

Sustainable  
Capacity  
Foundation



# Report

## BIPOC Internship Support

A Showcase of Diversity and Sustainability







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# Introduction



The promotion of diversity within the sustainability sector is of critical importance. But what is diversity? Diversity is a broad term that can pertain to a variety of situations. In short, diversity encompasses the varying social identities, different ways of problem-solving, styles of communication that an individual may have. In any organization, boasting a variety of individuals with varying skill sets can allow for a multitude of perspective-taking when approaching problems and tasks. Thus, also encouraging productivity, creativity, and overall performance. When it comes to issues related to sustainability, creativity and effective problem solving are often needed.

Diversity, although important, is not enough on its own. While diversity refers to the number of different voices at the table, inclusion refers to whether these voices are heard (Liz Fosslie & Mollie West Duffy, 2019). It is incredibly important that a sense of belonging is fostered that allows individuals to voice opinions and sentiments. Moreover, this sense of belonging is sincere in action and intent. Organizational policies and operations must be created to embrace diverse people and opinions, as well as the change that they may provide.

The next missing factor that is adjacent to inclusion and diversity is equity. Equity is intended to assess individual circumstances to be able to allot resources and opportunities within context to create as close to an equal baseline of opportunity as possible (Milken Institute of Public Health, 2021). Within organizations, creating an equal baseline of opportunity means giving further representation to disenfranchised voices.

When implemented tangibly DEI or diversity, equity and inclusion provide organizations and workplaces with improved talent pools, performance, business results, employee engagement and trust, ideas, reputation and reduced employee turnover.

# Funders

The Sustainable Capacity Foundation (SCF) is working to promote diversity in the sustainability sector in Canada. In partnership with Five B Family Foundation and the Inrig Family Foundation, funding was provided to 22 BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) youth in 2021 to participate in a pre-employment placement program that led to a 6-month internship with an environmental organization. This significantly increased diversity among several environmental organizations and also showcased the importance of diversity in hiring and organizational culture.



This report details how SCF has supported diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), through its support of the 2021 BIPOC Interns. The report showcases some of the youth who took part in the program.

Developed in partnership with





# Key Partners

Some of the partner organizations who have hosted internship placements are:





# 2021 BIPOC Intern Profiles

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Here is a showcase of some of the interns detailing why they got into the sustainability field, the importance of diversity within the sector, and their future aspirations!



Aashna Pachai



Aminah Attar



Darlene Coyle



Jacqueline Nguyen



Jody Chow



Nicolas Djems Hyacinthe



Omar Kawar



Paule Bhérier-Breton



Promi Nahar



Sarah Li

# BIPOC Intern Profiles



**Aashna  
Pachai**

Aashna Pachai has been interested in sustainability since an early age. “...since I was a kid, I’d turn lights off when they weren’t in use, I’d turn off the sink whenever I was able to and just generally I think I’ve always been aware of the importance of a healthy environment.”

Aashna’s drive of joining the sustainability sector stems from wanting to be a part of the movement that protects the Earth and fosters a better future for generations to come. She understands that as the climate crisis becomes more prominent, there is an increasing need to lead more sustainable lives.

Aashna believes diversity within the sector is important as “it brings forth multiple perspectives on issues and allows people to learn about and understand different world views. Specifically, in the sustainability sector, diversity allows for us to see a variety of opinions/perspectives when addressing environmental/sustainability issues. People from diverse backgrounds can bring forth several important factors that may not have even been considered in the first place.”

“*With diversity, environmental problems and solutions can be addressed to be more inclusive.*”

**AASHNA PACHAI, BIOSPHERE ECO-CITIES CANADA**



# BIPOC Intern Profiles



**Aminah  
Attar**

Aminah was propelled to join the field of sustainability as a response to the ecological crisis, the need to have everyone in every sector involved, and the desire to include, often excluded, marginalized narratives. As part of Aminah's aspirations for themselves in the sustainability field, they hope to amplify marginalized voices, connect resources to communities or countries that don't have access to increasing climate resiliency, and, ultimately, find their own place in a more just world.

