



Ottawa - Capital of Canada (2022). Adventures. photograph, Ottawa. Retrieved February 22, 2022, from <https://adventures.com/canada/attractions/cities-towns/ottawa/>.

# Social Justice, Climate Action, & Community Potential

BIPOC FELLOW  
NASHA  
CHOUDHURY



Nasha Choudhury (n.d.). Eco Executive Director. photograph, Ottawa. Retrieved February 22, 2022, from <https://www.ecoexecutivedirector.ca/about>.

The Sustainable Capacity Foundation is honoured to award a \$10,000 grant to Biosphere Eco-Cities Canada (BECC) and Ottawa Biosphere Eco-City (OBEC) for their support of Black Indigenous Person of Colour (BIPOC) Fellow, Nasha Choudhury. Nasha is an experienced Program Manager at both OBEC and BECC. She also works as an Eco Executive Director at a social enterprise and namesake, Eco Executive Director that helps small-shop non-profit environmental organizations across Canada that need administrative support.

Long before she entered the environmental sector, Nasha was always passionate about working with people directly to improve sustainability and other quality of life at a grassroots-community level. Focusing on the grassroots level is what Nasha considers the best way to connect diverse individuals to big issues by listening and amplifying their voices. In her own words, *"there is so much potential in the community, and [I] want to help bring that potential to life"*. Nasha has turned this potential energy into achievable action through her dedicated years of serving the local Ottawa community by facilitating public events, championing social justice movements, and bringing awareness to pertinent sustainability issues. Nasha has a gentle and humanistic approach to change. 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 to Bengali parents. She was influenced by both Canadian and Bengali cultures, which gave her a unique and worldly perspective. While she integrated into Canadian life, her family taught and instilled Bengali culture and values that are a foundation of who she is today. While she is proud of her heritage, Nasha recognizes that—

—as a BIPOC, it can be difficult to express opinions and share experiences in a sector that greatly lacks diversity. In predominantly white-centric spaces, it is easy for diverse perspectives to be missed and for BIPOC to feel isolated, even when surrounded by well-intentioned coworkers. In an example, Nasha deliberates, *"[other sustainability leaders] 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"*. Over time, these feelings of isolation, misunderstanding, and caution to speak can lead to low self-worth and a lack of confidence.

The lack of real diversity within the sustainability sector is problematic. Nasha believes unless this issue is addressed, there cannot be true solutions to climate change and other environmental challenges because *"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 in the first cohort of BIPOC Fellows, *"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 has had many successes as part of the Fellowship program. Notably, she has run a workshop for BIPOC on diversity and sustainability that addressed 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. All of these programs are catalysts to a more sustainable and longstanding future. The Sustainable Capacity Foundation is proud to be a part of Nasha's leadership and sustainability journey.