



THE  
**HOUSSIAN**  
FOUNDATION

# Growth and Focus

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The Houssian Foundation's  
Impact Report 2020–2022

# Welcome to The Houssian Foundation's first impact report.

Founded in 2005 by Joe and Joanne Houssian, The Houssian Foundation is a reflection of the Houssian family's commitment and dedication to community, our natural environment and gender equality. The Houssian Foundation comprises two generations of family members on the Board of Directors and a professional leadership team.

## Grant-Making Strategy Focus Areas

The Houssian Foundation focuses on three main areas:

- Our environment in British Columbia.
- Gender equality across Canada and internationally.
- Supporting resilient communities in Vancouver and the Sea-to-Sky corridor.

Our work is underpinned by a set of values that include:

- **A solutions-focused orientation** - recognizing the challenge and responding with hope, creativity and constructive paths forward.
- **Valuing an entrepreneurial spirit** - taking on risk or pursuing a new idea to achieve greater impact, leverage and scale.
- **Engaging in partnerships built on trust, respect and humility.**
- **Prioritizing feminist values** - celebrating wins, and acting with transparency and accountability.
- **A commitment to ongoing learning and action to advance Diversity, Equity and Inclusion** - centring those most impacted by injustice and working with an anti-racist approach.

The impact of our work can best be seen by reading about who, what and how we invest our resources. The Houssian Foundation seeks to put 100% of the foundation dollars to work through grant-making, impact investing and leveraging collaborations. We are committed to advancing trust-based philanthropy and holding ourselves accountable to the communities we work with.

# Partnering with Change-Makers

Our grantees are shaping climate and conservation policy, strengthening feminist movements by advancing reproductive rights, building the care economy, and tackling gender-based violence, amongst so many other issues.

We are incredibly proud to partner with change-makers in Canada and around the world. And we have big plans for the year ahead.

## Board of Directors

Joanne Houssian    Joe Houssian

Joey Houssian    Jessica Houssian    Jamie Houssian

## Leadership team



Mira Oreck  
Executive Director  
(she/her)



Lara Hoshizaki  
Program Manager  
(she/her)



Christine Robertson  
Operations Administrator  
(she/her)

## Member Associations

The Houssian Foundation is a member of the following associations:

- Philanthropic Foundations of Canada
- Environmental Funders of Canada
- Canadian Philanthropy Commitment on Climate Change

## Grant-Making Strategy

In 2022, the Houssian Foundation developed a grant-making strategy to guide the actions and allocation of resources over the coming three years.

We are guided by the principles of trust-based philanthropy and seek to learn from our partners to develop a community-informed approach.

## Focus Areas

### Gender Equality

- Supporting feminist movements in Canada and globally through unrestricted grants towards:
  - Advancing universal accessible childcare, strengthening reproductive justice, and working to combat gender-based violence.
  - Responding to the needs of women, girls, trans, Two-Spirit and gender non-conforming communities in crisis globally.

### Environment

- Supporting programs that will sustain healthy ecosystems for future generations and the collaborative approaches needed to get there by providing unrestricted grants in two areas:
  - Advancing measurable progress towards BC's target of net zero emissions by 2050.
  - Policies that transform how BC manages old growth forests and support ecosystem health.

### Community Resilience

- Working closely with community-based organizations to support their core work through operating grants in Vancouver, the North Shore, Whistler, and Pemberton to:
  - Ensure they continue to be most impactful in helping people and building resilient communities.
  - Strengthen them with predictable funding for vibrant and long-term sustainability.
  - Advance local strategies aligned with our environment and gender equality portfolios.

# Grantee Partners

## The Houssian Foundation Grantee Partners 2020 – 2023

GRANTEE	TERM	AMOUNT
Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights	2022-2024	\$200,000.00
AIDS-Free World	2021-2023	\$155,000.00
BC Newcomer Camp	2021-2023	\$40,000.00
BC Women's Health Foundation	2021-2023	\$150,000.00
Canadian Women's Foundation	2020-2023	\$110,000.00
CityHive	2022-2024	\$100,000.00
Clean Energy Canada	2020-2023	\$147,500.00
Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC	2022-2024	\$50,000.00
David Suzuki Foundation	2020-2023	\$225,000.00
Downtown Eastside Women's Centre	2020-2023	\$120,000.00
Equality Fund	2022-2026	\$5,000,000.00
Family Services of the North Shore	2020-2023	\$90,000.00
Fresh Roots Urban Farm Society	2022-2024	\$80,000.00
FRIDA Young Feminist Fund	2020-2023	\$300,000.00
International Crisis Group	2020-2023	\$150,000.00
Iron + Earth	2020-2023	\$150,000.00
Justice for Girls	2020-2023	\$150,000.00

