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# LAND(ING) BACK

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**RECENTERING INDIGENOUS YOUTH VOICES  
IN CLIMATE ACTION & RECONCILIATION**

INSIGHTS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS  
PREPARED BY THE TEAMS AT 4RS YOUTH MOVEMENT  
& YOUTH CLIMATE LAB SUMMER 2022

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

## 4RS YOUTH MOVEMENT

The work of the 4Rs Youth Movement is about centering the needs and role Indigenous young people play in moving forward reconciliation between individuals, communities & systems in Canada. We work to create opportunities for youth to envision self-determined reconciliation initiatives in their communities while being given the opportunity to focus on their joy & wellbeing, and filling their bundles with new knowledge from across movements, about co-liberation and healing justice.

## YOUTH CLIMATE LAB

Youth Climate Lab (YCL) is a Canada-based, global non-profit organization of youth mobilizing youth (18-30) to create just, climate-resilient futures. We equip youth with skills, financial access and policy knowledge to take leadership in the climate movement. Youth Climate Lab was founded in May 2017 to support and strengthen the next generation of leaders to shake up the status quo of climate inaction. Since then, we've worked with 30+ partners around the globe to design and pilot projects that have reached thousands of young people in more than 77 countries.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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# GIVING THANKS



The authors would like to extend our gratitude to everyone who helped to uncover these insights and bring forward the recommendations weaved throughout this document. This begins first with the land, the earth, our mother, and all our relatives who we share these lands with: from the animals, to the plants, down to the microbes and mycelium that seek to bring balance to our co-existence.

This work wouldn't be possible without the Indigenous youth who participated in [the Land\(ing\) Back audio blog series](#), and whose stories and recommendations contributed greatly to this document. Thank you to guests Kyla Pascal, Kakekà Thundersky, Nika Silverfox, Gabe Calderon, and Riley Yesno as well as our podcast co-hosts Shalaka Jadhav, Naia Lee and Dani Lanouette.

We would also like to thank Dakota Norris (YCL Associate), Soomin Han (Climate Action Cohort 2019), and Ronald Gamblin (4Rs Youth Movement) for their contributions to the report as peer reviewers.

Lastly we wish to acknowledge and thank Alanah Jewell of @Morning.Star.Designs for her original artwork, "Our First Mother" which was adapted for the logo and elements of the Land(ing) Back podcast and which appears throughout this document. While doing this work together, we were reminded of our relationship with the earth and how, for many Indigenous peoples around the world, the earth is referred to as our mother. Alanah very graciously provided us with permission to use her artwork and the individual elements within her piece.



# LAND(ING) BACK

## BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW

This document was developed based on the conversations and recommendations from the Land(ing) Back audio blogs that were collaboratively produced and released by 4Rs Youth Movement (4Rs) and Youth Climate Lab (YCL) in fall 2021.<sup>1</sup> Land(ing) Back was a call to pay attention to the voices and perspectives of Indigenous young people, to be inspired by their work in community and around transformative approaches to creating healthier and sustainable futures for us all.

This knowledge and insight is consistent with the research and analysis published by countless Indigenous peoples, and organizations leading climate work on Turtle Island and internationally, as demonstrated throughout the citations embedded in this document (see Appendix and references). Our intention here was to honour their labour and uplift the voices of young people who have been speaking truth to the same issues for decades.

While current programs, policies and initiatives of the federal government, nonprofit and community sectors aim to advance climate action and reconciliation, the perspectives and experiences of Indigenous youth are not well integrated, and often the types of action taken at the policy level create more barriers and cause further harm in community. This document seeks to address the gaps and barriers identified by Indigenous youth who are driving the climate movement.

"OVER THE LAST THREE DECADES, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES HAVE BEEN ADVANCING AND ADVOCATING FOR SOME OF THE STRONGEST CLIMATE POLICIES AND ACTIONS ROOTED IN OUR RIGHTS, LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND IDENTITIES. AND OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS THERE HAS BEEN PROGRESS TO INTEGRATE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND OUR KNOWLEDGE INTO THESE PROCESSES... BUT THIS PROCESS IS STILL LAGGING WHILE 'FALSE SOLUTIONS' CONTINUE TO BE NEGOTIATED AND SANCTIONED THAT HAVE DETRIMENTAL IMPACTS ON OUR COMMUNITIES AND OUR LIVES"<sup>2</sup>

ERIEL TCHEKWIE DERANGER  
INDIGENOUS CLIMATE ACTION

# SETTING THE SCENE



## RECONCILIATION & A GREEN RECOVERY

“INDIGENOUS YOUTH WILL SHAPE AND INHERIT THE RESULTS OF CANADA’S RECONCILIATION AGENDA, AND PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN REBUILDING RELATIONSHIPS. THEY ARE KEY DRIVERS OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES AND THEIR VOICES ARE ENSURING THAT NO NEW GENERATION OF INDIGENOUS YOUTH IS “LEFT BEHIND.”<sup>3 (p12)</sup>

### CANADA’S FIRST STATE OF THE YOUTH REPORT

On November 23rd, 2021, the 44th Parliament commenced with a throne speech from Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary Simon, the first Indigenous Governor General of Canada. The throne speech was given within the context of a second year into a global pandemic where Indigenous and Northern communities have been made particularly vulnerable, and mere months after the first of many discoveries of unmarked mass graves at former Residential Schools across the country.

