



**BIPOC
FELLOWSHIP**

SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP & SUPPORT

Sustainable
Capacity
Foundation 



Report

BIPOC Fellowship

A Showcase of the Founding BIPOC Fellows



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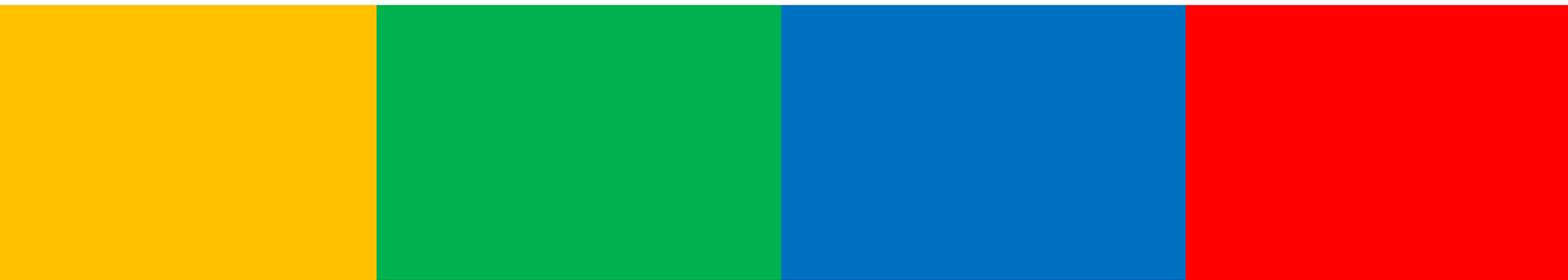




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Introduction



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.

But 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.



Funding Partners

The Sustainable Capacity Foundation (SCF) is working to promote diversity in the sustainability sector in Canada. With funding from Five B Family Foundation and the Inrig Family Foundation, support was provided to 3 BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) Fellows in partnership with the Capacity Building Institute and Sustainable Eastern Ontario.

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



History of the BIPOC Fellowship

The Sustainable Capacity Foundation (SCF) partnered with the Capacity Building Institute (CBI) in 2021 to launch the BIPOC Fellowship. In its pilot year in the Ottawa region, the BIPOC Fellowship has invested in three outstanding local environmental leaders with support from Sustainable Eastern Ontario.

The objective of the BIPOC Fellowship is to support and encourage leadership from those identifying as BIPOC in the nonprofit environmental sector. In addition, the Fellows established key initiative goals:

- 1 ENGAGE
- 2 CONNECT
- 3 SUPPORT

The goals are to (1) engage, (2) connect, and (3) support BIPOC in the sustainability sector through a series of workshops, events, and the sharing of resources and tools.



Celebrating BIPOC Leaders



The BIPOC Fellowship recognizes and celebrates BIPOC that are strong leaders with valuable perspectives to offer in the sustainability sector. The BIPOC Fellowship program acknowledges the unique challenges BIPOC face when entering, developing, and striving to become leaders in all work sectors.

The BIPOC Fellowship provides an open, safe, and supportive space for BIPOC to express themselves and share their experiences. This program also provides members equitable access to tools and resources that aid them in their sustainability careers. Examples can be in the form of workshops, supportive circles, group events, and online forums to help address the ongoing challenges BIPOC face in their professional careers.

With rising threats of climate change and perceived resource scarcity, it is imperative more than ever for everyone to come together to create a more resilient and fair world. These complex issues require diverse and inclusive approaches to find timely solutions that are effective and just.

It is critical to note that the fellowship program is not for BIPOC to do the work of educating Non-BIPOC about what they must do to be diverse, inclusive, and respectful, but to create a space for BIPOC to be themselves and share their experiences and challenges.



