

L'Année PhiLanthropique

The PhiLanthropic Year

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PhiLab

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À propos du PhiLab | About PhiLab

Le Réseau canadien de recherche partenariale sur la philanthropie (PhiLab) a été créé en 2014 dans le cadre d'une demande de financement « développement de partenariat » obtenue du Conseil de recherche en sciences humaines du Canada (CRSH). Ce financement a été reconduit en 2018 pour six années par l'obtention d'une subvention « partenariat » du CRSH. Depuis 2024, PhiLab profite de financements octroyés par différentes fondations dont la Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon et la Fondation Mirella et Lino Saputo. Le Réseau pancanadien constitue un lieu de recherche partenarial, de partage d'information, de mobilisation des connaissances sur la philanthropie subventionnaire et de formation à la recherche. Les activités de recherche conduites en partenariat valorisent les connaissances auprès d'une diversité d'acteurs sociaux, d'agences gouvernementales, milieux universitaires et petits et grands médias. La valorisation des connaissances, via des outils de communication novateurs et accessibles, permet une diffusion élargie des connaissances produites ou déjà existantes. Le Réseau regroupe des chercheurs, des décideurs et des membres de la communauté philanthropique à travers le monde afin de partager des informations, des ressources et des idées.

The Canadian network of partnership-oriented research on philanthropy (PhiLab) was created in 2014 as part of a “partnership development” funding application obtained from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). This funding was renewed in 2018 for six years by obtaining a “partnership” grant from SSHRC. Since 2024, PhiLab has benefited from funding granted by various foundations, including the Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon and the Mirella and Lino Saputo Foundation. The Pan-Canadian Network is a hub for partnership research, information sharing, knowledge mobilization on grantmaking philanthropy and research training. Research activities carried out in partnership promote knowledge among a wide range of social players, government agencies, academics and small and large media. The valorization of knowledge, via innovative and accessible communication tools, enables a wider dissemination of the knowledge produced or already existing.



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada



À propos de L'Année PhiLanthropique



Par : **Elisabeth Robinot et Adam Saifer**

Codirecteurs du PhiLab

Codirecteurs de publication

L'Année PhiLanthropique est une publication spécialisée dans la diffusion de connaissances scientifiques et professionnelles dans le domaine de la philanthropie et plus précisément de la philanthropie subventionnaire. La revue répond au besoin de rendre disponible, en français et en anglais, des connaissances principalement produites ou mises en valeur par des activités scientifiques réalisées au sein du Réseau canadien de recherche partenariale sur la philanthropie (PhiLab).

L'Année PhiLanthropique publie des travaux de nature scientifique ou professionnelle répondant aux exigences de base de l'édition scientifique. La revue dispose d'un comité de lecture et de politiques éditoriales qui assurent un niveau de qualité certain aux textes qui y sont publiés. Ces derniers prennent différentes formes – articles, chroniques, comptes rendus critiques – et s'inscrivent dans un créneau qui se situe entre les publications scientifiques formelles et informelles. Il s'agit donc de textes qui, tout en respectant les normes éthiques de la production scientifique et professionnelle, se veulent plus courts – une dizaine de pages – et plus légers (moins grande emphase sur les dimensions méthodologiques et plus sur les résultats ou l'analyse) que la moyenne des productions scientifiques.

Produite une fois par année (hors éditions spéciales), chaque numéro de la revue est pris en charge par une équipe éditoriale différente rattachée au PhiLab. L'équipe, en mode direction, est chargée de la conception, de la production et de la gestion d'un appel à contribution.

En publiant L'Année PhiLanthropique nous nous assurons d'agir en complémentarité avec une offre de publications scientifiques, ou visant le grand public, déjà existante. En se voulant accessible en ligne et offerte gratuitement, la revue ouvre la voie à la diffusion de contenus générés par ou découlant d'activités de recherche majoritairement conduites en partenariat avec des acteurs de l'écosystème philanthropique.