GRANTEE	TERM	AMOUNT
Kinbrace	2021-2023	\$100,000.00
Landesa	2021-2023	\$100,000.00
Low Carbon Funders Group	2022-2023	\$50,000.00
Nature United	2019 - 2023	\$500,000.00
Neighbours United	2022-2024	\$100,000.00
Options for Sexual Health	2022-2024	\$100,000.00
Organizing for Change	2022-2024	\$100,000.00
Pembina Institute	2020-2023	\$225,000.00
Pacific Immigrant Resources Society	2022-2024	\$80,000.00
Raincoast Conservation Foundation	2022-2024	\$100,000.00
RefugePoint	2020-2023	\$120,000.00
Saint James Music Academy	2020-2023	\$75,000.00
Squamish Helping Hands Society	2022-2023	\$75,000.00
The Climate Justice Organizing HUB	2022-2023	\$50,000.00
Urgent Action Fund	2020-2023	\$150,000.00
WISH Drop-In Centre	2020-2023	\$187,500.00
YWCA Metro Vancouver	2020-2023	\$112,500.00



## Stories of Impact

*GlobalGirl Media Greece filming "Over to Her" / Photo Credit: Global Girls Media Greece*



## Family Services North Shore

Much-needed support to queer, trans, non-binary, two-spirit, gender diverse and/or gender-questioning children and teens.

Committed to providing compassionate, professional, and affordable social services to those who live or work on the North Shore, Family Services of the North Shore (FSNS) offers counselling, support, education, and volunteer engagement opportunities on a range of issues faced by individuals and communities.

The Houssian Foundation provides general operating support to Family Services of the North Shore's (FSNS) Proud2BE program which supports queer, trans, non-binary, two-spirit, gender diverse and/or gender-questioning children and teens.

Many youth who come out as non-binary may also struggle with mental health, and want to go on hormones. For their parents, the FSNS Parents of Gender Diverse Children and Youth Support Group can help answer questions and provide support for all members of the family.

**Initially, parents of queer, trans, non-binary, two-spirit, gender diverse and/or gender-questioning children and teens can feel confused, scared, and overwhelmed. After hearing from other parents and realizing they were not alone, they can begin to process their own feelings.**

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Parents find connection in an environment where their feelings are validated. Through discussions within the support group, facilitators can recognize that there are other issues going on at home and offer individual family support outside of the group.

Group and individual support sessions are available for families where they can have honest conversations in an environment where their child feels safe enough to express themselves and ask for the support they need from their parents while navigating their gender affirming journey.

FSNS also offers the PROUD2BE Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Conference presented in partnership with West Vancouver Youth Services which brings together youth, parents, and service providers for activities, panel discussions, workshops, entertainment, and clinical services. Open to children, youth, families and professionals, it's a thoughtful weekend designed to support and connect our diverse LGBTQ2S+, gender-diverse and allied communities.



## WISH Drop-In Centre Society

WISH's Supportive Employment Program improves the health, safety and well-being of women who are involved in Vancouver's street-based sex trade.

The Houssian Foundation is proud to partner with WISH (Women's Information Safe House) Drop-In Centre Society in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, an organization that improves the health, safety and well-being of women who are involved in Vancouver's street-based sex trade.

Many of the participants who walk through the doors of the WISH face limited options. When Avery Gray\* was living in a tent on Alexander Street, she didn't know what WISH was. One freezing night, she was invited into the drop-in for a hot chocolate and decided to check it out.

"I didn't share any details of the work I did at all because I just felt that if I, you know, made enemies with even my closest friends, that they would somehow rat me out to the ministry and it would go against me and my kids, right?" she shared.

Avery Gray describes how experiencing homelessness and living with substance use severely limited her options, "I had no choices at that time," and even now she says, "I don't really know what got me through it to be honest with you. Things kinda just started slowly day by day, increasingly getting better and better and a lot of that is because of the support I got from here."

