This report is a summation of the one-day dialogue. Green is the New Black, organized by the students of the Undergraduate Semester in Dialogue summer session at Simon Fraser University. We, the students, and the participants explored our shared responsibility for creating a sustainable future in BC. This successful event was comprised of active dialogue, insightful speakers, storytelling and art.
IF A TREE FALLS...

If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it still make a sound?

Does sound only occur if someone is present to verify its existence? The philosophical debate surrounding the power of a listener in acknowledging sound resonates deep within the youth of today. At times we feel as though our words go unheeded; we wonder why even bother at all? We want our ideas and concerns to be heard, loud and clear across society; we want you to know that when we fall, we want to be heard. The real question is: Are you listening?

Each tree is unique: they vary by species, but also by age and trait. Some grow sideways, others have knots, and some have moss, fungi, or pine beetles. Each section of the forest treats your eyes to a different view. And no two snapshots are the same. This is true of the next generation as well. We are a diverse group and pursue a variety of dreams and goals. But just as a forest is bound together as a type of community, we too are united. Our drive to turn our ideas into action and our desire to initiate positive change only begins to reveal the extent of our common values. We represent a movement, a force of change focused on a better future for all, and hope that when we fall, we will make an impact and we will be heard.
“Green is the New Black aimed to examine issues that surround global sustainability, while building community, momentum and motivation towards creating and implementing local solutions now and in the future.”

Tom Kineshanko - Dialogue Student
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“After reflecting upon the day, I realized that my personal understanding of dialogue had come full circle. No pun intended. After seeing the dialogue process take place in the “real world” I felt its potential had been realized. Community members, students, academics and artists were speaking the same sustainability language. Even though they represented it to the world differently, their true intentions ran parallel. I saw how the values of community, collaboration and communication were held dearly and strongly in many of my fellow citizens.”

Ellisa Calder – Dialogue student
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On June 15th, 2006, the students in the 2006 Summer Undergraduate Semester in Dialogue, in collaboration with Imagine BC and the Roundhouse Community Centre, held a one day dialogue exploring our shared responsibility for creating a sustainable future for the province of British Columbia.

While the Dialogue department at Simon Fraser University and individuals from both the Roundhouse and Imagine BC had decided to host this event many months in advance, the Summer students had a mere six weeks to plan, coordinate, and amaze on June 15th. The students had to learn how to work together, and how to dialogue, before they could even begin to introduce this concept to others.

They choose to base the day around sustainability and the slogan “Green is the New Black.” The idea was that through dialogue, imagination, and the arts, sustainability could be made into something cool and important to young and old across the province.

The students engaged with the Roundhouse Community Centre and the Footprints Exhibition that was being held in the space at the same time as the dialogue. They decided that not only would the art accompany the day, but it should be made a part of it. They invited Daniel Sanchez, a Mitote musician and artist, to perform at the dialogue, and included several footprints artists at the event. Further, First Nations vocalist Cease Wyss performed a welcoming ceremony to continued...
begin the day, and local artist Titziana De Melia documented the event through artistic drawings.

The students also invited local activist and Parks Board representative Spencer Herbert to deliver a reflective speech about his own experiences with environmental activism and advocating for the province’s future. Janet Boxwell, a local tour guide, offered a 40 minute lunchtime historical walking tour of Yaletown, putting the past into perspective in order to lend insight into discussion of the future. The day was rounded out with a unique performance by the local dance troupe the BC Clettes.

The students also ensured that their own voices were heard. Two dialogue students, Travis Streb and Tom Kineshanko, acted as hosts during the day, while Lynn Saffery, Leanna Platt, and Leah Camenzind set the tone for the day with reflective storytelling pieces about their own experiences with sustainability, community, and art. As well, the students acted as dialogue facilitators and notetakers, and reported back about the dialogue sessions at the end of the day.

The dialogue sessions were dynamic and engaging. A number of problems, ideas, and solutions were discussed in depth in a very short amount of time. Participants spoke about the role of the individual and about individual behaviours that can be changed in order to contribute to sustainability. The relationship between individual action and community building was discussed, and connections were made, many of which involved a strong role for the arts.

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Beyond individual action, the roles of politics and our democratic system were discussed. While some frustration emerged surrounding perceptions of inaccessibility to politicians and policy makers, a role for regulatory action came into view. Further, many discussions were centered on governance reform; many wanted to ensure that citizens and their elected representatives could engage in dialogue around the issues that are crucial to the future of this province.

Beyond individual and systemic change, the discussion moved toward paradigm shift and cultural reformation. Issues as diverse as consumption patterns, gender, technology, and the way that children are raised were brought up as imperative to the drive for change. Societal change was discussed as passionately and completely as the role of the individual.

Several small touches made the day a success. Students solicited donations from several companies, including Uprising Breads and the Granville Island Tea Company, and then brought bread baskets and special coffee mugs from home. The catering was socially-conscious, provided by The Potluck Café, a Downtown Eastside not-for-profit enterprise.

Overall, participants seemed to walk away inspired. Many participants requested follow-up-events such as an annual conference or festival organized by youth around sustainability issues.

The report that follows is a culmination of the day’s events, and is assembled by, and serves as an embodiment of, the efforts and passions of the 2006 Summer Undergraduate Semester in Dialogue.
“Taking pictures put me in a unique position; I was outside of the action, while being intimately engaged in it. I paid close attention, through the camera lens, to participants’ reactions and level of interest: people were in deep and it was so exciting to see. Even the facilitators from my class, who had been so nervous about awkward pauses and keeping the conversation going, had forgotten their insecurities and were actively engaged in dialogue.

At one of the tables, a woman said that achieving sustainability was like trying to eat an elephant - that quote really sticks out in my mind. Because, really, how do you eat an elephant? It is enormous; it would take forever; you need help, and tools, and it’s a lot of work. But the truth is that you eat an elephant like you eat anything else, one bite at a time.”

Robyn Switzer – Dialogue student
WHAT IS DIALOGUE?

Dialogue is a process of communication that aims to create a shared understanding. It must take place in a welcoming and respectful environment so that all participants can interact as equals. Dialogue will take place reflectively with oneself and conscientiously within a group.

