabled, queer).



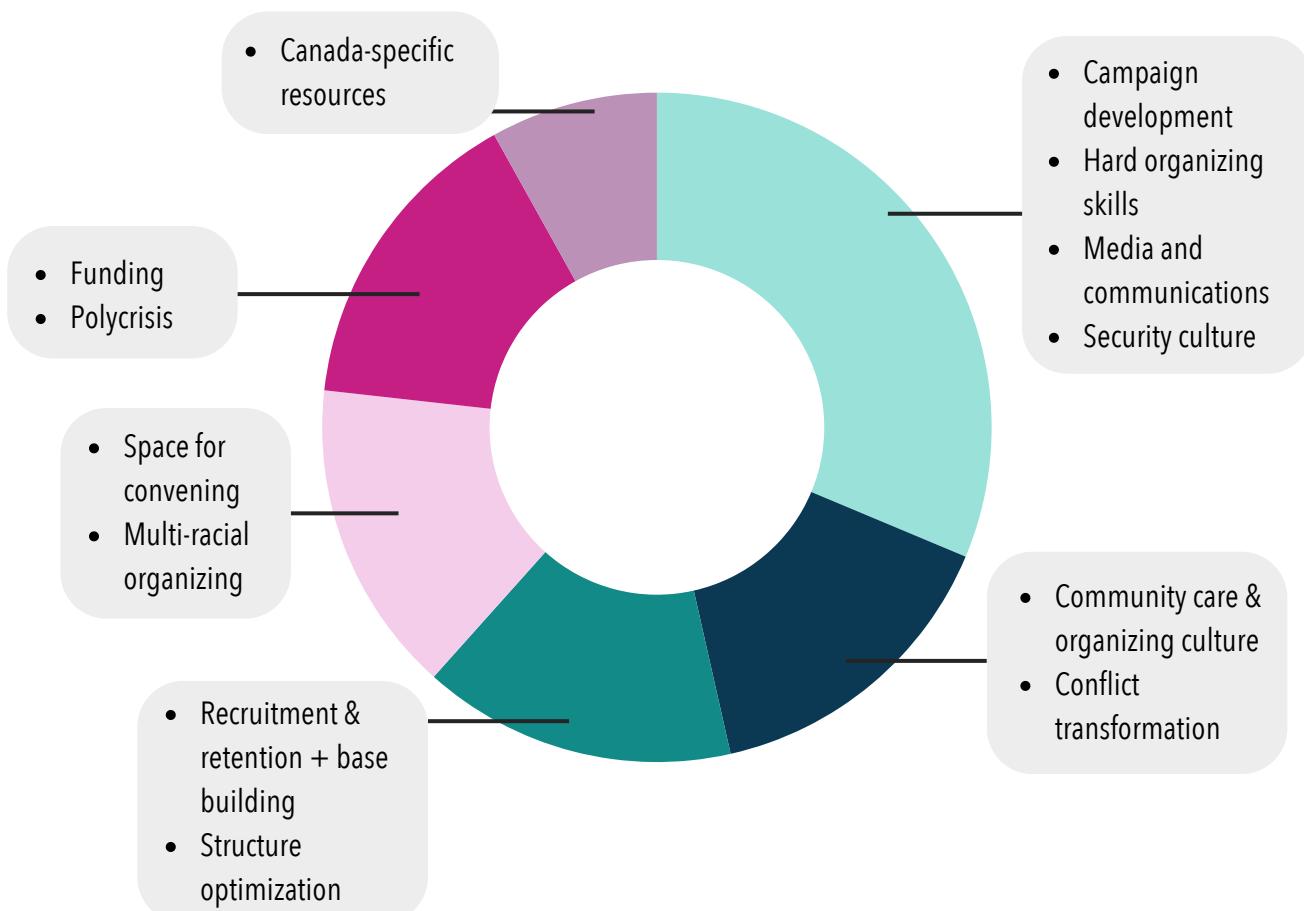
Data Analysis

Data from interview notes were coded using thematic analysis. The top challenges, areas of focus, and areas where support is needed were grouped under 13 open codes: campaign development, hard organizing skills, media and communications, security culture, recruitment & retention + base building, structure optimization, community care & organizing culture, conflict transformation, space for convening, multi-racial organizing, funding, polycrisis, and Canada-specific resources. These 13 open codes were categorized into four main thematic areas, as illustrated in the image below: 1) Doing (Campaigns/Actions), 2) Being (Culture/Relating), 3) Structural Factors, & 4) Canadian Context. Many of these topics are also interrelated, thus some open-codes are grouped under more than one thematic area.

Thematic Areas

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| | Doing (Campaigns/Actions) | | Being (Culture/Relating) + Structural Factors |
| | Being (Culture/Relating) | | Structural Factors |
| | Doing (Campaigns/Actions) + Being (Culture/Relating) | | Canadian context |

Distribution of Open Codes in Thematic Areas



"There are lots of people who are excited about things, but not a lot of people who are trained in organizing skills, or who know how to develop strategy."



Findings & Implications

At the heart of all organizing and movement building is human relationships and interactions, and actions taken to bring about positive change in the world. To organize is to do together what one cannot achieve alone; organizing is a form of collective action. Thus, organizing is fundamentally about "doing" things, but also doing them through "being" in particular kinds of relationships with others. Categories 1) and 2) above reflect this through the headings of "doing" and "being", but it is important to note that any neat separation is purely for the purposes of theoretical understanding. Organizing is also impacted by broader political, social, economic and environmental factors; indeed, these are often part and parcel to the conditions organizers seek to change. These factors are reflected in category 3) "structural factors". Finally, conditions or factors specific to the geographical and political context of so-called Canada, where the HUB is based, are reflected in category 4) "Canadian context". A brief summation of these categories follows.

