



Reflecting on our progress in 2020 and 2021: Our impact report



In memoriam: Dr. Elder Dave Courchene Jr., Nii Gaani Aki Inini



We wanted to honour and commemorate Dr. Elder Dave Courchene Jr., Nii Gaani Aki Inini or Leading Earth Man, an Elder and knowledge keeper of the Anishinaabe Nation and the founder of Turtle Lodge, who passed away in December 2021, beginning his journey into the Spirit world.

We spoke with Elder Dave in 2021 as part of our [Colour Commentary](#) series, and his talk left an indelible mark on us. His Colour Commentary profile leaves us a lifetime of wisdom to reflect upon and guide us: to always lead with kindness and humility, and to think of nature not as a series of resources for mankind to exploit, but as our kin.

Photo from Turtle Lodge.

Foreword

The deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor in 2020 were a turning point for many, bringing about an awakening to those who had overlooked the tragedies of racism and societal inequities, and igniting bold action across many quarters.

In our field of sustainability, where we are focused on making the world a better place, we were forced to ask ourselves: what is a better place? And for whom? We wanted to explore how we could be better allies and advocates for fellow Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) sustainability practitioners, and to do our part to shift the wider sustainability ecosystem to create a more inclusive sector in a lasting and meaningful way.

Diversity in Sustainability (DiS) started as an idea floating in our heads in June 2020. As we start 2022, we wanted to reflect back on our growing organization and community, and document what we have accomplished with your support. We also wanted to share our plans for this coming year.

In 2020/2021, our achievements include:



Hundreds
of people consulted
to create Diversity in
Sustainability



Thousands
of volunteer hours committed
to building DiS during the
pandemic by co-founders and
other volunteers



**1,500 respondents | 30+
interviews 750 downloads**
of our State of Equity, Diversity and
Inclusion in Sustainability Survey



**110
applications**
globally for
Advisory Panel
leading to a 14
member panel



76
applications
for **2** intern
roles



Over 1,400
members in our DiS Google
Group

270 job opportunities and
43 grant/ scholarship/ event
opportunities shared in 4
months



21
Colour
Commentary
profiles
completed

As we head into the third year of the pandemic and are witness to a growing number of extreme weather events, it is increasingly apparent that we need to work together to build a sustainable future. Closer to home, we also recognize that as a volunteer run organization, this is incredibly hard work mentally, emotionally and physically, and we must be kind to ourselves as well.

Your support helps us as we continue to grow. Whether you can support by providing your time or even funds, please join us as we continue to build Diversity in Sustainability. As always, reach out to us at info@diversityinsustainability.com if you have any questions.

In gratitude,



Heather Mak
Co-Founder



Marie Jurcevic
Co-Founder



Michael Harvey
Co-Founder

About Diversity in Sustainability

We are a member network initiated by diverse sustainability professionals aimed at increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion within the field of sustainability. We aim to do this by equipping current and future Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) sustainability leaders with the skills, networks and resources to accelerate the transition to a sustainable and just future. We also aim to shift the industry to become more inclusive.

Our vision:

A sustainable and prosperous world built through equity and inclusion.

Our values:

Championing Diversity - We believe that honouring individual identities and drawing on the differences in where we come from, what we've experienced, and how we think can greatly enrich the sustainability sector.

Ensuring Equity - We believe in catalyzing outcomes that ensure everyone has access to the same opportunities.

Cultivating Continuous Learning - We believe that when addressing complex issues, we may not always get it right in the first place - but we have the curiosity and interest to ensure we keep learning and unlearning with humility.

Activating Systemic Thinking - We believe in applying a systemic lens to diagnosing and solving complex challenges.

