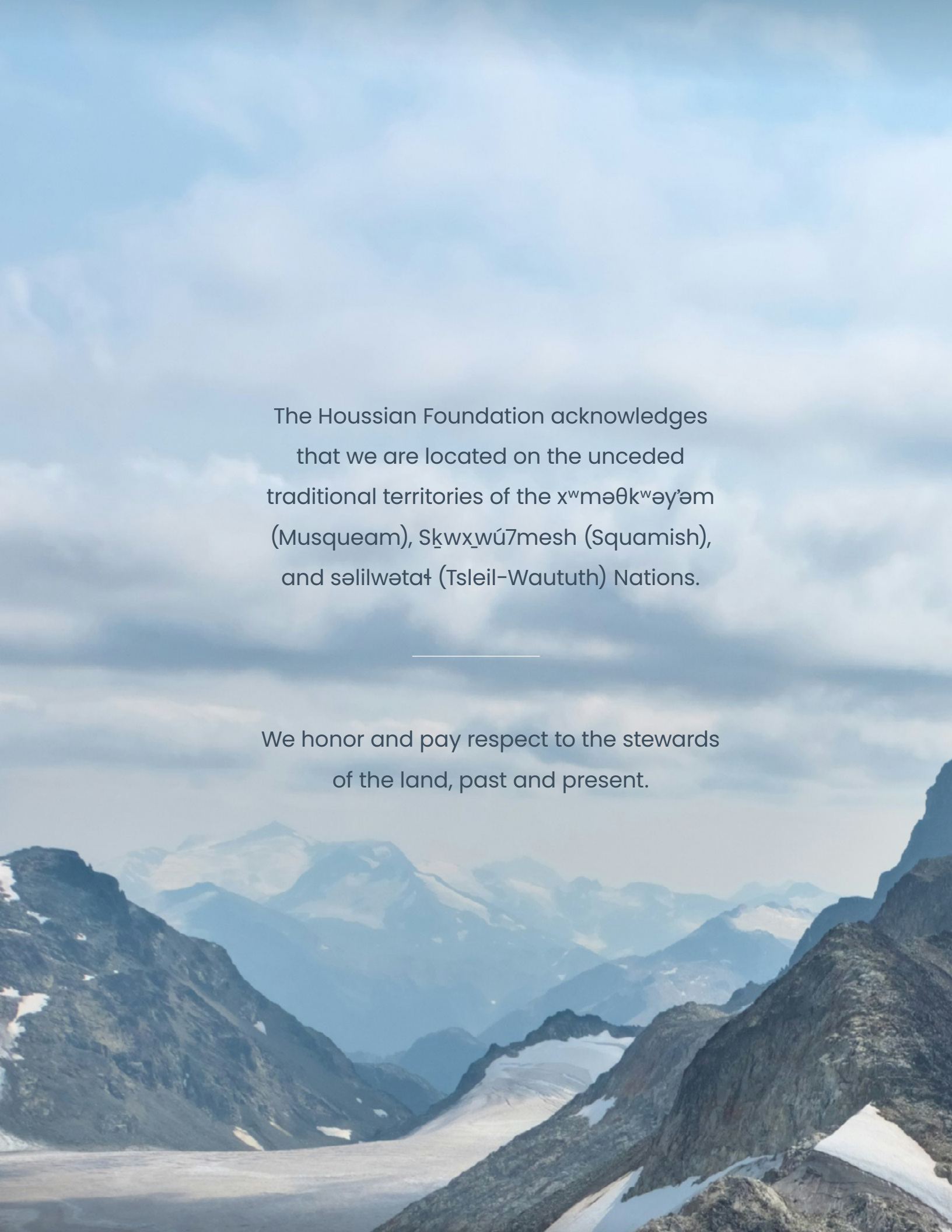


A photograph of two children crouching in a garden. The child on the left is wearing a yellow patterned long-sleeve shirt and a black and white floral-patterned baseball cap. The child on the right is wearing a pink long-sleeve shirt, a pink bucket hat, and blue denim shorts. They are both looking down at a small plant in a wooden planter box. The background is filled with green foliage and small yellow flowers.