Doing (Campaigns/Actions)

Actions, events, and protocols that organizers create or carry out, requiring specific skills and often undertaken as part of a particular campaign or overarching project, or in response to a specific event or injustice.

Being (Culture/Relating)

Forms of interaction, dialogue, communication, and relationality that organizers engage in, often contributing to a sense of community and forging a particular organizing culture.

Structural Factors

Political, social, economic, and environmental factors that impact the ability of organizers to organize and achieve their objectives.

Canadian Context

Conditions or factors specific to the geographical and political context of so-called Canada as well as resources and organizing infrastructure tailored to the Canadian context.

Doing (Campaigns/Actions)

Campaign development: The process of ideating, developing, and carrying out a campaign, including elements such as creating a theory of change, aligning on a strategy, and choosing effective tactics.

Description	Campaign development emerged as a major challenge and an area of interest across multiple groups. This was especially the case for groups that formed around a general interest or passion in "climate justice" broadly, rather than in response to a specific community need or targetted objective. For generalized "climate justice" groups, even the process of coming up with a campaign idea can prove challenging, as the scope of issues and topics related to "climate justice" is massive. Some groups with a campaign idea also struggle to move beyond the "research phase" without external support. Groups currently engaged in campaign work are also facing challenges, including effective coordination and communication in coalition work, evaluation of tactics, and development of a long-view of campaigning. Some groups are also looking for opportunities to network with campaigners working on similar projects and discuss strategy at a movement level.
Illustrative Quotes	"We're so used to doing the tactics without evaluating them and then people get burned out [...] We need to build capacity amongst organizers to name what they're experimenting with and what strategies they're trying at a deeper learning level [...] to understand how individual strategies are producing certain effects and to become more comfortable thinking about the transformative potential of certain actions."
HUB Resources	The First Cohort of "Groundswell", the HUB's Campaign Incubator, ran February 6th to March 19th 2024. It is a series of seven workshops designed to equip participants with the tools and instincts needed to design, deploy, and assess a campaign for maximum impact. The HUB intends to run future iterations of the incubator. <u>What is the right way to come up with a campaign strategy?</u> (HUB wiki article)

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Campaign development: The process of ideating, developing, and carrying out a campaign, including elements such as creating a theory of change, aligning on a strategy, and choosing effective tactics.

HUB Resources	Aligning on group direction: how to decide what you want and how you'll get there (HUB wiki article) Building coalitions (HUB wiki article)
Possible Future Directions	Some organizers expressed interest in a broader movement convening to share and exchange insights on strategy and campaigning, similar to Netroots or Power Shift . Of note, some organizers expressed a desire to network with organizations not directly working on climate, to begin to foster better reciprocal relationships across inter-connected causes. This is something funded support structures and other relevant organizations could consider hosting in the coming years.



Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Pinault



Hard organizing skills: Basic skills that are transferable across campaigns and may be useful to organizers across a wide variety of contexts, such as one-on-one conversations, house meetings, canvassing, meeting facilitation, and event planning.

Description	High turnover rates in many grassroots groups means that knowledge and skills are not always passed on to the next generation or cohort of organizers. While many groups do make concerted efforts to teach organizing skills to new members, either through formal training or through direct participation in organizing, there is still a need and desire for recurring opportunities to "skill up" in a way that is fun and accessible. This is especially the case for groups with young memberships.
Illustrative Quotes	"Skilling-up opportunities are great. If it's fun, people will want to come!" "There are lots of people who are excited about things, but not a lot of people who are trained in organizing skills, or who know how to develop strategy."
HUB Resources	Groups can contact the HUB for one-on-one support and coaching via this form . The HUB has begun partnering with local organizations to bring some of its trainings directly to organizers in their local context, and welcomes further collaborations of this nature. Facilitation 101 (HUB wiki article) Student organizing best practices (HUB wiki article) How to mobilize in rural communities / small cities (HUB wiki article)
Possible Future Directions	Funded support structures could consider partnering with more local organizations to offer training and workshops in organizing skills in their own communities, as well as expanding existing online offerings.

Media & communications: Knowledge, resources, and tips on developing a media and communications plan, including basic skills such as writing press releases, doing pitch calls, and developing a social media presence, and more advanced skills such as developing a cohesive and impactful public media story that propels campaigns forward.

Description	Amongst other "hard organizing skills", media and communications emerged as a top need, especially amongst youth and student groups who tend to be less experienced in these areas. Relatedly, some groups also expressed that they could use support in public speaking and speech writing more broadly. Media, communications, and public speaking are skills best learned by doing, meaning that the existence of guides on these topics is often insufficient on its own as a capacity building strategy. It can be challenging for youth especially to develop confidence in these skills without older or more experienced organizers guiding them or offering one-on-one support. Unfortunately, the pandemic disrupted or severed many informal networks and movement relationships, and organizers continue to feel the effects of this gap in the movement ecosystem.
Illustrative Quotes	"We have trainings there but because of a lack of an intergenerational component, which was so strong in the movement before [the pandemic], it's harder to give those trainings."
HUB Resources	The HUB has developed a media & communications 101 workshops for use during one-on-one coaching with groups. The HUB can also offer support with speech writing and public narrative to groups upon request. Groups can contact the HUB for one-on-one support and coaching via this form .
Possible Future Directions	As more grassroots groups begin to embark on new projects and campaigns requiring media and communications, funded support structures could consider partnering with media and communications experts (eg. videographers) to help grassroots groups develop more sophisticated media and communications strategies.