It stated the federal government’s priorities to recognize that “reconciliation requires a whole-of-government approach, breaking down barriers, and rethinking how to accelerate our work”, reaffirming their commitment to implement the United National Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples (UNDRIP) and closing the gaps First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities face, such as lack of access to clean drinking water.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, for the first time, the mandate letters to Ministers included the need for a whole-of-government approach to work towards reconciliation, climate action and systemic change, followed by prioritization of the full implementation of the UNDRIP Act passed in the 43rd Parliament for key ministers responsible for the portfolio.

Additionally, the Government of Canada has made promises both domestically and internationally regarding climate change mitigation and adaptation infrastructure, investments to assist a green recovery from the pandemic, and creating a Just Transition Act to guide Canada’s transformation to a low-carbon economy.



Through these commitments and mandates, it is clear that reconciliation and climate action are key priorities of this government and it is widely acknowledged that impactful and sustainable action can only occur with a whole-of-government approach. However, while both youth and Indigenous people are highlighted repeatedly in witness testimonies for committee studies studying just transition and reconciliation, and documents such as the Healthy Environment, Healthy Economy Climate Plan and the new Federal Sustainable Development Strategy as being the most vulnerable to climate impacts, they continue to be left out of decision-making.

**“THE TIME IS NOW TO AMPLIFY, INVEST IN, AND EXPAND INDIGENOUS-BASED JUST TRANSITION ECONOMIES, INFRASTRUCTURE, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL MOVEMENTS, AND CLIMATE SOLUTIONS. IN SEVERAL DECADES WE MAY LOOK BACK AT THIS TIME BEFORE IMPLEMENTATION OF GREEN NEW DEAL POLICIES, PROGRAMS, AND ACT IN DISBELIEF THAT WE DID NOT ACT SOONER.”<sup>5</sup>(p5)**

NDN COLLECTIVE

Despite the ongoing personal, community, and systemic barriers faced by Indigenous peoples in navigating these systems of decision-making, meaningful action and calls for justice within the climate sector are still being driven by young Indigenous leaders. It is critical to note that they lead this work despite the sacrifices of their mental, emotional, spiritual and physical health to defend the land and water.<sup>6</sup> Young Indigenous leaders are also more likely to face state violence, legal barriers and expenses associated with their community work due to the over-policing of Indigenous climate-related actions and activism.<sup>7</sup>

These young Indigenous leaders are demanding governments, organizations and industries to build more meaningful, reciprocal and respectful relationships with Indigenous Nations and their people, especially by upholding Indigenous rights frameworks and ways of ecological stewardship.

# ONGOING CHALLENGES



Indigenous young people are often the focal point of (unmet) commitments and promises from all levels of government and sector leaders on reconciliation, climate action and future-readiness. Yet, their voices and experiences are not centered in the reconciliation process, nor are they seen and supported as legitimate contributors to decision-making and policy development in planning to realize climate resiliency and towards a green economy.

For Indigenous youth, many systematic barriers exist including “a legacy of exploitation, ecocide and environmental, energy, climate and economic injustice”<sup>8</sup> that prevent them (as well as other racialized and marginalized youth) from building capacity, implementing solutions and participating in decision making processes around the climate crisis. Identified below are key barriers that must be addressed as a critical step towards a just future that centers Indigenous youth voices.



“THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION OF CANADA IS RELATIVELY YOUNG IN COMPARISON TO THE NON-INDIGENOUS POPULATION, WITH AVERAGE AGES OF 32.1 AND 40.9 YEARS, RESPECTIVELY (STATISTICS CANADA, 2018). GIVEN THE AGE DEMOGRAPHICS OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND EXISTING BARRIERS TO YOUTH ENGAGEMENT, THE INCLUSION OF INDIGENOUS YOUTH WITHIN THE CLIMATE JUSTICE MOVEMENT IS IMPERATIVE FOR AN EQUITABLE, JUSTICE-ORIENTED RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE.”<sup>6(p4)</sup>



# CHALLENGE #1



NARROW DEFINITION OF YOUTH CLIMATE ACTION, VOLUNTEERING AND GREEN JOBS, WHICH LARGELY EXCLUDES GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT WORK AND CRIMINALIZES INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATION AND WORLDVIEWS.