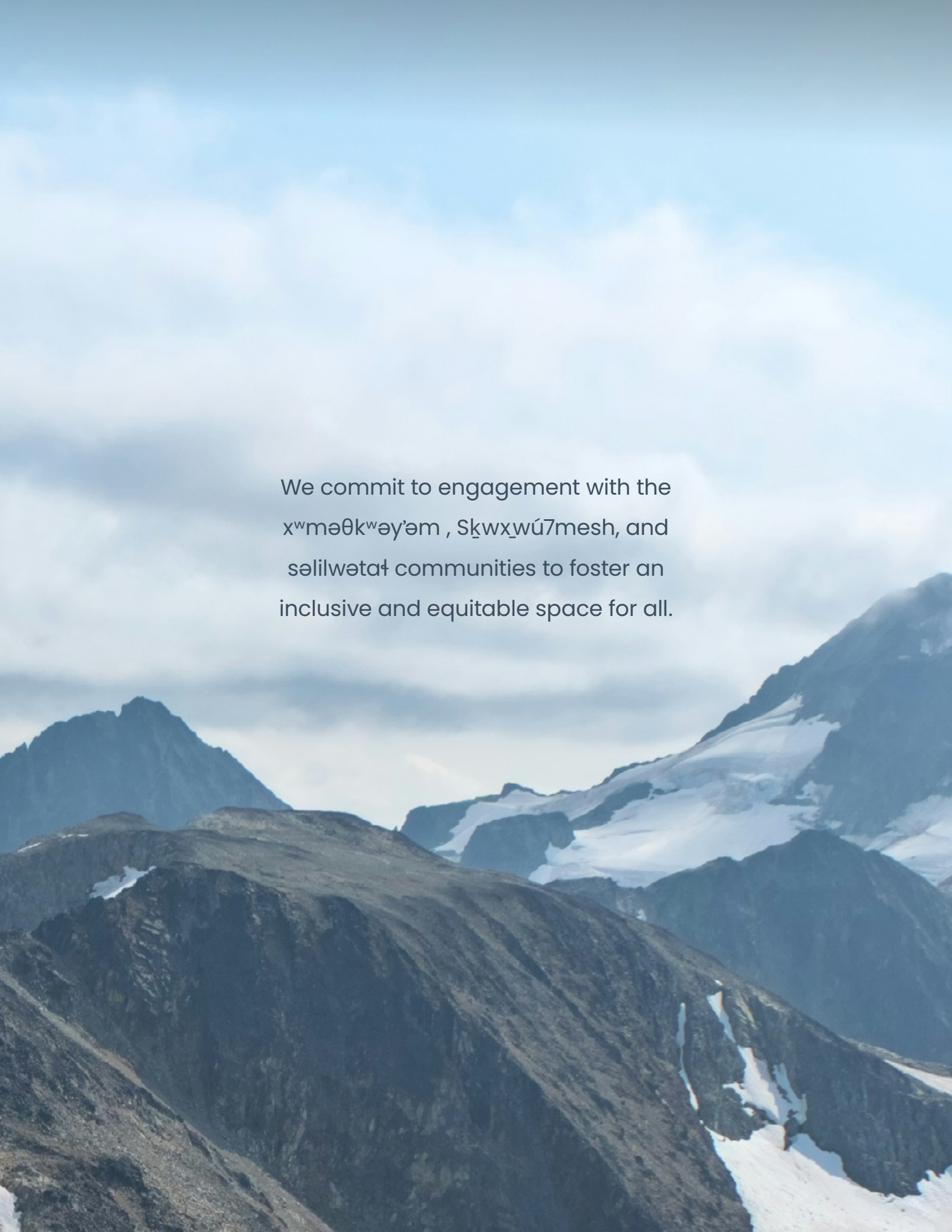
Reconnecting

The Houssian Foundation's
2023 Grant-Making and
Investment Report



The Houssian Foundation acknowledges
that we are located on the unceded
traditional territories of the x^wməθk^wəy'əm
(Musqueam), S_kwx_wú7mesh (Squamish),
and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

We honor and pay respect to the stewards
of the land, past and present.

