



David  
Suzuki  
Foundation

# Sustainable diversity

A behind the scenes look at how the David Suzuki Foundation mixes multiculturalism in the green movement.



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A behind-the-scenes look at how the David Suzuki Foundation mixes multiculturalism in the green movement

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## A note on language

This report uses the language “new Canadians”, “multiculturalism”, “ethnic Canadians” and “diversity” in discussing the research and key findings. This differs from some of the language found in the literature review (“people of colour”, “black”, “minority”). The language of the literature review has not been changed since it reflects the unique political context in the United States, where much of the data for the literature review were collected.

To avoid confusion, the terminology in the literature review was kept intact to accurately reflect the source documentation surveyed for the literature review. It is also an acknowledgement of the inherently politicized nature of language and the embedded manner in which language itself can be a marker of inclusion or exclusion.

For this research report, the language chosen is in alignment with the vision and mission of the David Suzuki Foundation (DSF) and reflected in the Foundation’s website and other publicly available documents. It is also the language adopted by the Public Engagement specialists on staff, in a conscious effort to reinforce the Foundation’s belief that multicultural engagement is an ongoing practice that includes all Canadians.



*DSF's annual tradition of participating in the Vancouver Chinese New Year Parade (above) and promoting nature connection with Punjabi by Nature (below).*

## Introduction

In 2010, DSF recognized the need to reach out to constituencies that have not been traditionally engaged and included in environmental discourse. As a result, the Foundation initiated a multicultural engagement program to create a diverse network of community leaders, youth and organizations that are actively engaged in creating a sustainable future for B.C. DSF believes that its multicultural engagement program is a pathway to forging strong social ties and more diverse dialogues on environmental issues that affect B.C. communities.

DSF hired Winnie Hwo and Harpreet Johal to reach out to Metro Vancouver's Chinese and South Asian communities, two of region's largest and fastest-growing ethnic communities. In the initial year, Winnie and Harpreet met with a variety of multicultural leaders to identify interests, common ground, needs and barriers to develop DSF's approach to multicultural engagement. For example, instead of campaigning on specific environmental issues (e.g., shark fins), the program staff built relationships by meeting with community leaders (SUCCESS, City of Richmond, Richmond District School Board, MOSAIC, PICS, Sing Tao Daily, RJ Radio) to learn how DSF could be of value to them. Because of the relationships that developed, Winnie was able to work with receptive community leaders who were willing to help collaborate and partner with DSF, advocating for a broadened carbon tax and use of that revenue to build a Better Future Fund for climate solutions. As a result, the issue was raised collaboratively in ethnic media and at several high-profile community forums, bringing about high levels of community action.

In the years since, a great deal has been learned from the multicultural leaders, youth and elders who have stepped forward to connect and partner with DSF. With the support of the Vancouver Foundation in fall 2014, a research project was undertaken to share the story of DSF's multicultural program as well as offer suggestions on how the program might strengthen its reach, effectiveness and impact.

This report is the result of the research project, which included interviews with key stakeholders in the community, a literature review of multicultural engagement efforts undertaken by key environmental advocacy groups, documentary analysis of key publications and articles sourced from Foundation staff and website, in-person dialogue with youth stakeholders, and field observations at the Richmond REaDY Summit (Richmond Earth Day Youth Summit) and the Blue Dot volunteer appreciation night in Richmond.

This report outlines the key themes that emerged from the research as well as recommendations and suggestions on how the Foundation's multicultural program could be enhanced and strengthened.

## Background

The data tell the story. By 2031, Statistics Canada estimates that approximately 28 per cent of Canada's population will be foreign-born. Multiculturalism is increasingly becoming one of Canada's most valuable assets. This is most evident in the major cities of Toronto and Vancouver, where the number of visible minorities is expected to double over the next few decades.

The results of the 2006 census showed B.C. as the province with the greatest diversity, with nearly one in four people self-identifying as a visible minority. In addition, recent statistics show that four out of five new Canadians do not have English or French as their mother tongue. With immigration to Canada outpacing the natural birth rate, the trend toward an increase in the number of diverse and multicultural communities will continue to grow.

With these rapidly changing demographics as the backdrop of the local and national landscape of Canada, there are many challenges as well as opportunities for creating and supporting spaces for more inclusive and engaged communities. The increasing diversity of Canada, and in particular the rapid growth of the Chinese and South Asian communities, raises the profile of public engagement with ethnic Canadians to a level where organizations, businesses and political parties are continuously vying for the attention and support of new Canadians.

For the David Suzuki Foundation, this means that its efforts at outreach and engagement may, at times, be in competition with a wide range of groups and organizations with differing values and agendas, all targeting and vying for the attention of Canada's Chinese and South Asian communities. Even within the Chinese and South Asian communities, no monolithic perspective or voice speaks for the entire community. With the number of voices, it is even more important that the door is opened for outreach efforts that are focused on two-way engagement and sustainable long-term partnerships rather than meeting the needs of individual campaigns or projects.



*Students in Richmond, B.C. on a nature walk led by Richmond Mayor Malcolm Brodie.*

# Summary of literature review <sup>1</sup>

A literature review was conducted by Linda Wong, a research assistant, to explore the role of multicultural engagement within the environmental movement in Canada and the United States. In particular, the literature review examined the need to expand diversity and cultural engagement with environmental advocacy groups, identified strategies used by traditional mainstream and grassroots environmental organizations to engage diverse communities and identified five case studies of organizational initiatives and how they addressed diversity and multicultural engagement.

The following salient themes and gaps emerged from the literature review:

## 1. Diversity is still in its nascent stages of development and growth with traditional environmental advocacy groups.

The environmental movement continues to struggle with diversity, in both internal organization makeup and dynamics as well as external partnership and collaborations with ethnic communities. Drawing on data from a comprehensive study of almost 200 mainstream environmental organizations, the study identified an inconsistency with regard to the issue of diversity. Despite an organization's stated desire for increased diversity, more often than not the organization's external actions did not support that desire. In other words, it is not uncommon for there to be organizational dissonance when it comes incorporating diversity as an integral part of organizational structure and programming.

Internally, the study found that visible minorities made up just 11 per cent of leadership and management roles and only 4.6 per cent of members of boards of directors. With regard to external initiatives, only 3.7 per cent of the organizations stated that they collaborated on a frequent basis with ethnic communities.

## 2. Lack of public documentation available on diversity initiatives and multicultural engagement.

The literature review is based on documents and publications that are publicly available and accessible with the Internet. During the research, it became clear that there is a lack of clear and comprehensive documentation available on multicultural engagement. This is particularly true in the Canadian context, where the amount of primary literature available from the organizations is limited relative to U.S. counterparts.

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<sup>1</sup> A copy of the complete literature review is available upon request from the David Suzuki Foundation.

3. There are distinct differences in approaches between traditional mainstream environmental organizations (e.g., Sierra Club, Greenpeace, Nature Conservancy) and grassroots environmental justice organizations (e.g., WE ACT for Environmental Justice, Community Coalition for Environmental Justice, Riding Tide: Vancouver Coast Salish Territories).

While not mutually exclusive, the literature points to two distinct starting points from which environmental organizations start to engage with diverse communities. On one end of the spectrum are the conventional mainstream environmental advocacy groups that have traditionally focused on ecological preservation and conservation. On the other end are grassroots, community-based organizations that focus on the disproportionately negative impact of environmental policies on racialized and marginalized communities.

## Implications of the literature review for the David Suzuki Foundation

From the literature, it is clear that the environmental movement still has a ways to go when it comes to multicultural engagement. While advances have been made in recent years to even out the gender balance, there is still work to be done before the environmental movement truly reflects today's diverse and multicultural communities.