L'Année PhiLanthropique s'inscrit dans la stratégie globale mise en place par PhiLab afin de mieux faire connaître les réalisations et enjeux de l'écosystème philanthropique canadien tout en ouvrant la voie à sa mise en comparaison avec des pratiques existantes ailleurs dans le monde. Enfin, rappelons que la création de notre revue n'aurait pas été possible sans l'appui du Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada (CRSH).

Elisabeth Robinot, de l'Université du Québec à Montréal, et Adam Saifer, de la University of British Columbia (Okanagan Campus), sont les codirecteurs du PhiLab. À titre de codirecteurs, ils veillent à la réalisation et à la coordination des activités de recherche et de valorisation des connaissances inscrites dans les programmes de recherche menés en partenariat et soutenus financièrement par le CRSH et les partenaires du projet. Elisabeth Robinot est aussi la cofondatrice de l'Observatoire de la Philanthropie, une cellule d'études et de veille stratégique en philanthropie qui associe des chercheur-e-s de l'ESG UQAM, de l'UQTR et d'autres universités internationales.

About The PhiLanthropic Year

By: Elisabeth Robinot & Adam Saifer
Co-directors of the PhiLab Network
Publication Co-directors

The PhiLanthropic Year is a journal that specializes in the transmission of scientific and professional knowledge within the philanthropic sector, and more specifically, grantmaking philanthropy. The journal meets the need of rendering available, in French and English, knowledge mainly produced by or highlighted by the scientific activities that take place within the Canadian Philanthropy Partnership Research Network (PhiLab).

The PhiLanthropic Year publishes scientific and professional articles that meet the basic requirements of scientific publication. The journal has a peer-reviewed committee as well as basic editorial guidelines that ensure a quality standard for the texts it publishes. These latter take on different forms - articles, chronicles, critical book reviews- and find themselves somewhere between formal and informal scientific articles. These texts, while respecting the ethical norms of scientific and professional publications, are shorter - a dozen pages or less - and lighter (less emphasis on the methodological aspects and more on the results or analysis) than your average scientific publication.

Published annually, each issue is taken in charge by a different editorial team that is connected to PhiLab. The team, from a management point of view, is responsible for the design as well as the creation and management of a call for contributions. By publishing The PhiLanthropic Year, we make sure to act as a complement to the existing offer of scientific literature and publications directed to the general public. By being available online and offered free of charge, the journal paves the way to the dissemination of content generated by or stemming from research mainly conducted in partnership with actors of the philanthropic ecosystem.

The PhiLanthropic Year is part of a global strategy implemented by PhiLab to spread awareness of the successes as much as of the issues of the Canadian philanthropic ecosystem while paving the way for comparisons with existing practices from around the world. Finally, let us recognize that the creation of our journal could not have been possible without the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).



Elisabeth Robinot, from the Université du Québec à Montréal, and Adam Saifer, from the University of British Columbia (Okanagan Campus), are the co-directors of PhiLab. As co-directors, they oversee the implementation and coordination of research and knowledge dissemination activities included in the research programs led in partnership with and financially supported by the SSHRC and the project's partners. Elisabeth Robinot is also co-founder of the *Observatoire de la Philanthropie*, a philanthropy research and strategic monitoring unit that brings together researchers from ESG UQAM, UQTR and other international universities.

Justice socioenvironnementale : quand la crise exige justice | Socio-Environmental Justice: When Crisis Demands Justice





Crisis as a Catalyst: How Climate Justice Is Reshaping Canadian Philanthropy

By **André Pawan Vashist**, *Director, Learning & Collaboration at Philanthropic Foundations Canada*



André Pawan Vashist is a multi award winning social innovator with over 25 years of experience in the nonprofit sector. He is a network leader and systems strategist dedicated to advancing equity, environmental sustainability, and community wellbeing. His career spans community program design, youth services, and post-secondary student leadership, grounded in anti-oppression and cultural inclusion principles. He works closely with Indigenous communities and and equity deserving groups to, supporting initiatives that their cultural leadership, stewardship, and sovereignty. As a grassroots nonprofit Executive Director, youth services network lead and fund manager of a place-based impact investing intermediary, he has built and scaled programs that empower communities while advancing economic inclusion and environmental resilience. He has played key roles in social enterprise development, entrepreneurial ecosystem building, and conservation finance, working to align capital with community impact and climate goals. Over the years, He has become a connector across Canada's nonprofit, social finance, environmental, and philanthropic networks - facilitating partnerships, convening learning exchanges, and shaping equity-lens program development.

