



The Earth Is Speaking

A Call for Climate Justice from the Next Generation

Partners



Funders



Kule Institute
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Prologue

This policy brief is a result of work done by 145 youth from 11 countries in partnership with Cape Breton University, the University of Alberta, and Mohammed VI Polytechnic University. From October 2025 to May 2026, youth aged 15-18 learned from one another, the elements, and other beings about how to respond to the climate crisis in ways that repair harm and respect all life on the planet. Facilitated by researchers and their teachers, youth from every continent collaborated using technology to learn from different knowledges, work together in relations of reciprocity with the land and communities, and build a world for everyone and everything. The culmination of months of international dialogue, this document was written by a team of youth from each country, summarizing the youth's vision for how to achieve a just climate future.

For more information, visit <https://collective-worldmaking.ca/>.

Participating Schools

Argentina	Colegio Pampedia
Argentina	St. Mary of the Hills School
Brazil	Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Paraná
Canada	Allison Bernard Memorial High School
Georgia	Georgian American School
Greece	7th Gymnasium of Thessaloniki
Kenya	St. Austin's Academy
Mexico	Colegia el Camino
Morocco	Lycee Chahid Saleh Serghini
Nigeria	Army Day Secondary School Maitama Abuja
Pakistan	Orion Education System, School and College
Philippines	Santa Monica National High School
Qatar	Qatar Academy Doha

Students in these schools were supported by a group of research assistants:
Carol Bomfim, Constanza Mora Sanchez, Danika Jorgensen-Skakum,
Lily Woods, and Noon Hussein.

Contact Information

Carrie Karsgaard
Cape Breton University
carrie_karsgaard@cbu.ca

Lynette Shultz
University of Alberta
lshultz@ualberta.ca

Sheena Wilson
University of Alberta
shwilson@ualberta.ca

Graphic Design by
Nathan Karsgaard
www.folkandwild.com



Introduction

Our earth is not silent, it is speaking through rising seas, burning forests, polluted skies, and dying rivers. Yet humanity has chosen, time and again, to ignore it. This policy, written by students from 12 countries, argues that the climate crisis is fundamentally a crisis of listening: our failure to hear the earth, each other, and the communities most vulnerable to climate breakdown. We call for climate justice rooted in connection, accountability, and education, a future built not above nature, but with it.

From wildfires to floods, the earth is sending us urgent warnings through the destruction of the very elements, land, air, water, fire, that sustain all human life. The bonds between people, cultures, and nature are the foundation of climate action, and rebuilding them requires that every community, especially the most marginalised, has a voice in the decisions that shape their shared future. True climate justice demands that we balance the needs of the population with the limits of our planet, holding the powerful accountable and ensuring that no one is left behind in the transition away from fossil fuels. And at the heart of all, education must evolve, from the transfer of facts to the cultivation of empathy, knowledge, and leadership that the world needs.

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We believe that our planet is not a silent rock floating in space — it is alive, breathing, and speaking to those who listen. The wind carries her voice, the rivers sing her stories, and the trees write her memories in green. Climate justice means hearing that voice — not with our ears, but with our hearts. It means standing beside the Earth, not above her. It means that every person — every youth, every village, every nation — has a role to play in this great healing. The Earth does not belong to us; we belong to her. The water that runs through rivers is the same that runs through our veins. The air we breathe unites every living thing. And the land beneath our feet is a promise — a promise to care, to protect, and to restore.”

~ Oumaima, Morocco

Context

Climate Change Harms the Earth, Air, Water, and Fire

Earth does not belong to us; we belong to it. Climate change is not only affected by carbon emissions but also by a lack of empathy towards the Earth. If we ignore the warnings of science, it will be difficult to act in harmony with the planet.

We are already suffering the consequences of pollution and the loss of natural resources. The land, air, and water and our relationships with fire are being damaged by climate change, demonstrating the need for humanity to learn to listen to and care for the environment.