Having support available when she needed it made a difference, "anytime that any, you know, upsetting situations happened or anything, I'd be able to come here at any hour of the day. Like midnight, three in the morning, anytime, and [WISH] was always here."

Avery Gray is modest about her accomplishments, but her journey is truly incredible. After joining WISH's Supportive Employment Program, she found work that she enjoys and is great at. Now, she has progressed from an entry-level role to become a program supervisor at WISH, overseeing nearly 40 employees.

Having staff with personal experience accessing services at WISH is immensely valuable to WISH's community. Avery Gray knows firsthand how "it takes somebody to feel welcome before they feel that they have choice or options to do anything else."

To do this, we need to create opportunities that meaningfully engage street-based sex workers, while prioritizing their safety, autonomy, and self-determination.

"I definitely am starting more and more to feel like, oh, I could be this somewhere else too. It's not just here. I'm valuable everywhere, right?... I can do it, so I think everybody else can."

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## Neighbours United

Support of research-based and data-driven deep canvassing work in Trail, BC leads to approval of 100% renewable energy transition by 2050.

The Houssian Foundation believes that community organizing is a key lever for social and environmental change. This past year, we provided a two year general operating grant to Neighbours United in support of their research-based and data-driven deep canvassing work throughout British Columbia.

Neighbours United has been deep-canvassing in Trail, BC with the goal of Trail adopting a renewable energy plan to address climate impacts. Through the efforts of their staff and 85 volunteers, the team had conversations with over 1,100 individuals. This is significant given Trail's population of 8,250.

The Neighbours United team tested and revised scripts using the trial and error method: attempt, review, evaluate, learn, adjust, repeat. They spent over a year testing 60 iterations of their script to ensure that the language, framing and order of sections resulted in conversations that shifted thinking.

The Neighbours United team heard repeatedly that people are already feeling the impacts of climate change, and are worried about their families and neighbours staying healthy and safe from wildfire smoke, strong winds, floods, landslides and extreme heat.

**Over 40% of the people that were deep canvassed shifted their views to be more supportive of government action on climate change and the clean energy transition in Trail.**

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On 25 April 2022, Trail City Council unanimously voted to transition the community to 100% renewable energy no later than 2050.

Neighbours United is scaling their work across BC and Canada, with the goal of listening, learning and ultimately shifting perspectives to drive action.



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## Nature United

Working with Indigenous partners, Nature United advances solutions to protect lands and waters with the recognition that nature is the foundation of healthy communities.

For the past three years, The Houssian Foundation has deepened our partnership with Nature United in support of their Indigenous-led conservation work across British Columbia.

Nature United's impact in the following areas of work has particularly resonated with the Houssian Foundation's goals this year.

In February 2023, Nature United celebrated a blueprint for a network of marine protected areas led by First Nations across the Great Bear Sea. This marks an important step towards protecting a globally rare ecosystem and supporting the

resilience of coastal communities and marine-based economies. This significant milestone, which The Houssian Foundation helped support, was the product of more than ten years of science and collaboration.

The team at Nature United partnered with N̓anw̓aḱolas Council and Coastal First Nations as they market carbon credits generated by the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement. Nature United provided ongoing capacity support and are actively engaging with Indigenous Nations across British Columbia to support their efforts to start or advance carbon projects.

Nature United is supporting emerging Indigenous leaders across the North Pacific coast. They continue to support five community-based programs, that engage youth out on the lands and waters of their territories, and published a report documenting why these programs are so important for Indigenous Peoples and our planet.

"The land and the water have a special kind of cell memory or a familial recognition that spans generations that is eternal. When I go into the forest in my homelands all the plants, trees, and mycelia know who I am, they know what family I am from, they know my lineage, they remember me. The water has this recognition too. Water is fused with our tears, our blood, our sweat, our sensual fluids, the vibration of our songs. To return to the land and the water is to return home. In some cases - return to a home we didn't know we had." - Ximiq (Dionne Paul), Nuxalk Nation and the shishálh Nation, Supporting Indigenous Youth report, published by Nature United.