To create a successful dialogue we imagine a circular space for connection, a facilitator to help ensure the dialogue’s open environment and respectful process are maintained, a time keeper, a note taker/scribe, and a system of agreed upon rules for governing the process.

For dialogue to be effective for all participants, each person must commit himself or herself to the moment. They must concentrate on every interaction, suspend judgment, and examine their and other’s responses. This examination must be undertaken to uproot the assumptions and constructs that underlie each response. Instead of discussing, debating, or defending a specific stance or opinion, dialogue is utilized to help participants explore the full context of the group’s interactions. It lets one “get below the surface.”

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In doing this, one can create a fuller understanding of the dialogue topic. There are no longer different opinions at every spot in the circle, but interconnected thoughts that each participant understands in some way. The creation of this situation-specific group dynamic will generate different results for each person involved. Their conscious level of awareness will become heightened. Each person becomes present in the dialogue. Great collaborations and solutions emerge from such experiences.

Chris Hogg, a student in the summer’s Undergraduate Semester in Dialogue gave a personal definition of dialogue during the opening at the event. His speech is below.

*Good morning everyone, I welcome you to this unique event at the Roundhouse Community Centre not just because of the lovely exhibition of artwork but also because we are participating in Dialogue about the future of our beautiful province.*

*For those of you who are unsure of what Dialogue means: Dialogue is about ideas, and today it is about your ideas on how we can positively maintain the beauty of our province into the future. But more importantly, Dialogue is about listening. It’s about hearing the ideas of those around you, even if you disagree with them. I urge you to respect these different ideas. This is not to deny that disagreement will occur. In fact, disagreement is the fun part. However, in Dialogue, disagreement is used as a tool to come to a better understanding of an issue than we could come to on our own, and is not used to deny or denounce others. I wish you an enjoyable day.*
How to describe a semester that is so different from any other semester we’ve endured? On which differences to focus? Should I describe my internal changes, our gradual group cohesion, my new insight into the world around me?

I must admit that I wrote this section of the report twice; I have to disclose that my first attempt was not very good. Yes, it was witty and well written but that simply masked the superficial content, which didn’t represent the Semester very well at all. “The programme was ultimately rewarding.”

Part of the problem stemmed from my desire to be as inclusive as possible. I took a deliberately neutral stance and then attempted to represent the Semester from what I continued...
thought would be the majority opinion. I then found myself apologizing for excluding other positions and simplifying the complexities of the course. “Certain aspects have been left by the wayside.”

Then there was my approach. As I reread the first summary I discovered that I was being descriptive as opposed to reflective. Instead of concentrating on meaning and significance, I was enthusiastically recreating the classroom and the expression on students’ faces. “The vibrant energy of the room was almost visible.”

But now I have done something right. In fact, it’s downright genius. I looked back, recognized my mistakes, and took ownership of them. Witness the skills I’ve gained from the Semester, in action. Operating quietly behind the skill-sets, dialogue techniques, and leadership tools that make up the course is the ever-present concept of process. Whether we realized it or not, we gradually learned how to reflect, identify, and analyze process. For me, to be able to separate myself from a situation, reflect back on how I got there, and then see room for improvement is what the Dialogue Semester is all about.

The Undergraduate Semester in Dialogue runs every four months at Simon Fraser University’s Harbour Centre campus in downtown Vancouver. For more information, please visit: www.sfu.ca/dialogue/undergrad
The Undergraduate Semester in Dialogue began like any other semester: with introductions and a summary of the work to be done. That was where the similarities ended. Right from minute one we were told that we would be hosting a public dialogue in association with Imagine BC and the Roundhouse on the broad theme of ecology and economy. And that was where the instruction stopped.

And so, as a group of nineteen, we needed to come together to choose a theme, a vision, and create something great out of nothing at all. For us, the easy part was breaking into smaller work groups, and delineating tasks and responsibilities. The moaning and groaning began when we tried, as a large group, to choose a topic: What were we going to dialogue about? Consensus decision making with a group of nineteen friends is tough; we were complete strangers!

Above and beyond that hurdle, we had externally imposed deadlines to meet and our anxious instructors overlooking our process. They asserted that what we would produce continued...
would be much greater than the sum of its parts; we were skeptical. Just when we thought we had made a breakthrough, just when we had finally managed to make nineteen tired, frustrated students agree, our professors would swoop in and prompt us; the message was that what we had done wasn’t good enough yet and we needed to work harder.

What began to happen was a surprise to all of us: we started to care about the project, a lot. We were invested, engaged, and we sought out ways to ensure that our voices, our concerns for the future, were included in the day. As we grew more and more excited, the professors contributed less and less. And as they had promised, our day grew and evolved until it was, indeed, a product of all our imaginations, much greater than something any one of us acting alone could have produced.

As a group we decided that small things matter. And we wanted to practice what we preached; we wanted to hold dialogue that was as environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable as possible. We served tea, donated by Granville Island Tea Company and rather than using disposable cups, we all brought special coffee mugs from home. We wanted to support our local community, and make socially conscious decisions, so we secured our catering continued...
from the Downtown Eastside’s not-for-profit Potluck Café, and solicited donated bread from East Vancouver’s Uprising Breads.

We posterized the city, sent out e-mails to every list-serve we could access, and a group of dedicated students appeared on CJSF, the Simon Fraser University radio station, to promote the event. We played Daniel Sanchez’s remixed Latin classics CD as guests arrived, and took advantage of the soft, comfortable lighting of the Roundhouse’s Footprints exhibit.

To complement the sustainable art exhibit, we invited several of the exhibited artists as well as local artist Titziana La Melia to document the day. We wanted to ensure that the role of art and culture in sustainability was at the forefront of our event.

Witnessing the day as it occurred was exciting, and participating even more so. We were all astounded at the small nuances that each working group had thought of and delivered. Our logistics group had secured socially conscious catering; the authors of this report had arranged full day photographic coverage; the folks in charge of inviting guests had secured amazing and unique performances, and our promotions team had delivered a room full of 57 enthusiastic participants who were eager to listen and share their ideas.

continued...
What we learned was immeasurable. We gained resume-worthy skills in event planning, promotions, and location management. But more importantly, we learned how to work together, not within a system of hierarchy, but as equals.