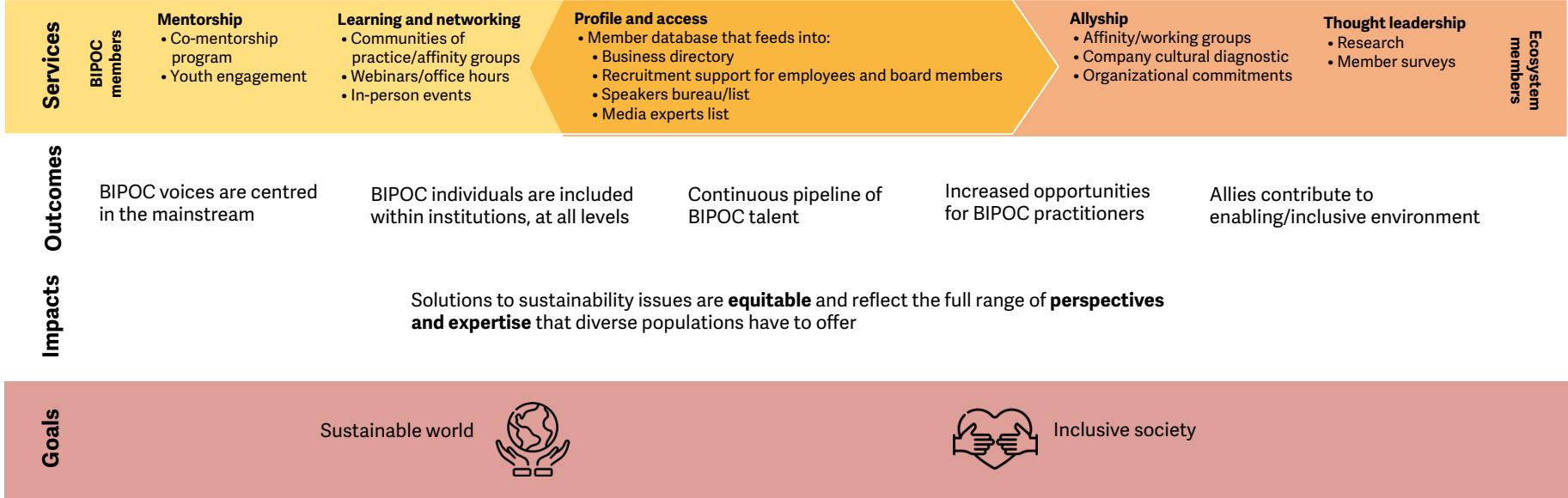
Driving Collaboration - We believe that the most important issues cannot be solved alone and solutions must be co-created with the people affected.

Embedding Transparency – We believe in operating with transparency by communicating internally and externally with honesty, integrity, consistency and respect.

Creating Impact – We believe in prioritizing constructive actions that create a lasting, meaningful and positive impact within our communities and sector.

Our theory of change

We developed a theory of change in consultation with hundreds of people to better understand where we could make a difference. This has helped us shape where our services are and will be focused, and this report documents our impacts and our plans for 2022 across our pillars including profile and access, mentorship, learning and networking, thought leadership and allyship.



Profile and access

One of the key pillars of Diversity in Sustainability is profile and access – ensuring that BIPOC practitioners are able to increase their profile and access to opportunities, and also for the wider ecosystem to see and access untapped pools of talent.

Google Group

We started our [Google Group](#) in July 2021 as a way for the BIPOC and allies community to share opportunities directly with each other. We currently have over 1,400 members, and from August 2021 until the end of December 31, 2021, 270 job opportunities and 43 grant/scholarship/event opportunities have been shared in the group.

In November 2021, we implemented a new policy in our Google Group to promote equity: ensuring that hiring managers share (1) pay ranges for roles, and (2) actions that their organizations are taking to ensure inclusivity. We hope that this policy sets a precedent in our industry for more transparency and inclusivity, similar to the measures taken or to be taken by places like Colorado or New York.