Aminah believes diversity within the sustainability sector is important, "when diverse voices and experiences are not given decision-making power that is when harm occurs. When voices are left out it is less likely that policies or said solutions will be effective or provide resources to everyone equitably and it is more likely that they will create intentional or unintentional harm." Thus, it is important to listen and understand diverse perspectives to be able to transition to a more sustainable world.

*“It is important to listen to and understand diverse perspectives of peoples of diverse backgrounds, abilities, and identities to wholly move towards a more sustainable world.”*

AMINAH ATTAR, GREENING SACRED SPACES

**Greening Sacred Spaces**



Aminah at the GSS booth for an outdoor event (Photo credit: Karli Zschogner)

# BIPOC Intern Profiles



**Darlene  
Coyle**

For as long as Darlene could remember, she has always been concerned about climate change. “I can’t remember exactly where I first learned about it but I remember being in elementary school and being deeply concerned that the natural environment, which I had spent so much time around, was being threatened and discouraged that I wasn’t seeing more people talking about it.”

Darlene wasn’t even aware the sustainability field existed until the final year of her undergraduate degree in political science, where she learned how different ways local governments were attempting to address climate change. After this, she was hooked and wanted to learn more. This led her to complete her Master’s in Environmental Studies at the University of Waterloo, which is something she is very proud of. “My younger self would be very proud of me in my efforts to protect Canada’s freshwater resources and mitigate the effects of climate change by highlighting all the ecosystem services the natural environment provides us with!”

Her aspirations in the sustainability field focus on advocating for stronger and more effective environmental protection policy at all levels of government. When thinking of why diversity is important in relation to sustainability, Darlene thinks about the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. “Not only are those goals global in scope, but they are meant to include and protect all people in society. I think we are finally coming to realize that we need a diversity of people to share their life experiences and perspectives to come up with holistic solutions.”

“I have a lot of fight in me and I am adamant on using this passion to inspire others to do the same. The more people we can inspire to take action, the better our position will be for better policy to protect our future.”

**DARLENE COYLE, WATERSHEDS CANADA**



# BIPOC Intern Profiles



**Jacqueline  
Nguyen**

Jackie chose to get into the sustainability field as “environmental health and social equity are very close to my heart. I felt that by going into the sustainability field I could address both these issues.” Her aspirations include going back to school for a Master’s in Environmental Science, where she plans on working in the ethical fashion sector upon competition.

Jackie believes diversity in the sustainability sector is important as negative impacts of environmental change disproportionately affect marginalized and racialized groups. However, when these groups feel empowered and represented, positive impacts can be made.

“*The narrative of climate change and environmental damage can often feel distant but when people most affected are empowered and able to share their story of how it has changed their lives, the impact is so much greater.*”

JACQUELINE NGUYEN, TUCKER HOUSE



Jacqueline at Tucker House with  
Executive Director Marie Veilleux  
(Photo credit: Karli Zschogner)

# BIPOC Intern Profiles



**Jody  
Chow**

Jody got into the sustainability field for something different, new and challenging to her. While deciding what to study at university, she ultimately chose to get her degree in Environmental and Urban Sustainability as she thought this best fit her interests. “I thought the field of sustainability encompassed different subjects such as geography, science, health, and social studies which would make my post-secondary studies interesting as I will be learning a variety of topics that all intertwine.”

Jody’s aspirations include gaining more research and fieldwork experience to protect local biodiversity and land conservation efforts. In addition, she would like to explore her interest in data storytelling using Esri and ArcGIS.

Jody believes diversity within the sustainability sector can be amplified. “...to learn from each other, work as a team to collectively brainstorm ideas and goals, and build trust... including BIPOC voices from a bottom-up research approach and policy decision-making really benefits individuals and communities with meaningful and impactful results.”

“Including BIPOC voices from a bottom-up research approach and policy decision-making benefit individuals and communities with meaningful and impactful results.”