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As Anishinaabe researcher and Land(ing) Back audio blog guest, Riley Yesno, writes, “for many Indigenous people ... care for the environment is a value deeply instilled in our culture and world view...it is an obligation to do this work, that is, ultimately, not just for us but for all people and living things”.<sup>9</sup> In many Indigenous cultures, water protection and ecological stewardship are community roles and responsibilities, and a duty they have to all their relations, including animals, trees, plants, rivers and mountains. As such, many Indigenous peoples do not see themselves as “climate activists” or as people doing “green jobs”.

Further highlighted by the Land(ing) Back interviewees, Nika Silverfox, member of Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation in the Yukon, shares that this is “how [she] was raised...I wouldn't really call us activists or anything like that. Because that's just, it's our way of life. Like that's how we've always lived. Since time immemorial, we've always been like this. And so just to be living on the land to be treating it with respect and to be using her gifts with love and not overusing them”.<sup>10</sup> Green jobs can thus include artists communicating climate solutions through their work, storytellers sharing the realities of climate change and teachings passed by generations of elders, or educating others on native plants and their healings. The possibilities are endless.

In contrast, the mainstream Canadian definition of green jobs tends to overly focus on western approaches to science, technology, engineering & mathematics (STEM), and positions ecological conservation or restoration work as 9-5 day jobs rather than a way of life. Furthermore, representation and mainstream understanding of climate action and green jobs often disproportionately portray a range of roles limited to renewable energy engineers and field researchers. These are roles dominated by, often white, older males. When youth are portrayed to engage in green work, they are only recognized as upper-middle class teenagers organizing school strikes.<sup>11</sup> Indigenous land stewardship is not portrayed as a green job nor viewed as ‘acceptable’ climate activism. Those who exercise their sovereignty on the frontlines of land defence and water protection are often painted as fringe radicals and dangerous criminals by the media and face severe consequences such as harassment, coercion and violence by non-Indigenous peoples, police and the RCMP alike.<sup>12 13</sup>

To address the gap in the various understandings of green jobs, there must be education, promotion, and funding of work that ‘bridges the gap’, such as the Land Guardians program,<sup>14</sup> work centering cultural and traditional knowledge, and Indigenous language courses.





# #1

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According to Indigenous Climate Action's Youth Needs Assessment, all of the youth study participants expressed the importance of including their voices within the climate movement, however "when asked if they felt that the input of Indigenous youth is incorporated into climate activism, 47% of respondents said "sometimes" and 33% said "rarely/occasionally". When asked if they felt that the input of Indigenous youth is incorporated into climate activism, 45% of respondents "strongly agree" and 25% of respondents "agree" that their Indigenous backgrounds impacted their ability to participate." <sup>6(p10)</sup>

On Land(ing) Back, Kyla Pascal, who identifies as a Métis Black woman, underscores the harmful impacts of whitewashing environmentalism; "if you consider that only white folks are doing the work, that leaves obviously a very large portion of the population out of the conversations, out of the rooms, out of the spaces to be able to make change. And so I think it also impacts the way that we think of climate work."<sup>15</sup>

## CHALLENGE #2

NARROW DEFINITIONS OF RECONCILIATION THAT PRIORITIZES THE EDUCATION OF SETTLERS, LIMITING INDIGENOUS-LED SOLUTIONS

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It is inherently problematic that so much programming around reconciliation is designed by non-Indigenous policy-makers and organizations. This results in setting false expectations and misallocating resources to a settler-centred instead of Indigenous-centered understanding of reconciliation. This limits the ability of Indigenous youth to define (and resource) what this process looks like for their communities. Instead, they are forced to try to fit the needs of their communities into these constrained program and policy parameters that are often designed with limited knowledge of the Indigenous communities' realities.

Survivors of residential schools and their allies have worked for many years developing the TRC Summary Report and Calls to Action. The Calls to Action are intentionally specific and detailed, however, we see federal programs and organizations practicing "pan-Indianism", homogenizing Indigenous identities; mislabeling efforts as reconciliation in ways that falsely signal progress while simultaneously under-resourcing Indigenous-led efforts. As a result, these federal programs and organizations too often reinforce the status quo, rather than focusing on addressing the systemic



## #2

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barriers and intentions underlying the implementation of a Call to Action. Many Indigenous youth are working towards intergenerational healing of traumatic experiences caused by colonization that have lasting impacts on the landscapes of their communities. Reconciliation, therefore, for many Indigenous youth, is deeply tied to healing relationships and access to lands and languages; a relationship and right that they often have to fight for.