Security culture: Skills, roles, and best-practices for maintaining the safety, security, and well-being of organizers at actions, including skills in marshalling, de-escalation, and effective direct action planning.

Description	<p>Training in security culture is a perennial need especially amongst groups engaged in direct action, civil disobedience, and solidarity with other movements where state or police repression is of high risk. Beyond training in the basics of security culture (eg. marshals, police liaisons), some groups also expressed a need for more advanced training in de-escalation of counter-protestors. A related though less pressing need pertains to digital security protocols - namely, platforms and best-practices for maintaining digital security of organizing resources, planning and communication. Integrating a race, gender, sexuality, and disability analysis into security culture training is essential given the uneven impacts and risks associated with direct action and protest across varied identities. Finally, some groups identified a need for support in more strategic planning of direction action and escalation within a campaign, to ensure such actions are carried out in a way that builds power.</p>
Illustrative Quotes	<p>"Folks are looking for tips and resources for dealing with alt-right counter-protestors or people who show up to take pictures, follow activists home, and attempt to dox them."</p>
HUB Resources	<p>Organizing on different platforms: Pros and cons (HUB wiki article) Digital Security and Activism with Destiny Montague (HUB podcast episode)</p>
Possible Future Directions	<p>Funded support structures could consider partnering with relevant organizations and trainers to offer recurring training in security culture, and/or having a roster of trusted expert practitioners on hand to support grassroots groups as needs arise.</p>



A photograph showing several people in a forest setting, focused on planting small trees. In the foreground, a person wearing a yellow hoodie and a face mask is crouching, while another person in a dark green long-sleeved shirt and a black headscarf stands behind them, also engaged in planting. They are surrounded by other individuals, some blurred in the background. The scene is lush and green.

"We need support setting up a team with a clear purpose, structure, and an orientation towards meeting people's needs."

Doing (Campaigns/Actions) + Being (Culture/Relating)

Recruitment & retention + base building: Recruiting, onboarding, engaging, and retaining new members into an organization and/or campaign role or project while building a base of supporters beyond already-committed activists.

Description	Recruitment and retention remains a challenge for climate justice groups across Canada, as well as an exciting avenue for many groups rebuilding after the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic. Closely tied to campaign development, some organizers are looking for advice on how to better move people up "clear ladders of engagement", as well as methods for better harnessing the skills and expertise of new members towards empowered leadership on a campaign or organizing project. Relatedly, some organizers are also seeking ways to expand and diversify their "base" geographically, demographically, and in terms of sheer numbers outside a committed core. Finally, some organizers noted that the pandemic context continues to pose challenges: engagement at in-person events is not what it used to be pre-pandemic, and there remains a greater need to attend to rest, burnout, and overall health.
Illustrative Quotes	"We are trying to grow sustainably and also expand our 'volunteer' base of people who support particular projects/actions but aren't core organizers."
HUB Resources	The HUB runs a recurring two-part workshop on recruiting and retaining members in grassroots groups, which covers best practices linked to both campaign development and organizing culture. Diagnosing low group capacity (HUB wiki article) Mobilizing and activating new members: recruitment and retention 101 (HUB wiki article)
Possible Future Directions	The movement consulting institute Power Labs runs a recurring course for seasoned organizers and coaches that covers the interdependent topics of motivation and well-being, recruitment, leadership, participation, team structure, and psychological safety, informed by evidence-based social science research. Funded support structures could consider incorporating evidence-based strategies from their course into future coaching and offerings.

Structure optimization: Developing an equitable and effective organizational structure that fosters membership development and supports organizational purpose.

Description	Aligning on group structure continues to be a challenge for grassroots groups. Some student organizers expressed that activist views and critiques of power within broader society can sometimes manifest as a fear or critique of leadership and structure in general. Others noted that inefficient or unclear structure can lead to poor distributions of labour within grassroots groups. Conversations about group structure are also often intermingled with questions about group purpose, mission, values, and needs, and organizers continue to need support in these interdependent areas. Finally, some organizers noted the necessity of both structure and strategy, and challenges that can emerge when one falls by the wayside.
Illustrative Quotes	"We're very much reliant on 1-2 people at times, that's one of the challenges of structure. It could also be made more efficient, key people for key things not everyone [doing] everything." "We need support setting up a team with a clear purpose, structure, and an orientation towards meeting people's needs."
HUB Resources	The HUB runs a recurring training on group structure, which includes practices for creating "leaderful" rather than "leaderless" groups. Since the time of interviews, the HUB has also begun supporting groups through restructuring processes through one-on-one coaching. Groups can contact the HUB for one-on-one support and coaching via this form . The tyranny of structurelessness (HUB wiki article) Non-hierarchical (horizontal) decision-making (HUB wiki article)
Additional Resources	Sociocracy for All offers a wide variety of tools and resources on sociocracy, a theory of governance that seeks to create psychological safety and productive organizations through the use of consent decision-making and shared power.