JODY CHOW, ECO-INTERNSHIPS



# BIPOC Intern Profiles



**Nicolas  
Djems Hyacinthe**

Nicolas' interest in sustainability rose from his studies in ecology. It was there he learned and developed a passion for how science supports environmental work. As a result, he aspires to be a conservation biologist or ecologist and contribute to the field of research within this area. Following this, Nicolas hopes to aid in governmental environmental policy development. "This way, I want to better connect the science community with government decisions hoping this will lead to more sustainable and environmentally sound policies in the future."

Nicolas believes diversity within the sustainability sector is important for the same reasons it is important in any other sector. "Having people with different backgrounds and values seeing a problem from multiple angles helps in getting a more holistic view on any problem and increases the chances of coming up with the most optimal solution." He also believes that diversity in the sector will ensure that the needs of everybody are considered and that everybody will get a voice in the decisions being made and work being done.

*"Diversity in the sustainability sector will ensure that the needs of all are considered and that the less privileged groups get a voice in the decision and work being done which is crucial since often they are the most affected by climate change and the most reliant on their environment."*

**NICOLAS DJEMS HYACINTHE, FRONTENAC ARCH BIOSPHERE**



Nicolas at Festival of Trails  
(Photo credit: Karli Zschogner)

# BIPOC Intern Profiles



**Omar  
Kavar**

Omar chose to get into the sustainability sector to focus on helping create a greener and more habitable planet for future generations. “Promoting sustainability and encouraging our communities to participate in the global mission creates the weapon we need to fight climate threats.” He found the Sustainable and Renewable Energy Engineering program at Carleton interesting, and it was there he decided to expand his passion for a cleaner planet to a profession.

Omar looks forward to contributing to the sustainability field by developing renewable energy technology that can mitigate the impacts and consequences of climate change. He aspires to grow his network in the sustainability field and build strong connections and partnerships with like-minded people who share similar passions and goals.

Omar believes diversity is always an asset on a team. “Diversity in the sustainability sector strengthens a community by creating an inclusive atmosphere for all. In a diverse sustainability sector, individuals can utilize their different skill sets, experiences, and strategies from across the world and integrate them to form something unique for our environment.”

“*In a diverse sustainability sector, individuals can utilize their different skill sets, experiences, and strategies from across the world and integrate them to form something unique for our environment.*”

OMAR KAWAR, SUSTAINABLE EASTERN ONTARIO



Omar at Energy Cube display with fellow interns and team members (Photo credit: Karli Zschogner)

# BIPOC Intern Profiles



**Paule  
Bhérier-Breton**

Paule chose to get into the field of sustainability when she learned about the current environmental and societal issues that she, and future generations, are facing and will continue to face if we continue down our current path. “When learning about those different issues (e.g., environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, famines, droughts, etc.), I truly became worried about the impact that we had on our planet and what that meant for our future, that I decided to pursue my studies in sustainability - focusing in sustainable agricultural development. In a sense, the general anxiety and uncertainty of climate change and global warming lead me to this field!”

Her aspirations and goals include working for the The Food and Agriculture Organization, which is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger and improve nutrition and food security. In addition, Paule hopes to be involved in international development projects that focus on sustainable agriculture, especially in Western Sub-Saharan Africa. She is very passionate and curious about climate change resiliency and the promotion of biodiversity in agriculture.

Paule believes diversity within the sustainability sector is important as it plays a crucial role in developing long-lasting, creative solutions and initiatives. She also recognizes that having diversity is becoming more expected in today’s age. “...diversity is not only needed for societal and environmental well-being, but it is slowly becoming the norm for organizations, businesses and workplaces to be more inclusive - and rightfully so.”

“I truly think that in the sustainability sector, we not only need diversity in terms of ethnic backgrounds, but it is crucial to include people coming from different socio-economic backgrounds with different levels of education to truly foster a sustainable future for the next generations.”

**PAULE BHÉRIER-BRETON, OTTAWA ECO-TALENT NETWORK**



# BIPOC Intern Profiles



**Promi  
Nahar**

Promi developed a foundation to act on climate justice and environmental issues after completing her degree in environmental studies. In her career, Promi has integrated her background in environmental science and planning to create more sustainable communities and regions resilient to ecological change. She has also worked on projects to engage youth in political action around climate change, promoted awareness around food security issues, and supported youth in the pandemic recovery.