A scenic view of a mountain range with snow-capped peaks and a cloudy sky. The foreground shows dark, rocky slopes with patches of snow. The middle ground features a range of mountains with significant snow cover. The background shows more distant, hazy mountain peaks under a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

We commit to engagement with the
x^wməθk^wəy'əm , Skwxwú7mesh, and
səlilwətał communities to foster an
inclusive and equitable space for all.

Welcome to The Houssian Foundation's 2023 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.

Meet the team

The leadership team of the Houssian Foundation is privileged to work alongside and learn from remarkable partners. Working with two generations of the Houssian family, our professional team has grown, allowing for greater connection, capacity and expertise.

Board of Directors

Joanne Houssian Joe Houssian

Joey Houssian Jessica Houssian Jamie Houssian

Leadership team



Mira Oreck
Executive Director
(she/her)



Christine Robertson
Operations Manager
(she/her)



Lizzy Karp
Program Director,
Gender Justice
(she/her)



Karen Tam Wu
Program Director,
Environment
(she/her)

Grounded by Progress in a Shifting World

Through 2023, it felt like the earth beneath us was shifting.

It was the earth's warmest year on record. We were — and continue to be — witness to war and the erosion of civil rights and personal autonomy. In these times, it's easy to succumb to sorrow and feel adrift amidst polarization. We've certainly had those days.

Yet amidst these challenges, we found hope and grounding in the milestones achieved by our grantee partners.

After decades of advocacy, we saw two provinces in our country lead the way with free contraception after years of advocacy. And then early in 2024, the federal government rolled out the first phase of national universal pharmacare in Canada making contraception free and universally accessible across the country. Grantee partners like Action Canada and OPTIONS have played pivotal roles in this important stride towards reproductive justice.

In climate action, the provincial government committed to capping emissions from the oil and gas sector. This commitment, which part of the Energy Action Framework announced in March 2023, marked a significant step forward. This critical step is due to the efforts of our grantee partners Pembina Institute, Clean Energy Canada, and the David Suzuki Foundation.

The implementation of the childcare initiative, \$10aDay Campaign, has had profound impacts nationwide. This initiative has boosted wages for early childhood educators, reduced fees in school age and preschool programs, and eliminated waitlist fees. Feminist movements have been the driving force behind this progress.

Conservation efforts in BC saw major strides, including a new \$300-million conservation fund for Indigenous-led conservation, Canada's first tripartite conservation agreement, and a \$60-million investment for marine protection in the Great Bear Sea. These achievements are the culmination of years of dedication from THF grantee partners like Nature United and Coast Funds, and have continued to be even more significant with time.

Our impact investment partners are also catalysts for change, advancing gender justice and climate solutions. Their work underscores the importance of collaboration across sectors to tackle today's challenges.

Internally, our board has strengthened its commitment to our strategy and approach as well as deepened our connection to this work through regular learning opportunities. We've grown our team of professional staff, and broadened our networks and associations.

Striving for social and environmental change can be likened to working on a very complex puzzle. Each movement and every piece is integral, and our goal is to appreciate these interconnected efforts and the reliance they have on one another.

Making lasting change requires effective organizing, bolstered by robust policy frameworks and engagement strategies, among other things.

In a world increasingly marked by division, we are committed to reconnecting with one another by bringing people together this coming year. We strive to break out of binary thinking and learn from one another to strengthen our collective efforts.

We look forward to the work ahead.



Jessica Houssian, Co-Chair of the Board



Mira Oreck, Executive Director



Fostering Connections: A Year of Building Relationships with Our Partners

Reconnecting was the theme for 2023, recognizing that our efforts are made stronger by knowing and being in solidarity with each other. Throughout the year, we gathered grantee and community partners to learn, to socialize and to connect.



- ▲ Learning about Feminist Philanthropy and Rapid Response granting with Urgent Action Fund.
- ▼ Our Open House in December 2023 was an opportunity to further one of our core goals: to strengthen our civil society by convening and connecting.



Grant-Making Strategy

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

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

Areas of Impact

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 organizations continue to be most impactful in helping people and building resilient communities.
 - Strengthen them with predictable funding for vibrant and long-term sustainability.
-



Our Approach

We are committed to advancing trust-based philanthropy and holding ourselves accountable to the communities we work with.