Introduction: Crisis as a Turning Point for Philanthropy

The climate crisis has reached a threshold at which incremental responses are no longer sufficient. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has warned that the world is rapidly approaching irreversible climatic tipping points, with impacts already being felt across social, ecological, and economic systems (IPCC, 2021). Canada is warming at approximately twice the global average, with northern regions warming nearly three times as fast (Government of Canada, 2023). These trends are driven in part by an economic history rooted in large scale resource extraction and the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous lands, positioning Canada among the highest per capita greenhouse gas emitters in the OECD (OECD, 2023).

The consequences are increasingly visible. Wildfires, droughts, flooding, melting permafrost, and severe storms are reshaping communities and ecosystems across the country. These impacts threaten progress across every domain that philanthropy seeks to advance, including health, housing, food security, education, economic inclusion, culture, and human

rights. Climate change is therefore not a single issue environmental challenge, but a multidimensional justice crisis that amplifies existing inequities and disproportionately harms Indigenous, racialized, low income, and marginalized communities.

Philanthropy occupies a distinctive position in responding to this crisis. With its long term perspective, convening power, and capacity to take risks, the sector has both a moral and practical responsibility to act. This article situates the Canadian Philanthropy Commitment on Climate Change within this broader landscape of crisis and transformation. It examines the role of Indigenous leadership in climate action, analyzes emerging trends within Canadian philanthropy, and presents early findings from the 2026 signatory survey. It concludes by identifying priorities for strengthening justice informed climate leadership across the sector.

Indigenous Leadership and Rights as Foundations for Climate Action

Any meaningful response to climate change in Canada must begin with Indigenous rights, sovereignty, and leadership. Although Indigenous Peoples represent approximately five percent of the global population, they steward an estimated 80 percent of the world's remaining biodiversity, reflecting land based knowledge systems that have sustained ecosystems for millennia (UNPFII, 2021; IPBES, 2019).

In Canada, Indigenous communities are among the first to experience the impacts of climate change, including disrupted food systems, collapsing ice roads, and threats to cultural continuity. They also hold some of the most effective solutions. Upholding Indigenous title and rights, including the right to free, prior, and informed consent, is both a legal obligation under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (TRC, 2015) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN, 2007), and a climate imperative.

Philanthropy therefore has a critical role to play in resourcing Indigenous led climate action, shifting decision making power, and supporting long term relationships grounded in respect, reciprocity, and self determination. As the survey data presented later in this article demonstrate, this shift is underway within

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Crisis as Catalyst: Why Philanthropy Must Transform

Crises tend to expose institutional vulnerabilities, accelerate innovation, and force a re evaluation of established practices. The climate crisis is no exception. Its impacts cut across all philanthropic portfolios, from health and housing to food systems, cultural resilience, and economic inclusion. Globally, philanthropic engagement with climate change is increasing but remains insufficient relative to the scale of the challenge. Less than two percent of global philanthropic funding is currently directed toward climate mitigation (ClimateWorks Foundation, 2023).

At the same time, international movements such as the Belém Declaration emphasize the centrality of Indigenous leadership, climate justice, and community led solutions in achieving a just transition (Alliance Magazine, 2025). Within Canada, philanthropic actors are increasingly recognizing that climate action is integral to achieving their missions. The transition to a socially just and ecologically sustainable future presents both an obligation and an opportunity to invest in well being economies, support community wealth building, and ensure that those most vulnerable

to climate impacts are resourced and included.

