



2023

EMBARK SUSTAINABILITY'S

Annual General Report

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GET
INVOLVED

LET'S GET
STARTED!

Credits

Content by Stephanie Elder, Talia Ferris, Jamie Hill, and Nelly Leo
Design by Jamie Hill

Embark Sustainability's work takes place across the unceded homelands of the xʷməθkʷəʔəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh úxwumixw (Squamish), səliilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh), kʷikʷəłwəm (Kwikwetlem), qíćəy (Katzie), Qayqayt, Kwantlen, Semiahmoo, and Tsawwassen Nations.

Embark Sustainability Society

is an independent, student centred not-for-profit based out of Simon Fraser University that catalyzes student sustainability (un)learning journeys for the next generation of leaders.

OUR VISION

A just, equitable, and sustainable future for all students.

OUR MISSION

To create space for transformation by catalyzing student sustainability journeys that centre justice, equity, decolonization, diversity and inclusion. We do this by engaging SFU students in programs, events, and other initiatives that spark dialogue and cultivate action to address systemic challenge within our climate and food systems.

OUR MEMBERS

Embark Sustainability members include all students enrolled in an SFU undergraduate or graduate degree program. SFU community members and Embark Sustainability supporters can become associate members.

Theory of Change

2021-2024



Climate Equity

Within our Climate Equity focus areas, we work to convene students and community members to bridge climate science and social justice through knowledge mobilization and institutional advocacy.

Our approach to sustainability advocacy can be broken down into two focus areas: Food Justice and Climate Equity.

Food Justice

As a focus area, Food Justice creates dialogue around food systems. Our work aims to uncover students' personal and cultural connections to food systems by promoting equitable and sustainable food production, distribution, and access.

Our History

From humble beginnings, Embark Sustainability has grown to represent a diverse membership base of more than 35,000 members. As we look back at what we've achieved, we are also excited to move forward with you in the mindful transformation of our organization. We hope to expand our role in a way that reflects your desires, demands, and dreams for a just, equitable, and sustainable future.

2003

Sustainable Campus Coalition

Three undergraduate students establish the Sustainable Campus Coalition (SCC) with a mission to form an SFU Sustainability Advisory Committee that would ensure sustainability is at the heart of decision-making at the university.

2012-15

Rapid Growth

SSFU undergoes rapid growth including but not limited to creating the Burnaby Learning Garden, launching new student grants, and regularly offering events and programming to its membership.

2015

Embark Sustainability Society Rebrand

SSFU rebrands and changes its name to Embark Sustainability, focusing on the society's role in empowering students to lead sustainable change at SFU and in its community.

2006

Sustainable Advisory Committee

SCC launches a Sustainability Assessment Package and forms the foundation for discussion regarding the creation of an SFU Sustainability Advisory Committee.

2009

Registered Non-profit

SSFU registers as a non-profit organization to increase accountability and capacity to support student sustainability initiatives.

2017-21

Organizational Growth

Embark Sustainability grows, increasing staff and student coordinator roles, building new Learning Gardens at SFU's Surrey campus, increasing the amount of event and program offerings while adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic and deepening its commitment to justice, equity, decolonization, diversity, and inclusion, culminating in its 2021-2024 Theory of Change.

2023

Big Celebrations

Embark Sustainability celebrates 20 years as a student-centred society that catalyzes student sustainability (un)learning journeys for the next generation of leaders. While, Embark Sustainability's Burnaby Learning Garden marks its remarkable 10th anniversary since opening its learning landscape in 2013.

Meet the Team



Board of Directors

Stephanie Elder

Co-Chair

Anne Tran

Secretary

Talia Ferris

Co-Chair

Hailey Tran

Treasurer



Staff

Nelly Leo

Executive Director

Zaena Tesfa

Programs Manager

Jamie Hill

Community
Development Manager

Pablo Vimos

Gardens Manager

Lisa Salomonsson

Design & Communications Manager

Coordinators

Alice Pinheiro

Climate Equity
Coordinator

Alyna De Guzman

Food Justice
Coordinator

Mahroo Shabaz

Programs
Coordinator





Volunteers

BLOG WRITERS

Sepehr Borji
Meghan Danyluk
Simran Gill
Paula Osborne Lopez

BURNABY LEARNING GARDEN COHORTS

Narges Bastan
Georgia Bellamy
Spencer Chen
Sunwoo Choi
Beth Clark
Brooke Conley
Sebastian Coxell
Megan Dalla Zanna
Marena Dewar
Diana Drozdik
Maria Fernandez
Marie Haddad
Keianna James
Kira Johnson
Zobia Khalid
Freddie Kim
Irina Lipnitskaya
Lily Nordgren
Brittany Savoie
Ella Tani
Mileny Vemon
Shruti Wani
Karin Yamakiri
Tracy Zhang
Aixin Zheng
Lei Zhou