“*Thank you for creating a new normal around best practices in role postings that benefit everyone. Hopefully we can get this to spread; I know I’m bringing up these exact issues in our team.*”

“*Just writing to say I appreciate y’all’s bold and much needed guidelines on job postings. Thank you for setting the tone.*”

In Fall 2021, we also started a weekly digest of curated job opportunities within our Google Group, which has led to a spike in interest for our group, with many members sharing our emails with friends and colleagues.

Focus in 2022

Job board

In 2022, we will build a paid job board on our website for employers who wish to profile their job opportunities for a longer duration of time and across multiple channels.

Colour Commentary

One of our first initiatives for Diversity in Sustainability was [Colour Commentary](#), where we highlight the journeys of different BIPOC sustainability professionals, from those who are new to sustainability to those who are more tenured. Each person has had a different career focus, whether it is in green buildings, responsible investment, accessible design, building the Indigenous bioeconomy, circular economy, or EDI. In 2020 and 2021, we featured 21 different practitioners and staff/volunteers. Thank you to all those who participated, and we look forward to reaching out to others this year for you to share your stories!

- Mamadou Abou-Sarr
- Christine Bader
- Priya Bala-Miller
- Hiwot Belai
- Rida Bilgrami
- Jarami Bond
- Elder Dr. Dave Courchene Jr.
- Ray Dhirani
- Kevin D’Souza
- Andrew Gonzales
- Shefaly Gunjal
- Tyrone Hall
- Marie Jurcevic
- Heather Mak
- Karista Olson
- Mei-Yee Man Oram
- Dinesh Ram
- Christian Smith
- Patience Tram
- Monica Wilson
- Tiffany Wong

Focus in 2022

Database

Progress continues in earnest for the development of our database that will profile BIPOC sustainability practitioners for job and board opportunities, speaking engagements and media expert requests. We are building a taxonomy of topics of expertise for our database and will start soliciting feedback on it in early 2022.

Mentorship, learning and networking

Two other interrelated pillars are those of mentorship and learning and networking. With these two, we aim to build the capacity and community of BIPOC sustainability professionals.

Community Calls

We hosted our first Community Call on November 12, 2021. Our Community Calls are informal discussions, where we solicit and compile our members' questions and queries in advance and draw on the collective knowledge of the community to answer. We had about 30 attendees, and we discussed thematic areas including career advice, trends, and tactical questions on embedding equity, diversity and inclusion into sustainability organizations. Based on the active discussions in our sessions, we believe there is a lot more ground to cover in 2022 in our Community Calls!

In Conversation With... Tyrone Hall and Zubair Zakir: Reflections on COP26



Our In Conversation With.... series is focused on giving a platform to BIPOC sustainability practitioners. Our first session was with Tyrone Hall and Zubair Zakir, both of whom were at COP26 in Glasgow. They provided their insights on what happened, the realities of COP processes and when/where to get involved for maximum impact, and the role we all need to play in getting to a 1.5°C future. They also covered some major developments in climate finance and adaptation. The video can also be accessed [here](#).

Focus in 2022

Mentorship Pilots

We are in the process of creating tools for our mentorship program, with our intern Hiwot Belai developing materials with help from the board and advisory panel member Katie Kross.

There are a number of mentorship models we are hoping to pilot in 2022, including:

- **An intergenerational mentorship program** – recognizing that younger professionals have as much to teach older professionals as they have to learn from them.
- **Cohort approach** – having several professionals of similar seniority act as each other's rapid response team.
- **Fireside chats** – having senior professionals in sustainability provide a view of their journeys and impart advice to others. (how is this different from In Conversation? Is it one on one?)
- **Speed mentorship** – a series of short conversations (between whom?) about specific questions, providing mentoring and networking to participants in the field.
- **Making it past the middle** – our research has found that a disproportionate number of BIPOC professionals advance to middle management levels in sustainability, but find difficulty advancing to the most senior levels. We want to create the necessary conditions for them to lead organizations and become champions for inclusion.

