

Creating Change Agents in the Classroom

This article is about a two minute read.

Jen Ball is a professor in Humber's General Arts and Science (GAS) program. Before starting at Humber College in 2008, Jen worked at CBC Radio as an outdoor educator while pursuing a graduate degree at York. In the fall of 2021, Humber launched the Sustainability Stream, a new program option guiding students toward green sector careers. Since then, Jen has been teaching courses informed by today's global challenges, such as the climate crisis and social inequity.

Sustainability plays a significant role in Jen's life. She credits the report released by the [UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC) in 2018 as a turning point for her perspective on the climate crisis. The report emphasized that if human-caused climate change continued, the effects would be catastrophic. "I still remember that day vividly," Jen said.



Photo of Jen Ball, (she/her).

"Until that point, I knew the climate crisis was a big problem, but the extent of it had not sunk in yet for me, or the massive transformations required at every level of society, and the ways in which we cannot tackle these problems without simultaneously addressing social inequality."

I read it and I cried. I remember looking at my two kids, aged 5 and 7 at the time, and thinking of all their peers. I decided that in 40 years, I wanted to be able to look them in the eye and say to them, 'I was part of the solution to the biggest crisis we have ever faced. I did not stand by and do nothing,'" she said.

Jen kept her word and has been working to combat the climate crisis in the best way she can — through education. At Humber, the classes Jen teaches are informed in some way by sustainability and global challenges, such as environmental problems, the climate crisis and social inequity. Jen also contributes to different climate action organizations, including a non-profit that promotes outdoor education and makes her voice heard by voting on civic issues.

There is no denying that we are in the middle of a global climate crisis. The [latest report](#) from the IPCC indicates that actions taken this decade are crucial to prevent the most severe climate disasters. A collaborative effort between governments, the private sector and civil society will be essential to slow down the progression of the worst climate impacts. Jen believes that individuals at the college level can play a crucial role in this change.

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"We at the college level are really in an excellent place to help shape the labour force required to meet the ambitious targets being set by Canada and the entire global community," Jen said. "Not only that, we must graduate critical thinkers who can assess the plans being made and identify weaknesses and opportunities. I have such excellent colleagues at Humber who do this work and teach these skills every day in the classroom. It's so exciting to be a part of this team."

Humber College strives to equip its faculty, staff and students with the tools they need, including professional development, resources and peer-to-peer learning in sustainability. In 2020, Humber launched the [Humber Learning Outcomes](#) (HLOs), which are a set of key skills and mindsets that prepare graduates for success in the rapidly changing real world. Sustainability, along with Equity, Diversity & Inclusion and Systems Thinking, were identified as key mindsets. "This is huge!" Jen said. "The HLOs give faculty license to include these topics in all courses. What could be more important? So, let's all do it. Now. There is not a moment to lose."

If you are interested in a career in the green sector or would like to learn more about Humber's one-of-a-kind Sustainability Stream, visit [their website](#) or contact greenpaths@humber.ca. Additionally, if you would like to learn more about the HLOs, or other aspects of sustainable learning at Humber, visit humber.ca/sustainability.



Jen at the 2021 Toronto Climate March, with her child and nephew.



Jen and her daughter on a hike.

Note: All photos were provided by Jen Ball.