One of our Undergraduate Semester in Dialogue themes this summer was leadership; over and over again guests and students have emphasized that we are all leaders. Finally we learned that this was true – by working as a group and buying into the process, we all led one another through a difficult project and into a successful, memorable day of dialogue.

“We intitated a movement beyond ideas to the provision of education and opportunities for action; youth perspectives, energy, time, and innovation; a dialogue that seeks to mediate the public’s mistrust in institutions and in their own ability to make a difference - the message is you can do it, we can help you to access change.”

Tom Kineshanko – Dialogue student

“Holding a public dialogue was exciting, but the real challenge was working in a pseudo-consensus decision-making group of 20 to plan and create the day.”

Robyn Switzer – Dialogue student
Sustainability is not elusive. While it may appear inconvenient, overwhelming, even impossible, the truth is that it is achievable. I can do it, you can do it, we can all achieve sustainability; in fact we must. While it is cliché, today is the first day of the rest of our lives; our actions today have a direct and meaningful impact on the future. We wanted to use words and ideas to inspire action - not only can we change, it may be our responsibility to do so.

We also wanted to discover ideas and methods for inspiring our community and beyond. We looked for ways to step up; to take on the responsibility for generating a sustainable future by moving from words to action. Beyond inspiration, we wanted to make sustainability fun, exciting, chic. If green is the new black, making sustainable decisions becomes attractive, en vogue, even easy.

Understanding our collective responsibility and moving forward toward achieving a

continued...
sustainable future allows us all to become accountable, to take ownership of the process. We can all feel justified in announcing that I am sustainable, and you can be too. Our dialogue brought understanding and motivation, fun and energy to these issues; what appears elusive today can become possible, even probable, tomorrow.

“We were creating change and talking about really gloomy issues but it was inspiring, uplifting and fun rather than heavy and dull.”

Tom Kineshanko - Dialogue student
The Space

Some say you can hold an event in a palace or in a cardboard box and it wouldn’t make a difference. We disagree. We were lucky enough to hold our dialogue in conjunction with the Footprints Exhibition at the Roundhouse Community Centre. The Footprints Exhibit, which explores themes of ecological sustainability, had the welcomed effect of stimulating dialogue among our participants.

As guests walked into the room, the paintings, sculptures, and interactive artworks encouraged serious reflection on our shared environment and future. A giant plastic bag made from 250 smaller plastic shopping bags dominated the room; it slowly swung from the rafters of the Roundhouse, moving in sync with the movement of our guests. Many participants felt that the bag made a great visual statement about our continued...
consumptive habits and referred back to the bag in the World Café discussions. The visual art also helped to set the tone of the day and acted as a constant reminder of why we were all there. We were also honoured to have several of the Footprints artists attending our dialogue as guest participants, including Shannon Harvey, Georgina Lohan, and Vicki Moulder.

Compounding the effects of the Footprints Exhibits was the Roundhouse itself. Not only did the stunning architecture of the Roundhouse impress and inspire our guests, but the function of the Roundhouse as a community centre also led to dialogue on the role of the arts in community building. For more information on how the Roundhouse influenced our day of dialogue, please refer to Appendix 2.

“I felt like the day created a shared feeling of community in the space even though we came from different places.”

Jessica Numminenn – Dialogue student
SPECIAL GUESTS

The following people were essential to the success of our dialogue. Each guest, listed below in order of appearance, brought a dynamic and vibrant energy to the day.

CEASE WYSS
Cease’s pink hair and no holds barred attitude dared us all to be different. Her openness and authenticity helped set a tone for the dialogue. Her soulful voice, arresting drumming, and Squamish Nation welcoming song inspired us and brought us all together. Thank you, Cease Wyss, for sharing and uniting us.

LYNN SAFFERY: Undergraduate Semester in Dialogue (USD) Student
In vivid detail, Lynn brought us through a camping trip he took with a number of families the summer he was 11 years old. Between camping, canoeing, and portaging, Lynn recalled, competition began to develop. Sharing a canoe with his dad, Lynn recalled the pressure to outpace his family and friends. Then something happened: his dad decided to brave some thorny rapids, continued...
and, hitting a rock, their canoe was split in two. Lynn and his dad sheepishly joined other canoes, and the trip dynamic was changed. Competition melted away, and was replaced, surprisingly, with community. Thanks, Lynn, for showing us that people are stronger when they work together.

LEANNA PLATT: USD Student
From her seat, Leanna asked us all to close our eyes and clap our hands to a rhythm. She then asked some simple questions: What does sustainability mean to you? What do you do to behave sustainably? The answers melted into the rhythm: “I bike” clap, clap, “I buy local” clap, clap, “Smile at neighbors” clap, clap, “I recycle” clap, clap, “I ask questions”.

Leanna brought participants out of their shells early on, using sound and music to bring the guests together as a community. Thanks, Leanna, for reminding us how small things done alone can make a big difference when put together.

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LEAH CAMENZIND: USD Student
“I’m only nineteen, I don’t have very much money, and I don’t have very much power. What difference can I make?” Leah asked. The answer was inspiring. Employed during the hockey season at GM Place, Leah was amazed to discover the stadium had no recycling program in place. She researched, discussed, and finally contacted the stadium, and has now been invited to participate on a project team within GM Place seeking to implement recycling. Sometimes a little question can change a lot. Go, Leah!

SPENCER HERBERT
Spencer surprised us all. He spoke from his seat, in an unassuming and kind voice. He recalled how as a young teen he had plunged into activism, illustrated by a trip to Costco with his mom. Emphatically, Spencer demanded that she pull the car over – if they were going to get there, then he was going to walk. He could no longer justify his own participation in car culture; he wasn’t even in high school yet.

What happened next was a little scary – Spencer stopped speaking. He opened up the floor, and invited the audience to share their stories. I could see the look continued...
of anxiety in the eyes of my classmates – what if no-one speaks? Mark Winston, our program director, quickly jumped up and made a confession – he was once a proud SUV owner. He was sincere, and funny, just as Spencer had been before him. Then others chimed in with their own tales, and before we knew it, Spencer had done what we had unanimously decided we wouldn’t be able to do: hold a dialogue with the entire group.