Key Partners

The partner organizations involved in the BIPOC Fellowship are:



Founding BIPOC Fellow Profiles



Nasha Choudhury



Jean Ked Neptune



Julie Servant

Founding BIPOC Fellow Profiles

Nasha Choudhury



**Nasha
Choudhury**

Nasha Choudhury is the Program Manager at both Ottawa Biosphere Eco City (OBEC) and Biosphere Eco-Cities (BECC). She also works as an Eco Executive Director to support sustainability. Nasha has Bengali roots and is working to build her leadership in the sector. She studied International Development and Globalization at the University of Ottawa and since graduating, has been passionate about working in community organizing and engagement on social justice and sustainability issues. She believes working at a grassroots level is the best way to connect diverse individuals to big issues by listening and amplifying their voices.

Having been with OBEC for three years, Nasha has always been passionate about working at a grassroots and community level, while also working directly with individuals. She aspires to “just continue encouraging people to live sustainably, but also in a socially just way, because it’s really important to address social justice issues around climate change since they go hand in hand.”

Nasha was born and raised in Ottawa, where she also received her Bachelor’s degree from the University of Ottawa, studying International Development and Globalization. With Bengali roots, Nasha grew up in a traditional Bengali household, which she credits to be a big part of who she is today and is something she is proud of.

As the environmental sector predominately lacks diversity, Nasha recognizes that as a BIPOC, it can be difficult to express opinions and share experiences as there is an overwhelming feeling of isolation when not surrounded by diversity. Not only can there be a sense of isolation, but Nasha further explains that underrepresentation can also lead to low self worth and a lack of confidence.

Founding BIPOC Fellow Profiles

Nasha Choudhury



“They think, oh, well, you know, you’re here, and we’ve included you in this space. But that you could still feel very intimidated, you could still feel very overwhelmed, you could still feel like you’re not sure if you’re saying the right thing, or if your opinion is counting as much as someone else’s.”

Nasha believes unless this gap is addressed, there cannot be true solutions to climate change and other environmental challenges as “You can’t have climate justice without social justice and without having the voices of all of all people in the conversation.”

This is why Nasha is excited to be a part of the BIPOC Fellowship.



I’m so happy that it exists. And I think it’s something that we need to continue to push for, as we move into the future.

NASHA CHOUDURY

As one of the first fellows, Nasha has been able to take a leadership role in shaping a more diverse, inclusive, equitable and just environmental nonprofit sector. One of her successes as part of the Fellowship includes running a workshop for BIPOC on diversity and sustainability which aimed to address concerns about the lack of representation within the sector, barriers and challenges BIPOC have regarding work within the sector and how the sector can encourage and value BIPOC perspectives and knowledge in promoting a more sustainable and longstanding future.



Nasha at a sustainability Tree Talk

Founding BIPOC Fellow Profiles

Jean Ked Neptune



**Jean
Ked Neptune**

Ked Neptune is the Deputy Director at Sustainable Eastern Ontario (SEO) and part of the Eco Executive Director team. He is originally from Haiti, and has his professional background in the environmental sector. He currently leads the Francophone NCENN hosted by SEO and the BIPOC Fellowship Roundtable.

Prior to working for SEO, Ked spent 15 years working on issues related to climate change in Haiti. Specifically, Ked had the opportunity to work for the Ministry of the Environment, and then with the United Nations Development Program specializing in forest reforestation, and watershed management. Ked himself was involved in many interesting and important projects in his home country. One project that Ked took a part in his personal capacity was the creation of an agroecological and tourist farm.

With his interest in the environment also came his interest in politics and the eventual integration of the two. However, politics in Haiti comes with a degree of danger that Ked did not feel comfortable living with and thought it was best to remove himself from politics in Haiti and move to Canada. In Canada, Ked was directed to SEO by the YMCA's employment services, SEO were looking to employ someone who was as passionate about the environment as they were, and there happened to be a match.



I think for me, talking about sustainability, is to have equality, economic, social and environmental equality that we hope to have and that everyone has a truly emancipated life in the environment.

