

COOPER INSTITUTE ACTIVITIES REPORT 2019



With the support of many generous donors Cooper Institute has been active in the community for more than 35 years.

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Social Justice Symposium 2019

The Social Justice Symposium is an annual event, held in memory of Father Andrew Macdonald, a founder of Cooper Institute. It was a great pleasure, in June, to hold this annual event in Souris, with the Souris & Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation as co-host. There was an excellent turn-out of interested people from the area. The objectives of the symposium, entitled “Land and Water: Sources of all Life”, were to identify major threats to land and water in Eastern Kings, to examine the root causes of those threats, to acknowledge the work that has been done to protect land and water and to propose ways of building on that work. The presenters were biologists Daryl Guignon and Rosemary Curley. The agenda included a chance for people to talk in small groups, about threats to land and water and how we can work together as a community to improve their health.

Daryl spoke about threats to PEI water, referencing his work on PEI’s Atlantic Salmon Conservation Strategy, which involved exploring 26 Island rivers where he saw: erosion from agriculture, highway construction and clay roads, resulting in sedimentation, affecting fish spawning; eroded grass waterways and insufficient grassed headlands; trees cut and left in streams, interfering with water flow and fish passage; removal of hedgerows. He also noted that runoff of pesticides into streams cause fish kills, and seepage/runoff of nutrients which results in anoxic estuaries. PEI’s waters are also affected by climate change, as more frequent and intense storms result in severe erosion of soil and chemicals into our waters. Daryl pointed to several ways in which things could be improved, including: conservation and management of riparian zones; effective climate change strategies; public engagement and outreach; the involvement of Indigenous communities.

Rosemary talked about protection of land and preserving biodiversity. She said in PEI, deforestation, climate change, pollution and invasive species all threaten biodiversity. When an area is legally protected, it can’t be developed – protected areas are

important in conserving ecosystems and biodiversity. Land can be protected under the Natural Areas Protection Act, by placing a covenant or by gifting it to an NGO. The national target for protected land is 17%, which is considered necessary to preserve biodiversity. The PEI goal is much less, 7%. Forests contribute to carbon sequestration and are vital to watershed protection and soil conservation. They help to control siltation and sedimentation. It’s recommended that 40-50% of each watershed be forested in order to protect biodiversity.



Cooper Institute and the Souris & Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation present:

PEI Land and Water: Sources of All Life

Following the presentations, people shared what they saw as threats to land and water in Eastern Kings. Climate change, which contributes to storm surges, increased runoff, structural changes, sea level rise, coastal erosion, and lack of cover in fields over the winter, was at the top of the list. Deforestation and depletion of organic matter in soils, pesticides and loss of wildlife habitat were some other concerns that were shared. People also talked about the challenge of maintaining institutional memory, environmental leaders sharing their knowledge with the next generation, and with newcomers. There was agreement that PEI needs stronger environmental assessment and public consultation processes.

In the face of significant and varied threats, there was hope. People in the area have a history of a willingness to learn and work together in a spirit of cooperation and respect. And a history of raising issues that balance human needs and the biosphere.

PEI Working Group for a Livable Income

The PEI Working Group for a Livable Income (WGLI) is a grassroots network of ten community-based organizations and individuals, formed in 2003 to address an ongoing indignity: that so many people in PEI do not have livable income. WGLI welcomes any actions which reduce poverty, but the long-term goal is poverty elimination, by establishing a system of basic income guarantee for all Islanders.

WGLI continues to monitor all sources of income and supports in PEI and to speak out on specific issues as they arise especially for people in the lowest income brackets. The emphasis each year differs either according to the gravity of situation or according to the opportunities for advancing the cause in the community and with public policy makers. One opportunity was when the PEI Chief Health Officer presented her very enlightening findings on the prevalence and consequences of child poverty at a public forum organized by the WGLI in February. Her study revealed a close relation between poverty and health threats to children. About 80 people participated, including policy makers and/or influencers, and adults living in poverty. WGLI asked the participants to discuss the study from the point of view of the possible effects of Basic Income Guarantee on the health and wellbeing of children. It was an excellent discussion. (More about BIG below.)

One of WGLI's annual actions is a submission to the Employment Standards Board. The Employment Standards Act is the only protection for non-unionized, low-wage workers. Their positions get more precarious each year. Added to the voicelessness of being in minimal wages, there is added vulnerability (two or three times for some) for women, Indigenous people, new immigrants, migrant workers, LGBT2SQ+ people and persons with varied physical and mental abilities.

This year the Employment Standards Board was required by law to base their recommendation about minimum wage on: the cost of basic necessities, an accepted measure of poverty indicating the ability of employees to maintain a suitable standard of living. The Board was also advised to base minimum wage levels on economic conditions in PEI, including return on investment. The proof of having followed these conditions is to be published in the Royal Gazette.

Basic Income Guarantee

C-BIG PEI (Campaign BIG) is a central program of PEI Working Group for a Livable Income. Our main objective is to engage community and to encourage public policy makers to use their power to establish Basic Income Guarantee in PEI.

Internationally recognized authority on Basic Income Guarantee, Dr. Evelyn Forget was in PEI as a guest of St. Dunstan's University Board, which invited WGLI to take advantage of her visit, including her public lectures and consultation with representatives of several interest groups. WGLI organized one of her public presentations and an intimate meeting with the representatives of the four political parties. (During the spring provincial election only the NDP and the Green parties spoke of BIG. Some candidates for the Progressive Conservatives expressed favour for BIG.)



Dr Evelyn Forget (second from the left, back row) was a guest at one of the Working Group's meetings.

Then on Thursday, July 11th, the Legislative Assembly provided the Working Group and all Islanders with reasons to hope when they gave unanimous assent to a motion which was generated by an initiative of the Green Party with all-party collaboration. By this motion, a three-party Special Committee of the Legislature was formed with a mandate to research and hold consultations on the reality of poverty in PEI. The final resolution of the motion is especially significant as a major leap forward. For the first time in Island political history, the legislature has a special committee on poverty and one of its mandates is to ***report back to the Legislative Assembly within twelve months with recommendations regarding the creation of a fully costed Basic Income Guarantee pilot for Prince Edward Island.*** The committee began hearing submissions from various perspectives and seemed sincere in its desire to find out as much as possible about Basic Income Guarantee.

Meanwhile a casual exchange between C-BIG and Senator Hugh Segal (ret) led to his coming to the Island in October. The Special Committee of the Legislature took advantage of his visit and asked him to be a witness for BIG. Senator Segal also met with the Premier, presented at a community engagement forum and consulted with the Mi'kmaq Confederacy.

Close to the end of the year, BIG promoters across Canada began to build momentum for establishing a PEI basic income proposal. Representatives from ten provinces and one territory consulted with C-BIG PEI. They decided on an initial action: to write individual letters of support to the leaders of the four political parties in PEI (plus the Chair of the Special Committee of the Legislature), supporting C-BIG's proposal for a full-province federal-provincial basic income project. They are clear that their goal is to create a path for a nationwide BIG. At year end only the Green Party, the NDP and the Chair of the Special Committee have acknowledged having received the letters from eight BIG groups across the country. The national group is meeting early in 2020 to plan next steps.

Trade Justice PEI

On the surface, international trade agreements can seem quite remote from the day-to-day lives of most people. And yet, in reality, they can have significant effects on the way governments provide essential public services, they can impede governments' actions to address climate change, influence food producers and food security and essentially interfere with the democratic processes we hold as important.

For the past seven years, several Cooper Institute members have been actively involved in [Trade Justice PEI](#), a coalition of groups and individuals concerned about Canada's current international trade agenda. We believe that it's time for trade that is more democratic and environmentally sustainable, more supportive of a transition to a carbon neutral economy in which workers receive their fair share of the benefits, and more respectful of the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The group maintained a presence, as much as possible, in local media, publishing several op-eds in response to the Canadian government's push to get the USMCA (the new NAFTA) signed, arguing that the deal "failed to address many of the long-term problems caused by NAFTA: wage stagnation, rising inequality and loss of food sovereignty and that it would contribute to increased drug costs for Islanders and erode supply management, which provides our dairy farmers with decent livelihoods."

In September we organized a series of events under the banner, *Building a Just and Sustainable Future*, including a coffee house and film night at UPEI. The main event was a public talk by Clayton Thomas-Müller, a campaigner for Indigenous rights and environmental and economic justice. Based in Winnipeg, he is member of the Mathias Colomb Cree Nation. Clayton talked passionately about the need for the wholesale transformation needed in order to

effectively address the climate emergency, and ensure social, environmental and economic justice for all peoples. Byron Petrie of the NFU, Choyce Chappell, a UPEI student, and Carrie Cormier, a youth union organizer, responded to Clayton, demonstrating how the free trade agenda affects young farmers, students, and workers.



Clayton Thomas-Müller spoke about Indigenous Rights, the Climate Emergency and Trade Justice

Seeds of Community

Once again, with the help of community members and librarians, Cooper Institute organized successful seed exchanges and seed saving workshops in four communities. Thanks to several organic farmers for donating seeds, and to Carina Phillips and Irené Novaczek for presenting the workshops. These events serve several purposes – not only do they provide beginning gardeners with access to seeds, they are also opportunities for people to learn more about the importance of seed sovereignty. In the long run, increasing our collective capacity to save seeds will lead to more diversity and more locally adapted varieties. When globally, only a handful of companies control the production of seeds for the food that we eat, this is a critical aspect of food sovereignty.

Cinema Politica

In 2019, Cinema Politica collaborated with the UPEI Environmental Society, UPEI Student Union, the Mawi'omi Centre and Trade Justice PEI. Many of the documentaries were about resistance and resilience – Indigenous communities in Canada and abroad who are organizing to stop oil and gas development; the fight to have GMO foods labelled – and related to issues of importance to Island groups organized for progressive change. Cinema Politica is coordinated by Cooper Institute.

Coalition for the Protection of PEI Lands

This Coalition for the Protection of PEI Lands formed in 2018 responding to a proposal which came out of Cooper Institute's community forum on the Lands Protection Act. The Coalition is made up of a variety of organizations and individuals dedicated to the land. They are convinced that the land must be protected from rampant corporate ownership, which is key to the well-known abuses and destruction of land from an environmental perspective. They chose to begin their work concentrating on the Lands Protection Act, keeping alive their concern about the degradation of land and the health of people.

The Lands Protection Act was a central issue for PEI residents in 2019. The Coalition witnessed this at its community forum on February 23 entitled *Land Grabbing in PEI: How the Lands Protection Act is being violated. And why Islanders should be concerned*. An unexpected turn-out of over 200 people indicated that when it comes to land Islanders are alert. The audience, many of whom were standing, listened carefully to three panelists, Senator Dianne Griffin, Ian Petrie, journalist, and Douglas Campbell, dairy farmer and District Director of the National Farmers Union.

The provincial election in May provided another opportunity for the Lands Coalition to host a community engagement event in the form of a Party Leaders' Debate on the Protection of PEI Lands. Again over 200 people attended, however the leader of the Liberal Party, the Premier was absent. It was an excellent session with the three parties participating, agreeing on the need to sharpen up the Lands Protection Act, to make all land transactions transparent to the public and to move toward a public land banking system for PEI.

With the election of the Progressive Conservative Party of PEI and Dennis King as Premier, the first Speech from the Throne on June 14 stated that the new government planned to: "uphold the spirit and intent of the Lands Protection Act; and consult on the establishment of a provincial Land Bank that helps keep land in appropriate use." This raised hopes.

The actions, or the lack thereof, in the second half of 2019 somewhat shattered those hopes. By August, it seems to the surprise of everyone, including the government, the media advised the Island public of an alarming land transaction: "2,200 acres in the area of Summerside and North Bedeque, formerly owned by Brendel Farms Ltd. was transferred to Haslemere Farms Ltd. on June 27. Corporate records show Haslemere Farms changed its name to Red Fox Farms effective Aug. 7.

Records also list Rebecca Irving as the sole director of Red Fox Farms. Rebecca Irving is the daughter of Mary Jean Irving, and a member of the larger Irving family with multiple corporate interests including Cavendish Farms Ltd. [CBC PEI]. This was specifically alarming, given that the previous government had denied the transferral of this land to a grouping of Irving interests, giving as reason that it contravened the Lands Protection Act. The speculation, though, is that the same former government had made this possible by providing an overriding clause in the Business Corporations Act.

Immediately after the formation of the new government, the Coalition for the Protection of PEI Lands prepared briefs for the Premier, the Minister of Agriculture and Land, and the Opposition critic. Despite many requests, none of them has as yet agreed to meet with the Coalition.