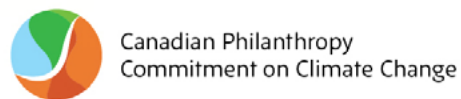
Grant-Making Focus

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.
- **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.

Membership Associations

The Houssian Foundation is a member of the following associations:



Grantee Partners

The Houssian Foundation Grantee Partners 2020 - 2023



Image provided by City Hive, a THF grantee partner

New grants 2023

- Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland
- Coast Conservation Endowment Fund Foundation
- Metro Vancouver Zero Emissions Innovation Centre (ZEIC)
- Oxfam Canada
- Rise Women's Legal Centre
- Wildsight
- Youth Climate Corps

Ongoing grants

- Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights
- Canadian Women's Foundation
- CityHive
- Clean Energy Canada
- Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
- David Suzuki Foundation
- Downtown Eastside Women's Centre
- Equality Fund
- Family Services of the North Shore
- Fresh Roots Urban Farm Society
- FRIDA Young Feminist Fund
- Justice for Girls
- Low Carbon Funders Group
- Nature United
- Neighbours United
- My Climate Plan
- Options for Sexual Health
- Organizing for Change
- Pembina Institute
- Pacific Immigrant Resources Society
- Raincoast Conservation Foundation
- Saint James Music Academy
- Squamish Helping Hands Society
- The Climate Justice Organizing HUB
- Urgent Action Fund
- WISH Drop-In Centre
- YWCA Metro Vancouver



Stories of Impact





Image provided by Downtown Eastside Women's Centre

Downtown Eastside Women's Centre

Downtown Eastside Women's Centre (DEWC) nurtures hope amidst crisis, serving over a thousand women, daily

In the face of crisis — COVID-19 and its aftermath, housing, toxic drug supply, mental health, and so much more — the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre endures as a beacon of hope and resilience.

As an organization committed to gender justice in resilient communities, The Houssian Foundation is proud to be an ongoing partner of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre. For 45 years, the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre has fostered a sense of belonging for women across diverse backgrounds and cultures. Their care provides nourishment, safety, and friendship, for cis, trans, and Two-Spirit women living and working in the community.

The work done at DEWC is monumental and the demand for support is staggering. Despite staffing and resourcing challenges, throughout 2023 DEWC served nearly 1,200 women daily, offering shelter, food, counselling, healthcare, and support services. The Downtown Eastside Women's Centre – under the leadership of Executive Director Alice Kendall – is a formidable force in the community.

"We wish there was no need for our services but the reality is that our safe spaces for women are needed now more than ever," says Alice Kendall.

With support from The Houssian Foundation and others, the food program at DEWC underwent a notable transformation in 2023, expanding across all five service sites with regular meal availability. And, the member reviews are coming in at five stars. "Our kitchen initiative has had a profound impact, as evidenced by one of our members who shared, 'I like to come in here. I can have a meal; the food is amazing, and to see my friends to have a cup of coffee. I really like the cook; she is amazing and gives us good food,'" she adds.

Amid challenges, the stories of impact from the community are invigorating. Lena*, a First Nations woman who had been historically marginalized due to her drug use and sex work, found a sanctuary at DEWC. And, Samantha*, an Indigenous woman who had been unhoused for over half her life, found a new sense of belonging and security after securing housing through the centre's efforts. She's secured work, is making strides in her goals for stability and self-sufficiency, and for the first time in a long while, she feels at home.

"When looking back on 2023, we are most proud that as an organization we worked hard to keep our doors open and provide the women of this community safe with advocacy, connection, and safety amid many barriers," concludes Kendall.

We are so very proud of the incredible team we have and the strength of the women we work with."



Image provided by My Climate Plan

My Climate Plan

Transforming Climate Concerns into Collective Action

Amidst the pressing climate challenges faced by communities across British Columbia and beyond, The Houssian Foundation has steadfastly supported innovative initiatives such as My Climate Plan. This pioneering project not only addresses the immediate impacts of climate change but also empowers communities through practical solutions, engagement, and education.

My Climate Plan is a new membership organization and powerful digital platform designed to help individuals understand, plan, and take action on the climate impacts affecting their families and neighbors. From preparing households for extreme weather to reducing carbon emissions and fostering connections with local community advocacy projects, My Climate Plan supports both personal and collective climate action.