Having said this, it is important to note that DSF, beginning with the addition of Winnie and Harpreet to the Climate Change Team in 2010, has already started paving the path for a third way of engagement. As noted above, environmental advocacy groups tend to start from either an ecological conversation or environmental justice perspective when it comes to designing engagement initiatives. While this may have proven effective with some communities, it may not necessarily be the best approaches for new Canadians or other ethnic groups.

In an article published in *The Philanthropist* in 2011, Winnie outlined the approach that she and Harpreet have been spearheading as part of their public engagement efforts. "I [Winnie] explained that our organization does not ask people to do the impossible, but we do ask them to pause and think, to evaluate the way we live and the way our world lives, and then to decide if this is sustainable."

In other words, there is a shift from outreach to engagement, and a recognition that to truly establish partnerships with the rapidly growing multicultural communities in Canada, public engagement and outreach must be reframed. In contrast to a traditional approach adopted by environmental advocacy organizations that tends to focus outreach efforts on convincing people to support a particular issue or campaign, Winnie and Harpreet, as early as 2010 with the inception of the public engagement program at DSF, understood that their outreach efforts would necessarily include several stages.

The first stage begins with listening and learning about "other points of view that have been traditionally foreign to climate advocates."<sup>2</sup> The second stage is a move from a monologue to a two-way conversation and dialogue. "Instead of trying to impose our views on new Canadians, we hope to incorporate their views into our new narrative. When we begin our 'real' outreach to our target audience, we are talking 'with' them, instead of talking 'at' them. Our goal is that our climate narrative will resonate with our audience because it will incorporate what they have told us."<sup>3</sup> The third stage builds off the results and work of the first two stages of listening and talking "with", not "to" new Canadians. This final stage is about identifying shared values rather than trying to "push a hidden agenda", and using the shared values as an inclusive starting point for building long-term, sustainable partnerships and active two-way collaboration.

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<sup>2</sup> The Philanthropist, 2010, Volume 24.1 (pp. 57)

<sup>3</sup> The Philanthropist, 2010, Volume 24.1 (pp. 58)

# Research methodology

This research is grounded in the basic principles of participatory action research (PAR), a methodology that has emerged as an important framework for co-creating knowledge and understanding with community stakeholders.

## Principles of participatory action research

### 1. Builds on strengths and resources within the community and organization.

This research seeks to gain insight into the cultural, institutional and personal knowledge that currently exist in the Chinese and South Asian communities in order to better understand how they can influence and support partnerships and community engagement.

### 2. Encourages and facilitates collaboration and feedback in all phases of the research.

Key stakeholders and community members were actively invited to participate in the research process to develop a shared vision and purpose. This includes, but is not limited to, defining the problem, interpreting results, collecting data and sharing results.

### 3. Involves a cyclical and iterative process.

This research recognizes that knowledge creation is neither one-sided nor static. As such, the research process was continuously informed by feedback.

### 4. Disseminates findings and knowledge to all stakeholders and partners

This research will disseminate the lessons learned from the information gathered in a manner and process that is respectful and understandable and that acknowledges the contribution of all participants.

## Data collection

Data were collected via the methods outlined below.

- Key informant semi-structured interviews.
- Live workshop and dialogue with youth stakeholders to identify key components of a successful partnership and community engagement program.
- Document review and analysis. In collaboration with the Foundation's staff and public engagement specialists, a comprehensive list of documents related to the program was reviewed and analyzed.
- Literature review: A literature review was conducted to survey the field of multicultural engagement within the environmental movement in Canada and the United States.

## Overview of research learnings

One of the keys to effectively engaging with new Canadians is developing an understanding of the immigrant story. The intent isn't to generalize and stereotype the immigrant story. Rather, it is to understand the broader narrative that Chinese and South Asian immigrants take part in when they come to Canada.

Delving into and listening to these narratives offers opportunities for authentic, two-way engagement between DSF and new Canadians. It also dispels the notion that immigrants and new Canadians don't care about the environment. Through the narratives, we see that there is an ongoing intersectionality with environmental concerns that takes place at multiple points in the immigration story.

Understanding the immigrant story also allows DSF to shift the dialogue from the false dichotomy that pits the environment against the economy. While economic considerations are undeniably a factor in the lives of new Canadians, the environment is a major reason many immigrants chose to make Canada their home. Recognition of the pull factor of the environment in the immigrant story opens the door to multiple points of engagement with communities that have traditionally been left out of the environmental dialogue.

In the research themes and learnings that follow, it becomes clear that there are certain points in the immigrant experience where it is easier to draw out potential connections. For example, with recent immigrants, for whom the priority is often a focus on establishing a strong economic base here in Canada, economic survival is top of mind. Because of this, trying to introduce dialogue around environmental issues and concerns to this particular demographic may meet with much higher resistance than trying to engage new Canadians who have been in the country longer and are more stable economically.

The immigrant story may help the public engagement team decide where to best direct limited time and resources to maximize engagement and dialogue with new Canadians. Rather than trying to reach everyone, understanding the broad trajectory and trends that many new Canadians experience when they immigrate to Canada may be a useful framework to help clarify program strategies and priorities as well as identify the ideal target audience for specific campaigns and initiatives.

Finally, the importance of stories cannot be underestimated. Although the Foundation is firmly grounded in a science-based analysis of environmental issues and concerns, there is power in moving beyond rational arguments and toward the use of stories as a strategy of engagement. Stories are the bridge that can forge connections between rational, science-based facts and the realities of people's lives.

The following are some key learnings that emerged from the research findings. All quotes are from interview participants, unless otherwise noted.

# Key Learnings

## 1. Be explicit in your commitment to “ongoing-ness”

There is no shortage of businesses, organizations or political parties vying for the attention of new Canadians. Increased numbers mean increased visibility and in some circles, increased political and economic power. Creating a partnership involves substantial investment of an organization’s time, energy and allocation of limited staff, and in some cases, financial resources.

In addition, traditional funding cycles may inadvertently place pressure on organizations to be project-focused rather than relationship-focused. The pressure, whether perceived or real, to regularly change projects can be disruptive to the long-term collaborative partnerships and relationships that DSF is focusing on building.

It is important for potential community partners to hear and understand from the outset that DSF is committed to a long-term partnership and is willing to build on the success and lessons learned from ongoing collaborative projects. “The community expects an ongoing-ness so later on you don’t have to spend time promoting this [Richmond REaDY Summit] more because you got a culture or a clientele or a community that are protecting it. If we’re going to this, we’re going to do this for a number of years — we’ll have short-term goals and long-term goals because we will not start things for one year and leave it at that. We do not do one year at the end of the day. We commit to the long-term transformation of a system.”

In contrast, projects and initiatives that leapfrog from community to community are not seen as sustainable. “So if people say, ‘You got to try something new every year,’ well then, you get it the first year, then most people forget and it doesn’t get sustained because no one’s advocating for them in year two, year three, year four.”

The knowledge that all parties view the partnership as long-term can relieve the pressure of trying to get it perfect the first time. It gives stakeholders permission and space to move away from blaming each other, to learn from what happened and figure out how to make it better the next time. “We gave each other permission and when challenges or mistakes had come, we figured it out. Never blaming, always saying, ‘How can we do this differently and how can we do it better next year?’ I know sometimes [funders] like to see the project change from year to year so they have something more concrete to report and that puts pressure on non-profits but the real engagement and the real change happens when there’s multiple sites of engagement. And some of those are small but the ones that are built up over time — it’s kind of the consolidation or the synchronicity of all of those that contribute to a longer-term change.”