To understand the connections between reconciliation, climate change and a just transition towards a green economy, we need to move away from narrow definitions of reconciliation that prioritize relationship building and the education of settlers, but rather towards

implementation of Indigenous Rights Frameworks such as UNDRIP, that take into consideration the intersections of genocide, land dispossession, colonial policy, economic development, climate change, environmental racism, and the ongoing harms against Indigenous peoples.

“WITH THE INCREASE IN FUNDING FOR “RECONCILIATION” WORK, PRIORITIES SHOULD ALSO INCLUDE INDIGENOUS-LED PROJECTS CENTERED IN RECONCILING WITH THE LANDS AND WATERS, RESTORING OURSELVES AS NATIONS, AND REBUILDING OUR INDIGENOUS NATION-TO-NATION RELATIONSHIPS.”<sup>16(p11)</sup>

4RS YOUTH MOVEMENT

# CHALLENGE #3



LACK OF ACCESS FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH TO GREEN JOBS, AND FUNDING TO SUPPORT INDIGENOUS YOUTH-LED CLIMATE ACTION

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One of the biggest challenges Indigenous youth have identified is the lack of capacity-building opportunities, especially ones which are compensated, to develop the skills and connections needed to participate in the low-carbon economy.<sup>6</sup> The Foundation for Environmental Stewardship (FES) shares that while 72% of

Canadians agree with the demands of the youth-led climate movement, less than 40% of youth-led organizations have paid staff to support the growing network of passionate and determined youth from all sectors of society.<sup>17</sup> While Canada has rolled out numerous environmental

 **#3**

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employment programs to help young people gain experience and skills in the green economy, and even a few Indigenous-specific programs, many Indigenous youth, particularly in the North and remote communities, find them hard to access.

They often rely on youth having some level of STEM competency, being located in urban areas, and having the ability to work full time for short intense periods, such as 40 hours a week for 8 - 14 weeks.<sup>18</sup> Other programs are often designed without taking into account the cyclical and non-linear 'timeline' of Indigenous life, where many Indigenous youth may return to their homes for the summer, re-energize, reconnect and take care of the land and their community - requiring flexibility in their schedules, extended time off, simultaneous training, higher pay, and hiring year-round instead of summer-focused opportunities. In addition, such programs are rarely culturally relevant, do not take into consideration the transferability of the unique skills Indigenous youth bring into the workforce,

and often advance a political agenda and western notions of "conservation" rather than the needs, and sovereign rights of the community.

Clearly, there is a systemic failure to recognize and support youth's climate labour, despite how essential it is for our collective future. As Kakekà Thundersky of Poplar River First Nation shares on Land(ing) Back, not only is a lot of the work unpaid, but this work "comes from our heart, it's volunteer, and it's our lives...at the end of the day we don't just get to go home, and just turn that off."<sup>19</sup>

ICA's Youth Needs Assessment reports participants' elaboration on the complexities of engaging in unpaid climate work, such as struggling to support themselves financially, "burnout from having to deal with a multitude of Indigenous issues at once, and constantly", trying to keep up with "climate justice work" that moves "at a pace that leaves people behind, including young people, disabled people and femmes/Two-Spirit/non-binary people".<sup>6(p11-15)</sup>



# CHALLENGE #4



TOKENISM OF INDIGENOUS YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT, INSTITUTIONAL AND NON-PROFIT SPACES.

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Indigenous youth are more and more sought out to be part of councils, committees, panels etc. for government bodies, universities, non-profit organizations and other institutions on a range of topics from climate action to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). There are constant talks of co-creation, where decision-makers laud youth for being the leaders of today and tomorrow, but the reality is that these spaces are exclusive, limited and have little accountability in how they implement youth contributions.<sup>20</sup> Often youth feel as though they are only asked to participate in order for the institution to check a box off their diversity checklist or to meet an internal quota, particularly if they hold several marginalized identities.

Furthermore, their contributions may be outright disregarded: Indigenous youth often “feel inadequate and unseen outside [their] circle because sometimes these spaces question the legitimacy of [their] knowledge, value and labour”.<sup>6(p14)</sup> In order to have their voices heard and opinions taken seriously, many Indigenous youth report having to portray certain demeanours or use jargon. Riley Yesno speaks about feeling pressured to play the role of ‘respectable native’, and being aware that “I’m invited into these spaces because I’m white-passing [and] very well spoken in the colonizer language”.<sup>20</sup>

Much of the tokenism and pressure to conform to norms are derived from the little/no effort by non-Indigenous people within these councils, committees and programs to build rapport and trust with Indigenous youth participants. Kyla Pascal believes if you invest in relationship building, “then you’re not going to have extractive practices of mining people for their knowledge and you’re not going to get tokenism and you’re not going to get all these unfortunate things that come up when there just isn’t a relationship”.<sup>15</sup>