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We have to protect the environment in order to live with dignity and respect all the elements, recognizing the importance of them for us and the future generations.

~ Student, Greece

Harm to Human Communities is Connected With Harm to the Elements

Water, earth, fire, and air are directly tied to human livelihoods. Floods and droughts have damaged crops worldwide, raising food prices and pushing farmers into economic hardship. Fishing has suffered from ocean pollution and warming waters. Ultimately, the health of natural elements and the well-being of human communities are inseparable, protecting one means protecting the other.

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When the air is polluted, people struggle to breathe, and birds and trees weaken. Dust and toxins spread everywhere, harming both humans and animals. Everyone suffers when the air is unhealthy.

~ Student, Georgia

Fire: Influence of Fossil Fuels in Our Daily Lives

Fire is central to climate change through the burning of fossil fuels. Petrocultures are societies and cultures - like all of ours - deeply intertwined with the extraction, production, consumption, and burning of fossil fuels, particularly petroleum.

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I saw these things as normal parts of life. Now I understand that they are part of a larger system called petroculture that shapes our habits, comfort, and values.

~Student, Morocco

Oil is woven into nearly everything we use. For example, rubber, cars, clothes, shoes, but into our values as well: speed and convenience over sustainability, identity through consumption. Together, these feed an economy built on endless growth, requiring ever more fossil fuels. But unlike money, you can't print oil. We are long overdue in finding alternatives.

The Planet is Speaking, But Are We Listening?

From rising sea levels to polluted rivers, the elements are constantly sending warnings. And yet, humanity keeps choosing silence over understanding.

Listen to the Earth

The planet communicates through rising seas, wildfires, floods and heat-waves. It doesn't speak like us but through signs, patterns, and changes that indicate its needs. Students from Georgia and Kenya described learning from water as listening to an ancient teacher, posing as a source of calm, wisdom, and concern. Young people from Morocco, Brazil, Nigeria, and the Philippines all share the same perspective, that the Earth is not silent. It warns us through signs and change. When we ignore these warnings, we do not just harm nature, but ourselves. Water, air, fire and earth are not resources we can own, but systems we depend on to survive.

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The air seems to whisper its pain softly over Tbilisi. It says, “I used to be light and clear, but now I carry your smoke, your dust, your noise. It tells of endless traffic, burning fuel, and careless habits that fill it with heaviness. The air feels tired, burdened by what humans release without thought. It asks us to listen — to notice how its breath has changed — and to remember that every cloud of exhaust and every spark of fire leaves a mark on its body.”

~ Student, Georgia

Listen to People

Listening to the earth goes hand in hand with listening to each other. Effective climate action requires hearing from everyone, youth, elders, Indigenous communities, farmers, scientists, and policymakers, especially those who are directly affected by climate change. This listening involves complex relationships between people, territories, and natural resources. Active and collective listening are tools for building collective consciousness through the relationship with the environment, which helps connect practical discourse with cultural and social realities, making young people and adults multipliers of knowledge. Rania from Pakistan showed that different types of knowledge can come together in public discussions like citizens' juries, including scientific, personal, economic, even non-human perspectives. Listening doesn't mean agreement. It means making space for everyone, even those who believe climate change is not real.

A World That Listens

Change starts with a simple act: to stop and listen. To the winds, to the river, to the forest, the elders, the children, and the communities on the frontlines of climate change. The Earth has never stopped speaking to us; it is the human species who has stopped listening. If we can rebuild that connection, we can rebuild everything.

We listened to each other's words to understand humans as part of nature. These words are on the back cover of this brief.



The Web We Share: Humans, Nature, And Our Common Future

We are in a community with the environment, and we play an important role in making decisions on behalf of the elements and other beings. We are all part of the same ecosystem, so we should always act with respect and care towards our surroundings.