And finally, Nature United provides technical expertise and shared resources for more than 35 Indigenous Guardian programs stewarding lands, waters and wildlife across Canada. After the success of an initial two-year pilot, the Indigenous Guardians Technical Support Team has continued to host webinars, develop and share new resources, and provide direct support in the form of in-person workshops and one-on-one strategy calls.

**The team at Nature United partnered with N̓anw̓aḱolas Council and Coastal First Nations as they market carbon credits generated by the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement.**



## Clean Energy Canada

Clean Energy Canada shapes provincial and federal climate and energy policy.

As an organization focussed on championing clean energy solutions, The Houssian Foundation's partnership with Clean Energy Canada exemplifies the value of working within existing structures to shape climate and energy policy with collaboration across sectors.

Clean Energy Canada's impact in B.C. can be seen through the following examples:

Clean Energy Canada helped to inspire the new B.C. government's commitment to the development of a "climate aligned energy framework." This framework will integrate energy planning, climate action, and economic strategy across the province. Clean Energy Canada is positioned to play a key role in working to align stakeholders to build consensus around this framework over the next 18 months.

**Clean Energy Canada helped to inspire the new B.C. government's mandate letters and a key commitment is the development of a "climate aligned energy framework."**

Work is underway to update the B.C. Zero-Emission Vehicles Act with more ambitious targets (26% by 2026, 90% by 2030, and 100% by 2035). B.C. now has one of the highest rates of zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) uptake in North America, with an accompanying rapid increase in the build-out of charging infrastructure. B.C. is a Canadian leader on this file, and Clean Energy Canada has played an ongoing role in both provincial implementation efforts, as well as in getting the federal government to announce and develop a draft regulation for a national sales target for ZEVs that is expected to be finalized this year.

The largest opportunity for future progress on the electrification of transportation in B.C. now lies in addressing medium- and heavy-duty (MHDV) road transport, which contributes 33% of B.C.'s total transport emissions. During 2022, Clean Energy Canada invested in the capacity needed to take on this complicated issue.

Our partnership with Clean Energy Canada will focus on moving from announcements to policy development and implementation. This work requires continuous engagement with governments and stakeholders while building the evidence to ensure that these policies will be durable over time.



Aborcynny Dream Team / Photo Credit: Aborcynny Dream Team

## Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights

Over \$3 million awarded to feminist activists in Ukraine have made a difference in the lives of thousands living through a devastating and overwhelming period of conflict.

Urgent Action Fund is one of the most knowledgeable and responsive feminist funders in the world. The Houssian Foundation is proud to be their only Canadian funder as part of our gender equality portfolio.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Urgent Action Fund (UAF) has awarded more than 160 grants and nearly \$3 million to feminist organizations and activists impacted by the war.

UAF grants over the past year have supported immigrants, refugees, sex workers, LGBTQI+ communities, people with disabilities, and rural women. Many grants have assisted those evacuating the country, helped those remaining get access to essential resources, and provided funding for care, connection, and community-building necessary to get through these difficult times.

Among the grants the UAF has awarded, funding has gone to:

An organization working with victims of sexual abuse by Russian soldiers. Since the cases of rape grow daily, there is the need for additional funding to bring psychologists and arrange accommodations for clients with special needs. The funds will cover psychological rehabilitation, relocation, and travel expenses.

An Ukrainian feminist media outlet to continue its work. Due to the Russian invasion, the group lost its main source of income, which came in through advertisements.

A Polish feminist group organizing a queer summer camp to welcome and offer safe spaces for Belarussian and Ukrainian queer activists resettled in Poland.

**Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Urgent Action Fund (UAF) has awarded more than 160 grants and nearly \$3 million to feminist organizations and activists impacted by the war.**

These grants, while serving as just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the help and support needed in Ukraine, have made a difference in the lives of thousands living through a devastating and overwhelming period of conflict.



## Childcare Advocates of BC

Decades of Advocacy by \$10aDay campaign leads to long-lasting policy changes for quality, affordable, universal child care.

The Houssian Foundation proudly partners with the ChildCare Advocates of BC in support of their work providing the pathway for affordable, accessible, universal childcare. As part of our gender equality portfolio, we consider childcare and the care economy as pivotal to an equitable society.

The work of the Childcare Advocates of BC has led to significant public policy changes, resulting in the first social program at this scale in decades and transforming the lives of families in British Columbia, in particular the lives of women.