It is important to note that the consistency valued by community partners may take different forms. Consistency does not necessarily have to translate into reproducing the same event or program each year.

For example, in Richmond, the partnership and collaboration was deepened and strengthened through planning and hosting the REaDY Summit each year. Through the annual event, momentum was built for both the REaDY Summit and its impact on the community as well as the partnerships between DSF, the City of Richmond and the Richmond School District. It was the consistency and “ongoing-ness” of these partnerships that opened the door for the success of the Blue Dot Campaign in Richmond. The groundwork of trust and relationships that had developed over the years of organizing the REaDY Summit provided fertile ground for launching and supporting the Blue Dot campaign in the city.

## 2. Start with why — Identify shared values and a cohesive vision

The willingness to commit to a long-term partnership in and of itself is not enough to sustain a successful collaboration. A clear sense of shared values and goals is also necessary. This cohesiveness of values and vision was evident in the success of the REaDY Summit.

“I think that the collaboration to produce the REaDY Summit met the needs of our goals and objectives and that is student excellence, environmental stewardship and it also met the need of City of Richmond trying to reach and having [sic] more families engage in this double awareness of student leadership and environment stewardship. And also it was exactly David Suzuki’s community goal of increasing beyond awareness and focusing on student leadership. This gave us an opportunity for all three organizations to have student leaders at the centre of this initiative and impacting our respective organizations and the City of Richmond [which] is 200,000 plus residents and the school district is 22,000 students. So I think you have an alignment and a commitment, alignment of integrity, you have alignment of investing in kids and in the end it was a beautiful partnership, a beautiful collaboration.”

For the Richmond REaDY Summit, three organizations that would not traditionally form close collaborations (Richmond School District, City of Richmond and David Suzuki Foundation) have been able to effectively work together around the shared values of promoting student leadership, through the vehicle of environmental stewardship. This allowed for a close alignment of values and paved the way and space for each organization to do the work they do best. “It worked so well because all three partners really had a collective value of imparting ecological stewardship upon our youth community and the importance of that — particularly for Richmond.”

It is also unusual for a municipal government to have such a close and long-term partnership with an environmental advocacy organization like DSF. One reason for this is similar to the sentiment expressed by immigrant-services agencies. Local governments, similar to non-profit organizations that receive the bulk of their funding from federal and provincial sources, tend to be more sensitive to the politically charged context of some environmental campaigns. Thus, partnerships with local governments and organizations that depend primarily on government funding may need alternative entry points, such as youth leadership and youth empowerment, as the initial steps toward long-term engagement.

### 3. Reframe the narrative on new immigrants and the environment

It's time to reframe the narrative from one that claims new immigrants don't care about the environment to one that highlights the ways they do. For many immigrants from China and South Asia, the environment is a major pull factor in their choice to move to Canada.

To understand new immigrant responses to the environment, one must start with a broader picture of the cultural and environmental context they are emigrating from, as well as the trajectory of the immigration story after they land in Canada. "I don't think it's a priority for them [recent immigrants] in terms of environment because the first generation of immigrants — they pay more attention to the job opportunity they need to survive — so that's the most priority for them. That's why they don't pay more attention to the environment. The first generation — I mean the ones from Canada and Mainland China and Hong Kong — the environment here is very good for them. They may say, 'Oh there's no need to do anything about that.' So their priority is how to find a job, how to go up here, so they work hard but pay less attention to the environment."

On the surface, it appears that establishing economic security is the priority for many new Canadians. "That [economic security] is quite important but the next generation is totally different because they have good education here, they have the concept for the environment. They were born in Canada so they don't have experiences in any other place to compare — they just have Canada. They can compare to stories of the past here — and they see more cars, more and more pollution in Vancouver right now — so they're concerned about the environment, so that's why they pay more attention to campaigns. That's their decision too."

It is important to dig behind the desire for economic security. For many immigrants, the financial security they are working so hard to achieve is often driven by a desire for a better life for their children. This better life, however, is not just based on economic security; it also includes freedom and an alternative from the negative environmental conditions that some parents experienced in their countries of origin. New Canadians want their children to be able to enjoy and benefit from the natural beauty and clean environment of Canada. This is one of the top reasons they decided to immigrate here.

Blindly accepting the conclusion that new Canadians don't care about the environment closes the door to a potentially rich dialogue on the ways that immigrants are concerned about the environment and its impact on their daily lives.

Tuning into the narratives of immigrant stories and experiences can help the public engagement team strategically focus its outreach and identify who may be most receptive to engaging in a dialogue on the environment. The immigrant story may also help to unpack the complexity of experiences and perspectives new Canadians have to share with the broader community.

When new Canadians are listened to and heard, it becomes evident that many are already aware of the ways climate change, or other environmental issues, are affecting their lives. At a community roundtable, a Chinese immigrant shared the impact of climate change on his backyard garden. He noticed that, over the course of years, his harvest date kept being pushed back, and he acknowledged that this was likely due to the effects of climate change.

At the same dialogue, a senior executive also shared how he feels "very wronged by the stereotyping and the Canadian community and he was really happy to join us in this conversation because he wanted the Canadian communities, the white people to know that it's not the immigrants are against the environment, because that makes no sense to them — they came here for the fresh air that they could not breathe in Hong Kong."

As his story emerged, it became clear that he did not have a problem with supporting action on climate change or even paying more to support an initiative like the carbon tax. The issue wasn't with paying more money to support an additional tax; he was happy to make the sacrifice. What he was angry with, was his perception of a lack of transparency in the government on how tax dollars are spent in Canada. For the executive, expectation of transparency in government, an ideal of democracy, was one of the reasons he came to Canada.

The underlying issue, then, was a perceived lack of government accountability rather than a lack of care about the environment. This perspective could emerge when assumptions about what immigrants care and don't care about are unpacked and questioned.

The pull to provide for one's children and to create a strong economic foothold in Canada is powerful. Thus, when the popular narrative frames the issues as a choice between the environment and the economy, new immigrants will choose the economy, especially immigrants who have experienced economic hardship. Moving away from this dichotomy is one of the biggest shifts in DSF's public engagement program and is a cornerstone of Winnie and Harpreet's work. It is helping people understand that they don't have to make a choice between the environment and the economy. The environment and economy are not pitted against each other. One doesn't have to suffer at the expense of the other.

#### 4. Strengthen support for youth leadership and engagement

The importance of youth leadership and engagement was a resounding theme throughout the research. The learnings from this showed up in different areas.

Programs like SUCCESS's Youth Leadership Program (YLM) are viewed as a win-win partnership, where DSF is seen as an active player in supporting and developing leadership among young people. The importance of youth leadership was also highlighted in the work of the Richmond REaDY Summit. REaDY Summit partners frequently shared their delight at the synergistic and cohesive planning process that the Richmond School District, the City of Richmond and DSF worked together on. "It [the three-way partnership] worked so well because all three partners really had a collective value of imparting ecological stewardship upon our youth community and the importance of youth leadership — particularly for Richmond."

While the goals of youth leadership served as a cohesive force for strengthening partnerships, the youth themselves were often magnets for drawing in a broader circle of involvement from community members, particularly elders. In the outreach for Punjabi by Nature, for example, which happened primarily at local temples, volunteers shared that adults and elders were drawn to their table because they were initially curious to see what the youth in their community were involved in. As a result of their curiosity, they were exposed to the 30x30 campaign and wanted to find out more. It was this initial curiosity that opened doors for broader discussions on nature and the environment.

"A lot of my experiences in volunteering with any event in the South Asian community is that they [the adults and elders] really, really love when young children or even their youth are doing this [kind of] public outreach program. I've done outreach programs successfully which promoted [awareness] of hepatitis C in the south Asian community and then I've done the environmental side of it with the David Suzuki Foundation and people are always so impressed that there are youth who are going to school but still taking the time — what we call it is seva — to volunteer.



*New youth leaders and their mentors at the Richmond REaDY Summit 2014.*

“They’re like, it’s so important because they grew up doing seva in some form in their culture. It’s part of our culture but there are always like a lot of kids [who] don’t do that anymore — that’s probably actually one of the main reasons they want to know who we are, what we’re doing here because they’re just really impressed that youth out there are delivering these programs in a language that makes sense to them.

“I know that’s a huge component. They might not know what we’re about. But the fact that we’re here giving them material — it makes them feel like their youth are contributing to this country that’s all of ours now. That’s something that’s really, really important to them and it draws them.”

In addition to being curiosity magnets, youth also serve as generational bridges. Again, the Richmond REaDY Summit is a prime example of this. Participation wasn’t limited to high school students. There was also broad representation from parents and other community members. Their presence at the event was significant for several reasons.

First, it’s an indication that youth are actively sharing what they’ve learned and what they’re involved in at home. “I’m not sure I would say that most people care for the environment. I think the reason why there’s changed behaviour [in] the household [is] because the kids that are learning about environmental stewardship are coming home with their ideas and talking to the parents (and grandparents) about them.

“And I think these kids go home and they tell their parents, ‘You should turn the tap off when you brush your teeth, put your toothpaste on it but while you were brushing your teeth turn the tap off.’ Or now that we have water meters in our home kids are very quick to say, ‘Come on we are now measuring our water consumption.’”

Another successful strategy was to design activities that would engage young children. One year, for the Punjabi by Nature campaign, a game was created so children could come to the tables, play games and earn stamps. “Every time there is a little crowd, it just creates more of a crowd and more of a crowd. The game has a very well developed theme and the kids who get the stamps will tell the other kids and they come back for more stamps and all who come for stamps bring their parents. I didn’t know how powerful it would be but it was very effective. And so we have a lot of kids come up to our stands and the kids want to collect the stamps so they bring their parents and we explain to them [the parents]. So we use the kids to break down the barriers to talk to the parents.”

An additional sub-theme that emerged from the youth leadership is how youth engagement can intersect with multicultural engagement. As noted before, one of the primary reasons for the success of the partnerships between the Richmond School District, the City of Richmond and DSF was the cohesive vision of supporting youth leadership. In this case, there was an overt emphasis on youth leadership rather than multicultural engagement. If the students are engaged and being developed as leaders, then in a city as diverse as Richmond, multicultural engagement becomes a natural by-product of the programming. This nuanced emphasis on youth leadership rather than multicultural engagement is an important distinction.

“If you want everybody in the community to participate you got to develop a strategy to engage everyone, not just specifically trying to get this community or that community.... It [Richmond REaDY Summit] was not specifically to bring together the Chinese or the South Asian because we just want build a fantastic student-led conference for our community and it got bigger and bigger every year.

“And so I think that that’s something the Foundation needs to tease out or they can tease out in their programming and say, ‘Who really is the target audience here? Are we trying to build student leadership?’ And if so then we de-emphasize the multicultural work and we emphasize the leadership development. If we’re wanting to work with the first generation immigrants, the parents, then we actually need to emphasize the cultural aspect of it and de-emphasize the overt leadership aspect of it.”

## 5. Add value to the community before asking for support

Engagement is a two-way street. This means including community members and key stakeholders from the onset of an initiative, rather than at the last minute. “So don’t ever give them a last minute, as if they’re only second [class]. My point is that if we want to engage them [new Canadians], let’s do it at the same time so that they feel that they’re also first class citizens. If we just bring them in the last minute, you can never have quality public engagement because they don’t even know who you are.”

With the increasing number of immigrants to Canada, the long-term sustainability and survival of an organization, business, or government must include engaging ethnic Canadian as a key strategy. As a result of this, organizations serving ethnic Canadians often receive requests to develop partnerships. It is important to note some of the ways that DSF has engaged that make it stand out among other organizations vying for the same attention and partnerships.

“I’ve seen many entities try to say the same thing: “We have been very successful at targeting mainstream, be it customers, stakeholders — whatever you want to call it — but we enjoyed limited success with the ethnic communities, in particular in the Chinese communities. We would love to get your thoughts on how we could do a better job and we would really like to do a better job and work with you and all that other stuff.”

“You hear that a lot ... my experience is that, sometimes they don’t really mean it, or sometimes we may observe — they’re not believers. They continue to spend 100 per cent of their advertising budget on 50 per cent of the market, which is the mainstream market. I know they’re not sincere about their engagement or they don’t believe it. I would say that Winnie was different because she genuinely believed it, she saw the need, they [DSF] really wanted to engage better and so they just had that kind of resolve and interest.”

Many of the collaborations and partnerships that developed to support the public engagement programs were initiated through connections from Winnie and Harpreet’s personal networks. For the

long-term sustainability and growth of the public engagement projects and collaborations with partner organizations, the current connections and relationships need to be developed beyond personal connections to Harpreet and Winnie to include relationships with DSF.

For DSF, this means having other leaders in the organization show their support. One way this is demonstrated is when DSF staff are present at partner events. Although this might not be an explicit request on behalf of partner organizations, the additional support and efforts made by DSF staff to attend and support partner events do not go unnoticed.

“I got a sense there was buy in; more importantly, they would show up at our events. So I would see not only Winnie. And these weren’t juniors. Some of these were senior staff. It’s like the wrapping paper so to speak. It makes it a gift. It makes things happen when you see her come to your events. You can tell they’re serious and then you can build the relationship for success. It also shows, this isn’t just Winnie telling me that the Suzuki Foundation cares. I can tell — it really seems that the Suzuki Foundation cares when they say they’re strategic partners for this and they want to engage the Chinese community. It really seems to be the case.”

In addition to showing up, the curiosity, exploration and listening that Harpreet and Winnie bring to their work with community partners is greatly appreciated. It is important that partnerships begin with curiosity and exploration. This was one of the key aspects that helped to cement the partnerships between DSF, the Richmond School District and the City of Richmond.

Community partners reflected on the fact that, since the inception of the partnership, DSF has demonstrated support for the teachers by giving a workshop on environmental stewardship at the annual teachers’ convention. DSF also participated in the Science Jam, a science fair where 1,200 elementary school students in Richmond come together in a shopping mall to display their science projects.

“So I think the defining characteristic why this worked... Winnie was pivotal in having her team take an interest in our work. Then after we had those two things, we thought, ‘What about if we actually had a conference where we had student leaders?’ ... There had been collaborations but definitely not a collaboration that lasted this long where we have mutually benefitted. She put the time to be curious about who we were.”

## 6. The messenger matters

People are more receptive to the message if they perceive the messenger to be from their own community. It is about more than just having someone who looks like them. It is also the ability to be able to speak the language, read the cultural cues, ask the appropriate questions (or know when to be quiet) and act as a both a cultural as well as a linguistic translator for the messages that DSF is trying to share.

“They brought on the right people, whereas a lot of organizations, they send a white guy and the white guy will try to pretend to know what’s going on. And they don’t hire anybody that knows what’s going on. I’m simplifying it of course. But I think hats off to the Suzuki foundation for actually putting the money into people that frankly bring a certain understanding. If you want to — if I want to sell a bunch of products to the mainstream people that have lived here for 30 years and speak only English and perhaps are generally white, I’m not going to hire some new mainland Chinese immigrant to do it. Similarly, if I want to engage the Chinese community that have recently moved here I should not be using the same guys I used in the mainstream community.”

In addition to the cultural and linguistic cues, it is critical to “know who are the key players in that community and who are maybe superficial players. I don’t know — other than experience of knowing and living here long enough, you work in the area long enough, you know who’s what and who can you take seriously and who can deliver and who doesn’t deliver. It’s a reputational piece.”



*The message behind DSF's Blue Dot movement — that every Canadian deserves the right to a healthy environment — resonates with communities across Canada.*

While a key theme emerging from the research is the importance of having volunteers and staff who reflect the demographic of the communities DSF is trying to reach, it is also important to recognize that there is incredible diversity within the South Asian and Chinese communities. One of the lessons learned from the first year in the Punjabi by Nature campaign was the importance of having robust orientation and training for volunteers. Even though many of the volunteers spoke Punjabi and were of South Asian descent, there are still lessons in cultural sensitivity and communication that volunteers should be made aware of.

In reflecting on her experiences with the South Asian community, a participant shares “with the south Asian community what I picked up in my volunteering experience is you need to be very to the point and you have to make the program about them so that they care. The south Asian community is really big on their health.

“They do care about the environment but when you go into details about the specific program of Suzuki Foundation — they don’t want those extra details and their social etiquette is a bit different. If they start zoning out, they will just walk away as opposed to being like, ‘Oh thank you for your time, I’m not interested.’ Their way of saying ‘I’m not interested’ is by walking away.

“And so a lot of people find that even if that’s offensive you just need to know those social cues and not take offence and be strategic. Ask them questions; that’s what I’ve learned.”

In addition to the cultural and linguistic cues, choosing a messenger with roots in the target community also engenders trust. When people see their own community members as the liaison between the community and DSF, it facilitates a space for two-way dialogue and engagement. This currency of trust opens the doorway for learning and insights for both the community and the Foundation.

## 7. Be sensitive to the external realities of immigrant-serving agencies

Many immigrant settlement agencies receive federal support and, in some cases, provincial support as well. For some agencies, this is a consideration when it comes to developing or deepening partnerships. It is important to recognize the political landscape because, in the absence of this sensitivity to the external funding reality that immigrant serving agencies operate in, a hesitation to partner with DSF may be misinterpreted as an indifference to environmental issues.

A participant speaks to this tension: “The tension is that for whatever reason ... being in a relationship with David Suzuki may impact negatively on one’s funding issues, the funding that we receive from the federal government. Of course, an organization will have to really seriously think about whether they should engage, be part of that relationship or even continue that relationship, because you weigh, okay what are we doing here? We got people in need and the reason for our existence is to help newcomers to integrate.

“I’m not saying the environment is not important but you weigh that against environmental awareness because that’s essentially what we are doing is environmental awareness, our work with David Suzuki, in that sense. So you got to weigh those two facts and of course the correct thing would be it doesn’t matter because it’s all been part of one, rolled into one. But however, I just hope in this sense that David Suzuki, the organization is sensitive to that kind of potential dilemma that organizations may face and that they will not put us in that kind of position. Yeah, I think it is ... it’s related to the perceived political activism of the organization’s engagement in environmental issues. And it’s not just the David Suzuki Foundation. I think it’s because one of the things is that we have charitable status as well, which is really significant. It’s significant for organizations like us and for any other not-for-profit organizations — as you can imagine.”

The public engagement team’s understanding and sensitivity to this external funding dynamic contributes to the success of the current initiatives at DSF. When the priority is on relationship-building and sustainable long-term partnerships, it becomes easier to envision a multiplicity of approaches that can support the community partner and build momentum for DSF campaigns and initiatives. Instead of directly campaigning on the DSF initiatives then, it may entail more explicit support in other areas such as youth leadership and youth empowerment. This was clearly demonstrated in the ways DSF contributed to the growth of the Richmond REaDY Summit as well the Youth Leadership Millennium (YLM) program at S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

Given the sensitive nature of this dynamic, there may be times when the community partner will not raise this concern in an explicit request. Instead, this is an area that the public engagement team can continue to pay attention to and build its successes upon.

## 8. The David Suzuki brand carries social and cultural capital

The David Suzuki brand matters and carries with it social and cultural capital. For some in the Chinese and South Asian communities, this is an important consideration. “He’s [David Suzuki] well-known. He’s well-known as a guy who’s environmentally concerned. He’s well-known as a guy who’s a scientist. He’s not seen to be some crazy quack out there and he’s one of those trusted folks in the country, so that does help. It’s easier to get people to want to get involved.... ‘Hey what is it? This is a partnership that can help us gain a profile. This is a very good strategic partnership.’”

Although many people may not be aware of the breadth of DSF’s work, some new Canadians know the David Suzuki name because they’ve seen translations of his shows on some of the ethnic media networks. “And a lot of people who do approach us generally come because it’s like, ‘Oh what do you guys do with David Suzuki?’ They’ve never heard of the foundation. They don’t know he has a foundation but they all know the name. One of the reason that people come — if they’re voluntarily coming — they come because they see the name or they see free material.”

Additionally, parents may be more supportive of their children volunteering with a reputable organization. One participant pointed out that parents want their children to develop meaningful connections and networks, and they consider volunteering for a “reputed organization” like DSF as an avenue for their children to earn a good reference.

And finally, David’s story resonates particularly well with Asian and South Asian communities. “It is a recognized name. I think immigrants connect with it, the name — because you know — David Suzuki himself being Japanese descent. And it is through the personal parts of his story that you know he is not Caucasian and it is exciting to see. You know, back in the 1970s or 1980s — or where we are again — there wasn’t a lot of Asian names or faces on TV. I think that that is a real advantage — particularly in these communities.”

With partnerships, strategic use of the David Suzuki brand that is in alignment with the Foundation’s values and mission can be an important aspect of building collaborative win-win situations.

## 9. Critical role of the media

A recurring theme in the research was the significance of the media presence in ethnic communities. Unlike mainstream networks, ethnic media outlets serve as a strategic hub for dissemination of news, an educational resource and a transmitter of cultural values and beliefs. “If you were going to engage the Chinese community...I would say on the big issues like environment, trade, economic development... I would say really, [go to] the Chinese media, because it’s so strong and it’s very significant. That’s the vehicle that I will use as well.”

Similar to the Chinese community, the media also play an important role in the South Asian community. One participant shares “A lot of South Asian people listen to those shows because it’s in a language that they know and talk about issues that they care about. Yeah, it’s so important ... especially for the middle-aged to older members in our community. Like my grandpa’s always on those networks even though he lives on the island. He watches these shows, and he waits for those interview segments. So that’s a great way to reach a large portion of the community. Get them aware. Get them thinking about the David Suzuki Foundation, the Punjabi by Nature campaign. Give little health tips that we can offer them — like ways they can reduce their impact on the Earth. That would be the place to get some initial engagement I think.”

Strategic involvement and engagement of ethnic media requires an understanding of the role and function the media plays in the communities. It also entails the ability to discern when and how to best engage the media. A clear example of this was the collaboration with the Chinese media during the Blue Dot campaign in Richmond. Through the combination of a full-page Chinese print ad and non-prime time radio interviews, the campaign was able to greatly expand the campaign’s outreach.