Spencer really set an open, engaged tone for the rest of the day, and we couldn’t have done it without his leadership. Thank you Spencer! For more details on Spencer Herbert, please refer to Appendix 4.

JANET BOXWELL
“Since we’re talking about the future today, it might be useful to learn about the past.” And so we did. We were privileged to have the energetic, charismatic Janet Boxwell, mother of our classmate Leanna and professional tour guide, lead a walking tour of Yaletown and the Roundhouse during our lunchtime break. Beginning in the train room at the Roundhouse and encompassing Granville Island, False Creek and Yaletown, Janet emphasized the historic roots and practices of the area that had enabled and anticipated the sustainable practices of the present. Thank you, Janet, for putting today and tomorrow into perspective.

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DANIEL SANCHEZ
He entered the circle, marching, and began to sing. Low, almost a hum, inaudible at first. On our chairs returning from lunch we found a plastic bag and a piece of scrap paper — strange... Daniel gestured to one group of people to pick up their plastic bags. He had us rub the bag between our hands, creating a rustling, reverberating sound — as if a strong wind was blowing through a field of wild grass. As this sound continued, he moved along to another group of participants. Still dancing, humming, stomping his feet to a rhythm complemented by the bag rubbers, he had this next group hold a piece of paper to their faces and blow, hum, and sing. The muted, vibrational sound added a bass-like undercurrent to the emerging song. Another group was asked to clap their hands with a piece of paper in between, adding a cymbal-like beat to the chorus. Finally, voices were added, and the orchestra was completed as Daniel raised his beautiful voice above the music.

It was incredible — with an old plastic bag, some scrap pieces of paper and a community of enthusiastic individuals, it took mere minutes to create a unique, beautiful, and memorable song. For more details on Daniel Sanchez, please refer to Appendix 4.
continued...
BC CLETTS
While planning this event, we knew that we would need something new, and big, to ensure that we ended on a high note. The BC Clettes hit that note, and then surpassed it. With their red hot dance number, the BC Clettes provided a stark example of sustainability-inspired community engagement by dancing with their bicycle tires, energizing the audience, and bringing disparate people together. After the dialogue, it seemed that everyone we spoke with was unanimous: “I want to be a BC Clette!”

TITZIANNA LA MELIA
We were fortunate enough to have our own dialogue documenting resident artist — Titziana La Melia. In true artistic form, she kept a low profile during the dialogue, all the while using pen and ink and color drawings to interpret and apply the events around her. The result was a series of interesting, humorous, and dynamic drawings that underline one of the main themes of our dialogue: art and culture bring people together and make intangible ideas real. Thanks Titziana!
SUMMARY OF THE DIALOGUE

MAKING A SOUND

“Hundreds of years ago, a community in England built a church. The roof was made from a strong, durable wood from a special type of tree. The builders, having the foresight to imagine that, years into the future, the roof would need to be replaced, planted the same trees around the church so that when the time came, the trees could be used to replace the roof.”

Overall, participants agreed that sustainability is an issue that must be considered, both now and in the future. Planning, resource management, and the foresight to plant the trees you will eventually need all encompass the concept of sustainability. But we also found ourselves hungry for solutions today; we sought action and ideas that we, as individuals, could implement in order to create positive change around us.

Many agreed that change must first happen within. Participants dialogued about the internal workings of individuals; we emphasized the need to balance work and personal life by relaxing and making time for self-reflection.

continued...
and expression through art, music, and movement. We often heard how privileged we are to live in this beautiful province and to have the leisure time to appreciate it. Our privilege also extends into our ability to exercise choice. We can choose, for example, to drive, walk, bike, or take transit when we travel - we decided to prioritize these choices with an eye to a sustainable future. Whenever possible we can also choose to make informed choices about our food; eating local, seasonal, and organically grown products. “Organic food is expensive.” When our choices are limited, we can lobby for improved access, farming subsidies, labeling that promotes ethical decision-making, and allow ourselves permission to not be perfect.

Permission was a big theme - to make mistakes, to pay the real price for things; remembering that as individuals, we cannot expect to take on every battle. But small battles can also have large effects. People discussed growing gardens and fruit trees, and sharing the harvest with community food banks and soup kitchens to promote social sustainability. We discussed composting and emphasized how small practices spread, encouraging one another to institute composting at home and at work.

A belief emerged; that taking simple steps towards greater sustainability could have side effects, like fostering continued...
community. Shared experiences, honouring elders, reaching out to people, and even smiling can transcend the individualism that participants perceived as eroding community. Yet this was also controversial; we identified a tension between the harmonious complexity of community and the value of unique and separate identities – ultimately we regarded balance, empathy, and mutual respect as solutions to this tension.

We identified a theme of denial running through the dominant paradigm in our lives; we ascertained that denial is a form of fear. "Fear is addictive." Returning to personal choice, we advocated becoming more aware of our consumption patterns and deciding to stop choosing to be manipulated by the mainstream media's marketing of a consumptive culture. Some participants encouraged others to make emotive decisions; to abandon greed and the esteem of outsiders to concentrate instead on self-actualization.

Elders encouraged youth to get mad, collaborate instead of competing, and understand personal responsibility as far more complex then casting a vote. Youth can get educated, break down misconceptions, and shatter urban myths. "Cars save money, fossil fuels, and reduce pollution when turned off instead of idling for more than 10 seconds. I was told a long time ago that idling the car was better." While some participants continued...
saw a need to start with oneself and avoid trying to change other people, others insisted that spreading the word on sustainability could operate as an effective method of informal education.

Several ideas were discussed, including remodeling using sustainable building practices and green roofs, living in cob bale/straw houses, recycling clothes through thrift stores and free-cycling, and turning cemeteries into gardens. While some ideas were contested, we spent a great deal of time discussing how sustainability needed to become convenient and cool. Ideas like bringing your own coffee cup and using cloth shopping bags resonated well with all. We even discussed paying for tap water; we all started confessing to sometimes taking two showers a day, over-flushing the toilet, and running the tap when we brush. Participants from outside Canada, hailing from locations as diverse as Columbia, Germany, and Mexico, recalled their own experiences with buying water and dealing with shortages. The sense of privilege re-emerged. Is this a privilege worth maintaining?