COVID-19 brought attention to what women have known all along: childcare is essential to our economy. The work of the Childcare Advocates of BC has taught us that childcare workers must be compensated fairly for the work they are doing - to build the care economy - and that affordable childcare must be universally accessible and culturally-informed.

**“My child care fees have dropped by close to 50%. In one day. Thank you for the tireless work to get us closer to affordable, high quality childcare in BC.”**

“This was a meaningful public policy announcement that will make a real difference for so many families and women. Adding my voice to the chorus of appreciation for the tenacity and focus of the \$10aDay campaign, Sharon Gregson and the countless other women over several decades.”  
– Maria Dobrinskaya

“I cried today listening to this announcement. These investments have been so hard fought for, and they are relieving so much pressure for those of us with young ones. History making changes that leave a legacy of hope and greater equality.” – Kristen Keighley-Wight

“My child care fees have dropped by close to 50%. In one day. Thank you for the tireless work to get us closer to affordable, high quality childcare in BC.” – Chantelle Krish

In September 2022, provincial and federal ministers unveiled details of new subsidies that will apply to 96,000 children across B.C. Affordable childcare advocates say the move puts the government’s promise of \$10-a-day affordable child care on the horizon.

## Investment Strategy

In July 2019, The Houssian Foundation made a commitment to transition our investment strategy to a fully mission-aligned portfolio that aligns with the overarching goals of the Foundation of environmental conservation, climate action and gender equality.

When we began our work to transition The Houssian Foundation's investment portfolio, our first objective was to align the investment portfolio with our philanthropic areas of focus. As we moved deeper into this work, we realized how critical our participation and that of similar organizations is in advancing the fields of sustainable and impact investing.

This type of investing requires people and organizations to embrace new ways of sourcing opportunities, conducting due diligence, and evaluating risk. Our continued work on implementation of this investment strategy will serve to elevate and support the expansion of sustainable and impact investing.

Impact investing focused on climate change mitigation is substantially more advanced than the field of gender lens investing. We see an opportunity for The Houssian Foundation to play a role in advancing gender lens investing within North America and will continue to explore opportunities for meaningful contributions to this field over the coming year.

The Houssian Foundation has progressed greatly over the past three years and intends to continue our learning and partnerships for greatest impact.

Since 2020, we have made the following investments:

- Aligned Climate Fund LLC
- Deetken Impact Sustainable Energy / CABEF (Caribbean Basin Sustainable Energy Fund)
- Deetken Impact Sustainable Energy / Ilu Women's Empowerment Fund
- District Ventures / Fund I (CPG I)
- Impact Engine Management, PBC / Impact Engine private Equity Fund LP
- InvestEco / InvestEco Sustainable Food Fund, II & III, LP
- Kapor Capital Fund / Kapor Capital Fund III, LP
- Renewal / Renewal2 Social Investment Fund Trust, Renewal3 Social Investment Fund Trust, Renewal4 Social Investment Fund Trust
- Rhia Ventures / RH Capital Fund II, LP
- Direct: Virtual Gurus

## Looking Back: A Year of Growth and Focus

2022 was a year of growth and focus for The Houssian Foundation. In addition to the development of our first grant-making strategy, we've also expanded our professional team.

The Houssian Foundation is fortunate to partner with community organizations in Vancouver and the Sea-to-Sky Corridor. Our partnerships have deepened this year and also expanded to include local organizations creatively advancing gender equality and environmental protection.

Hearing first hand from our grantee partners about the struggles they've been facing - rising food costs, labour shortages, the toxic drug crisis and increasing tensions due to precarious living conditions - has shaped our thinking and actions.

Inspired by the trust-based philanthropy community, our team began exploring tangible responses to the inflation crisis affecting our front-line service partners. Subsequently, we're proud to share that we have provided a one-time inflation-based increase to existing grantees working in front-line service.

In the year ahead, you will see The Houssian Foundation expand our virtual presence, convene our grantees and initiate programs to support the work we are fortunate to support.

We look forward to doing this with all of you.

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FOUNDATION

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Our office is located on the unceded territory of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əy<sup>ə</sup>m (Musqueam), S<sub>k</sub>w<sub>x</sub> wú7mesh (Squamish), and səilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples.