



PowerShift Organizing Toolkit

Welcome to PowerShift Atlantic!

This guide is designed to help you organize your campus, high school, community or workplace to attend PowerShift Atlantic and strengthen the climate justice movement. It will also offer some tips and tools to help you fundraise to cover the costs for participants in your region to get to this exciting gathering.

This toolkit is meant to be a starting point to provide you with the background information and basics to get started on working in your community. More resources will be sent your way as PowerShift Atlantic gets closer and your organizing progresses.

We hope to build momentum in the lead up to PowerShift Atlantic through coordinated actions, events and other organizing. **Remember**, if you have any questions or concerns always feel free to contact us at info@ourclimate.ca



What is PowerShift?

PowerShift is project that started in 2007 in the United States, and first came to Canada in 2009. It is a youth led organizing effort to bring together people from a diversity of backgrounds and communities to build a movement for climate and environmental justice. Between October 2013 and October 2015 there will be six PowerShift gatherings across Canada to connect and grow our movement while building skills and strategies for collective action. PowerShift Atlantic is the second regional event. The first was PowerShift BC in October 2013.

Be a part of building a climate justice movement in Canada!

PowerShift is a project of OurClimate.ca - the Canadian Youth Climate Coalition and is organized with a wide range of partner organizations.

In addition, we have a growing team of **volunteers and grassroots organizers** from across Atlantic Canada who are playing a vital role in making PowerShift a reality.

Programming at PowerShift Atlantic

The programming at PowerShift Atlantic will include inspiring keynote speakers, interactive skills-based workshops, issues-based workshops, identity-based meet-ups and caucuses, panel discussions, entertainment, fun social events, opportunities to take action and much more.

PowerShift is designed with the goal of educating and empowering hundreds of youth in Atlantic Canada to grow a broad-based climate justice movement that feeds into local, justice-oriented and community-based organizing to transform our society. Participants with diverse passions and levels

What is Climate and Environmental Justice?

It's the idea that no group of people, including racialized, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local and tribal programs and policies.

When talking about oppression and inequality, sometimes new terms arise which have specifically intended functions. A good first step when working in the environmental justice field, or with groups of like-minded allies, is to familiarize yourself with this new vocabulary in order to communicate your message clearly.



of experience will have ample choice in order to find programming that interests them.

Based on the type of skills or knowledge participants want to develop they will have the opportunity to choose a 'skill track.' Examples of skill tracks include: campaign planning, communicating through diverse forms of media, organizing people and resources in our communities, educating and facilitating, advocacy and carrying out effective actions, among others! There will be a series of **core workshops for each skill track** and many optional workshops to choose from. The tracks will overlap in order to ensure we are **learning from each other** and are able to share our diverse interests and backgrounds.

PowerShift Atlantic will also include **issue-based workshops, panels and speakers**. In the evening there will be live music and entertainment with options for alcohol-free events. Other on-going activities will include an art space, tabling fairs and more.

Sample workshops include:

- Separating Oil and State: Understanding how corporations are influencing our policies
- Faith-based Perspectives on Climate Change
- Losing more than Hockey: Panel on the Impacts of Climate Change in Canada
- Organizing an effective action
- Puppet Making and other Creative Visuals
- How and When to Break into the Media
- Grassroots Fundraising
- Developing and Carrying-out Strategies that Win!

Anti-Oppression and Accessibility

PowerShift strives to organize the workshops and panels in a way that is **inclusive, accessible and empowering**. Moreover, throughout the process we aim to collectively, creatively and positively challenge power while encouraging meaningful collaboration, and the **participation of and solidarity with impacted communities**.

PowerShift Vision Statement

2011 was a year of people's power. From mass mobilizations in Greece and Spain, throughout North Africa and the Middle East, to Occupy Wall Street and the struggle against the Keystone XL and Gateway pipelines, movements of ordinary people emerged and set the stage for much needed changes to today's economic, social and political landscape. For many, 2011 spelled a darker and tougher time, with climate change-induced disasters and spiralling economic inequality and misery. But it also re-kindled a fire, an appetite for greater justice, for a more equal and collaborative society.



