

L'Année PhiLanthropique

The PhiLanthropic Year

Volume 7 | Printemps / Spring 2026



PhiLab

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ISSN: 2563-3058

Dépôt légal - Bibliothèque et Archives
nationales du Québec, 2026.

Dépôt légal - Bibliothèque et Archives
Canada, 2026

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.

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





From Extraction to Equity: Philanthropy's Role in Advancing Environmental Justice

By Alicia Richins, *Program Officer, Climate at the McConnell Foundation*



Alicia Richins is the Program Officer, Climate at the McConnell Foundation. There, she supports a granting strategy focused on climate mitigation, equity and finance across Canada. A certified foresight practitioner with a Master in Environmental Studies from York University, Alicia brings over five years of experience in sustainable development, impact measurement, community facilitation and climate storytelling to her work.

Introduction

Environmental justice is rooted in a simple but profound principle: all people deserve equal protection from environmental harm and equal access to environmental benefits. It insists that no community—especially those historically marginalized—should bear disproportionate burdens from pollution, toxic exposure, or the economic fallout of industrial decline. Across Canada, however, environmental harms have rarely been distributed evenly. From Africville to Sarnia's Chemical Valley to Grassy Narrows, the pattern is unmistakable: low-income, racialized and Indigenous communities are more likely to live near hazardous sites, face elevated health risks, and be excluded from the decisions that shape their

environments (Aamjiwnaang First Nation & Ecojustice, 2017; Grassy Narrows First Nation, 2020).

Today, as Canada navigates the global shift away from fossil fuels, the stakes of environmental justice are rising. Communities directly impacted by extraction—particularly in Alberta—are confronting toxic legacies, economic uncertainty, and political narratives that frame decarbonization as a threat rather than an opportunity. At the same time, the transition offers a once-in-a-generation chance to repair past harms and build a more equitable future.

Philanthropy has a catalytic role to play in this moment. Unlike governments, philanthropic institutions can innovate to fund long-term strategies, and support community-led solutions that challenge entrenched systems (Environment Funders Canada, 2023). Yet, Canadian philanthropy remains underinvested in environmental justice, even as the need for sustained, strategic funding grows.

This article explores three areas where philanthropic investment is already helping to shift outcomes, and where deeper commitment is urgently needed:

1. Securing remediation and compensation for fossil fuel-affected communities.
2. Supporting a just transition for workers and Indigenous communities.
3. Building public support for economic diversification and decarbonization.

Securing Remediation for Fossil Fuel-Affected Communities

The Landscape of Abandonment

Across Alberta, the remnants of extraction are everywhere, from rusting pump jacks to inactive wells and tailings ponds that stretch across the horizon. For many rural, landholding, and Indigenous communities, these are not distant symbols of industrial decline but daily reminders of environmental harm. With more than 470,000 non-producing wells across Canada, and nearly half of them in Alberta (CBC News, 2025; McGill University, 2025), the scale of the cleanup challenge is immense. Methane leaks from these wells are now understood to be seven times higher than official estimates (McGill University, 2025). Methane contributes significantly to climate warming—80 times more than carbon dioxide (IPCC, 2021)—and poses direct risks to landowners and nearby residents. The longer these sites remain unaddressed, the more expensive and technically complex remediation becomes, creating a growing liability that threatens both public finances and community wellbeing.



Source : Tom Prilesky, Ecojustice Canada

Ecojustice's Approach

Ecojustice has emerged as a leading force in confronting this legacy. As Canada's largest environmental law charity, they combine litigation, scientific research, and public advocacy to hold fossil fuel companies

accountable for the true cost of cleanup. Their work scrutinizes Alberta's Mine Financial Security Program (MFSP), revealing how flawed assumptions about asset values and cleanup costs have allowed companies to defer their obligations while communities bear the consequences (Ecojustice, 2023).

Ecojustice's legal strategies are designed not only to address individual cases but to set precedents that reshape how regulators assess risk and enforce responsibility across the entire sector.

Ecojustice's strategy is deeply collaborative: Through partnerships with community groups, Indigenous nations, and national and provincial networks coalitions like the Coalition for Responsible Energy they amplify voices that have historically been sidelined in regulatory processes, like those of rural landowners. Their goal is not only to secure remediation but to reshape the legal and policy landscape so that polluters—not the public—pay for the damage they leave behind. This work also helps shift public understanding of the true costs of fossil fuel extraction, making visible the long-term environmental debts that have too often been hidden from view.