“IT TAKES QUITE A BIT OF PRIVILEGE TO BE ABLE TO FOCUS ON BEING ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS AND SUSTAINABLE VERSUS ONLY ON GETTING THE BASIC NECESSITIES, NO MATTER HOW UNSUSTAINABLE. WE ALSO CANNOT FORGET THAT MANY PEOPLE SIMPLY ARE NOT ABLE TO SPEND THEIR TIME VOLUNTEERING BECAUSE THEY CANNOT AFFORD IT. CLIMATE ORGANIZATIONS GENERALLY, AND NOT-FOR-PROFITS SPECIFICALLY, ARE LED BY AND MADE FOR WHITE PEOPLE AND ARE STRUCTURED IN A WAY THAT LEAVES OUT MARGINALIZED YOUTH.”<sup>3(p30)</sup>

CANADA’S FIRST STATE OF THE YOUTH REPORT

# ACCOUNTABILITY & ACTION

FOR SECTOR LEADERS & POLICY MAKERS



## RECOMMENDATION #1

FUND INDIGENOUS YOUTH-LED CLIMATE ACTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS, AND IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY OF FEDERALLY-FUNDED GREEN JOBS PROGRAMS FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH.

Collectively we must re-evaluate how, why and who often receives climate & reconciliation funding, as well as whether we are creating the most accessible and impactful methods of program reporting that are appropriate for Indigenous projects, or if we are continuing to operate within the colonial standard. We believe a more equitable and just standard is possible,

and improving the accessibility of funding is critical to achieving this. Some key strategies include increased investment in the funding pool for Indigenous and Indigenous-youth-led initiatives, ongoing applications rather than a hard deadline/yearly cycle, flexibility in reporting, setting up councils led by Indigenous peoples to design the



programming, and the TRC Call to Action 66, which calls upon governments to provide multi-year funding for community-led youth reconciliation programs, including support infrastructure.<sup>21</sup> In their Roadmap to achieving Call to Action 66, the Indigenous Youth Voices network also identifies acknowledging the past, healing, improving relations, treaty and land rights, and equity as key components of reconciliation.<sup>22</sup>

This is an opportunity for the government to implement this Call to Action in a way that recognizes the connections between climate and reconciliation work - by extending resource distribution beyond the historically-funded limited scope of reconciliation programs, and including community-centred Indigenous youth-led climate work. For example, as shared by FutureXchange participants from Gwich'in communities, this would include elements of cultural revitalization and language training which are intrinsically connected to the land and require youth to have access to their territories without hindrance. But to do so, it is imperative that actions involving land and water defence are decriminalized and destigmatized, and developers and industries are held accountable for the violation of Indigenous rights.

Investments and infrastructure support could include: scholarships, flexible environmental courses that are accessible to Indigenous and remote students (online, part-time, tuition-free, designed by Indigenous peoples), supporting culturally relevant employment programs and wraparound services, running land and culture-based work experiences,

mentorship, and networking opportunities for Indigenous youth to meet peers and elders working in land and water stewardship.

Backing legislative amendments on Non-qualified donees, as introduced by Bill S-216, would enable grassroots and community-based Indigenous youth-led climate initiatives to access the funding they need, without adding additional barriers or compromising their personal income, employment or mental wellbeing.

Beyond that, investing in Indigenous-led and Indigenous youth-led organizations will result in the creation of green jobs and workplaces that are safer spaces for women and gender-diverse individuals, resulting in a much-needed pivot in the energy, engineering, tech and science-based economies that lack gender diversity and cultural safety. Additionally, recognition of the increase in gender-based violence due to climate change and the connection between the resource extraction industry and MMIW2SG are critical to address.<sup>23 24</sup> Establishing safety measures and holistic supports and services led by Indigenous women, two-spirit, and non-binary people of the community will ensure safety, accountability, transparency and accessibility of jobs within the climate sector and increase opportunities for Indigenous women and gender-diverse relatives in the development of equitable climate solutions.

# #1

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Supporting existing Indigenous-led environmental employment programs, land & culture-based educational programming and enabling the creation of new Indigenous youth-led initiatives would also signal progress on Call to Action 7: eliminating educational and employment gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada.<sup>21</sup>

Funding for youth-led organizations to pursue such programs and activities could come from recovery/stimulus funding, tax increases on higher income tax brackets, reduction of corporate tax breaks, redirecting funds from fossil fuel subsidies, and philanthropy, among other avenues.<sup>25</sup>

**BY IMPLEMENTING POLICY AND LEGISLATION IN SUPPORT OF THIS RECOMMENDATION THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE MAKING PROGRESS ON TRC CALLS TO ACTION 7 AND 66. PRIORITIZING INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND 2SLGBTQIIA+ LED SOLUTIONS WOULD BE IN SUPPORT OF THE CALLS TO JUSTICE 13.3 AND 13.4 FROM THE NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN, GIRLS AND LBGTQIIA2S PEOPLE.<sup>26</sup>**



# RECOMMENDATION #2

OFFER PAID DAYS OFF OR BARRIER-FREE ACCOMMODATION FOR YOUTH TO PURSUE CLIMATE-RELATED VOLUNTEER WORK.