*Ethnic media outlets serve as strategic hubs for news dissemination.*

## 10. Preaching beyond the choir

For a movement to grow, it has to continuously expand its boundaries and cultivate a sense of openness that invites new members into its fold. Sometimes, the most powerful form of engagement is simply to offer a space, a container, for relationships to develop and evolve. Once a relationship is established, the doors are opened for dialogue about environmental concerns.

This means starting wherever people are at and walking the journey with them. “In my experience, the best method was through one-on-one outreach. It was to make it personal. I don’t think educating them — education and bringing to light these issues — makes much of an effect. It was mostly, ‘Oh yeah, we’re friends; come out with me and volunteer today.’ ‘Yeah, sure, I’ll come.’ That kind of thing. Making relationships and making it enjoyable — not necessarily, ‘Oh yeah — not here for the cause — it’s more like, out here spending an afternoon with my friends.’

“We always get over 60 or 70 or 80 students to just come out and clear up the trash. And I’m sure most of them aren’t even close to being or defining themselves as environmentalist or environmentally keen in any sense. But they just want to come out because all their friends are coming out. Other things like where we pull out ivy, or pull out plants from the soil that shouldn’t be there. It’s therapeutic and we get to be outside. I think the thing in common is they don’t really require much thinking — where you can just do these tasks and talk to their friends at the same time.”

Starting with where people are at can take on many forms. As seen in the example above, it can begin with a simple invitation to hang out with friends while weeding.

It can also mean starting with people’s stories, particularly their immigration stories. For example, “You could have someone who says, ‘I couldn’t breathe in Hong Kong anymore and now I am here in Vancouver you know my lungs are better.’ That is going to feel a lot more like everybody breathes and the fact is that there is such universality to that. I think that if we had done this a bit stronger — like you know, we talk about the animals and we talk about the trees but I think merely focusing on humans — mental health, physical health, all of this. You know the toxins and how it is affecting us and our children. You know appealing to children and talking about things like diabetes and how the impact is and how the food is impacting diabetes and asthma and attention deficit disorder and mental illness, depression. I mean these are all really big topics and they are unavoidable.”

This is in contrast to traditional campaigns in the environmental movement that tend to be focused on single issues. For new Canadians who are already expect to adapt to an endless array of new cultural and linguistic norms, an invitation to share their stories and teach others in the community about how they are already caring for the environment may be a way to demonstrate two-way engagement as well as a continued willingness to learn from others.

In addition to starting where people are at, preaching beyond the choir can also involve some creative thinking. People who participated in the Punjabi by Nature campaign could vote on which Bhangra song David Suzuki should learn. A participant speaks to the “wow factor” of this: “And it’s amazing that David Suzuki is one entity that — he did a fundraising thing where he just put on this outfit. That was really amazing. Our community is like, ‘Wow! There’s an Asian person who’s doing something that’s part of our own personal culture.’ It’s really cool. It’s like — they gave him a second look. ‘Somebody else is interested in us? In our community? That’s pretty cool.’

“Then they would stop and ask, ‘What’s this about?’ And then we taught them how to be involved in going out into nature. And it starts off with that. So it’s like a wow factor for our campaign.” Combining the wow factor with the David Suzuki brand created a unique opening to attract people who might not normally be interested in the campaign.

Finally, preaching beyond the choir can also mean tapping into immigrant stories and acknowledging the environmental pull factor and beauty of British Columbia that draws people here. Once this connection to nature is made and reinforced it creates a natural link to talking about how to protect and preserve the environment. As one participant shared, this approach would work particularly well for older, first-generation immigrants.



*Punjabi by Nature reaches new audiences, young and old, in innovative ways.*

“For the young generation there’s no problem, they understand the [shark fin] issue ... but for the old generation they may say, ‘It’s just our food. It’s nothing to do with us because the laws are made by the government. If the restaurants don’t have the shark fin, okay.’ That’s not our responsibility.... If the government bans all the shark fin, ‘Oh that’s okay. It’s not my job.’

“What would be more effective then is to introduce the beauty of British Columbia. To show that ‘We want to enjoy such a beautiful environment — we need to keep doing something to protect them.’ That’s a way for them to easily get the idea or how can we protect the environment and to save our beautiful place. That’s the way I think.

“This is also another way for the entire family to be involved. Probably the young generation have some family tour, the young generation bring their parents, grandparents and show them to the park and show them what’s going on with the environmental issue. Also, it may work because the family likes to join together. They appreciate the organizer to go up together and let them listen to the young generation speak to them.”

Ultimately, relationships open the door for two-way engagement and long-term collaborations and partnerships. Sometimes, preaching beyond the choir means noticing that people are not necessarily drawn to a campaign because of its compelling issue. Even if they don’t understand the logic of what the campaign is about, they can still be drawn to the activities around the campaign, especially the activities that allow them to deepen their own connections to their community and friends. And sometimes it highlights the fact that people may already be engaged in daily actions that connect them to nature.

## 11. Increase internal communication and coordination on multicultural engagement initiatives

More communication and sharing of internal expertise and resources at the beginning of projects and campaigns would benefit the Foundation. The current gap in internal communication was noted by community members. As one participant said, even though there was a clear alliance and sense of shared values with the Richmond REaDY Summit, this didn't translate to the Blue Dot campaign. For the REaDY Summit, the clear call to empower youth leadership via raising environmental awareness was the foundational cornerstone of a successful partnership.

With the Blue Dot campaign, the values alignment was less clear. “We got a bit of a hiccup with the Blue Dot because there wasn't a whole understanding of values between both partners. So, I think knowing your partner as you enter into these types of initiatives and investing time and inquiry into knowing your partners is really important. It was more that the Blue Dot campaign ended up being launched in Richmond prior to us knowing about it. We read about it — got the emails from DSF. We didn't know much about it. But we are not allowed to be involved in programs unless they are embedded through council. We had to slow down the process and recommend that they delegate. What's all said and done — it's not a major hiccup because we had this very honed machine of relationship with REaDY [Summit]. So that was a little bit bumpy with the Blue Dot. When you have an existing, very positive relationship with something like Ready you don't want to jeopardize it.”

The “hiccup” in the launch of the Blue Dot campaign in Richmond can also be seen to demonstrate the importance of continuity and “ongoing-ness” between DSF and community partners. What may, in alternative circumstances, have been a significant roadblock for the campaign turned out to be a minor hiccup because of the strength of the pre-existing relationships that had developed as a result of the REaDY Summit partnerships.

Because of the positive history of the partnership, the City of Richmond was able to provide direct, effective feedback to DSF about what was not working, without jeopardizing the relationship. The end result of the open communication and feedback contributed to the Blue Dot's success in Richmond. The historical backdrop of the partnerships forged with the REaDY Summit directly contributed to opening the door for the important outreach and engagement of Richmond city councillors, city managers and school district trustees. The combined momentum of all the efforts paved the way for Richmond to become the first Canadian municipality to pass the declaration for a right to a healthy environment.

Understandably, the pressure of limited time and staff resources poses challenges to effective planning. But creating an effective multicultural engagement program means the Foundation must also engage in the internal work so that its policies and procedures reflect the vision of engagement and inclusion that it is trying to promote externally.

Multiculturalism is a critical piece of all the work that the Foundation is doing — not just the work of the public engagement specialists. DSF is blessed with incredible internal resources and knowledge about effective engagement with the Chinese and South Asian communities that should be drawn upon.

## Conclusion

*"We believe The David Suzuki Foundation is uniquely positioned to be a major catalyst for social change in Canada." ~ Long Term Direction Project*

It takes a community to build a movement. In 2008, the Foundation shared its Long Term Direction Project with the public. The report serves as a cornerstone for charting the path of the Foundation as it moves into its third decade. It outlines the role that DSF can play in ensuring a sustainable future for all Canadians.