Research and Allyship

The aim of our research pillar is to create valuable research for our sector on the multi-faceted issues around equity, diversity and inclusion. The aim of our allyship pillar is to help non-BIPOC communities to become champions of inclusion.

Our main focal point in 2020 and 2021 was our survey.

The State of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Sustainability Survey



We created The State of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Sustainability Survey to identify the baseline of demographics in the sector, barriers to entry and advancement, practitioners' experiences in EDI in the sector, and organizational commitments to EDI. In order to widen distribution, we established relationships with 21 partners:

- Acre
- Buzzword
- Canadian Business for Social Responsibility
- Canadian Renewable Energy Association
- Centre for International Sustainable Development Law
- Corporate Knights
- Ecobabes
- Energy UK
- Futerra
- Future-Fit Foundation
- Her Climb
- IAC
- Institute of Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability
- PAC Packaging Consortium
- REALPAC
- Reconsidered
- Responsible Investment Association
- RW Institute
- WOC/CS
- Wolf and Player

We obtained 1,500 responses to the Survey and interviewed over 30 people to provide added dimension to the survey responses. We released the final report on September 16, 2021. As of December 31, 2021 there have been approximately 750 downloads of the report.

We held a Survey Results preview webinar with Acre, which had approximately 120 attendees. The webinar recording can be viewed [here](#).

We also secured sponsorship from several organizations, including Buzzword, Loblaw Companies Limited, Nutrien, QuadReal, and Weinreb Group.

The Survey was featured in a number of media publications in Canada, US and UK, including:

- Canada: [Corporate Knights](#), [Globe and Mail](#), [Toronto Star](#), [Advisors Edge/Investment Executive](#), JWN, [Closing the Loop](#)
- US: [Greenbiz \(podcast\)](#), [Reconsidered](#)
- UK: Edie ([article](#) and [podcast](#)), Future-Fit, [ERM – Corporate Progress and Action on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#)

We have also presented the Survey Results information to organizations such as UNPRI, Wildlife and Countryside Link UK and the Welsh government.

Overall, the survey has been an enormously helpful tool for engagement and awareness building for our organization, and we believe it has spurred many discussions, many of which we hope to continue into 2022.

Focus in 2022

Inclusion Blueprint Dialogues

As a follow-up to the Survey, we will be organizing Inclusion Blueprint Dialogues in 2022 and 2023. The first session is planned for February/March 2022. The goal of these sessions is to engage in targeted conversations with key stakeholders such as, amongst others, recruitment firms, HR professionals, students and organizational leaders, and communities of colour, to reflect on the results of the Survey, explore challenges, and find solutions to foster EDI within the field of sustainability. Findings and input received from these conversations will be compiled into sessions summaries and a final summary document. To ensure that the sector takes action, we will create a pledge for each stakeholder group in our sector to foster EDI within their sphere of influence. We will also seek sponsorship in 2022 for these dialogues.

Team updates

Advisory Panel

In order to guide the activities of Diversity in Sustainability, early in 2021 we began the process to find our Advisory Panel. We received over 110 applications and selected 14 individuals who we believed would offer complementary skill sets and expertise, with the aim of being intergenerational and intersectional.

- Christine Bader
- Priya Bala-Miller
- Kevin D'Souza
- Talynn English
- Andrew Gonzales
- Rekha Grennan
- Shefaly Gunjal
- Charlotte King
- Katie Kross
- Sandip Lalli
- Kiana Michaan
- Farron Rickerby-Nishi
- Rosie Towe
- Carissa Wong

You can read the bios of these incredible individuals on our [website](#).

We have held quarterly advisory panel meetings, and to date, have had three Advisory Panel meetings. Our discussions have included a review of our principles, business plan, survey, funding, and other strategic planning. We have detailed summaries of our discussions on our website under [News](#).