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As identified as a barrier, many Indigenous youth “trying to do this work can’t afford it, whether that’s financially, physically, time-wise, capacity wise, etc.”<sup>6(p14)</sup> Having paid days off to engage in climate-related volunteer work adds to advancing the climate agenda without having to decide between financial consequences and the passion of pursuing climate solutions. This is different from a sick day or personal day that many workplaces currently offer, as the activities that necessitate absence still require labour in service of a collective need.

Understanding that for Indigenous youth, accessibly participating in land-based activities (such as hunting and harvesting) and cultural reclamation (such as Indigenous ways of knowing and language revitalization) are all considered contributing factors to building their capacity to engage in climate solutions within an Indigenous worldview. Barrier-free accommodation also looks like a relationship based on offerings between Indigenous youth and those with capital and the resources to access the land and water. Reciprocity can be established by Indigenous youth, offering their time,

expertise and skills in exchange for capital, access to resources, equipment, and opportunities for Indigenous youth to reconnect and spend time out on the land and water that may otherwise be inaccessible to them. Allowing Indigenous young people the accommodations to pursue climate-related commitments without fear of professional or economic repercussions would certainly increase accessibility and help foster an equitable and youth-friendly workplace that supports youth to show up as their full selves.



**BY IMPLEMENTING POLICY IN SUPPORT OF THIS RECOMMENDATION, GOVERNMENTS, INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS WOULD BE SUPPORTING UNDRIP ARTICLES 11, 13 & 15.**





# RECOMMENDATION #3

UNDERSTAND, VALUE & INVEST IN DIVERSE AND INTERSECTIONAL APPROACHES IN THE CLIMATE SECTOR.

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Indigenous young people approach the climate crises with an intersectional and global lens that has the potential to have lasting impacts across the SDGs from mental and physical health, innovation, transition economies and women/2SLGBTQTI+ rights (among others).<sup>27</sup> An Indigenous youth-led approach to addressing the climate crisis is also one that situates the conversation within a discourse of sovereignty, racial justice, reconciliation and reparations. As Gabe Calderon, an Algonquin and L'nu writer, artist, educator and Land(ing) Back participant puts it, "you can't do climate justice without being in solidarity with Black Lives Matter, without being in solidarity with Palestine without being in solidarity, you know, with Colombia and with all the different struggles that people are facing."<sup>28</sup>

Diversity and intersectionality also include recognizing the values of social, cultural and community benefits that are often unmeasured and undervalued. Many funding schemes' assessments of value and economic benefit frequently fail to measure non-market benefits as equal value to economic returns. However, it is critical to understand that when taking into account the holistic benefits of non-

market values and the impact they have directly in the communities, a project is equally as valuable as projects with high returns assessment. Additionally, any funding schemes must derive from a clear understanding of intersectionality and acknowledgement of the role institutions and governments play in perpetuating and enabling marginalization. Funding policies, eligibility criteria, and regulations must be reviewed to ensure they do not create further barriers to accessing funds.

By expanding our understanding and valuation of diversity and intersectionality in the climate sector, we create opportunities for Indigenous-led innovations in green infrastructure and economies, investments in sector and capacity building for Indigenous young people, research led by Indigenous peoples and healing of the land through Indigenous paradigms. Funding for BIPOC youth-led organizations, initiatives and capacity building, would also have a cascading effect on the future of innovation and invention of localized community-based solutions to the climate crisis that can be applied nationally and globally.

**PRIORITIZING FUNDING FOR PROJECTS THAT TAKE AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO CLIMATE SOLUTIONS, WHICH INCLUDE CAPACITY BUILDING FOR INDIGENOUS YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN LAND AND WATER DEFENSE WOULD HELP THE GOVERNMENT MAKE PROGRESS ON TRC CALL TO ACTION 66.<sup>21</sup>**

# RECOMMENDATION #4

ADOPT AND IMPLEMENT BILL C-226 AND PROVIDE UNANIMOUS CONSENT TO TRANSFORM CLIMATE DECISION-MAKING SPACES TO INCLUDE YOUTH.