Why Philanthropy Matters

Legal challenges and scientific investigations require long-term, flexible funding. Philanthropic investment enables Ecojustice to pursue precedent-setting cases, respond quickly to emerging threats, and support communities seeking justice. Funders who back this work are helping to build a more accountable regulatory system—one where environmental justice is not merely aspirational but enforceable.

Transitioning the Oil & Gas Workforce for the Clean Energy Future

A Workforce at a Crossroads

For generations, Alberta's oil and gas sector has offered workers stability, pride, and a clear sense of identity. As global markets shift and climate commitments deepen, many workers now face an uncertain future. The transition to renewable energy is underway, but without intentional support, workers risk being left behind. The emotional dimension of this shift is often overlooked: for many, the energy sector is not



Source : At picnic tables, Iron & Earth instructors guide two groups of Indigenous youth through renewable energy projects. Iron & Earth

just a job but a community, a culture, and a source of intergenerational livelihood. A just transition must therefore address not only economic realities but the social fabric that binds these communities together (CCPA, 2021).

Iron & Earth's Worker-Led Vision

Iron & Earth was founded by oil sands workers who recognized that their skills could be redeployed to build a clean energy future. Their programs help workers gain hands-on experience in solar installation, geothermal development, and energy efficiency retrofits (Iron & Earth, 2023). What makes their approach unique is that it is worker-led: training programs are designed around the realities of shift work, family responsibilities, and the need for income stability. This worker-centered model builds trust and ensures that training is relevant, accessible, and grounded in lived experience.

The organization also partners closely with Indigenous communities, supporting local leadership in developing renewable energy projects that strengthen sovereignty and long-term economic resilience. Their work demonstrates that the transition is not just about technology—it's about dignity, opportunity, and community empowerment. By centering workers and Indigenous partners, Iron & Earth is helping to build a transition that reflects the values and aspirations of the people most affected by economic change.

Why Philanthropy Matters

Government programs often overlook the community-level supports needed for a just transition. Philanthropic funding allows Iron & Earth to pilot new models, respond quickly to community requests, and advocate for policies that reflect workers' lived experience. Funders who support this work help

ensure that the transition is not only environmentally necessary but socially just.

Building Public Support for Economic Diversification and Decarbonization

The Narrative Challenge

Even the most ambitious climate policies cannot succeed without broad public support. In Alberta, where fossil fuels have shaped jobs, community and individual prosperity for generations, decarbonization is often framed as a threat, making even straightforward conversations about the future of energy deeply polarized. Shifting this narrative and bringing regional stakeholders for lasting change back to the table requires trust, dialogue, and a shared sense of possibility. Public opinion research consistently shows that people are more open to change when they feel included in the conversation and when they can see tangible benefits for their families and communities (Abacus Data, 2024). Without this foundation, progress becomes gridlocked, innovation stalls out, and opportunities for advancement and investment are lost.



Source : The Energy Futures Lab's Brian Nicholson (top left) listens to an exchange of ideas at a regional summit held at the Mannawanis Native Friendship Centre in St. Paul, Alberta.

Energy Futures Lab's Collaborative Model

The Energy Futures Lab (EFL) has become a vital convener in this space. As a social innovation lab, EFL brings together industry leaders, Indigenous Rights holders, community advocates, entrepreneurs, and policymakers to explore Alberta's economic future. Through regional dialogues and multi-stakeholder workshops, the Lab helps participants identify shared interests and co-create pathways for diversification—whether through modernizing and optimizing electricity systems, responsible development of critical materials value chains, or advancing low emission economic development opportunities. These engagements often surface unexpected alliances, revealing that communities with seemingly divergent priorities can find common ground when given the space to explore solutions together (Energy Futures Lab, 2023).

EFL's strength lies in its commitment to relationship-building. Participants often enter the process with divergent views, but through facilitated dialogue, they discover common ground and new opportunities. This collaborative approach helps shift public narratives and garner the support of champions from all sides by showing that decarbonization is not a zero-sum game but a chance to build a more resilient, diversified economy. By reframing the transition as a story of innovation and shared prosperity and revealing direct benefits to communities, EFL helps them reimagine themselves as active participants in shaping Alberta's energy future.

Why Philanthropy Matters

Narrative change is long-term work. It requires broad participation and sustained investment in bespoke project design, facilitation, community engagement, and storytelling—areas that rarely fit neatly into traditional funding cycles. Philanthropic support allows EFL to maintain continuity through multi-year projects, remove barriers to convening diverse partners, and experiment with new approaches to public engagement. Particularly, pooled funds give the Lab the stability needed to deepen impact over time. In a political landscape where, public opinion can shift rapidly, philanthropy provides the steady foundation required to build durable support for climate action.

