



Spotlight on Environmental Justice



With **Canadian Environment Week** kicking off the month of June, this edition of *Seeds of Social Justice* focuses on environmental justice. The resources, workshops, and actions outlined in this issue are aimed at providing teachers with the necessary tools to go beyond the traditional focus on “reduce, reuse, and recycle” by bringing environmental justice into the classroom. By empowering students to reflect on the underlying sources of environmental issues, teachers can support them in developing concrete actions that contribute to systemic change.

A big thank you goes out to the BC Teachers’ Federation (BCTF) members who contributed articles to this edition. The opinions expressed in these articles reflect the perspectives of the authors. We encourage all BCTF members to consider sharing their perspectives on social justice issues by contributing to a future edition of *Seeds of Social Justice*.

BCTF Social Justice Program Calendar of Events

June	
1–7:	Canadian Environment Week
5:	World Environment Day
12:	World Day Against Child Labour
12:	Canadian Rivers Day
21:	National Aboriginal Day
27:	Canadian Multiculturalism Day
Aboriginal History Month	
LGBTQ Pride Month	

An icon of a glowing lightbulb with a green plant sprout growing out of the top, symbolizing ideas and growth.

The [Aboriginal Education web pages](#) on the BCTF website offer numerous resources to help teachers recognize **Aboriginal History Month** and **National Aboriginal Day** on **June 21**.

June is also **LGBTQ Pride Month**. For lesson plans and resources, including our new poster (available in [locker-size](#), [vertical](#), and [horizontal](#)), see the Committee for Action on Social Justice (CASJ) [LGBTQ web page](#).

Resources for **Canadian Environment Week**, **World Environment Day**, and **Canadian Rivers Day** can be found in this edition of *Seeds of Social Justice* and on CASJ’s [Environmental Justice web page](#). The [Environment and Climate Change Canada web page](#) contains links to additional resources.

June 12 is **World Day Against Child Labour**. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives’ free resource [Child Labour, Costly at Any Price](#) contains lesson plans to address this issue. In addition, consider participating

in the Amnesty International (AI) campaign against the exploitation of child labour in cobalt mines in the Congo. For more information and access to their online petition, visit the AI [e-activist website](#).

We Can All Be Climate Change Heroes

by Richard Pesik, Environmental Justice Action Group



Our students have the right to learn about the state of their planet. Climate change—increasingly recognized as the greatest threat facing humanity—is one of the most discussed, yet least understood, issues around us. That’s why it is important to bring climate change into our classrooms and help our students to both understand this issue and develop their sense of agency by identifying solutions.

Climate change lessons can be integrated throughout the curriculum. In English classes, for example, students can learn persuasive writing skills to urge their hometown to become a [regenerative city](#). In technology classes students can learn about renewable energy technologies. French classes can teach the vocabulary of feelings, helping students to better articulate their [hopes and fears related to the changing climate](#). There are many [climate change numbers](#) that math students can calculate. Primary classrooms already teach about weather, which provides a perfect foundational understanding for younger students.

Finally, every student would benefit from learning how to grow food, collect rainwater, and generate energy.

So get your brave on! Become a climate change hero and help your students learn the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind and heart that will serve them as they create their best possible future in a carbon-constrained and climate-wracked world.

Environmental Justice Resources



This thought-provoking [poster](#) created by the members of the Environmental Justice Action Group and the BCTF Graphics Department is available in both English and French.

Lesson plans, fact sheets, an in-depth list of resources, and suggested actions that help teachers address pipelines and super tankers in the classroom are available on the [Environmental Justice Posters and Resources page](#).

The free [Climate Justice in BC: Lessons for Transformation](#) resource developed by the BCTF and the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) provides lesson plans that help teachers go beyond teaching about the “three Rs” and support students in considering the two pressing issues of climate change and increasing inequities within society. The eight modules in this unit were designed for students in Grades 8–12, but can be adapted for intermediate students. By exploring climate justice within the context of BC’s communities, history, economy, and ecology, Climate Justice in BC supports students in envisioning a better world. Download copies from the [CCPA website](#) or from [TeachBC](#).



The November 2015 edition of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives’ *Monitor* focuses on Canada and climate change. Copies of this document are available to download on [the CCPA Monitor web pages](#).

To request hard copies of BCTF environmental justice resources, email socialjustice@bctf.ca. Please include the name and number of each item along with your mailing address.