Value Culture-Nature Connection

Our cultures are grounded in the elements. Our traditions connect us to the land and foster a sense of community. In Nigeria, festivals celebrating rivers highlight the profound dependence on water. Whether it is a fisherman's bond with the sea or a farmer's relationship with the soil, our cultural identities are rooted in the elements. Because of this, our traditional knowledge holds important information about responding to climate change.

Recognize We are All Connected

The elements connect us across borders, cultures, nations, and differences. Despite this, we recognize that power and access are not distributed equally. While we all have a right to a healthy planet, we must acknowledge that some humans, elements, and other beings are more vulnerable than others. To preserve our connection with the planet it is necessary that every community has a voice in decision making: “Decisions about the environment must include communities most affected by pollution, as well as the voices of scientists, policymakers, and Indigenous knowledge holders” (Tatuli, Georgia).

Make Decisions Together with the Elements

Across the globe students used "Citizens' Juries" where we listened to the perspectives of different humans, elements, and other beings to model a new way of deciding our future. These processes prove that “when regular citizens are empowered, they demand systemic shifts towards long-term health . . . a testament to the fact that a cooler, fairer city is possible when we prioritize the voices of those who navigate its streets every day” (Ella and Rhian, Philippines, Citizens’ Jury).

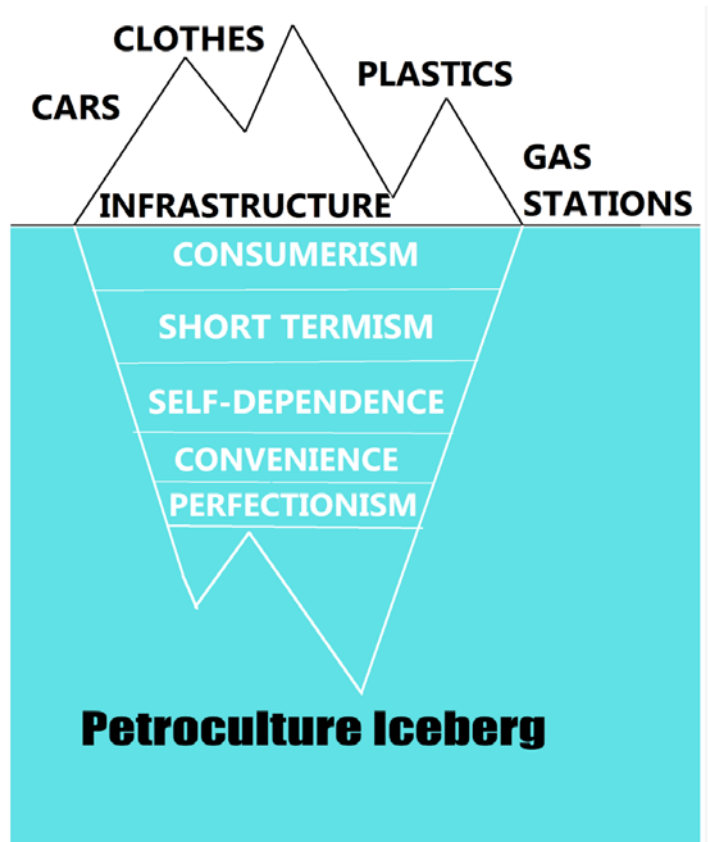
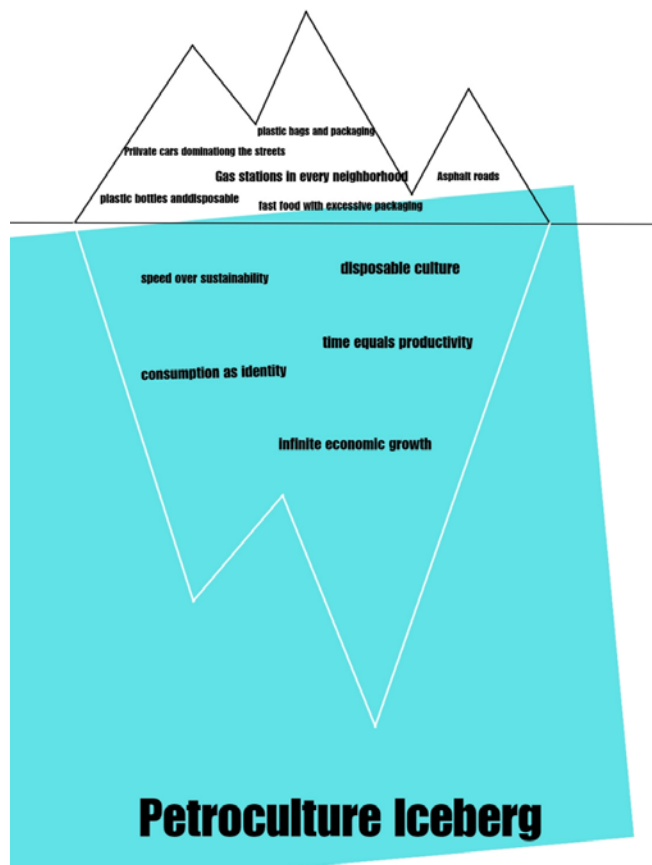
- In Qatar, students focused on deliberation over debate, listening deeply, and being open to changing their minds.
- In the Philippines, the focus shifted from individual needs to the "whole neighborhood," including those without air conditioning and even the street dog on the pavement.