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Structure optimization: Developing an equitable and effective organizational structure that fosters membership development and supports organizational purpose.

Possible Future Directions

In grassroots contexts especially, group structures often change to adapt to changing circumstances. As more grassroots and non-profit organizations continue to rebuild after the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is possible that new structural needs may arise.



"How are the leaders leading? It sets the stage for how the people being led act [...] We need to be reflecting on leadership, what the responsibilities are, how challenging that role is [...] white supremacy thinks we are individuals and not collectives [...] Someone who ends up as a leader on the frontlines on something new might just be angry enough that they are so done, don't have the skills to be otherwise."

**STRONGER
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Being (Culture/Relating)

Community care & organizing culture: Practices and conditions for fostering a healthy, grounded, and empowering organizing culture and a broader sense of community care.

Description

Community care and organizing culture emerged as one of the most prominent topics in interviews, and was also the area where there was the greatest diversity in responses. There was a fairly even mix between groups that identified this as a strength and those that identified it as a challenge in their group, and the impacts of the pandemic on community care and organizing culture emerged as a common theme across responses. In general, the groups that identified community care and organizing culture as a current strength of their group took time to attend to care and cultural practices and infrastructure during the pandemic. These groups also tended to be less focused on membership growth and campaign development and more focused on building a supportive community, at least during the height of the pandemic. To be clear, these groups were not uninterested in growing their membership or starting new campaigns, but they tended to view and prioritize care and culture as a necessary foundation and pre-condition for sustainable growth and campaigning.

Social distancing and the forced-scaling back of protest allowed many groups to deepen relationships and support structures internally, and to gain a deeper understanding of members' needs and how to best meet them collectively. Still, the pandemic also saw some groups struggle with long-time members moving to other parts of the country, creating gaps in intergenerational knowledge sharing. Some groups that developed strong bonds of care internally during the pandemic are also now grappling with how to effectively integrate new members into their groups. The networks of care that emerged over the past four years were uniquely forged during a context of intense and unprecedented global health crisis, and some organizers noted that it can be challenging to replicate that level of trust, comfort, ease, and understanding with newly recruited members.

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Community care & organizing culture: Practices and conditions for fostering a healthy, grounded, and empowering organizing culture and a broader sense of community care.

Description

Groups that identified care and culture as a current challenge spoke to perennial concerns such as burnout, capacity building, and interpersonal and power dynamics within organizing groups. Related to conflict (discussed below), some organizers noted difficulties responding to individuals within their groups who can be dismissive or domineering and the impacts this can have on overall group culture; this is especially challenging to navigate when such behaviours intersect with broader systems of oppression such as sexism, misogyny, ableism, and racism.

Related to both campaign development and retention (discussed above), some organizers expressed challenges with finding the right balance between perseverance and rest when engaged in a long-term campaign that has seen few wins, and articulated the importance of celebrating small milestones and showing appreciation for members. Another organizer noted that the culture of some climate activist groups encourages (consciously or not) the development of a curated “activist self” or persona separate from one’s full sense of self. This can create challenges for both campaign development and community building, as organizers miss out on learning about the relationships, networks, and interests of fellow organizers outside of activism, all of which could be leveraged towards building collective power and deepening trust.

Finally, some organizers expressed a desire for more opportunities to discuss heavy topics such as climate grief, burnout, and safety during the pandemic with fellow organizers. This was especially the case for organizers in remote areas and those who are immunocompromised, who faced additional barriers to building community in the climate justice movement throughout the pandemic.

Continued on the following page.

Community care & organizing culture: Practices and conditions for fostering a healthy, grounded, and empowering organizing culture and a broader sense of community care.

Illustrative Quotes	<p>"It's mostly femme of colour leading, it's a place for people to come and talk about what we're feeling, how we feel we can help the movement or be involved...We have a lower membership right now but the culture is really great, a lot of bonding, we do invest a lot in community culture. A key tenet of climate justice is practicing sustainable organizing within ourselves."</p> <p>"We're trying to grow now but we are really good friends; it's hard for people to get in, we have close bonds from the pandemic but it can be hard for new folks to jump in and know each others' strengths and weaknesses."</p> <p>"Maybe not seeing many gains is also part of it too? Not seeing much success... some [affinity groups] had actions for 10 months, it fizzles out then saying 'we're done with that phase, moving on to something else', it may feel demoralizing [...] maybe we need to take stock and celebrate what we've done so far, communicate to folks, show appreciation for ourselves and everyone else."</p>
HUB Resources	<p>The HUB runs a recurring two-part workshop entitled "Care 101", which provides participants with tools and best practices to address care needs and centres teachings from disability justice organizers and practitioners. Other previous workshops on related subjects include: Finding Your Role in Social Movements, Healing Justice: Intersectional Pathways to Community Care, Anti-Oppression 101, and a multi-part workshop with Gabrielle Gelderman on Climate Grief.</p> <p>Following needs raised during our interviews, the HUB ran a new Care Learning Circle entitled "Self & Collective Care: A Learning Circle on Holistic Approaches to Sustaining Activism" in December of 2023. This event brought together organizers who participated in needs assessment interviews and the broader HUB network to share and exchange best practices and challenges. Topline notes from this event are reflected in this HUB wiki page.</p>

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Community care & organizing culture: Practices and conditions for fostering a healthy, grounded, and empowering organizing culture and a broader sense of community care.