The central vision that emerged from the project was: "Within a generation, Canadians act on the understanding that we are all interconnected and interdependent with nature." The backdrop of this vision is the underlying core value that people and nature are interconnected and the recognition that change must necessarily involve the diverse, multicultural communities that make up Canada today.

The shift to a world of interconnection and interdependence with nature requires shifts within the organization as well as externally.



Organizationally, DSF has already started to make the necessary changes to ensure that a vision of inclusivity starts internally. One clear demonstration of this was the internal restructuring that moved Winnie and Harpreet's staff positions from an initial project-based focus on the climate change initiative to their current roles as critical members of the public engagement team. This was not just a superficial change in titles and job descriptions. The Foundation cemented its commitment to multiculturalism and public engagement by incorporating the multicultural engagement specialist positions into the organization core operating budget to ensure long-term continuity and stability.

This is a bold and important move that also highlights the tension programs in non-profit organizations often face with regard to securing sustainable funding. For long-term two-way engagement to be sustainable, a quality that was repeatedly identified as highly valuable by the research participants, there should also be continuing awareness and education on the part of donors and funders. Long-term change, particularly on issues as crucial as the environment, requires an ongoing commitment from funders as much as from organizations. To truly engage and support a project, a community wants to know that the organization is going to stick around, that "ongoing-ness" is a central part of its values. For this to happen, organizations need to be able to rely on funders who understand that the funding collaborations and strategic partnerships are just as important as funding discrete projects.

In addition to the funding dynamics above, a move toward a sustainable multicultural engagement policy also includes a shift in the project planning process. From the inception, multicultural engagement should be seen as the purview of the entire organization, rather than something relegated to the work of the public engagement team. In other words, "interconnected" and "interdependent" may also refer to the ways that new initiatives and projects are envisioned, designed and implemented at DSF.

With the unique positioning of DSF and the breadth and depth of expertise of the public engagement team members, the David Suzuki Foundation can lead the way for forging new partnerships with communities that have traditionally been left out of the environmental dialogue.

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## Appendix A: Youth consensus workshop

One of the key learnings that emerged from the research is the idea of youth leadership and youth empowerment as vehicles for enhancing multicultural engagement. The strength and effectiveness of this approach has already been demonstrated in the various initiatives undertaken by the public engagement team.

A workshop was convened of youth volunteers who had participated in previous public engagement initiatives with the Chinese and South Asian communities. The purpose of the workshop was to collectively explore with the youth participants the idea of strengthening the youth leadership component in DSF's public engagement and outreach initiatives.

The workshop was designed to start with ideas from each participant and move to consensus on the following focus question:

What are the elements of a successful youth-driven multicultural engagement program at DSF?

The resulting consensus can be seen in the chart on the following page.

In addition to identifying the central elements of a successful workshop, the participants were also asked to reflect on the following questions.

Given limited time and resources, what would you see as the top priority for DSF to focus on?

Participants were asked to vote on the core program themes that emerged from the workshop. The priority focus areas for DSF, as recommended by the youth participants, are:

- Facilitate and empower youth leadership (7 votes)
- Impactful objectives (6 votes)
- Incorporate diversity in your audience (1 vote)
- Supportive and informative communication (1 vote)
- Spreading the message (1 vote)
- Engaging, motivational events (0 votes)
- Expanding personal networks (0 votes)
- Strengthening community connections (0 votes)

## Appendix A: In their own words

Stakeholders and community members were asked the following question:

**If you were called in to consult with DSF on how they could improve their multicultural engagement program, what would you say?**

The following are responses from interviewees, in their own words:

“For the Chinese community ... you’ve hired well and you hired the correct, the most appropriate person for the position, all I can say is provide her in this case more resources to continue to work so they can even do more. Another thing is developing diverse champions and that could be found in many different places ... not only newcomers, it would be newcomer kids [too].

And the other way ... it’s a continued presence in whatever community you’re working in. Not just one time, but a consistency. To me it’s like branding, you got to be at it all the time so people don’t forget you ... also celebrating those who have been your champions and using them and if they wish — or give permission using them as your, I don’t know, ‘poster person’.”

“...look at your staff — is it representing the communities you want to engage with? My sense is that they have people like Winnie and Harpreet ... other than that, I still didn’t see tons of non-white faces. So if you’re really doing well with the white folks then maybe you should think about getting some ... maybe increasing some expertise and skill with the other cultures in society or groups.”

“For me I would say ... if you engage the citizens of Richmond it is already multi-dimensional, multicultural, multi-diversity; you’ve already got that factor it’s just a matter of will you replicate this every year?

If you come and do a one year thing people will say, ‘Wow! That was great!’ if you don’t look forward to, ‘Hey next earth day, next earth day, next earth day, five years from now earth day we’re going to have this community event.’ And right now, now that we’ve done it for three years we’re heading to our fourth year people can expect that.

So I think that I don’t have a specific multicultural, multi-diversity strategy to engage the diversity of the community, I just know that if you build a strong program in a community that is already multi-diverse then you will bring them out.

And the students on your planning committee are the best ambassadors because they will tell their parents and their families and their uncles and aunts and their grandparents and their siblings and their neighbours of where they live in which is Richmond and they will come out. “

"I would consider number one is the group that you choose to partner with has to have a sense of readiness. Second, the representative of your organization in that collaboration has to have a commitment to the relationship to the other people. They have to be committed because it's not just a job.

I don't think we did it a job. We represented our organizations. I think that we truly cared for each other. I would say that's number two is to have that commitment to the relationship and the process.

And number three, I think there has to be a promise of upfront divisioning. I think we put up some expectation of the collaboration so it's clear. Basically a partnership protocol so that, if we knew this, what each group must bring to the table and what each group is responsible for. Having those protocols established really early is very conducive to successful relationship because even though sometimes things — that's okay.

At least you have a solid foundation of the protocol that we established together that we agreed on that will make this relationship work. Probably those are my top three."

"I would say, recommendation-wise, to have it [REaDY Summit] be entirely youth and have one or two adults that are facilitators and not contributors. So their goal, I would say, would be to be in charge of liabilities. They make sure nothing bad would happen and make sure all discussions and all resolutions were in the confinement of all the laws, and all the respective views of all the partners. Someone who's there to facilitate — not necessarily to drive the discussions.

Because I feel like the biggest barrier between the youth involvement and the REaDY Summit itself was that the youth can't feel ownership of the event because if you didn't do something, the adults will just take over and it would be done.

The issue there is that, if it ever happens and you fail to, as a student, you fail to complete a task. And the adult will take over and do it for you. You feel like it's not necessary that we have to do this, that you have to follow all your responsibilities because someone else in this committee will fill up your task."

"I would 100 per cent start with diet because that's like — I don't know if you ever heard of this saying, 'You can't outrun a bad guy.' And our community is full of the bad guys — full of oil and sugar. It's disgusting.

So I would start by maybe putting up posters in temples and say like, 'Choose healthy food. And some informational diagrams, images or something. And then put that up in religious temples and maybe put up a segment on TV. Like an episode every day. I would talk about the health — as in the physical body, as in exercising — which is important. Which everybody knows but no one does.

Third, I might talk about the environment itself. So set up a show where they can talk in Punjabi about environmental stuff that's going on like exercises or breakthroughs. They would be in Punjabi. Or maybe some sort of segment in the newspaper or on the radio.