Design with Nature Not Fossil Fuels

A significant barrier to connection our fossil fuel culture, or “petroculture,” a culture based on individualism, productivity, and waste. Our dependence on plastics and petroleum products often makes us forget our interconnectedness.

Petroculture Icebergs by Laura, Brazil (left) and Rania, Pakistan (right)



To heal our relationship with the Earth, we must unlearn these habits of waste and the systems that we have built that centralize fossil fuels. We must replace petroculture by designing our world to be compatible with the natural world. This includes both physical designs like buildings and streets to digital designs.

- Natural Cooling: Students in the Philippines suggest planting leafy trees to cool sidewalks naturally.
- Smart Architecture: In Qatar, the focus is on buildings that stay cool through smart design, reducing energy use while protecting the most exposed workers.
- AI: We all think artificial intelligence should be redesigned so it does not harm the planet.

We must design and build in harmony with nature, always asking ourselves: "How do we design with rather than against other beings?"



Nature's Justice: Living within the Planetary Boundaries

Finding a balance between our social foundations (making sure everyone has what they need) and its planetary boundaries (not allowing pollution, deforestation, fossil fuels, etc.) is key to benefiting without causing harm. We must implement actions that can improve our climate but not harm the most vulnerable people.

We Cannot Own the Elements

Climate policy and action should include future generations and other beings, and to do that, it needs to recognize the elements (like water) are beings we all share and not resources or commodities to be owned and controlled to the benefit of only some people. The air belongs to everyone; everyone should have clean air. We want to “ensure that future generations inherit a world where they can breathe freely under a clear, blue sky, with clean air accessible to everyone” (Wilbert, Philippines)

Address Climate and Poverty Together

Climate action has to take into consideration our social foundations and respond to poverty. Giving people basic needs (water, food, housing/shelter, etc.) ensures they can live good lives without being forced to disrupt the environment out of desperation.

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A livable world isn't a privilege; it's our shared inheritance. To reclaim it, we must cease our destructive treatment of the environment and envision a future where clean air isn't a luxury, but a fundamental right for all.

~ Wilbert, Philippines

Hold The Powerful Accountable

Climate change does not affect everyone equally; its harshest consequences fall on those with the least power to fight back. Vulnerable communities, often with no political or economic voice, bear a disproportionate burden of a crisis they did little to create. This is why accountability matters. Those with political and economic influence have a responsibility to use that power not for self-interest but to represent and protect the people who cannot protect themselves.