FOOD JUSTICE FACILITATORS

Jordyn Carss
Sude Guvendik
Marie Haddad
Amos Kang
Farah Messan
Amy Sang
Hana Watanabe
Shruti Wani
Danielle Weisz

FOOD RESCUE DISTRIBUTORS

Jane Chen
Kai Clark
Mitchell Han
Anas Hasan
Valentijn Helmus
Constantin Kenneth Lee
Alysha Mah
Kartik Samtani
Brittany Savoie
Hailey Tran
Rachael Quak

CLIMATE EQUITY FACILITATORS

Nehal Dhadral
Heidi Kwok
Benjamin Lanji
Jessica Moh
Amy Sang
Polina Shuba
Andrea Tovilla Rivera
Anne Tran





A Letter from

This year has been one of new avenues as the two of us co-chair the Board of Directors, which is a first for Embark. Sharing the workload of Chair has been a positive experience to allow both of us to share our strengths, manage our capacities, and explore the benefits of a co-leadership model. As a small team, the Board has supported the amazing work of our staff and volunteers as they continue with partnerships, projects, and initiatives that bring Embark into the next year. Being in community has helped support the resilience of those at Embark who are doing hard work of learning and engaging others with sustainability, so that everyone can find how sustainability resonates within.

As we look beyond ourselves, land sovereignty is at the forefront of our minds as we bear witness to the ongoing genocide in Palestine and watching those near and abroad fight for justice renews our vigour for Embark's work close to this place many of us settlers call home.

Our strength grows as we grow in number; more volunteers and

“ Being in community has helped support the resilience of those at Embark who are doing hard work of learning and engaging others with sustainability, so that everyone can find how sustainability resonates within.





our Co-Chairs

participants are continuing to stay connected with Embark in a variety of ways. We truly believe one of the best parts of Embark is that the opportunities to be engaged with the organization are plentiful and come in a variety of shapes and sizes. As your life changes throughout your journey with us, you can adapt how you participate based on your capacity.

“ **As your life changes throughout your journey with us, you can adapt how you participate based on your capacity.** ”

Thank you for believing in Embark's mission, and to our community, thank you for continually and authentically showing up for one another and for Embark as a whole. The future gets a little bit brighter with each volunteer who shows up to their shift at Food Rescue, each participant who shares in a Community Kitchen event, each member who steps up to serve on the Board, and those who connect with the earth in our Learning Gardens. ♦

Yours in Solidarity,

*Stephanie Elder &
Talia Ferris*

Board Co-Chairs





A Letter from our

As I sit down to reflect on 2023 with a cup of lemongrass tea from our Summer 2022 harvest, I can't help but be reminded of Adrienne Maree Brown's teachings in her book *Emergent Strategies*, urging us to 'move at the speed of trust.'

Two years ago, Embark Sustainability made intentional moves towards a recentering of self – who are we, what do we have to offer, why do we do the work we do, and how do we best show up for our members and community in a literally and figuratively burning world. At the heart of this reflection was our commitment to centering people first, which may seem counterintuitive for a 'sustainability' focused organization. We understand that any version of sustainability devoid of justice and equity is a false solution, and we delved deep into this belief to guide all aspects of our work.

In reframing what impact looks and feels like, we prioritize carving space for community to blossom and nurturing a sense of belonging for those who come through our doors. The year 2023 has been a year of abundance in the kinds of programming we've been able to implement, the partnerships we've built and grown, as well as the level of sustained engagement we're seeing at the organization. I see this as our year of harvest, where our small experiments have finally given us clarity on where we can and should go from here as an organization.

As we savor the fruits (and vegetables and legumes) of our efforts this harvest, we can take comfort in knowing that there is more bounty to come because we have nurtured our work with intention and reciprocity, much like how we tend to our Learning Gardens at Embark.





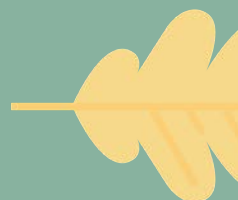
Executive Director

Celebrating the 10-year anniversary of the Learning Gardens, it would be remiss not to acknowledge a few of its teachings that have infused into how we function as an organization: there is a season for everything, hard work and plans don't always unfold as expected, but there is beauty in the unexpected, nourishment is crucial, many hands make light work, and lean into abundance as we make room to share more.

Just as our gardens act as a small green haven in the midst of a bustling campus, we hope to continue being a space of refuge for when the world feels a little too much to bear. ♦

Nelly Leo

Executive Director



“ Just as our gardens act as a small green haven in the midst of a bustling campus, we hope to continue being a space of refuge for when the world feels a little too much to bear.