Interns – Hiwot Belai and Patience Tram

Recognizing that we needed additional support as we scale up our organization, we started hiring for a Membership and Communications internship in June 2021. Our goal was to ensure that we could provide our interns with meaningful opportunities to gain experience in the sector of sustainability, while ensuring a living wage, as aligned with our values. We had 76 applicants, and shortlisted and interviewed 10 applicants. We were very lucky to have Hiwot Belai join us in July 2021 and Patience Tram join us in September 2021. All of our interns are working remotely during the pandemic.

Hiwot Belai, Membership and Communications Intern



Hiwot has been indispensable and instrumental in getting our CRM in shape, overseeing communications and outreach to potential members, setting up our Google Group, starting the development of our mentorship program, supporting our events, and conducting research such as a JEDI toolkit and the survey. Hiwot also completed a Colour Commentary, which you can read [here](#).

“Working with DiS has allowed me to fully realize that inactivity or nonchalance on the DEI front is really complicity in the exclusion of BIPOC and marginalized professionals. A major takeaway from this role is that diversity shouldn't be a separate unit of an organization, but a mindset incorporated into every one of its operations to promote equity, efficiency and even sustainability itself. As a life sciences student looking to go into the public policy side of things, this role has helped me to always keep in mind any decision's contribution to equity and sustainability and to ensure holistic approaches to global problems.”

Patience Tram, Research and Engagement Intern



Patience Tram supported our research into Turtle Island based Indigenous organizations, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and Tribal Colleges, as well as our development of our job board. Patience will be graduating from Mount Royal University in April 2022, and we wish her the best as she finishes her last semester. You can read more about Patience in her Colour Commentary [here](#).

“As my first remote working experience, working with Diversity in Sustainability helped me build my confidence in my skills in the workplace, and I found it meaningful to be able to build the foundations for future engagement with Indigenous communities and HBCUs.”

We thank ECO Canada and the Government of Canada for their partial subsidies of our internships.

Focus in 2022

Volunteer and people strategy

Anjan Mahrok, a DiS volunteer, has completed a review of our organization and is in the process of creating a **volunteer strategy** for us in 2022 to support the core team and advisory panel.

As the organization continues to grow in 2022/2023 and we secure steady funding, we will also look to hire **full-time staff** to take care of operational priorities.

Funding

As an organization, we aim to be funded from diverse sources to be resilient over time: through membership dues, corporate sponsorship, grants, foundation/charitable and government funding. Each source has its own sets of benefits and challenges.

In March this year, we laid out our Principles of Engagement as a complement to our values, to lay out our approach for our partners. We have included them on our [website](#).

Start-up funding for Diversity in Sustainability has to date, been provided by Heather Mak Consulting Inc. and Marie Jurcevic. We have also received corporate sponsorship from our Survey (Buzzword, Loblaw Companies Limited, Nutrien, Quad Real, Weinreb Group), government funding for our internships (ECO Canada and Government of Canada), and donations from the following individuals:

- Christine Bader
- Cindy Chao
- ECO Canada and Government of Canada
- Leah Haygood
- Charlotte King
- Alex Kruzel
- Shannon Mullins
- Darren Vanstone

The organization has also had hundreds of hours of unpaid time from the co-founders and volunteers over the past year. We believe that we will need to find sustainable funding in order to hire full time staff for the organization over the longer term.

Giving Tuesday

To try our hand at grassroots fundraising, we ran a GivingTuesday campaign at the end of November 2021 to raise awareness for the work of DiS, engage potential partners, volunteers and supporters. We managed to raise \$1,440 USD. Thank you to Marie and Oke for leading the charge on this initiative!

Focus in 2022

Funding consultation

Based on concerns by the youth caucus in our advisory panel, we have completed further benchmarking of 10 non-profits and multi-stakeholder initiatives to determine where we can further bolster our Principles of Engagement. In addition, we have issued a survey distributed to members of our Google Group, on LinkedIn and on Twitter to gauge members' opinions on funding. This will be used to inform our Principles of Engagement. The survey is expected to be complete by February 2022.