Definitely from diet I think you can go into health stuff, how food is made, how it is processed and transported here and the cost of that. And from there you can segue into the environment. I think it would, it might work. It would be different — a different perspective on food."

“I think if we had continuous campaigns — because you just can’t say, ‘We’re here for you.’ And then do one campaign and do one TV show and that’s it.

You need to be continuously involved on the ground level. So I think an annual campaign would be a good idea to say, ‘You know what? We are involved somehow.’

I think the David Suzuki Foundation would be good in involving David Suzuki himself in some of these events. It would be definitely interesting to have a talk with David Suzuki with some focus on Indian culture something like that.”

“I think the key message to say is that nature, the parks that you go and walk in, the trails that you go and walk in, your backyard if you have a garden planted — all of those I think we can all agree are very, very therapeutic for us. And imagine if a company came in, regardless what company it is and wanted to tear that down, how would that make you feel?

And chances are — people have their favourite parks and have their backyard and their garden. They’re not going to want that. And, like, we’re here to tell you that if you don’t raise your voice now that park can easily be taken down.

And you know what? Even the city- sometimes — it’s out of their hands if enough people don’t raise their voice. One or two people is not going to make a difference but a full movement. And we’re not here to sell you anything except sell you your future basically.”

“Take it a step further and target the message to them in their life versus selling them a product, selling them an idea. It is different because they will see that, ‘Hey she’s just engaging us in a conversation, she’s not going to sell us anything.’ So it’s important to engage them in a conversation — in a story.

Share stories back and forth versus having a sales speech, ‘Sign up with us today and you will receive updates etcetera, etcetera, etcetera and you will get free publication from our table. Enter to win this book.’ They don’t care about it — because they don’t.

You need to engage them in a conversation. Bring up your personal experiences. I always bring up my personal stories. And they always get a kick out of it because it’s something that they can connect to you.

I say to them, ‘running in the field in an orchard and you feel back in India. Don’t you want that future from your kids? That was so important to me. I’m so glad my parents own a farm and I have all these natural land.’ And it connects to them right away.”

"[For the 30x30 campaign] I think it would be more effective if we have these templates — if we had a sort of calendar on that template. That way they can put it on their fridge and mark it up for each day of the week that they went out. Or even having like a digital calendar. They could tick off that they went out this week or they went out with their parents.

That is something that I would recommend. If we are preaching the 30x30 day kind of thing, I think we should advertise externally we are doing or a Saturday kind of an activity. Because if we are preaching, we should help them turn up and help be involved.

So I feel it should lead up to something. Before preaching to people that 'You should go out and spend 30 minutes a day outside and do it for 30 days' — I guess it feels very one way. That we are telling them to do something. That is it. So I feel like there is some kind of way to their response — or you know to get their participation by hosting some event for walks to a park or something."

"I think that they are taking the right steps, you know, by doing Punjabi by Nature twice a year in a temple. And came April, I went to the Vaisakhi Parade, which is an Indian Parade in Vancouver, and that was very festive as well.

But in terms of program for youth, I think we have to involve the youth. It is tough because I would like to say to involve the school.

I would use the temples as one method but then there are a lot of South Asian Community groups that may partner with you. We can maybe make people help us host an event. It will be an event based thing where people will be showing their project proposals or kind of demos — but even just events too creates interest.

So I think there are like host a lot of other events anyway for like let us say TIE which is the Indian Entrepreneurs and they host a Diwali Dinner every year. The David Suzuki Foundation had a table there and they would have like you know 15 minutes. I don't know it is a very business oriented thing but maybe we can promote some sort of youth leadership.

They are actually already keeping Science Fair competitions so maybe partnering with the competition itself to have a sustainable kind theme. Promote the challenge to be a sustainable thing and TYE [TiE Young Entrepreneurs] they have what is called the 'Young Entrepreneur Challenge' for high school kids and the university students.

If you partner — I think if we partner with TYE to make sure the challenge was, you know, environmentally focused — that would be cool."

"I don't know where Suzuki, David Suzuki Foundation is on this. But I can tell you how the brain works. The way I have seen is there has been a lot of appeal to the left brain. The left brain is the analytical brain that takes in data. So here are the studies. These are the numbers.

The right brain is the intuitive brain and the emotional brain. The story telling brain. I think there has got to be a lot more appeal to the right brain because that is the brain that actually gives us the decision.

So you know what I would love to see, is kind of giving more appeal to take your left brain data and then appeal it to the right brain — kind of in a story and in something that brings meaning and intuitively connects.

I don't think that we need the left brain so much because I think that we know. You have to move them. Basically not so much to think about it — but to feel about it. You know when you look at marketing and you look at commercials, like for an iPhone, they actually make you cry.

Why not employ those kinds of very powerful meaning type of promotions? I am not for criticizing the path. There is a lot of data collection in the past but I think that it is time to integrate and appeal to both the sides for actions."

"Yes we can work in several ways. One is, we can organize some volunteers to join the program and the volunteer can come back to the family and talk about the job they're already done and some information can come to their family and their community.

And also we can also have some column in our [Chinese] newspaper to talk about the things regarding the environment — the people may be interested so that's quite important.

[Topics we can talk about are] Probably the history of the environment, the environmental history in Canada. Quite easy. You choose one or two pictures. Probably 20 years ago, what it looks like in Vancouver and right now. So what's the difference between those [pictures]?

That's the way people can easily catch some idea, 'Oh it's time we believe [we have] to do something to protect the environment. Otherwise Vancouver might be another Shanghai and Beijing.' So that's the concept .

Also talk about how they can save if they use the concept of the environment. Save some money. Save some costs. Especially because we also have one magazine called Home and Realty Weekly. So you can talk about your house. How can you save energy. How can you protect in terms of the environment. Even the gardening you can talk about. There are a lot of other things. That's the easy way. Nobody is doing this yet.

Use everyday life so that it's easy. They catch the idea. They can accept the concept of the environment. Otherwise it's, 'Oh I don't have much more time.' Or, 'It's not my business.'"

“I think primarily social media [for outreach to youth]. Not necessarily just Facebook posts. Twitter doesn’t do much in my opinion in our demographic. But things beyond Facebook, things like YouTube. Even having short videos one — two minutes that really hit home.

When I say hit home, I mean things like, ‘Oh yeah, I’ve seen my friends there on the video advocating this.’ When they want to watch the video —for whatever reason — means that, yeah, it hits home.

I think Richmond High — if I was to use that, for example, would be making funny videos about someone who doesn’t throw away garbage correctly. And so someone in a superhero costume jumps out and slaps the person and puts the compost to composting.

That’d be funny for my friends to watch and they’d share it. And it certainly doesn’t reach out to large audience but it works for that specific group.”

## Appendix B: List of research participants

I am grateful to the people below who contributed so generously of their time to participate in the research interviews and youth workshop and dialogue.

- Tifa Baidyn
- Dennis Chan
- Kristina Chang
- Jennifer Doel
- Jaskaran Dosange
- Lesley Douglas
- Winnie Hwo
- Harpreet Johal
- Shimi Kang
- Sophika Kostyniuk
- Wendy Lim
- Gavin Li
- Ashish Mohan
- Amrita Parmar
- Peter Robinson
- Ian Tom
- Jessica Wang
- Albert Wei
- Sandra Wilking
- Frank Huang
- Sybil Zhang



David  
Suzuki  
Foundation

SOLUTIONS ARE IN OUR NATURE

## Sustainable diversity

A behind the  
scenes look at how  
the David Suzuki  
Foundation mixes  
multiculturalism in  
the green movement

*(Photo by Brendon Purdy)*