The overall message was clear: a plethora of personal choices exist; a great many of them are accessible and sustainable. Our decisions as individuals have a large impact and we need not be overwhelmed by the enormity of the effort - starting small can make a big difference. We can strengthen the forest and ensure people are listening when a tree falls.

continued...
HEARING THE TREE FALL

“Politicians serve us.”
“We are the politicians.”

Overall, our world café dialogues were engaging and lively. Talk of politics, however, tended to alter the mood and tone of the conversation. Why is that? What is it about politics that causes energetic and motivated people to check out of dialogue? We joked: “Why do more people vote for American Idol than for the American president?” Reluctant to deal with the hassle of politics, one participant exclaimed: “Does it have to come to regulations?”

Working through the urge to shut-off and shut-down, people vented their frustrations and discussed their real issues with our system of governance. A great many participants felt a real disconnect from those in power, pointing out a lack of dialogue between policy makers and the rest of us ‘folks’. It was suggested that true dialogue could foster an exchange of ideas and knowledge, and that this exchange was urgently needed.

Participants yearned for participatory budgets and policies that were responsive to bottom up changes. Regulations could be designed that would make individual change continued...
convenient - speeding up the process. We discussed this in depth and concluded that the either/or formation of top down government policy or bottom up grassroots initiatives was a false dichotomy. Instead, we imagined an ongoing conversation, an inclusive climate of decision-making that produced policy solutions that both government and citizens could feel ownership over.

These desires led to an interesting set of questions: What comes first, policy or the demand for policy? Is policy a response to stakeholders or merely imposed upon them?

One participant lamented: "We hoist the responsibility upon the elected officials and then we get to complain about what they're doing wrong."

We wondered about the role of individuals acting within superstructures and institutions. Perhaps we need to overhaul our systems and structures rather than expecting powerful officials to repair situations that are outside their realm of control. One indicator of this need for systemic change came in questioning the role of cost-benefit analysis. People wondered: How do we measure true costs? What indicators should we be using? GNP is insufficient for measuring happiness and the things we value - how do we measure values?

continued...
Some felt that regulation needed to be combined with individual initiative in order to solve our most pressing social issues. Participants imagined institutionalized composting, incentives to take transit, government accountability written into governance, initiatives to encourage developers to contribute to social housing solutions, and subsidies being shifted to encourage non-corporate farming. And that was just the tip of the iceberg.

We yearned for the arts to be integrated into governance. We imagined citizenship-based thinking that would encourage participation in communities and cultural sustainability; we envisioned art as a tool of governance contributing to the realization of this dream.

Intuitively we all understand that when a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to hear it, it may or may not make a sound. Overwhelmingly we agree that it's not worth the risk: we need to ensure that not only are caring, passionate decision-makers listening when a tree falls, but that they are on the ground in the forest with the rest of us, working hard to keep the tree from falling.

continued...
Sometimes I feel like a solitary soldier. Sometimes I worry that cynicism and despair will get the better of me. And then sometimes, I have a day that makes me forget all of that. As I participated in the “Green is the New Black” dialogues, I was reminded of Theodore Zeldin’s “An Intimate History of Humanity.” Zeldin elevates personal narratives as legitimate sources of knowledge about our world and, through multiple voices, reminds us that the history of humankind is ultimately a history of the relationships we have with one another and with ourselves.

The second part of Zeldin’s argument is, that of all the mechanisms we may rely upon to protect us from forces we perceive to be beyond our control, the human imagination is the most powerful. This power to liberate, however, is intimately tied to purpose. To create solely for the approval and admiration of others is meaningless. To create with purpose is to make meaning. And once we reconnect with meaning we will no longer be content to move through life like parts on an assembly line, gathering all of the required components without really understanding why.

The way in which dialogue and the arts came together that day seemed to gently awaken in the room a sense of personal agency and connection to community, essential first steps towards collective action. The issues we face may seem insurmountable, true. But what is also true is that our chances of success don’t improve if we let fear prevent us from trying. Dare to dream. Invite others to dream with you. It may be our best hope yet.

Taigita Biln – Dialogue Instructor
IF A FOREST FALLS

Time and again during our dialogues, the question arose: When trying to achieve sustainability, where do we begin? The debate boiled down to a tension between individual reform and system-wide change. Some participants argued that we make individual changes and then feel like we have accomplished our goals, without ever carrying sustainability to the level of social, even global responsibility. "Are we trying to reach individuals or incite mass change?" Are the two goals compatible?

On the ‘mass change’ side of the equation, participants emphasized a number of important factors. One in particular, education, kept on recurring in conversations. We all agreed that education matters, not just at school and in a formal sense, but also within the household, within the family, and as part of the learning that takes place while children and adults are out in the world. People agreed that education was the best way to bring GREEN out of its ivory tower and ultimately change the consumption habits that underlie individual un-sustainability. We agreed that if we truly understood the history behind

continued...
the items we use and their ultimate destination, the waste cycle would be unrecognizably altered. Fundamentally, we decided that what matters most in successful education are communication, listening, and the willingness to engage in mutual learning.

Consumption and materialism were other issues that incited debate over whether they should be confronted by the individual or by the system. “Our whole culture is based on materialism; if we stopped consuming our whole social structure would collapse.” We debated the merits of a consumer culture and agreed that a cultural shift was needed. We imagined an open, sharing, nonhierarchical, citizenship based culture, which would integrate sustainability seamlessly into our daily choices. Making environmentally-friendly decisions would be an unconscious act, something promoted at school via education, but not being left behind when children walked out into the world, a transition facilitated by the arts.

Participants agreed that children were key to sustainability. “If it’s good for children, it’s good for everyone.” We sought not only to begin cultural change through an integrative approach to education, but also to empower children as actors able to advocate for their own visions of the future.