HUB Resources	<p>Building cultures of care (HUB wiki article)</p> <p>Activist mental health and managing burnout (HUB wiki article)</p> <p>Making your activism accessible (HUB wiki article)</p>
Additional Resources	<p>Organizational Culture Toolkit (see also the accompanying toolkits: Organizational Structure and Operations Toolkit and Organizational Strategy Toolkit)</p>
Possible Future Directions	<p>Funded support structures could consider running more learning circles on topics related to community care and organizing culture, so that organizers can learn directly from each other. Organizers have expressed during HUB coaching calls that the opportunity to share challenges pertaining to care and culture with a fellow organizer on the HUB team can be beneficial for articulating to themselves more precisely what it is they are going through, and coming up with possible paths forward. Organizations of all kinds can encourage leadership teams to incorporate coaching in their practice, allowing organizers to talk through some of the more subjective and personal aspects of climate justice organizing.</p>



Photo courtesy of Jacqueline Lee-Tam

Conflict transformation: Processes, skills, and best practices for navigating organizational and interpersonal conflicts in generative ways.

Description	<p>Several groups identified a need for continued support in how to navigate conflict in generative ways. Some organizers noted that a culture of conflict avoidance (both within organisations and in broader society) often leads to heightened conflict and sometimes detrimental outcomes both for individuals within an organization and the ability of the organization as a whole to function effectively. This insight sheds light on the relationships between organizing culture and conflict, and the importance of attending to both together.</p> <p>Navigating conflicts can be challenging because they can often involve a combination of many factors including political disagreement, interpersonal tensions, power dynamics, cultural values, trauma, and the influence of broader systems of oppression on in-group dynamics. Some organizers noted the importance of attending to how leadership is carried out, as this can have an outsized impact on the culture of an organization, the ability of organizers to avoid preventable conflicts, and their ability to navigate conflicts that do emerge in a generative way. Finally, the overlapping crises organizers are responding to also place stress on them as people, which can sometimes pose barriers to approaching conflict in generative ways.</p>
Illustrative Quotes	<p>"How are the leaders leading? It sets the stage for how the people being led act [...] We need to be reflecting on leadership, what the responsibilities are, how challenging that role is [...] white supremacy thinks we are individuals and not collectives [...] Someone who ends up as a leader on the frontlines on something new might just be angry enough that they are so done, don't have the skills to be otherwise."</p>
HUB Resources	<p>The HUB has previously run a two-part workshop on navigating conflict and is currently updating both workshops for 2024. These workshops are geared towards normalizing discussion of conflict in movement spaces, and providing participants with the skills and tools necessary to navigate conflict within their own communities and groups in a generative way.</p> <p>Navigating in-group conflicts (HUB wiki article)</p> <p>Notes on accountability from Beyond Survival: Strategies and Stories from the Transformative Justice Movement (HUB wiki article)</p>

Continued on the following page.

Conflict transformation: Processes, skills, and best practices for navigating organizational and interpersonal conflicts in generative ways.

Additional Resources	<p><u>Working with Conflict in Our Groups: A Guide for Grassroots Activists</u></p> <p><u>In It Together: A Framework for Conflict Transformation in Movement-Building Groups</u></p> <p><u>Love Notes to Our Social Justice Leaders: A Workbook to Support Your Reflective Leadership Practice</u></p>
Possible Future Directions	<p>Organizations could consider cultivating relationships with trusted movement elders in their communities, who may be called upon to assist groups in moving through conflict as the need arises. If moving forward with such an approach, movement elders should be called upon to assist groups to transform conflict themselves, not serving as a venue for outsourcing conflict management to external parties. This follows from advice from conflict consultation calls carried out by HUB team members in the fall and winter of 2023, which emphasized the importance of building strong conflict navigation skills within groups and communities.</p>





"There's a lot of people not talking to each other, we need to find ways to get together."

Space for convening: Accessible physical space for organizers to convene, gather, learn, share knowledge, and work together.

Description	A lack of access to public space for convening poses significant barriers to building relationships, an essential component of organizing. While organizers often make use of people's homes and online platforms for meetings, bringing together moderate to large groups of people necessitates public, accessible, physical space. Beyond space for meetings, organizers are also looking for space to gather in social settings, make art, share knowledge, run skills-trainings, participate in cultural ceremonies, and host events. Some organizers noted that there is often significant overlap in the work of different social and climate justice organizations within the same vicinity, and having more access to public spaces for convening would make networking, collaborating, and avoiding unnecessary duplications of work easier. Others noted that access to multi-purpose space (i.e. not only for meetings) could help foster greater dialogue and community-building at an inter-organization level.
Illustrative Quotes	"There's a lot of people not talking to each other, we need to find ways to get together."
HUB Resources	The HUB is currently working with The Youth Harbour to support the creation of a lending library for activist materials in Montreal.
Additional Resources	The Youth Harbour currently has Climate Sharespaces in Vancouver and Toronto.
Possible Future Directions	There is a need for funding bodies to step up and help address the lack of physical space required for organizers to continue and grow their work. Pending available funding, there is potential for movement support structures to explore further collaborations similar to the Youth Harbour collaboration in other parts of Canada.

Multi-racial organizing: Practices, skills, and conditions for working across difference, geared towards fostering a multi-racial movement where historically marginalized groups and people feel empowered to lead and enact change.