Since recently completing her Master's in Environmental Science, Promi hopes to further learn about sustainability, social and political struggles and science related to climate change. "I intend to explore the local and global environmental and ecological changes, and the efforts made by the government and organizations to mitigate such issues. I seek opportunities that pave the way for innovative sustainability and climate change solutions." Promi also aspires to become an environmental consultant where she can use the experiences she's gained to make a difference.

Promi believes diversity within the sustainability sector is important as it is linked both globally and locally. "As we experience global climate change, it impacts the local environment as well. It brings different perspectives and lived experiences from a variety of people by bridging gaps and bringing positive influence and reach. In addition, it embraces diverse communities to create a more resilient world."

*"In each professional and volunteer position that I pursue, I integrate my background in environmental sciences and planning to create just communities and regions resilient to ecological challenges and change."*

**PROMI NAHAR, CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK**

# BIPOC Intern Profiles



**Sarah Li**

Sarah got into the sustainability field due to her love for the outdoors. Growing up hiking, camping and kayaking in British Columbia led her to have a strong connection with wildlife and nature. She aspires to work as an environmental consultant to help corporations be sustainable.

Sarah believes diversity within the sustainability sector is important as it leads to creative solutions. She also recognizes climate change as an equality issue, therefore needing diversity and equality when addressing environmental issues.

“*Having diversity brings in different perspectives and more creativity in solving problems or coming up with ideas. However, climate change is ultimately also an equality issue, and you cannot solve environmental issues without considering race/ diversity/ inequality.*”

SARAH LI, ALGONQUIN TO ADIRONDACKS COLLABORATIVE



**A2A**

Algonquin to  
Adirondacks  
Collaborative



# Conclusions

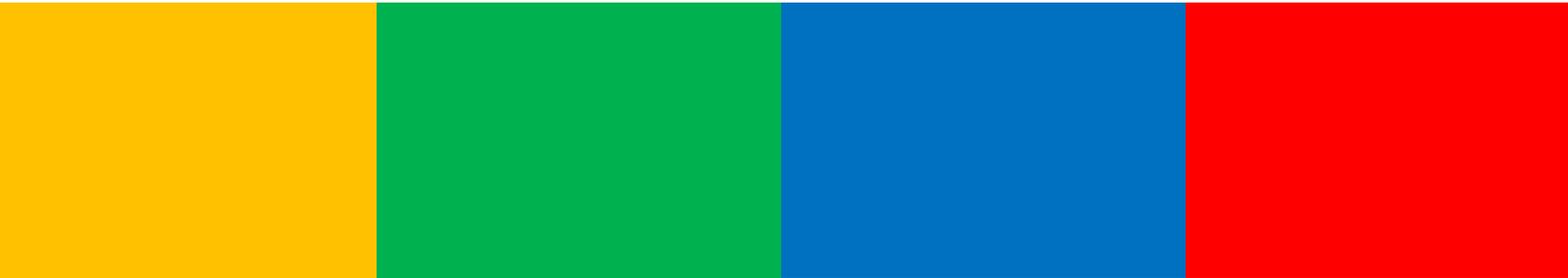
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The BIPOC Internship Support was provided to interns who self-identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Colour. The initiative seeks to support their training, career development and leadership as they enter the nonprofit sector. It also provides them with spaces and opportunities to come together to share their unique perspectives, experiences and challenges in the sector.

These discussions can inform our organizations on how to better implement best practices in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. We also seek to recognize and celebrate the contributions and work of our amazing BIPOC interns through promotional materials and public events.

The Sustainable Capacity Foundation is proud to support BIPOC youth in the sustainability sector.







Sustainable  
Capacity  
Foundation 

The Apartment: Sustainability Office  
2203 Alta Vista Drive,  
Ottawa, ON  
K1H 7L9

1-888-385-1154  
[www.sustainablecapacityfoundation.ca](http://www.sustainablecapacityfoundation.ca)  
[info@sustainablecapacityfoundation.ca](mailto:info@sustainablecapacityfoundation.ca)