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Women were also seen to be at the heart of the issue. Our participants were disproportionately female and we pondered the reason for this attendant population. Some of us asserted that women care more and yet face barriers to true participation in the organs of power capable of mandating real change. “We treat the earth the way we treat women.”

Beyond gender, many issues around difference arose. We discussed our isolation within silos – an idea that describes both the lack of cross-pollination between academic disciplines as well as the general fragmentation of various segments and groups within our society. We all agreed that silos need to be broken down and that if we are able to come together and exchange ideas and knowledge, we will be able to generate a new, holistic worldview.

Another debate arose around technology. Has it made our lives better or not? Some participants felt that our reliance on technology has distanced us from our neighbors and led to a reliance on machines rather than one another. Others argued that technology has enabled vast networks of communication, created new forums for interaction, and

continued...
fostered the formation of new, interest-based communities. Despite the difference in opinion, we agreed that as an agent of participation and community formation, technology is a useful tool for us all.

Our final society-level idea involved revisiting a very old notion, that of the social contract. Participants described what they perceived of as an enviable social contract that Canada’s First Nations uphold not only between one another, but also between humankind and the earth. If we engaged this idea on a cultural level, we felt that our consideration for future generations, the future of the earth, and for one another would lead us to a radically different and more sustainable way of living our lives.

If a tree falls in the forest, it may or may not make an audible sound. And yet, if all the trees could somehow come together, working in concert to have their voices heard, to solve their problems together, things could be very different. A single tree falling may or may not make a sound, but an entire forest slamming itself to the ground will make a sound that reverberates the world over.
SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT TIME

As a class, we collectively agreed that the event was a huge success. Many of us were surprised at how smoothly the day flowed, and many problems that we had anticipated thankfully never materialized. The number of attendees and the eagerness of all the participants involved also pleasantly surprised us. The energy in the room was consistently high and there were smiles all around.

The success of the public dialogue was largely due to our own extended six-week dialogue. Our struggle to dialogue in class prepared us for the public event better than we could have ever planned. The numerous in-class dialogues taught us first hand how so many unique conversations can start with a single idea, and how the outcomes are never what you expect. Learning to facilitate dialogue in class also turned out to be a great asset as we were able to guide the World Café discussions with ease.

As a group, we truly learned the meaning of working as a team and trusting one another to do what each individual does best. That being said, there is always room for improvement.

continued...
The process was difficult at times and we especially struggled with the idea of collaboration. As students that are accustomed to working on our own, being competitive, and rarely seeking help from instructors, we admit that we didn’t understand the true meaning of collaboration. In hindsight, had we recognized that every individual in the class was a resource, we might have been able to work together more effectively and been more efficient at solving problems, we might have even avoided some problems entirely.

Yet in addition to instilling us with a deep appreciation for collaboration, holding the public dialogue also pointed to the larger value of our university experience; demonstrating how turning our ideas into actions could create a force of change. Moving away from the traditional classroom setting of reading textbooks and writing papers, we had the amazing opportunity to contribute to our community and come away with skills and knowledge that no amount of reading could ever have taught us. The human interaction and the conversations that transpired could not have been replicated nor could they have been bought with tuition money.

“Throughout the day, we all made connections with people we never would have under any other circumstances. From now on, I will challenge myself to continue to do this in my day to day life.”

Jessica Numminenn – Dialogue student
What You Can Do

How do we achieve the dream of a sustainable British Columbia? We posed this question to our dialogue participants who in turn spoke in unison. Start small. Beginning with personal change can have a significant impact on the environment we all share. Consider the following suggestions when debating the role of the individual in creating a better future for BC.

Food Miles Matter: To help reduce CO2 emissions released from trucks, airplanes, and cargo ships it’s best to buy food that’s in season, organic, and grown locally.

Go Vegetarian One Day a Week: To produce one pound, 0.45 kilograms, of beef requires 9, 464 litres of water—that’s forty times more water than it takes to produce a pound of potatoes. Cows consume enormous amounts of antibiotics and are responsible for almost twenty percent of the greenhouse gas methane in the atmosphere.

Drive Less: Walk to nearby destinations. Approximately fifty percent of car use is for trips within five kilometres of the home. By walking, rollerblading, or biking, you will be saving fuel and reducing pollution.

Turn Off Your Chargers: Most cell-phone chargers continue to draw electricity even when the phone is not plugged in. The same problem applies to your other electronic devices—your laptop, ipod, digital camera, and Blackberry.

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Ditch Plastic Bags: It is estimated that North Americans use 84 billion plastic bags annually, a considerable contribution to the 500 billion used worldwide. Invest in stronger, reusable bags, and avoid plastic bags whenever possible.

Build Green: Before embarking on any home renovations or construction, consider hiring an architect with green credentials who will build along sustainable lines. Ask your contractor for the sources of materials and request that energy-saving devices, such as solar paneling, be installed. Please visit www.greenbuilder.com for more information.

Discover Your Carbon Footprint: Determine your carbon footprint and then try to reduce it! Your footprint will take into account the food you eat, gas and electricity usage, and car and air mileage.
Go to www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.html

“To be honest, I was entirely surprised at the outcome of the day. I came there expecting an entertaining and art-filled day. I came away with much more, however, including a head full of ideas and inspiration. I couldn’t believe the topics of conversations that were flowing and the thoughts they provoked.”

Raena Dumas - Dialogue student
T H A N K  Y O U

Our dialogue would not have been possible, or so successful, without the help, guidance, and support of many individuals. We wish to most sincerely thank a few of our mentors.

From the Undergraduate Semester in Dialogue at Simon Fraser University, we wish to thank Mark Winston, for your leadership and skillful mediation. Further thanks to our generous, dedicated instructors Janet Moore, Rob VanWynsberghe, and Taigita Bihl, for encouraging us to reach for the stars, and being brave enough to tell us when we had missed the mark.

From the Roundhouse Community Centre, many thanks to Amir Ali Alibhai for inspiring us to emphasize arts and culture in our sustainability dialogue, and for lending us such an inspirational space. Thanks as well to Bryony Hollick for your administrative and logistical support.