Paid Memberships

Our intention in 2022 is to also make our paid membership available through our platform in 2022 – for BIPOC professionals, allies and organizations. Stay tuned for more details!

Communications

Building relationships has been instrumental in growing awareness of our organization, and during a pandemic, this has proven to be an interesting challenge. With the work of our co-founders and a team of volunteers, we have built out a number of social media channels.

We are glad to see that our engagement has been growing since we have launched, and we've provided further detail on our engagement as of December 31, 2021:

18,000 visits to our website in 2021

1,648 followers on LinkedIn

555 followers on Instagram

351 followers on Twitter

600 subscribers to our newsletter

Website

Our website had approximately 18,000 visits in 2021, a 15-fold increase from the 1,112 visits we had in 2020. This represents 14,000 unique visitors and 32,000 page views.

LinkedIn

We set up a company page on LinkedIn, which we use to share the latest information about our organization and to share interesting news. In 2020 and 2021, our top 5 most popular posts on LinkedIn were:

- Marie Jurcevic's Colour Commentary - 12,011 organic impressions
- Mamadou Abou-Sarr's Colour Commentary - 8,580 organic impressions
- Tiffany Wong's Colour Commentary - 7,929 organic impressions
- Announcement of our advisory panel - 6,569 organic impressions
- Christian Smith's Colour Commentary - 4,538 organic impressions

Instagram

Our Instagram page has 555 followers. Oke Isaac-Onwah has been deftly managing our Instagram page, responding to queries and designing beautiful templates and engaging content with the support of Hiwot Belai.

Twitter

Our Twitter page has 351 followers. We post Colour Commentary, events, tools, and relevant articles as we find them.

Newsletter

Our newsletter has over 600 subscribers, and we put out updates on a quarterly basis. Before the holidays, we highlighted the co-founders', Advisory Panel's and volunteers' favourite books, documentaries, TV shows and podcasts from 2021.

Thank you

We also wanted to take the time to acknowledge all of the people who have supported us this past year, including:

Our volunteers

- Oke Isaac-Onwah - strategic advice, event support, social media
- Natalie Arnieri - communications support
- Selly Principio - communications support
- Anjan Mahrok - strategy development
- Wynn Kwan - survey research and mentorship support
- Rayna Han - sponsor research
- Althea Reyes - event support
- Jared White - event and research support
- Sitra Suleiman - sponsor research

Our Advisory Panel members

- Christine Bader
- Priya Bala-Miller
- Kevin D'Souza
- Talynn English
- Andrew Gonzales
- Rekha Grennan
- Shefaly Gunjal
- Charlotte King
- Katie Kross
- Sandip Lalli
- Kiana Michaan
- Farron Rickerby-Nishi
- Rosie Towe
- Carissa Wong

Our interns

- Hiwot Belai
- Patience Tram

Our co-founder emeritus

- Rida Bilgrami

Creative

- Roxy Shapwaykeesic for her graphic design and creative guidance
- Suhmer Hyatt for her illustrations
- Freepik for icons used within this report
- Rachel Frost and Sean DeSouza at Acre for ongoing creative support and Chloe Hunt for providing a brain trust as we have built our organization

Legal

- Inga Andriessen and Robin Mann

Accounting

- Monika Malachowska

Our funders

And thank you to everyone who has participated in discussions or other initiatives with us!

Support us

Diversity in Sustainability welcomes any donations as we continue to grow as an organization. You can donate directly to our [Paypal account](#) (fees apply). If you are donating from Canada, an Interac e-transfer can be made directly to info@diversityinsustainability.com. If you would like to make a bank transfer, please email us at info@diversityinsustainability.com for details.

Please note: although we are a non-profit organization, we are not a charity. As a result, we cannot issue tax receipts. We are looking to partner with trustee charitable organizations in the future to do so.



www.diversityinsustainability.com
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