Conclusion: The Throughline of Philanthropic Investment

Environmental justice is not a short-term project. It requires decades of sustained commitment, deep collaboration, and a willingness to challenge entrenched systems. It also requires funders to embrace the same principles that frontline organizations model every day: partnership, accountability, and community leadership.

Philanthropy can help secure remediation for communities living with the toxic legacies of extraction. It can empower workers and Indigenous communities to shape the clean energy future. And it can build the public support needed to diversify and decarbonize regional economies.

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Environmental justice is not a short-term project. It requires decades of sustained commitment, deep collaboration, and a willingness to challenge entrenched systems. It also requires funders to embrace the same principles that frontline organizations model every day: partnership, accountability, and community leadership.

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To meet this moment, funders should: provide stable, multi-year funding for grassroots and community-led organizations; join or create pooled funds that strengthen collaboration and reduce duplication; and

support implementation and innovation, especially in early-stage initiatives. Across the sector, we need to fully embrace the tenets of trust-based philanthropy: trust that the communities impacted by environmental injustice know which strategies to deploy (legal, regulatory and/or narrative change). And incorporate flexibility by supporting multiple strategies at a time, on terms that are responsive to frontline needs.

In closing, the transition to a decarbonized future is already underway. Philanthropy has the opportunity—and the responsibility—to help ensure that it is equitable, inclusive, and grounded in justice.

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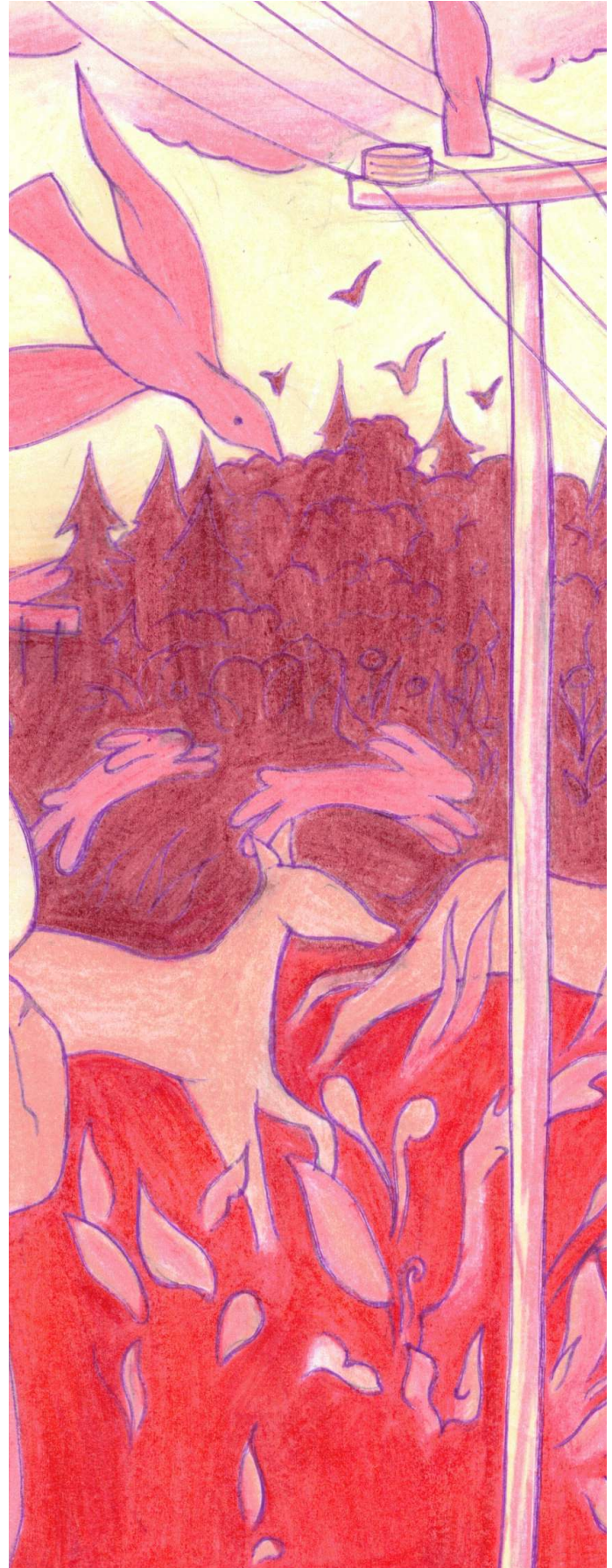
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