Resist Oil Dependency

A clear example of this failure of accountability is our deep societal dependency on oil. Humanity has built entire economies, infrastructures, and lifestyles around a resource that is in short supply, yet we continue to consume it as though it will never run out. In doing so, we repeatedly ignore one of the most fundamental planetary boundaries, pushing ecosystems and communities past their breaking point.

Nigeria illustrates this tension vividly: one of Africa's largest oil producers, its economy remains deeply tied to fossil fuels while communities in the Niger Delta face oil spills, pollution, and health risks. At the same time, rural communities remain deprived of energy, with access to electricity still far from guaranteed. A transition, one that prioritizes affected communities, expands solar energy, and redirects fossil fuel subsidies to renewables, is not just desirable, but necessary.

This is precisely why balance becomes essential. When we respect planetary boundaries, treating them not as obstacles but as guidelines, we are forced to make more equitable decisions. We shift the focus from short term economic gain to long term protection of both people and the environment. Climate justice is not just an environmental issue, but it is a question of who gets heard, who gets helped, and who gets left behind.

Roots and Branches: Rebuilding Education From the Ground Up

Education about climate change matters, and teaching it the right way matters even more, because we want to see a world where environmental concerns are made understandable to all, which becomes the basis for collective action. Educating empowers students to take action and to think critically and innovatively for a collective cause.

Learn Directly from Nature

Learning in classrooms that connect us with one another and nature can help improve our understanding and shape our desire to learn. Being in a visually comfortable classroom, instead of the typical classroom with few windows, plain walls, and a rigid structure, can make students feel more inspired. A more natural environment with plants, natural light, and open spaces can make learning more enjoyable while also helping students listen directly to nature. Through listening, we gain the ability to learn with rather than simply about the environment. Diverse languages and perspectives help us sense our connection with the earth, and can guide us towards meaningful action.

Teach in New Ways

Effective education starts with a shift in approach, from lecturing to listening. Productive dialogue means hearing students first, asking questions, and finding common ground before presenting solutions. Teachers should draw from students' own lived experiences and ground lessons in local, familiar topics. Instead of discussing distant glaciers melting, students can hear real stories about regional flood issues, local seasonal shifts, and how people are adapting to a changing climate. When science feels close to home, it stops being abstract, and starts becoming action.

At the same time, we can't focus only on ourselves and our own places. We need to take collective action. This is hard to do because it seems borders keeps us separated, so that we act as individuals. We need to learn to work together, to collaborate, and act collectively.

Involve Young People in Education

Young people are not just the audience of education, but part of it. Students bring fresh perspectives, lived experiences, and a deep personal stake in the future of the planet. Involving them actively in shaping how and what they learn creates a stronger, more relevant education for everyone. When young people are given a seat at the table, in classrooms, in school policy and in broader climate conversations, they do not just absorb knowledge; they generate it. Listening to youth is not a courtesy; it is a necessity.

Bring Real-World Voices into the Classroom

A new way of education could be for schools to organize time to meet with people like elders, fishermen, farmers, and others who can share how climate change affects their daily lives and work. This is important because this kind of learning can encourage people to reflect on their attitudes and behaviours, while also helping them make informed decisions. These talks can also help us understand that we are all connected and that everyone can contribute in any way possible.

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I talked with my Grandmother and she had told me that at the time when she was young, global warming was not considered as a major issue and respiratory diseases were not common. But now a days, we can see that air is majorly contaminated with harmful pollutants produced through human activities... She told me that these issues occur due to human activities like deforestation and burning of fossil fuels. But at her time, these activities are in minor range because people have not too much needs as compared to the people now who want too much comfort.

~ Student, Mexico

Bring Youth Voices into Decision-Making

Schools have a responsibility to model the kind of listening they teach. When the administrations actively involve students in critical decisions, especially around climate initiatives, they send a powerful message: that students' voices matter. Teachers and school staff can encourage youth participation in climate action not through instruction alone but through example. A school that installs solar panels because of a student initiative, or that opens its doors to environmental dialogue, becomes more than just a place of learning. It becomes a community leader.