The Canadian Philanthropy Commitment on Climate Change

The Canadian Philanthropy Commitment on Climate Change is part of the international Philanthropy for Climate movement, a global network of national climate commitments spanning Europe, Africa, and the Americas (Philanthropy for Climate, 2024). These commitments share a common framework organized around seven pillars: education and learning; commitment of resources; integration; endowments and assets; operations; influencing and advocacy; and transparency.

Across all national commitments, an overarching principle is the centering of Indigenous led climate action and climate justice. The Canadian Commitment aligns with this global framework while grounding its approach in the national context, including reconciliation, Indigenous rights, and region specific climate impacts. Signatories represent a diverse cross section of Canadian philanthropy, including private, public, community, family, and corporate foundations.

Methodology

The findings presented in this article draw on a national survey conducted in early 2026 as part of the Canadian Philanthropy Commitment on Climate Change. The survey was administered by Philanthropic Foundations Canada, the Commitment's coordinating team, to all organizational signatories at the time of data collection.

Respondents included foundations and philanthropic organizations across Canada, representing a mix of private, public, community, family, and corporate foundations. Invitations were sent electronically to designated organizational contacts, typically senior staff or executive leaders responsible for strategy, grantmaking, or investments. A total of 31 organizations responded to the survey.

While participation was voluntary and the sample is not statistically representative of the entire Canadian philanthropic sector, respondents reflect a geographically diverse group of institutions actively engaged in climate related work. The survey combined self assessment ratings aligned with the seven pillars

of the Philanthropy for Climate framework with quantitative and qualitative questions on grantmaking, investments, operations, learning, and partnerships. The results are descriptive and exploratory, offering an indicative snapshot of emerging practices rather than definitive sector wide conclusions.

What the 2026 Signatory Survey Reveals: Momentum, Gaps, and Signals of Change

The 2026 survey of signatories to the Canadian Philanthropy Commitment on Climate Change (n = 31) offers an indicative snapshot of how Canadian philanthropic organizations are responding to the climate crisis. While the data is self reported and not statistically representative of the entire sector, they provide valuable insight into emerging practices, areas of leadership, and persistent gaps among foundations that have formally committed to climate action.

Climate Funding Is Increasing, Though Still Variable

Among organizations that reported both total grantmaking and climate specific funding, the median proportion of grant dollars allocated to climate related initiatives was approximately 12.5 %. This represents a notable shift from earlier periods, when climate funding within Canadian philanthropy was often siloed, intermittent, or treated as a niche issue.

At the same time, the range of responses points to uneven uptake. For some organizations, climate considerations now influence multiple funding portfolios and strategic priorities, while for others climate funding continues to compete with established program areas for limited resources. This variability suggests that climate funding has gained legitimacy within philanthropy, but has not yet achieved consistent sector wide integration.

Increasing Attention to Indigenous Leadership

The survey indicates growing recognition of the importance of Indigenous leadership within philanthropic climate action. 71 % of respondents (22 of 31 organizations) rated their funding to Indigenous led organizations as at least "reasonable," and 16 % rated their performance as "excellent."

While these self assessments suggest progress, they also point to substantial room for improvement. The findings highlight an emerging shift toward

acknowledging Indigenous rights and leadership as central to effective climate action, but do not yet demonstrate consistent alignment with Indigenous self determination, long term partnership, or shared decision making across the sector.

Investment Practices Are Advancing Faster Than Operations

One of the clearest patterns in the survey is the pace of change in investment practices relative to internal operations. 42% of respondents report advanced progress on the Endowments and Assets pillar of the Commitment. Approximately 71 % of organizations indicate that they have assessed their investment portfolios through a climate lens, and a similar proportion report developing environmental, social, and governance or impact investing strategies. 61 % are moving toward low carbon portfolios or divestment, and the same proportion have revised their Investment Policy Statements to explicitly integrate climate considerations.

These findings point to material, policy level shifts in how philanthropic capital is governed and deployed. By contrast, progress on operational decarbonization remains limited: only 16 % of organizations report advanced progress on the Operations pillar, and just 23 % currently measure their organizational carbon footprint. This divergence suggests that while foundations may find it more feasible and impactful to influence grantmaking and investment practices, operational emissions, often comparatively small in scale, may be perceived as less material, leading them to receive less strategic focus despite requiring additional measurement, capacity, and sustained leadership attention.