Description

There is broad acknowledgement across groups who participated in interviews that the climate movement is still overwhelmingly white and continues to centre the concerns and values of dominant white society. All participants that raised this concern identified it as something that must change for the movement to be successful.

Some organizers identified the 2019 global climate strikes as an important moment when fissures in political orientations and approaches to racial and climate justice became more clear, as multiple organizations were working together, sometimes for the first time, and attempting to craft shared demands and strategies. Amidst this landscape, concerns emerged over the need to centre Indigenous land defenders and BIPOC communities at the frontlines of the climate crisis, and move away from individualistic responses to climate change. Post-2019, several groups noted the continued need for resources and training on anti-oppression, and strategies for fostering inclusive and accessible organizing spaces.

Several organizers noted the importance of decolonization and "land back" in climate justice, and expressed that climate justice organizations could be doing more to concretely support and actualize these efforts. Some settler-led groups working in solidarity with Indigenous land defenders expressed interest in deeper learning on reconciliation. Some organizers suggested that more funding and fundraising for BIPOC-led organizing would be beneficial.

Finally, some participants commented on the relationship between geography, race, class, and culture in efforts to organize multi-racial groups for climate justice. For instance, one youth organizer noted that student organizing at their university is dominated by white students who live on campus, have ample free time for organizing, and tend to participate in multiple student groups at once. The resulting student organizing culture does not resonate broadly with BIPOC students living off campus, who come from different cultural backgrounds and have less time for organizing due to their long commute and the need to [...]

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Multi-racial organizing: Practices, skills, and conditions for working across difference, geared towards fostering a multi-racial movement where historically marginalized groups and people feel empowered to lead and enact change.

Description	work to support their studies. Moreover, student organizing on campus is largely separated from community organizing in the surrounding area.
Illustrative Quotes	"A lot of it [fissures during the climate strikes] has been centred on white [environmentalism], not putting Indigenous land defenders and BIPOC at the frontline; centred on individualistic rhetoric, doomist rhetoric."
HUB Resources	The HUB runs a recurring training on Anti-Oppression 101, which introduces participants to the fundamentals of anti-oppression and intersectionality while situating environmentalism within a broader history of settler-colonialism. Anti-Oppression (HUB wiki article)
Possible Future Directions	As one participant noted, funded support structures such as the HUB are well positioned to work with organizations whose work forwards or intersects with climate justice, but who may not necessarily frame themselves primarily in terms of climate change or climate justice. Opportunities to uplift and support marginalized communities and to translate knowledge across social movement spaces could emerge from such an approach.

"We're all going through many things in life, we're not able to shoot out actions every moment; The 'youth are going to save us' Greta Thunberg rhetoric - it didn't get maintained [after the pandemic], so I think there's been a bit of curiosity of where it went... folks our age and younger are working jobs, supporting families, it's also connected to the climate crisis, labour, housing etc [...] Dialogue and community building is the way to combat that."



100 BAGS
SET 101

Structural Factors

Funding: Reliable, sustainable, and non-restrictive sources of funding for grassroots organizing.

Description	Grassroots groups are seeking diverse funding streams that do not place restrictions on their ability to take strong political stances. Possible uses of funding noted by organizers included: funding to support a specific project or campaign, funding for travel to support solidarity or protest efforts in other areas, funding to offer stipends to organizers, funding to secure space for organizing, and funding to create new localized trainer or organizing support positions in communities.
Illustrative Quotes	"We are also looking for diverse funding streams to support our goal of starting an organizing space."
HUB Resources	The HUB works with grassroots groups to find funding opportunities and coach organizers through fundraising activities. Currently, a HUB team member in Quebec works closely with grassroots groups in the province, supporting specific projects through trainings on a case-by-case basis.
Additional Resources	<p>The Youth Harbour provides funds for youth-led projects that aim to reduce the impacts of the climate crisis.</p> <p>The New Economy Coalition, based in the United States, uses Resourcing Agreements to help organizations make decisions on accessing and accepting funding. The intent of these agreements is to provide a framework for how to organize internally to interact with funders. This includes both asking funders to take particular actions and respect positions, and agreeing internally on how to relate to movement resourcing more generally.</p>
Possible Future Directions	Alongside remote training opportunities, funded support structures could consider developing localized support positions and in-person trainings to support grassroots groups in different parts of the country.

Polycrisis: Multiplicity of overlapping social, economic, political, and environmental crises which create barriers to organizing in terms of time, energy, motivation, focus, and morale.

We are living through tumultuous, deeply unjust, and overlapping social, economic, political, and environmental crises, and this is understandably taking a toll on climate justice organizers. Several organizers noted that this multiplicity of crises can make following through on longer-term organizing projects challenging when there are so many causes and injustices requiring immediate attention. It is not uncommon for committed organizers to be involved in multiple grassroots efforts at once, which can be beneficial for building relationships and solidarity, but also challenging when the capacity of skilled organizers' is split. Some groups noted that ongoing struggles of unaffordability and (un)employment also make it difficult to find time and energy for organizing. Some respondents also speculated that for some segments of the population, climate change may still appear as a more distant threat amidst a confluence of more immediately glaring struggles for survival and efforts to meet basic needs.