Respond to Petroculture

Education plays a crucial role in addressing petroculture. Often, when we think about what petroculture means, we think of plastics, traffic, and gas stations. But petroculture goes far beyond that; it's something deeply ingrained in us. Education has the role of making us question how difficult it is to imagine a world without oil and how it's part of our daily lives. Schools should present a new vision, offering alternatives such as minimalism, reducing energy and water consumption, recycling, renewable energy, and how we should act in a world where petroculture is deeply rooted within us.

Climate change education should not only focus on facts and science, but also on connection, empathy, and action. If education changes the way people think and act, it can become one of the most powerful tools for building a more sustainable future.

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Teaching the young generations about taking care of nature and the environment is the best way to stop the problem.

~ Student, Argentina

Our Recommendations

Recommendation for Education

We recommend climate education policy and funding that is freely and universally available (all ages, all socio-economic groups, diverse cultural groups, all genders, all schools systems) so that communities around the world are more aware and willing to contribute to climate solutions that address their local climate priorities and social needs. Governments, schools, community organizations, and more, can create a common network so that this education is accessible to all.

We recommend climate change education incorporate traditional knowledge with science so that learning is connected to place, learns from local people, and introduces new ways of educating. Everyone should learn directly from nature and the elements, in order to better attend to planetary boundaries. Finally, education must support critical thinking so everyone can understand the impacts of petroculture and climate change first hand - and learn not to accept the way things are but to change them. Projects can support students to enact change.

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We should educate people so the end of oil seems more feasible than the end of the world.

~ Matias, Argentina

Recommendations for Decision-Makers

We recommend that policies respect planetary boundaries while guaranteeing social wellbeing.

We recommend that policy making processes centre the climate crisis, taking into consideration knowledge from a range of perspectives, including diverse cultures, youth, and nature itself (elements). Listening and acting with respect to all voices, regardless of social, economic and political power, also requires holding the powerful to account, to make sure that these ideas are having impact through the policies created.

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Listening to water: “I once ran free through rivers, danced in rain, and shimmered in lakes under the sun. Now I carry the weight of toxins, plastics, and waste.

~ Student, Georgia

Conclusion

The Earth is not waiting for us to be ready, but it is asking us to act now. As students from 12 countries, we have listened to rivers, forests, farmers, elders, and each other, and we have arrived at the same place: the solutions exist, the knowledge exists, and the will of the next generation exists. What is needed is leadership that listens. This is a moment to choose whether to build a future based on petroculture and short term gain, or one grounded in justice, education, and harmony between the needs of the community, and the safety of the environment around us.

We are not asking any single leader to solve the global climate crisis alone. We are asking you to model what it looks like when a city truly listens, to its young people, to its most vulnerable communities, to the rivers and forests that surround it. Every solar panel installed, every marginalized voice included at a planning table, every classroom that teaches empathy alongside science, is proof that a fairer, cooler, cleaner world is not a dream. It is a decision. Make it.



Shared languages help us understand the ways we are part of a shared planet.

لتراپط : فكرة أن جميع الكائنات والطبيعة والعالم من حولنا مترابطون ومتصلون ببعضهم البعض، وأن الإنسان ليس منفصلاً عن الطبيعة بل هو جزء منها

لتراپط is an Arabic word that expresses that the elements are linked together. It captures the interconnectedness of life.

Anyị bụ otu na eke.

An Igbo expression meaning we are one with creation; we are one with the life-force in all things.

Msit No'kmaq

A Mi'kmaq word translated to "all my relations," whereby we recognize our interconnective place in the world and understand and treat all plants, animals, and elements as family.

Ον/ Όντα: όλα τα είδη ζωής, τα πλάσματα και τις υπάρξεις.

This ancient Greek word that is still used today refers to all forms of life, creatures, and beings.