This Year's Highlights

Cultivating Connectivity

In 2023, we had the unique pleasure of seeing our members invest their time in each other and in this community. The interweaving was slow and steady, yet markedly perceivable, with each offering creating closer knits and widening our net. It lived in the way past Food Rescue distributors maintained their friendships; in the time more than half the attendees of one event came to the next; in the excitement of an event regular asking if they could host the next one.

Most of all, this connectivity shined in the moments when members lingered well beyond closing remarks, laughing and mingling until we had to clear the venue. Our community has been so generous with their time and care, and we have been so grateful to bask in their collective presence.

Our **Community Kitchens**, a collaborative effort with the SFSS Womens' Centre, were a way for members to connect with culture, heritage, justice, and one another over shared meals. In March we explored **Comfort Foods Across Motherlands**, bonding over bean stew, fried



plantains, and other West African dishes. In April we were joined by FNMISA for **Food is Medicine**, where we enjoyed the Métis staple bullets and bangs, and over the summer we savoured dal, korma and other delights with the Bangladesh Student's Alliance for **Celebrating Our Heritage**.

We also made space for newcomers to find a home at Embark Sustainability. In September we celebrated fresh beginnings with the Community Kitchen **Trifecta Fiesta**, welcoming Ethiopian New Year, our new Programs Manager Zaena, and the start of the fall semester. At **Catalyst Cafe** laughter spilled into the hallway as first-time attendees and regulars alike got to know each other, sampled some of Embark Sustainability's offerings, and explored our varied roles in changemaking through Deepa Iyer's *Finding your place in social movements*.

For those further along in their sustainability and university journeys, our **Sustainability Career Nights** in spring and fall offered a chance to connect with changemakers, from storytellers and restaurant owners to agrologists and community planners, inspiring post-university aspirations and sparking new relationships in professional networks. ♦

“ I'm sort of new to SFU and I'm always looking for events and organizations to be a part of. I'm so glad I attended the event, it was so great to meet people and try new delicious food. Thank you Embark folks!!!!!!

Community Kitchen Attendee

WHAT A
YEAR!



Piecing Perspectives of Justice

Envisioning a just future is both a transformative and ever-transforming effort. This year, we were able to broaden our understandings of justice through each other's expertise, interests, and lived experiences, coming together to not only learn from one another, but contribute to a collaborative perspective of justice that captured more than the sum of its parts.

Sparking change often starts with breaking bread. Cohosted with SFU's Sexual Violence Support and Prevention Office, the Community Kitchen **Recipes for Change** explored our roles in creative safer campus communities as we shared in a warm meal and swapped recipes.

Over a traditional Coptic Egyptian breakfast, **People, Power, & Pekoe** explored food as a form of resistance, both in physically nourishing one's body, and in preserving cultural traditions like Coptic breakfasts against colonial forces that seek to eradicate them.

The Edible Landscape: Demystifying Food Justice was our contribution to this year's Burnaby Festival of Learning. Co-hosted with SFU's Office of Community Engagement, we gathered community members, students, researchers, food justice practitioners, and city staff to discuss food systems within Burnaby. Speakers and participants uncovered the pitfalls of increasingly globalized and monopolized food systems



as well as ways to move towards food justice, distilling actionable recommendations for academic and governmental institutions.

Over Zoom we joined SFPIRG in welcoming Jacob Crane, a citizen of the Tsuut'ina Nation and Community Engagement Coordinator from Indigenous Climate Action, for a **LandBack Talk** that emphasized the intersections of climate justice and Indigenous futures. Together we explored LandBack in the context of the TMX pipeline, highlighting the role universities play in addressing climate violence and its impact on Indigenous peoples and territories.

Bringing our efforts to Surrey, **DigitALL** was a collaboration with the Sustainable Energy Engineering Student Society and the SFSS Women's Centre that welcomed participants to celebrate women with unique backgrounds in our communities developing innovative solutions towards climate equity.

Participants were invited to ponder how innovation can propel the climate equity movement while hearing students and professionals share their experiences and insights. ♦

“ Coming as a person who has done a lot of activism on campus, sometimes we're not awarded the experience or space of just being students....Embark invited me as I was, not to be shaped by Embark but to shape Embark with my journey.

Marie Haddad,
Food Justice Facilitator,
Burnaby Learning Garden Cohort



Putting Hope into Practice

In 2023, we made a conscious effort to create space for compassion, joy, and hope, reflecting on and recognizing our power as well as exploring the emotional impact of our work. These moments gave members a sense of belonging and fulfillment, time and space that is so dearly needed to approach changemaking with care.