“In 2023, My Climate Plan provided crucial support to communities hit hard by practical resources and simple steps, like building your own air filtration system to clean indoor air during smoky periods,” shared Co-Founder Adam Lynes-Ford.

“One member shared her experience of building an air purifier for her family’s home, expressing immense relief. It was so straightforward and cost-effective that she offered to teach her neighbors to build their own.”

Central to My Climate Plan is a deep commitment to community and mutual aid —helping ourselves by helping each other. Initiatives like the build-your-own air filtration system exemplify this commitment and play a pivotal role in advancing climate action.

Last year marked the launch of My Climate Plan’s ambitious online platform, poised to democratize climate education. This platform offers accessible resources on community impact, personalized planning, practical support, and connections with fellow climate advocates. “The platform is groundbreaking, providing support to tens of thousands as they navigate future fire and heat seasons starting in 2024,” added Adam Lynes-Ford.

Through tangible, community-driven actions, My Climate Plan continues to guide British Columbia toward a sustainable future, embodying the resilience and collaboration needed to confront today’s climate challenges.



Image provided by Pembina

Pembina Institute

Leading the charge: Pembina Institute shines a light on the impact of the oil and gas sector through the power of numbers.

The Pembina Institute is a non-profit think tank, advocating for strong, effective policies to support Canada's clean energy transition. For over 40 years, Pembina has been working unremittingly to reduce the environmental footprint of Canada's energy production and on developing actionable ideas.

Pembina's mission focuses on transforming the country's energy sector to ensure a prosperous, sustainable, and resilient future. Aligned with the Houssian Foundation's dedication to nurturing healthy ecosystems and collaborative pathways to a sustainable future, Pembina Institute stands out as a grantee partner, since 2020.

A key moment for Pembina came in March 2023, when British Columbia's Premier unveiled the New Energy Action Framework, which includes a commitment to cap emissions from the oil and gas activities in B.C.

In the lead-up to this announcement, Pembina Institute released a pivotal report, "Squaring the Circle", which details the tremendous carbon pollution associated with liquefied natural gas (LNG) development and the enormous amounts of electricity that would be required to make operations less polluting.

"In the lead-up to this announcement, Pembina Institute collaborated closely with partner organizations," shared Chris Severson-Baker, Executive Director "Long-term relationships with senior government officials have solidified trust in Pembina's expertise," noted Severson-Baker. "This trust was pivotal when we strategically shared our report at a critical juncture." This report remains very important as LNG developments are still being considered in BC.

The Pembina Institute doesn't mince words: climate change, as they say, threatens everyone, so it's time to work together. Their impact transcends policy shifts, illustrating how informed advocacy can drive meaningful progress in the global fight against climate change.



Image provided by Action Canada

Action Canada

Action Canada, a leading advocate for sexual health and reproductive rights, secured inclusion of contraception in Canada's Pharmacare Act, marking a transformative step towards universal access and reproductive justice.

Action Canada serves as a steadfast advocate for sexual health and reproductive rights, amplifying its impact in alignment with The Houssian Foundation's vision to bolster powerful, interconnected feminist movements across Canada and globally. As a progressive, pro-choice charitable organization, Action Canada has made significant strides in advancing reproductive justice, particularly in ensuring access to safe and affordable contraception.

The provision of free contraception has the potential to revolutionize reproductive health, transforming choice from a privilege to a fundamental right. The prohibitive costs associated with birth control have historically posed a substantial barrier, limiting access for many Canadians.

“The health, economic, social, and equity impact of free contraception cannot be overstated and benefits everyone, regardless of gender or ability to get pregnant,” shares Frédérique Chabot, Acting Executive Director.

The journey continues beyond this landmark achievement. Action Canada remains committed to amplifying its initiatives on national platforms, uniting its network of sexual health centers to champion advocacy and address sector priorities.

“Our vision is to equip our sector, communities, and decision-makers with the tools to effectively combat populist political tactics such as polarization and disinformation, which threaten community cohesion and individual well-being,” states Chabot.