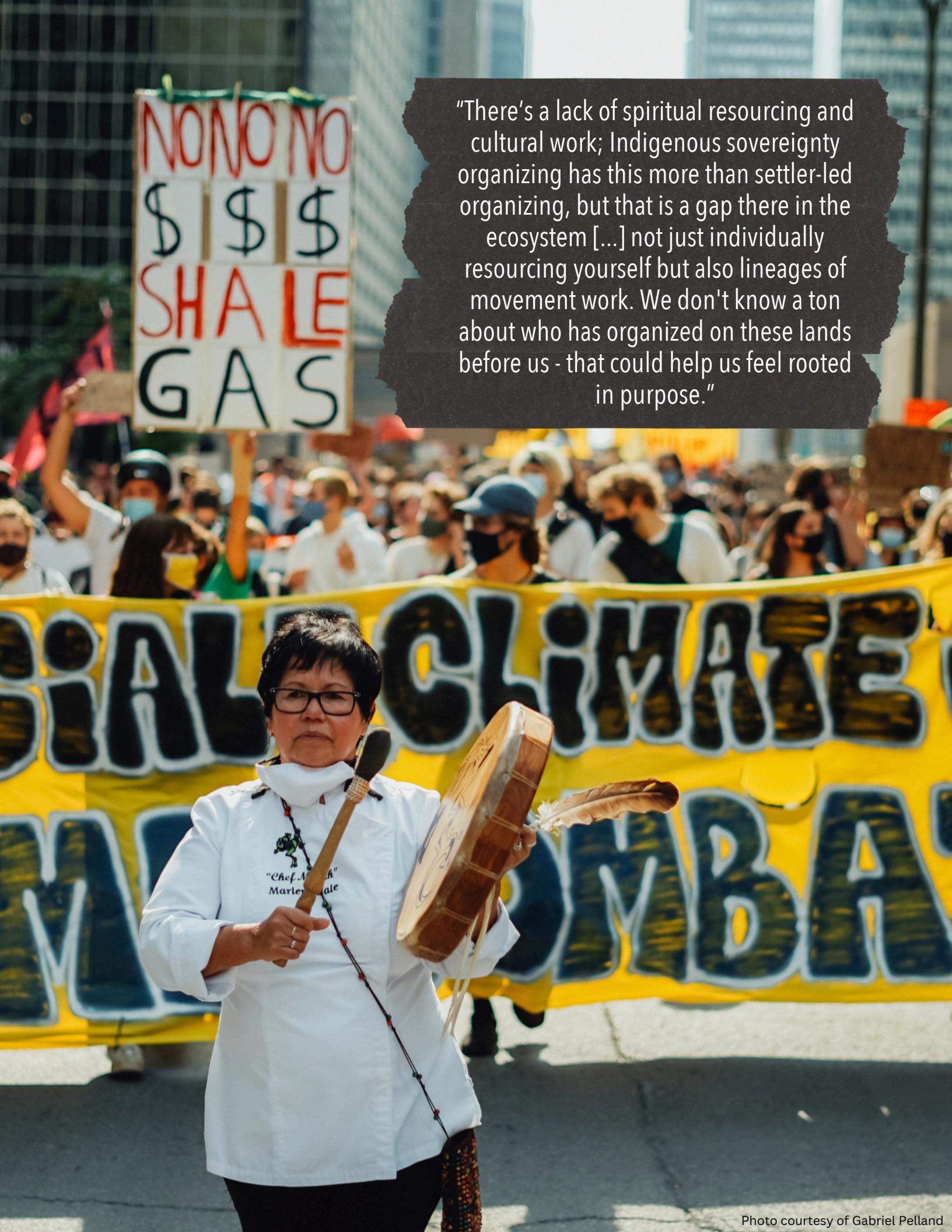
Description

Organizers expressed conflicting feelings around the sense of urgency and the rhetoric of "emergency" that can often accompany climate justice efforts. Some organizers described the rhetoric of a climate emergency as a colonial framing of the problem, [echoing scholarly critiques](#) that suggest declarations of a climate emergency work to erase the colonial roots of climate change and narrowly situate environmental catastrophe as a problem of the present (and future). Moreover, some organizers suggest that while an emergency framing is intended to spur action, it can lead to a prioritization of outcomes over and above relationships, thereby diminishing the work of sustainable relationship building that makes climate justice action possible. Similarly, organizers also suggested that an acute focus on urgency may cause leaders to exploit people's fears and anxieties and steamroll over their needs. Finally, some organizers observed that in many parts of Canada, there is a certain timidness even amongst organizers to truly step into one's power and enact change, compounded by a narrowing of what is considered possible in oil-dependent areas.

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Polycrisis: Multiplicity of overlapping social, economic, political, and environmental crises which create barriers to organizing in terms of time, energy, motivation, focus, and morale.

Illustrative Quotes	<p>"We're all going through many things in life, we're not able to shoot out actions every moment; The 'youth are going to save us' Greta Thunberg rhetoric - it didn't get maintained [after the pandemic], so I think there's been a bit of curiosity of where it went... folks our age and younger are working jobs, supporting families, it's also connected to the climate crisis, labour, housing etc [...] Dialogue and community building is the way to combat that."</p> <p>"People's attentions are divided, there are a lot of issues out there and it can feel overwhelming"</p> <p>"A problem we're facing in Canada and especially Alberta is that a lot of organizers are timid to step into power [...] it's super contained on what is possible in this super conservative theocracy of oil, no one feels they can step outside of a small boundary."</p>
HUB Resources	<p><u>Activist mental health and managing burnout</u> (HUB wiki article)</p>
Possible Future Directions	<p>The insights shared by respondents point to interdependent needs in community care and culture, hard organizing skills, and campaign development. They also highlight the importance of attending to the affective and emotional experience of organizing for climate justice amidst polycrisis. While some climate justice organizers are beginning to articulate climate justice as a struggle interwoven with other social, economic, and political struggles, this has not at present translated into campaigns and movement messaging that successfully link these struggles together in a way that is easily understandable, compelling, and inspiring to a broad base of people. These insights should inform future programming from funded support structures across multiple areas.</p>