Environmental Justice workshops

by Julie Johnston, Environmental Justice Action Group



This workshop has replaced the Linking Thinking and Thirsty for Change workshop that was previously offered. Environmental issues have become social justice issues; locally and globally, the most vulnerable populations—especially children and women in poorer regions of our province and the world—are affected first and most by ecological disasters. Individually and collectively as a profession, educators are greater than the sum of our daily teaching duties. This workshop asks teachers to see themselves as transformational agents of change, through critical- and creative-thinking activities that will develop their own and their students’ eco-literacy, while engaging them in inquiry-based learning about social and environmental justice.

The Teaching Green workshop consists of five modules that examine different environmental issues through a social justice lens: climate justice, food security, sustainable resource use, sustainable transportation, and water rights. These modules are of different lengths and can be mixed and matched to create workshops of different durations. All five modules together will make a very full, day-long workshop.

This and other social justice workshops can be reserved free of charge for your school or local using the [Faxback Workshop Request Form](#) .

Environmental Justice Alliance Partners

by Julie Johnston, Environmental Justice Action Group



Remember when students, having learned at school about the dangers of smoking, led the antismoking movement and got their parents to quit? And remember when the Blue Box Movement got its impetus from children who recycled at school? Well, the kids are at it again. The young petitioners in Our Children’s Trust are “leading the game-changing, youth-driven, global climate recovery campaign to secure the legal right to a healthy atmosphere and stable climate.”

In **April 2016** in the United States, a group of 21 plaintiffs, ages 8–19, had their constitutional rights affirmed by a federal court when it denied the motions of government and the fossil fuel industry to drop the case. These young people can now carry on their suit against the federal government “for violating their constitutional rights to life, liberty and property, and their right to essential public trust resources, by permitting, encouraging, and otherwise enabling continued exploitation, production, and combustion of fossil fuels.” Climate change activists Naomi Klein and Bill McKibben are calling it “the most important lawsuit on the planet right now,” and the judge “characterized the case as an ‘unprecedented lawsuit’ addressing ‘government action and inaction’ resulting in ‘carbon pollution of the atmosphere, climate destabilization, and ocean acidification.’”

For more details or to provide support, visit the [Children’s Trust website](#). All quotes are taken from this site.

Sharing Environmental Justice Resources on TeachBC



The [TeachBC website](#) contains lesson plans for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Lessons addressing all areas of the curriculum can be found on this site and downloaded for free.

Climate Change Science: An updated resource with Canadian and global impacts, mitigation, and adaptation



The information on global climate change presented in this book is supported by scientific evidence amassed from an extensive research base. Retired teacher Howard Gopaul created [Climate Change Science](#) as a gift to students from Grades 7–12 and their teachers. This resource is primarily meant to empower young people with the tools necessary to make wise decisions about their future. The updated version of this resource was recently posted on TeachBC.

We invite you to take a few minutes to explore this and other environmental justice lesson plans on the [TeachBC site](#), and to post some of the social justice lessons you are using in your classroom.

Opportunities for Teachers and Students

by Julie Johnston, Environmental Justice Action Group



Here's your chance to have your say on the climate change emergency. The Government of Canada is calling for student and teacher participation in current federal consultations on climate change. To participate, go to the [Let's Talk Climate Action website](#).

Events in Social Justice

by Kathy Hartman, BCTF member and climate justice activist

The global movement to [Break Free from Fossil Fuels](#) was a huge success. Over 30,000 people in 20 escalated actions on six continents shut down the source of oil and gas extraction. In Burnaby on **May 14**, over 800 people on land and approximately 100 in kayaks risked arrest by surrounding the Kinder Morgan Terminal.

On **May 19**, the National Energy Board announced its [recommendation](#) that the federal government approve the Trans-Mountain pipeline expansion, as long as Kinder Morgan meets 157 conditions.



There will be more actions. Prime Minister Trudeau still thinks that the corporations need the money more than we need a planet. For example, Richard Kinder makes \$60.9 million a year and has a net worth of \$8.2 billion. Do we need another 890,000 barrels of oil per day and five times the tanker traffic in Vancouver's harbour? Canada must acknowledge the embedded emissions it is shipping off to be burned as part of its promise to keep the planet from heating up more than 1.5°C.

More information on the Break Free event is available on the following news sites: [CBC News](#), [Ottawa Citizen](#), and [Radio Canada](#) (en français).

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