From Imagine BC, we wish to thank Joanna Ashworth for your enthusiasm and belief in our collective ability. Thanks as well to the administrative staff of Imagine BC for your guidance and assistance throughout the process.
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• Simon Fraser University Vancouver - Dialogue Programs, Continuing Studies
• BC Hydro - Power Smart
• British Columbia Arts Council - Supported by the Province of BC

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• Drive Organics
• Flower Box
• Granville Island Tea Co.
• Happy Planet
• Janet Boxwell
• Magpie Magazine
• Prado Cafe
• Reprographics
• SFU Bookstore
• Sports Junkies
• The Bike Doctor
• Whistler Water

RESOURCES

Undergraduate Semester in Dialogue:
www.sfu.ca/dialogue/undergrad

Imagine BC:
www.sfu.ca/dialogue/imaginebc

Sustainable SFU:
www.sfu.ca/~sustain

The Roundhouse Community Centre - Footprints Project:
www.roundhouse.ca/footprints

Smart Growth BC:
www.smartgrowth.bc.ca/index

Green House Emissions Calculator:
www.climatechange.gc.ca/calculator

Discover Your Carbon Footprint:
www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.html
APPENDIX NO. 1
IMAGINE BC

Under the leadership of the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue and the Dialogue programs at Simon Fraser University, Imagine BC is a five year initiative that aims to create opportunities for public dialogue on British Columbia's shared future. The Imagine BC dialogue series, initiated in the fall of 2004, uses an interrogative approach to seek answers to complex questions concerning the culture, environment, and future of BC.

The initial 2004 Imagine BC event engaged a small, diverse group of experts in a three-day dialogue on Bowen island. The goals of the dialogue were to exchange ideas on BC's unique culture, forge connections between economic prosperity and environmental sustainability, and to map a vision of BC in 30 years time. This dialogue inspired and informed a series of larger public dialogues throughout the year and led to a second three-day Imagine BC event with a narrower focus on the current and future state of BC's economy and ecology.

Our dialogue was a continuation of the Imagine BC dialogue project, organized and hosted by the students of the Undergraduate Summer Semester in Dialogue at Simon Fraser University. Building on the Imagine BC theme of ecology and economy, our dialogue sought to understand and inspire sustainability by way of an exploration of our collective responsibility towards the future.
Our day reminded me over and over of my favorite quote, to paraphrase: some people look at the world as it is and ask why? I prefer to look at the world as it could be and ask why not. On June 16th we asked why not and the power of the response we got back is something I won’t forget.

From the individual teacups to doing our event inside of an art exhibit I felt a very special quality to the day, as if progress and change was marching in step with a rhythm of creativity and collaboration.

Tom Kineshanko - Dialogue Student
APPENDIX NO. 2
HISTORY OF THE ROUNDHOUSE

Built in 1888 as the western terminus station of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Roundhouse endured a long and colourful history before it was slated to become a public facility in 1993. Despite the waning use in railway transportation over the years, public concern for the historic building saved the Roundhouse from demolition scares and ensured that the architectural gem would be enjoyed for generations to come.

Remaining true to its unique past, the Roundhouse is unlike any other community centre in Canada: grounded firmly in the arts and a public facility of not just residents of Yaletown but all of Vancouver. Featuring a black box Performance Centre, exhibition hall, woodworking shop, pottery and dance studios, full size gymnasium, café, and several multi-purpose areas, the Roundhouse provides a wide range of artistic and cultural opportunities to the citizens of Vancouver.

We are thrilled to have had the opportunity to host a community-wide dialogue in Vancouver’s oldest heritage continued...
building, still standing on its original site of construction. Beyond the breathtaking design, we found that the fusion of community and art as represented by the Roundhouse was an ideal setting for a dialogue exploring visions of a shared future. In addition to inspiring us with its vivid history, we saw that the Roundhouse encouraged discussion on the role of community and the arts in moving towards a sustainable British Columbia.

“The space was surprising – my first impression was that it was too noisy and big – I was wrong. It was open enough to allow for comfort, and the art displays really added to the open-ended and creative spin that we had worked so hard to put on the day.”

Robyn Switzer – Dialogue student
APPENDIX NO. 3
SUMMARY OF EVALUATIONS

At the end of the dialogue, we asked guests to fill out anonymous evaluation forms and reflect on their personal experience of the event. “Too much structure.” “Not enough structure.” While many comments were in opposition, others were repeatedly echoed and several common themes emerged from the evaluations.

People were really inspired by us, the students of the Undergraduate Semester in Dialogue, for caring enough and having the drive to put this event together. They loved our catch phrase “Green is the New Black” and really felt our presence throughout the day, whether through our stories, our artful facilitation, or our overall effort that culminated in the dialogue. Many participants credited the openness of the student storytellers in creating a comfortable and open atmosphere that encouraged guests to speak freely at the World Café’s about their own ideas and experiences.

Many participants really enjoyed connecting with the unique group of people gathered at the event. Some, however, felt that a bit more diversity, both in age and in status, would have enriched the day, whether through the presence of politicians, scientists, or members of the business community. Most participants were thrilled with the Mitote performance by Daniel Sanchez and felt a real sense of community in being part of a spontaneous musical ensemble continued...
with a group of strangers. They felt a real questioning of the idea of music and musicians, and were brought to wondering whether they, too, were really musicians.

Almost all respondents had something to say about the World Café dialogues and the comments were overwhelmingly positive. Some felt that the talks had too much tangibility and wondered what came after recycling and compost. Others had issues with the World Café questions, which left them feeling motivated for action, but with no real solutions to pour their energies into. Participants appreciated the opportunity for cross-pollination and were excited to hear what had been going on at other World Café tables. Many people wished that the dialogues were longer and were reluctant to switch tables, not wanting to abandon passionate topics or discussions.

Overall, people seemed to walk away feeling inspired. Many requested follow-up events such as an annual conference or festival organized by youth around issues of sustainability. Other suggestions included a multi-day event featuring speakers, storytellers, exhibits, and opportunities to get involved in hands-on activities designed to implement some of the generated ideas.

“This day will always be a day that I can reflect upon and remember I can do anything, we can do anything, there are no limits.”