Pamoja inathibitisha kuwa moto, maji, hewa, na udongo ni nguvu za msingi za asili zinazowaunganisha watu wote duniani, zikikuza mshikamano wa kimataifa, maelewano ya kudumu, na uwajibikaji wa pamoja katika kulinda uhai na mazingira.

From Kiswahili, **Pamoja** (together) affirms that fire, water, air, and soil are the fundamental natural forces that unite all people across the world, fostering global solidarity, lasting harmony, and shared responsibility to protect life and the environment.

فطرت انسان اور قدرت کے لیے بھی یہ لفظ استعمال کیا جاتا ہے۔ یہ نہایت ہی خوبصورتی سے اس بات کا احاطہ کرتا ہے کہ ہم قدرت کا حصہ ہیں اور قدرت بھی ہماری فطرت کا حصہ ہے۔ یہ جبلت کو بیان کرنے کے لیے بھی استعمال کیا جاتا ہے جس کے ساتھ ایک بندہ پیدا ہوتا ہے جس کا یہ مطلب ہے کہ ہر بندہ اپنے دل میں ماحول کی خدمت کرنا سمائے ہوئے رکھتا ہے۔

Fitrat is an Urdu word that describes nature, human and environment alike. It beautifully encapsulates the fact that we belong to nature and the environment is a part of our nature. It is also used to describe the human instinct to care for the environment.

tekohá

For Guarani (an Indigenous peoples from South America), it means "the place where one belongs" or "the place where on is." It does not merely refer to physical land but a living territory of life, culture, memory, and spirituality.

ერთობლიობა - ერთიანობა/ადამიანების გაერთიანება და ერთად დგომა.

Ertoblioba is a Georgian word capturing how everything belongs to one thing, how everyone being united and standing together.

Wahkotowin

A Cree word that recognizes our deep kinship with all humanity and the land, water, sky, and all of nature, which are all animate, with agencies of their own. Human actions affect all of creation, so we have responsibility to live together in reciprocal ways with all relations.

Àjọṣepọ́ túmọ̀ sí iṣẹ̀ pọ̀, iṣọkan nínú igbẹ́ ayé, àti ibáṣepọ̀ rere láàrín ènìyàn àti ohun gbogbo tí ó wà kààkiri wa. Àjọṣepọ́ dá lóri ọrọ̀ mọ́ta:

- **Àjọ:** pọ̀, pẹ̀lú ara wa
- **Ṣe:** ṣiṣe ohun kan
- **Pọ:** dídàpọ̀, dídapọ̀ mọ́ra

Àjọṣepọ́ is a Yoruba word referring to working/being together in community and harmony. It breaks down to **àjọ** - together, **ṣe** - do, **pọ** - join. It's used for people cooperating, but it means we thrive only when humans, animals, land, and spirit are all doing things together, not against each other.

Ìṣọkan túmọ̀ sí idàpọ̀ mọ́ra, iwà tí a fí mọ̀ pé a kò yàtọ̀, a jẹ̀ ọkan ṣọṣo.

Ó jẹ ọrọ tí a ní ló láti sọ pé kò sí iyàtọ̀ nlá láàrín mí àti ẹ̀, láàrín ènìyàn àti ayé, láàrín ara àti ẹ̀mí. Nígbà tí ẹ̀ni kan bá ní imọ̀lára iṣọkan, ó mọ̀ pé iwọ, igi, odò, àti ẹ̀ni tí ó wà lẹgbẹẹ ẹ, gbogbo yín jẹ apá kan náà nínú ayé aláàyè yíi. Kò sí "ẹ̀ mí" àti "ẹ̀ ẹ̀" nikan, ṣùgbọ́n "wà" tí ó pọ̀.

Ìṣọkan is the Yoruba word people use for unity, but it carries a deeper sense of "we are not separate pieces." It's that feeling that you, the tree, the river, and the person next to you are all part of the same living whole.

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