Each week, **Food Rescue** was a chance for our Food Rescue Distributors to have an insightful conversation about food justice before collecting produce from Nester's Market to distribute to students on Burnaby campus. Regulars shared how incredibly important it was for them to access fresh, nutritious fruit and

vegetables, and distributors shared that this program left them feeling hopeful and fulfilled in ways they'd yet to experience.

For those unsure where they fit in the climate movement, **Climate Curious to Climate Confident** was a chance for members to explore how their unique passions, skills, and interests can fill gaps in climate justice spaces. Participants bonded with speakers and fellow students alike over pizza, personal stories, and our passions within climate action.

A summer session of bonding and solidarity, **Liberation Summer Organizers' Bootcamp** was a three-day intensive series of workshops and engagements that supported current and future organizers to explore their role in social movements,



discover joy, prioritize rest, and strategize their organizing efforts. Alongside taking tangible actions like mutual aid distribution and active rest, guest speakers and attendees alike were generous in sharing their experiences and expertise, providing each other helpful insights from their backgrounds in organizing or otherwise—IT, law, art, and more. A huge thanks to our collaborators SFPIRG and Organizing for Change for bringing this dream to life with us.

To nourish our creative sides, **The Rights of Nature: Collage Making and Finding the Words for Climate Hope** encouraged us to explore our relationships with the climate crisis through found poetry and collage. One found-poetry participant shared that although they had attended events addressing climate grief before, this was the first time they had ever left less angry.

Our days spent connecting with the land were nourishing in more ways than one. **Thinking Full Circle: the Art of Permaculture** was a rain-drenched afternoon of harvesting and laughter, chatting through permaculture practices and later learning what the word for pickles was across our languages. Each term, members of our **Learning Garden Cohorts** gathered under the guidance of our Gardens Manager, Pablo Vimos, who supported them to embrace the fun of food growing while exploring organic gardening techniques and reflecting on food justice. Cultivating their own plot, our gardeners could take time away from student stressors and work the soil in each other's company, all the while learning to advocate for just, community-centred food systems on and off campus. ♦

“ Embark excels at creating a relaxing environment for their event participants by playing soothing music, having tea and hot water, as well as warm lighting. The staff are extremely friendly, hard-working and easy to talk to; they put real effort into making everyone feel included and their events go on without a hitch. I have made friends, learned new recipes, gained knowledge about topics such as permaculture, composting, and gardening, and generally had lovely experiences and chats every time I joined them.

Isabel Johnson
Thinking Full Circle: The Art
of Permaculture Attendee





“

This is a sacred space, and within that idea of being sacred, we talk about sustainability... this is a space we need to protect.

Tricia-Kay Williams
Clinical Counsellor

“

If I had not participated in Embark Sustainability's Learning Garden Cohort, I don't think after my first failed attempt on my own to start a garden, that I would have had the capacity...to know what to do next. If you're thinking of getting involved with Embark Sustainability's Learning Gardens, do it! Don't hesitate! **Run, don't walk!**

Meera Eragoda
Garden Cohort Member
SFU Graduate

A Decade of Growth

This year we celebrated the ten year anniversary of the Burnaby Learning Garden with Embarkers and community supporters past and present. Thank you to our attendees, to Daiya Foods and Soon Coffee for your support with food and drink, Nimrit Basra for your beautiful words and Elaina Sofia Buenaventura for your serene musical stylings! It was moving to experience such an immense outpour of love from our community.





“ My dream for the future of Embark Sustainability's Learning Gardens are that all these areas where we have grass, cement and concrete, that they're integrated into everything...I'm just really grateful that the Learning Gardens are ten years in now, that shows the staying power and obviously the need of the institution for this in our communities.

Candace Ratelle
Executive Director,
SFU Sustainability

“ Carving out this little space of greenery in this concrete world, feels like a very revolutionary thing...

It was one of the best things, if not the best thing, that came out of my time at SFU...I felt like with Embark Sustainability, my knowledge was always very much appreciated, it was celebrated, and I was encouraged to share, which was a really unique opportunity.

Nimrit Basra,
Gardener and SFU Graduate

WATCH OUR ANNIVERSARY VIDEO



The year in



56
Plots
Cultivated

63
Volunteers

971
kg food
distributed

2082
Members
Engaged



24
Events

26
Garden
Graduates

NUMBERS

Get Involved

JOIN OUR TEAM

Have we won you over yet? Each semester brings new opportunities to get involved with climate equity, food justice and more. Follow our social media or subscribe to our newsletter for the latest updates and we look forward to having you on board.



ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

Wondering what happens after graduation? Keep connected to our growing community of changemakers. Become an associate member to maintain access to all our programming and events post-grad.

STAY IN TOUCH

Get the full digital experience! We have so much happening on our social media. Follow us to keep connected and learn what we're up to each semester.



Embark Sustainability / @embarksustain