Jessica Numminen – Dialogue student
SPENCER HERBERT

We were honoured to introduce Spencer Herbert, as a reflective storyteller for our Creating a Shared Future dialogue. Spencer is currently the Associate Producer of the World Urban Forum’s Earth Village Festival with Judith Marcuse Projects. Spencer was recently elected to the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation and is in high demand as a facilitator and lecturer. In addition to having travelled the world promoting arts as a method of uniting communities, Spencer has also worked with Better Environmentally Sound Transportation, the Sierra Youth Coalition, the Gay and Lesbian Centre, and the Roundhouse Community Centre.

As a strong proponent of community building through the arts, we believe that Spencer will offer a unique insight into the roles of community and art in achieving a brighter future for British Columbia. As a reflective storyteller, Spencer helped to create an atmosphere of inspiration and imagination that was necessary to stimulate innovative dialogue surrounding BC’s envisioned future.

continued...
DANIEL SANCHEZ
We were proud to introduce Daniel Sanchez, as an interactive artistic participant of the Creating a Shared Future dialogue. A composer, percussionist, speaker, and touring artist whose musical works include pieces for ballets, theater, television, and cinema, Sanchez is best known for his work with the Orquesta Mitote, or the Mitote Orchestra. As a Mitote musician, Sanchez works to bridge the gap between the individual and community through artistic presentations. Mitote is traditionally a pre-Hispanic Nahuatl fertility dance that searches for the union between heaven and earth. Contemporary Mexican Mitote bridges music and ecology by creating instruments out of recycled materials. Mitote has earned international recognition, awards, and is backed by UNESCO and the International Music Council’s Support.

In his interactive performance, Sanchez introduced us to his idea of ‘garbage’ and how we can mold an individual consciousness towards waste that contributes to larger social change based on the well-being of all life forms. We were excited to have the chance to explore and experience other methods of dialogue, where non-verbal modes of communication can be as powerful tools of expression as speech. For more information on Orquesta Mitote or Daniel Sanchez, please visit: www.geocities.com/orquestamitote
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Sheena Sarava
Ava Shui
Kelsey Singbeil
Linda Stedfield
Julia St. Pierre
Del Tamborini
Neil Varner
Mark Winston
Cease Wyss
Bonnie Yee

UNDERGRADUATE
SUMMER SEMESTER IN
DIALOGUE STUDENTS

Ellisa Calder
Leah Camenzind
Jasmine Cumberland
Harinder Dhillon
Raena Dumas
Amanda Emsley
Venita Fung
Nina Halliday-Thompson
Christopher Hogg
Christy Jung

Tom Kineshanko
Adrienne Kinzel
Amanda McCuaig
Jessica Numminen
Lauren Ogston
Leanna Platt
Lynn Saffery
Travis Streb
Robyn Switzer
APPENDIX NO. 6
THE DAY’S SCHEDULE

9:30-10:00  Registration
10:00-10:45 Welcome and Introductions
10:45-11:15 Reflective Storyteller: Spencer Herbert
11:15-11:30 BREAK
11:30-11:50 World Café 1 – “What do you love about BC?”
11:50-11:55 Switch Tables
12:00-12:20 World Café 2 – “What would a sustainable BC look like?”
12:20-1:30 LUNCH and Additional Activities
  • Envision Our Future Wall:
    Come express your vision for the future. Craft supplies available for your creative genius
  • Walking Tour:
    A forty minute walking tour of False Creek lead by Janet Boxwell
  • Exhibit Tour:
    A tour of the Footprints Exhibit right here in the Roundhouse
1:30-2:15 Reflective Artist: Daniel Sanchez

continued...
2:15-2:50  World Café 3 – “If you had a magic wand, what future would you create for BC?”

2:50-3:10  BREAK

3:10-3:45  World Café 4 – “How can we achieve the dream?”

3:45-4:15  Report Back

4:15-4:30  Closing and Thank You’s, including a performance by the B.C. Clettes

Until 5pm  Dessert and Refreshments

“As MC I was removed from much of the dialogue. When people came back to the circle I wasn’t sure if I would have to attempt to raise the energy of the group. This never was the case as the crowd returned to the circle more energized and humored after every world café.”

Tom Kineshanko – Dialogue student
Green is the New Black!

A one-day dialogue exploring our shared responsibility for creating a sustainable future in BC. Come prepared for active dialogue, insightful speakers, storytelling, and art.

You are invited to “Creating a Shared Future” — a dialogue on

Thursday, June 15, 2006
10:00 am — 3:00 pm

Vancouver Art Gallery
1100 Hamilton St.
Vancouver, BC

Cost: $10 (includes lunch)

Reservation required. RSVP by calling 604-913-1020
(Green is the New Black, June 15, 2006 10:00 am — 3:00 pm)

www.vaf.org/dialogue/unsung
Who's responsibility is it to change
Are we moving forward and just hitting barriers?
Does change come from education?
Creating smart patterns
Early in life?
Sustainability used to be just about the environment
But it's not bigger
Economic
Social
We must think outside our roles.
Beyond
The individual.

Do we change because of guilt?
Or because we’re embarrassed?
Of leaving the water on
or dropping litter.
I try to influence others but they turn to me and say:
“Well I work hard, why can’t I just buy things?
I want it
but I want it
I WANT IT.”
The change has to be personal
Maybe when others see how
they are a part of a bigger community
then they’ll understand our need to change.

We get caught in patterns of

continued...
Intergenerational tyranny
We use excuses to be passive
Arm
Chair
Analysts
But someone has got to be the beginning
We may not be comfortable
And so we don’t participate
But if we don’t participate we feel uncomfortable.
Sometimes it’s really WORK
to change
our
perceptions.

The idea here is that we’re allowed
to change our opinions
Ignore the marketing that tells us
we had better look out
or we’re drinking toilet water.
As far as I’m concerned
fear
is a shitty motivator.
So what is the incentive?
Is change good because it’s healthy
Is it good for the environment
or is it good because it’s trendy?
Even if it’s just a fad
it will be come
part of us.

Amanda McCuaig – Dialogue student