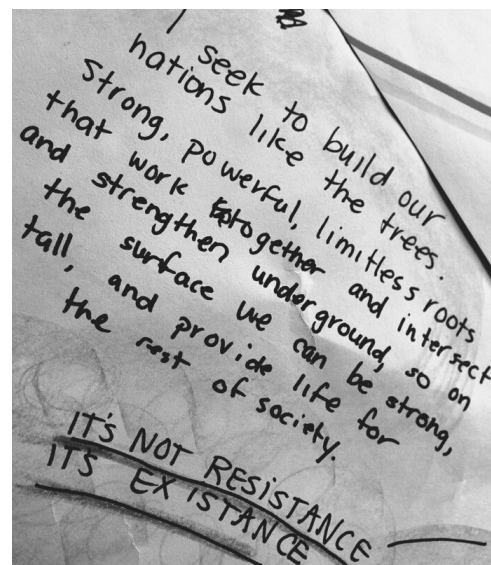
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By passing Bill C-226 a National Strategy Respecting Environmental Racism and Environmental Justice Act, the government will enable the creation of a strategy to assess, prevent and address many forms of environmental racism, while creating more pathways to include Indigenous youth in climate work and policy development processes. As stated in the Bill, such measures include increasing the involvement of community groups in environmental policy-making and providing compensation for individuals or communities impacted.<sup>29</sup> In fully implementing the National Strategy, the government will also be fulfilling our other recommendations, as well as contributing to the implementation of UNDRIP and TRC Calls to Action mentioned in the brief.

Providing unanimous consent to the failed motion presented by MP Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach) in the House of Commons during the 44th Parliament's 1st session, which acknowledges youth as integral decision-makers regarding climate action in Canada, is an important first step in shifting the spotlight from climate strikers and teen activists to a wider diversity of youth with a multitude of important roles in the movement. Furthermore, it underscores the disproportionate burden of the climate crisis on BIPOC communities and youth in particular, and the responsibility of the government to go beyond giving them a mere seat at the table.

Importantly, the government needs to follow through with tangible financial commitments to equip youth with the skills and resources they need to lead climate solutions, including many of the suggestions we have made above regarding green jobs, grants and scholarships, and equitable access to decision making and capacity building.

Resources and opportunities of particular importance include “cultural and Indigenous-led resources, educational resources, financial resources, mental health support, networking and collaborative projects, online events and opportunities, and skill or training opportunities”.<sup>6(p16)</sup>





# FINAL THOUGHTS

Indigenous young people are calling on adult allies to use their leadership, influence, resources and power, to make space for the inclusion of their voices in reconciliation efforts and the just transition to a low carbon economy. As a society, it is important that we take seriously the long-term societal and economic impacts across sectors when Black & Indigenous youth are not actively and meaningfully included in the development of climate policies and solutions.

The integration of Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing into policy creation and implementation; the direct involvement of Indigenous youth as decision makers; reconfiguration of budgets, policy and avenues of capital for government, corporations and organizations to carry out reparations; and a culture shift in the understanding of Indigenous sovereignty, youth employment & volunteering reconciliation and climate action, are all tangible ways that we can reinvest for a generational and sustainable impact. To do this, however, the government, philanthropic sector, and civil society must meaningfully and strategically create avenues of accessible, long-term funding for Indigenous youth-led projects and climate solution innovations.

There will be no future for the generations to come, if we don't stand behind the generation of Indigenous youth leaders who are on the frontlines today.

**“THERE IS NO WAY TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE MOVEMENTS WITHOUT INVESTMENT AND RE-DISTRIBUTION OF POWER TO YOUNG PEOPLE. BLACK AND INDIGENOUS YOUTH NEED TO FRONT THE CLIMATE JUSTICE MOVEMENT BECAUSE WE ARE THE ONES WHO WILL FEEL THE LONG TERM IMPACTS OF DECISIONS MADE BY BOTH SETTLER COLONIAL VIOLENCE/RESOURCE EXTRACTION AND INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP OF OLDER GENERATIONS. WE ARE A GENERATION THAT IS BREAKING CYCLES, FULFILLING PROPHECY, REKINDLING KNOWLEDGE AND KINSHIP AND ALSO PICKING UP WHAT OUR ANCESTORS HAVE LEFT FOR US.”<sup>6</sup>**

INDIGENOUS CLIMATE ACTION  
YOUTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT

# APPENDIX



## TAKING ACTION FROM A LEGACY OF KNOWLEDGE

We believe that it is important to continue to be in solidarity with and amplify organizations that work in the climate sector, who have been relentlessly advocating for Indigenous rights and youth inclusion in climate justice spaces. In that regard, we support and encourage the prioritization of recommendations which are common across those voices, and have compiled this non-exhaustive list of resources for further integration and action beyond the recommendations contained within this document.