A photograph of a woman with short dark hair and glasses, wearing a white button-down shirt with a small logo on the chest, standing in front of a large yellow banner. She is holding a traditional wooden drum and a feather. In the background, a crowd of people is visible, some wearing face masks. A protest sign is held up behind her, reading "NO NO NO \$ \$\$ SHALE GAS".

"There's a lack of spiritual resourcing and cultural work; Indigenous sovereignty organizing has this more than settler-led organizing, but that is a gap there in the ecosystem [...] not just individually resourcing yourself but also lineages of movement work. We don't know a ton about who has organized on these lands before us - that could help us feel rooted in purpose."

Canadian Context

Canada-specific resources: Organizing resources, knowledge, and frameworks that are tailored to the Canadian context and speak to its political, geographical, and economic conditions and systems of governance.

Description	Several organizers noted that there are limited resources on organizing and on climate justice that are tailored to the Canadian context. Thus, organizers in Canada often struggle to translate reports, training manuals, and other resources from the United States and Europe to fit their own context. Areas where organizers are looking for more support specific to Canada include: understanding systems of political governance (both settler and Indigenous) and strategic points of intervention, up-to-date resources mapping corporate power and the overlaps between the fossil fuel industry, financial system, and government, manuals on organizing in rural or remote areas, educational resources on land politics, workshops articulating visions of climate justice in Canadian municipalities, and historical accounts and stories of organizing across so-called Canada. Notably, organizers are not only seeking Canada-specific resources for pragmatic or instrumental reasons (although these are important), but also to foster a greater sense of place-making and purpose on the lands sometimes known as Canada, as noted in the quote below.
Illustrative Quotes	"There's a lack of spiritual resourcing and cultural work; Indigenous sovereignty organizing has this more than settler-led organizing, but that is a gap there in the ecosystem [...] not just individually resourcing yourself but also lineages of movement work. We don't know a ton about who has organized on these lands before us - that could help us feel rooted in purpose."
HUB Resources	The HUB, in partnership with the Climate Reality Project Canada, recently released a " Rural and Remote Communities Climate Organizing Toolkit " geared towards the unique challenges of organizing in such contexts in Canada. A limited series HUB podcast hosted on the Harbinger Network, " Climate Organizing Shorts ", primarily centres stories from activists and organizers based across so-called Canada in the climate justice movement.

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Canada-specific resources: Organizing resources, knowledge, and frameworks that are tailored to the Canadian context and speak to its political, geographical, and economic conditions and systems of governance.

Additional Resources	<u>The End of This World: Climate Justice in So-Called Canada</u>
Possible Future Directions	There is room for funded support structures in the Canadian non-profit sector and in academia to help fill some of the identified gaps in knowledge and resources, geared towards better supporting grassroots climate justice organizing.





Conclusion

Doing/Being, Acting/Relating, Campaigns/Culture, Conflict/Care...these are the themes that recur throughout the HUB's interviews. As participants' comments make clear, these topics need not always be understood as binaries. Indeed, we proposed at the outset of this report that the harmonious interweaving of "Doing" and "Being" is at the very heart of what it means to organize - acting collectively, building relationships, and bringing about changes together that could never be achieved alone. Organizers will not always get the balance right, and no two situations are exactly alike, but we hope those reading this report will take some comfort in knowing that they are far from alone in walking this path towards climate justice.

Considerations for Funders, Support Structures, and Movement Partners

Findings from this study are informing existing and future programming at the Climate Justice Organizing HUB. The dynamic and evolving nature of both grassroots organizing and the worsening climate crisis necessitates that funded support structures remain agile and creative, while also expanding capacity and reach to meet recurring and newly emergent needs. Pending available funding, there is potential for multiple movement partners to collaborate in expanding support for the grassroots, including in the areas summarized below.

Localized Support

- In-person trainings and workshops, and localized support positions within communities (e.g. media, security, action planning, canvassing, house meetings)
- Rosters of expert practitioners and movement elders within communities (e.g. videography, conflict support)
- Learning circles for peer-to-peer support & discussion
- Coaching incorporated into organizational practice

Movement-Wide Support

- Movement convenings for sharing and exchanging insights on strategy and campaigning, both within and beyond the “climate” space
- Knowledge translation and relationship building across social movement spaces, especially at the intersections of climate justice and other causes
- Accessible, current, and contextual information to support climate justice organizing in Canada

Appendix

Interview Questions

1. What is the current membership of your group (core members + others)? How would you describe your group's overall capacity?
2. What current projects is your group engaged in?
3. What is working well in your group (structure, strategy, culture, etc)?
4. What are the main challenges facing your group?
5. What kind of outside support do you think would be helpful for your group? (in terms of workshops, resources, coaching, etc)
6. What topics/subjects for future learning circles/workshops would be most helpful for you/your group?
7. What do you see as the main problems facing the climate justice movement in Canada today? From your vantage point, do you see any possible solutions?