Resources Are Shifting Closer to Communities

The survey results also show an increase in funding directed toward grassroots and community led climate action. 74 % of respondents report directing funds to grassroots groups, including non qualified donees, and 97 % report funding Indigenous led organizations. In addition, 74 % indicate that they are actively deepening relationships with Indigenous communities, while 45 % report working with dedicated Indigenous advisors.

These trends suggest growing recognition within philanthropy that climate justice requires not only

reallocating resources, but also shifting power and strengthening relationships with communities most affected by climate impacts.

Learning Is Widespread but Not Always Translating into Integration

Learning activities are common across respondent organizations. 74 % participate in climate related learning networks, 58 % provide internal staff education on climate issues, and 52 % report targeted learning related to Indigenous rights and climate leadership. Approximately half of respondents also report efforts to build climate awareness at the board level.

These findings underscore the role of learning as a foundational step in organizational change. However, the limited progress on full integration suggests that learning does not always translate into cross portfolio strategy, operational change, or publicly accountable commitments.

Persistent Barriers to Integration and Transparency

Despite evident momentum, several barriers continue to constrain progress. Only 19 % of organizations report advanced progress on integrating climate considerations across all programs and strategies, and just 32 % publish information on their climate related progress. Capacity constraints emerge as the most frequently cited barrier: limited staff time was identified by more than half of respondents, followed by competing organizational priorities.

These challenges matter because they slow field wide learning, limit transparency, and reduce opportunities for collective action. Addressing capacity gaps and supporting shared infrastructure may therefore be essential to sustaining and scaling progress across the sector.

Bright Spots: Case Examples of Transformation

Several Canadian foundations illustrate what crisis driven transformation can look like in practice. During its spend down period, the Ivey Foundation made climate action its sole strategic focus, co initiating a climate fund that has mobilized approximately \$481 million to date. Its approach combines policy advocacy with explicit pathways for Indigenous partnerships and systems level change (Ivey Foundation, 2024).

The Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia has similarly transformed its grantmaking practices, shifting from approximately five percent to more than 70 percent Indigenous led projects in its general grants. This shift has been guided by Indigenous advisors and a dedicated UNDRIP Fellowship, representing an equity first model for land based climate action (REFBC, 2023).

Toronto Foundation has aligned 52 % of its investment assets with managers committed to halving emissions by 2030, while 19 % of its social impact investments are explicitly environment aligned. These investment shifts are paired with place based partnerships focused on green infrastructure and community resilience (Toronto Foundation, 2024).

Priorities for Strengthening Collective Action

Taken together, the survey findings and case examples point to a broader shift within Canadian philanthropy toward a more integrated, justice oriented model of climate action. Drawing on the survey results and existing sector research, five priorities emerge for strengthening collective progress.

First, increasing transparency through regular public reporting can accelerate peer learning and accountability. Second, establishing operational baselines and emissions targets is essential for translating commitments into measurable decarbonization. Third, practical integration tools are needed to support funders whose primary portfolios lie outside the environmental field. Fourth, strengthening pathways for funding grassroots organizations and non qualified donees can help shift resources toward communities closest to the impacts of climate change. Finally, shared sector assets can help address persistent capacity constraints.

Conclusion: Crisis as a Catalyst for a Just, Equitable and Sustainable Future

The climate crisis is reshaping Canadian philanthropy. It is exposing vulnerabilities, accelerating innovation, and compelling foundations to reconsider how they deploy resources, build partnerships, and exercise influence. The Canadian Philanthropy Commitment on Climate Change provides a framework for coordinated action, but its impact ultimately depends on how signatories bring it to life through learning,

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Crisis may act as a catalyst, but transformation remains a choice. Philanthropy has an opportunity, and a responsibility, to help shape a future that is just, equitable, regenerative. The momentum is real, and the path is emerging. The next step is collective.

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