INDIGENOUS CLIMATE ACTION YOUTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT (2020)  
[HTTPS://WWW.INDIGENOUSCLIMATEACTION.COM/ENTRIES/ICA-YOUTH-NEEDS-ASSESSMENT-SUMMARY](https://www.indigenousclimateaction.com/entries/ica-youth-needs-assessment-summary)

INDIGENOUS CLIMATE ACTION'S DECOLONIZING CLIMATE POLICY (2021)  
[HTTPS://WWW.INDIGENOUSCLIMATEACTION.COM/PROGRAMS/DECOLONIZING-CLIMATE-POLICY](https://www.indigenousclimateaction.com/programs/decolonizing-climate-policy)

INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK'S PRINCIPLES OF JUST TRANSITION (2021)  
[HTTPS://WWW.IENEARTH.ORG/JUSTTRANSITION/](https://www.ienearth.org/justtransition/)

THE YUKON FIRST NATIONS RECONNECTION VISION + ACTION PLAN (2021)  
[HTTPS://WWW.YFNCLIMATE.CA/YFNRVAP](https://www.yfnclimate.ca/yfnrvap)

VUNTUT GWITCHIN FIRST NATION CLIMATE CRISIS DECLARATION (2019)  
[HTTP://WWW.VGFN.CA/PDF/CC%202019%20DECLARATION.PDF](http://www.vgfn.ca/pdf/cc%202019%20declaration.pdf)

UNICEF CANADA'S REIMAGINE PLAY BOOK (2020)  
[HTTPS://ONEYOUTH.UNICEF.CA/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/2020-11/REIMAGINE%20PLAYBOOK\\_0.PDF](https://oneyouth.unicef.ca/sites/default/files/2020-11/reimagine%20playbook_0.pdf)

# APPENDIX

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◦ ◦ ◦ CONTINUED

YELLOWHEAD INSTITUTE CASH BACK RED PAPER (2021)

[HTTPS://CASHBACK.YELLOWHEADINSTITUTE.ORG/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2021/05/CASH-BACK-A-YELLOWHEAD-INSTITUTE-RED-PAPER.PDF](https://cashback.yellowheadinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/cash-back-a-yellowhead-institute-red-paper.pdf)

CANADA'S FIRST STATE OF YOUTH REPORT: FOR YOUTH, WITH YOUTH, BY YOUTH (2021)

[HTTPS://WWW.CANADA.CA/CONTENT/DAM/PCH/DOCUMENTS/CAMPAIGNS/STATE-YOUTH/2021-STATE-OF-YOUTH-REPORT.PDF](https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/pch/documents/campaigns/state-youth/2021-state-of-youth-report.pdf)

INDIGENOUS YOUTH VOICES: A ROADMAP TO TRC #66 (2018)

[HTTPS://YOUTHREX.COM/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2019/05/INDIGENOUS-YOUTH-VOICES-ROADMAP-TO-TRC-66.PDF](https://youthrex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/indigenous-youth-voices-roadmap-to-trc-66.pdf)

CANADIAN CLIMATE INSTITUTE: FACING THE COSTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE FOR NORTHERN INFRASTRUCTURE (2022)

[HTTPS://CLIMATEINSTITUTE.CA/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2022/06/DUE-NORTH.PDF](https://climateinstitute.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/due-north.pdf)

INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES: SHARING INDIGENOUS RESPONSES TO CLIMATE CHANGE (2022)

[HTTPS://CLIMATEINSTITUTE.CA/REPORTS/INDIGENOUS-PERSPECTIVES/](https://climateinstitute.ca/reports/indigenous-perspectives/)

YOUTH & CLIMATE JOBS ARE CRITICAL TO A COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY (2022)

[HTTPS://STATIC1.SQUARESPACE.COM/STATIC/59EC036EF9A61EBF918040AC/T/603E78CB17F1C46B2F12C414/1617222570484/RESEARCH+BRIEF%3A+YOUTH+%26+CLIMATE+JOBS+CRITICAL+TO+COVID-19+ECONOMIC+RECOVERY](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59ec036ef9a61ebf918040ac/t/603e78cb17f1c46b2f12c414/1617222570484/research+brief%3A+youth+%26+climate+jobs+critical+to+COVID-19+economic+recovery)

LE BÂTON DE PAROLE EST AUX FEMMES AUTOCHTONES ELLES PRENNENT LA PLUME POUR PARTAGER LEURS VISIONS DU DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE (2018) (MULTILINGUAL)

[HTTPS://IDDPNQL.CA/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2018/06/20180625-LIVRE\\_FEMMES\\_FINAL.PDF](https://iddpnql.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/20180625-livre_femmes_final.pdf)

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# LAND(ING) BACK

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