This reproductive health work is more critical than ever, ensuring that individuals can make informed decisions about their own bodies, including whether and when to have children. This autonomy is linked to our gender justice approach, as we empower women and those with diverse genders, to control their futures and engage in their communities.



Image provided by Justice for Girls

Justice for Girls

Imagine a world where young women shape the laws, policies, and educational frameworks of society. This is the future that Justice for Girls (JFG) tirelessly strives to achieve.

At Justice for Girls—a Canadian non-profit organization and registered charity dedicated to advocating fiercely for social, environmental, and Indigenous justice—young women always have a seat at the table. Their mission is focused on eradicating violence, poverty, and racism from the lives of teenage girls. The Houssian Foundation has proudly partnered with this influential work since 2020.

In 2023, under the leadership of Zoë Craig-Sparrow, JFG continued to empower young women to take the lead. They expanded their community outreach and

engagement efforts, developing new workshop series and curricula covering essential topics such as consent, healthy relationships, trafficking, exploitation, and online safety. The impact was significant—more than 600 girls across the province actively participated in JFG’s exceptional programming.

“As a small organization, achieving such widespread impact among so many girls and communities—especially those historically underserved—was a significant accomplishment. These relationships will continue to bear fruit as we deepen our engagement,” remarked Savannah Norman, Director of Communications.

Central to Justice for Girls’ mission is the belief that women, particularly young women facing poverty, are the experts of their own lives. This principle underscores their commitment to justice by centering and prioritizing the lived experiences of women and their families in the community. From grassroots initiatives to national campaigns, JFG has swiftly made its mark. In just two years they have confronted gender-based violence in oil and gas work camps, and challenged the RCMP, with much more on the horizon.

Last year, Justice for Girls launched a high-profile campaign in collaboration with researchers and families of missing women, urging the RCMP to preserve evidence and honor their commitment to investigating over 30 cold cases. This initiative culminated in a widely covered press conference in December 2023, garnering significant attention and support, including an open letter endorsed by over 40 organizations.

“Seeing our office filled with cameras and microphones underscored the gravity of our efforts for the families and in advancing women and girls’ equality and freedom from violence,” shared Norman.

“JFG remains steadfast in demanding police accountability on this critical issue through various public forums, including courts, tribunals, and international human rights bodies.”



Image provided by Climate Justice Organizing HUB

Climate Justice Organizing HUB

Climate Justice Organizing HUB connects climate activists across the country

Climate Justice Organizing HUB is the connective tissue between grassroots organizers and community engagement. Grassroots movements are important catalysts for systemic change. Building power, and engaging voices calling for change, is critical.

In 2023, the HUB reached a significant milestone by training 5,000 activists nationwide. Motivated by an impactful year, HUB is continuing to deepen its engagement efforts with activists to continue fostering a leaderful climate justice movement into 2024 and beyond.

“The HUB plays a crucial role in bridging movement leaders and projects across the country,” explains Jacqueline Lee-Tam, Director. “Whether learning from pipeline resistance in BC, electoral victories in Manitoba, or student union activism in Quebec, activists benefit greatly from cross-pollination. Local and regional movements become more strategic and impactful when connected to a broader movement ecosystem.”

According to Jacqueline Lee-Tam, training 5,000-10,000 climate justice leaders annually is pivotal for achieving transformative policy changes.

To date, the HUB has conducted over 800 grassroots support interventions, fostered a learning community of 5,000 climate activists across Canada, and developed 35 workshops in English and French covering campaign strategy, coalition building, recruitment, and community care.

This year, community members emphasized the importance of national solidarity and connection, especially in navigating shared challenges and celebrating collective successes. Given the high turnover in grassroots activism, particularly among student organizers, the HUB’s role as a convener and capacity-building organization, responsive to the needs of activists, is crucial for sustaining momentum toward bold and equitable climate action.

The Climate Justice Organizing HUB remains at the forefront of cultivating a cohesive and empowered climate justice movement, driving impactful and inclusive climate actions across Canada.

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.

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
-

THE
HOUSSIAN
FOUNDATION

The Houssian Foundation

2150, 745 Thurlow St, Vancouver, BC V6E 0C5

Our office is located on the unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam),
Sḵw̓x̓ wú7mesh (Squamish), and səilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples.

Cover photo by Jackie Dives