Youth were at the forefront of these movements. In Canada, too, they are rising to the occasion. In 2012 nearly 1500 youth from across Canada gathered in Ottawa to build on this momentum and strengthen the movement for climate and environmental justice. In 2013, 1000 more gathered in British Columbia for the first regional PowerShift. Now PowerShift is heading east for PowerShift Atlantic.

The current political moment in Atlantic Canada and more widely in Canada presents severe challenges as well as exciting possibilities. Federally, the government continues to obstruct the success of international climate negotiations, putting coastal communities at risk of rising seas and increasing extreme weather. The federal government's priorities are in direct opposition to initiatives that would promote environmental protection and environmental justice.

The Atlantic Canadian provincial governments have varying approaches to highly polluting unconventional energy sources, but on a whole are not doing enough to mitigate the impacts of climate change and create an environmentally and economically sustainable economy in Atlantic Canada.

On the other hand, public support for action on climate change is increasing. Pipelines, offshore drilling, and fracking have emerged as a new battleground in the fight against extreme energy in Atlantic Canada. Grassroots campaigns, led by affected communities, have postponed exploratory work in New Brunswick and Cape Breton, and widespread opposition to extreme energy is pushing many jurisdictions in Atlantic Canada to adopt temporary bans on fracking.

Other factors, such as the emergence in 2011 of the Occupy movement and spinoff activist groups in Atlantic Canada, have increased our ability to name corporate power and spiralling inequality as key economic issues.

Youth unemployment in the Atlantic Provinces and the westward migration of our region's young workers and professionals continue to grow. As people scramble to find jobs close to home, we have a huge opportunity to mobilize thousands of young people to push for a locally focused sustainable economy that provides green jobs here in Atlantic Canada.

For PowerShift Atlantic, and subsequent PowerShifts, to take advantage of this political moment, it cannot be a one-off event. PowerShift Atlantic needs to conceive itself as a contribution to a sustainable, broad-based movement that feeds off of and into local justice-oriented and community-based organizing. PowerShift Atlantic should aim to be a catalyst for education and collective action in a long-term effort to empower and



educate youth and intergenerational communities to create change for a just and sustainable future.

An accompanying challenge is to confront the shift toward policies that prioritize short-term economic gain over the general well being of the environment and people. The national conversation about climate action is full of reactionary language, like “environmental measures will ruin the economy,” and so forth. It’s up to us to change the conversation.

PowerShift Atlantic will need to articulate a vision that can demonstrate that solutions to the economic crisis — creating environmentally and socially valuable jobs, tackling inequality, and restraining corporate power — are also solutions to the climate crisis. This is the only way to shift the conversation about climate change, and lay the groundwork to build the future we need.

Are you in?

What role can you play in PowerShift?

Gearing up for PowerShift Atlantic requires a bottom-up approach to building momentum. That's where you come in! As a PowerShift Organizer, you will build momentum around climate justice in your own community (this might be your school, your city, your faith community, your region - whatever you identify with). You will connect with youth, community leaders, and organizations that focus on environmental and social change to recruit at least 5 of your peers to join you at PowerShift Atlantic.

As an organizer you will be recruiting not just participants, but other organizers to collaborate with you in building a local organizing unit with support from one of our Regional Organizing Coordinators (ROC). They will provide you with any support you may need when it comes to contacting local organizations, asking for assistance, and fundraising.

A Note on Youth

PowerShift is primarily led and organized by youth aged 18-30, as we as we have the collective energy, creativity and power to transform society, and to work as together as allies with others fighting for climate justice in frontline and affected communities. While people falling outside that age range will not be turned away from participation in PowerShift, they should be aware that PowerShift programming is geared towards the specified ages. We also invite other parts of society to volunteer their time, be supportive of youth efforts and to participate in creating a better future for everyone.