KED NEPTUNE, BIPOC FELLOWSHIP, 2021

Founding BIPOC Fellow Profiles

Jean Ked Neptune



From his experience, Ked believes that to improve the environmental footprint in a country, leaders need to effectively communicate with many diverse individuals externally as well as internally through a variety of variables such as race, culture and language. As evidence of Ked's commitment to centring diversity through communicating and networking, Nasha and Ked put on a Diversity and Sustainability Workshop together for the SEO network in 2021. Moreover, Ked led a series of francophone workshops in 2021 surrounding environmental topics.



We will go search for [francophones], educate them, raise their awareness so as to integrate them directly into environmental debates.

KED NEPTUNE, BIPOC FELLOW

Ked believes it is essential for the environmental movement to understand how to manage diverse individuals and possess cultural intelligence to succeed in their goals. In a recent video done by SEO on their BIPOC Fellows Ked states,



The other people approach the term BIPOC Fellowship in a social sense, to see social inclusion, inclusion of community- of voices of ethnic minorities, to integrate or better, to permit them to engage their full civic and political rights. But, we others, we saw above the possibility to also integrate in the movement, in the sustainable development movement.

KED NEPTUNE, BIPOC FELLOW



Founding BIPOC Fellow Profiles

Julie Servant



**Julie
Servant**

Julie is the Executive Director of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Network (FABN) and Runner for the Indigenous Circle for Canadian Biosphere Regions, who has been hard at work educating others on how we can protect our land and dismantle narratives surrounding Indigenous people.

Julie grew up with both Anishinaabe and French-Canadian heritage and is of the M'Chigeeng First Nation on Manitoulin Island. She now resides in Southeastern Ontario but has lived all over Canada which allowed her to gain an advanced socio-ecological perspective. Julie also took a multidisciplinary approach to education. She studied Biology at Vancouver Island University, where she gained interest in plant medicine, from both her schooling and grandparents. The intersection of human health and ecology is what led Julie into non-profit work.

When Julie moved to Ontario and first became active in non-profit leadership, she noticed that “board members... conservation players and organizations [were] like, ‘Well there’s no native people here. Where are the native people?’” To challenge that mentality, Julie would announce, “I’m right here”, and began educating others on “land acknowledgments and started talking more about... where the [Indigenous] communities are”.

Founding BIPOC Fellow Profiles

Julie Servant



Julie's hardwork, knowledge, and skills led her to FABN. FABN is the 12th out of 18 biosphere regions in the country and encompasses an area of 2700 sq. km. FABN's mission is to implement the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere programme to improve relationships between people and their environments. The work Julie and her team does is impactful and aligns with their mission; they provide scientific-based educational material, a variety of kid-friendly nature programs, and facilitate local environment-centric events. Their vision is also one that can be appreciated by many: to contribute to strengthening sustainable community development, celebrating the interconnectedness of nature, livelihood, well-being, and culture, for this and future generations.

When Julie is not working towards a more equitable future, she spends her time researching health, learning land-based skills, and playing lego and Minecraft with her two children.

“Julie's Indigenous knowledge comes into play in other aspects of her life too: “Wisdom is represented by the beaver”, says Julie, “because the beaver knows how to use its skills and its gifts, and that's what it does”. Like the beaver, Julie is “hoping to find... where [her] skills can best be used for the land”.

**Frontenac Arch
Biosphere**





Conclusions

Canada is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world, yet due to systemic racism, few of our environmental organizations reflect true Canadian diversity. Too many BIPOC professionals are marginalized from leadership positions and often leave the sustainability sector to pursue opportunities elsewhere. That is why there is a real need for a BIPOC Fellowship program that advances the interests and opportunities of BIPOC.

The BIPOC Fellowship is founded on the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion and aims to provide resources, support, and safety to BIPOC leaders. The funding from this program enables individuals to be recruited into leadership positions and have opportunities to learn and advance their careers. The intended benefits of this program are for BIPOC in the sustainability sector; however, by providing real leadership opportunities to BIPOC, nonprofit organizations can experience cultural, policy, and practical changes that make these organizations more inclusive and just.

“The Sustainable Capacity Foundation is proud to amplify BIPOC voices through the BIPOC Fellowship.”



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