In the last days of the fall sitting of the Legislature, bills were passed providing better access to data relating to the Business Corporations Act and the Lands Protection Act. The promise of a soon-to-be delivered IRAC report on land transactions was renewed. And there was an indication that in early 2020, the government will open up the Lands Protection Act for public consultation. The Coalition for the Protection of PEI Lands has deep concerns about the goals of the consultation, and the public engagement processes. A number of the organizations in the Coalition have wide experience in productive public consultation design and processes. The Coalition will be asking to have input on the consultation well before it is put in motion.



It was standing room only at the Lands Symposium in February

Migrant Workers

It has now been a full decade since Cooper Institute started to support and advocate on behalf of migrant workers who come to Prince Edward Island, and to defend their rights. For the past 3 years, Paola Flores has coordinated migrant worker projects, connecting with more and more workers every year, working tirelessly, with passion, immeasurable love and caring. In 2019, we were heartbroken when Paola and her family moved to British Columbia. While we know it will be challenging to maintain the same level of activity, Cooper Institute will continue to advocate for programs, services and policies that better protect the rights of all migrant workers. Thanks Paola, and her predecessor, Josie Baker, there is a dedicated group – the PEI Action Team for Migrant Workers' Rights – ready and willing to help.

In 2019 we were connected with workers from 14 different farms and 4 seafood processing plants. We also offered support to 53 workers (advocacy with employers, access to provincial and federal services, support with health issues, and connection with consulates and tax services). We provided education and guidance on multiple topics, holding workshops and meetings in at least five Island communities.

We made presentations about migrant workers' rights and inclusion and diversity at four different events during the year – an engagement event organized by Health PEI, the March 8th International Women's Day celebration, the first-year anniversary of the Filipino organization Sandigang Pinoy, and a conference on migration and families at UPEI.

We organized a Rally to commemorate the International Worker's Day on May 1st, which attracted many representatives of the community, organizations, and political parties (NDP, Green, and PC). Several op-eds were published, highlighting the contributions of migrant workers as well as the challenges that they face. On September 1st, we joined groups across the country in the campaign "Unite Against Racism", distributing materials at the annual Labour Day picnic in Charlottetown.

In 2019 we met with people in different departments of the provincial government including Public Health, Employment Standards and Immigration, as well as with bureaucrats such as the new Deputy Minister Responsible for Labour. Each of the meetings was aimed at improving programs, policies and services for migrant workers, to ensure their health and safety and their personal dignity.

We continued to be actively involved at the national level through the Migrant Rights Network and the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR). We

attended three national meetings: of the Migrant Rights Network, the CCR spring consultation and the Migrant Worker Forum in Vancouver.



A May Day rally drew a wide range of people representing many different groups and interests

We will continue to advocate for legislation to protect migrant workers' rights, legislation that requires the registration of both recruitment agencies and employers. Over the past three years especially, we have been made aware of so many gaps in services and supports for migrant workers, when it comes to healthcare, access to justice, and employment standards.

There is a real need for comprehensive settlement services for the workers who come to Prince Edward Island, who work and live in our communities and support our Island economy. At the federal level we will continue to lobby for open work permits and access to permanent residency.

We acknowledge and value the financial support of the PEI Interministerial Women's Secretariat and the Campbell Webster Foundation.

And we are privileged to work with the volunteers of the PEI Action Team for Migrant Workers' Rights, all of whom participate in many different capacities in this work – by offering translation, helping to facilitate workshops, attending meetings and organizing activities and events. Thank-you!!

Proportional Representation

Cooper Institute has publicly supported Mixed Member Proportional Representation (MMP) for PEI since the first plebiscite in 2005. Over the years, there have been signs that many more Islanders are in favour of proportional representation (PR) as a step towards a more democratic electoral process. Between the 2016 plebiscite and 2019 referendum there is a progression which may not be evident in the final results. In 2005, of those who voted, 36% favored MMP; in 2016 MMP actually won with 52.42% of the vote; in 2019 this declined to 48.26%.

Islanders for Proportional Representation (IPR) was founded on May 16, 2019 as the newest community-based organization promoting PR for PEI. Cooper Institute is an active member. The goal is to see Proportional Representation established as the electoral system for Prince Edward Island. The main objective is to develop a community-based plan to promote the implementation of PR on the Island. IPR maintains that plebiscites and referendums are unnecessary and may even be deliberate obstructions to democratic electoral renewal. The Legislature has the authority to enact changes to the electoral system.

Immediately after its formation, the group analysed the Yes vote, noting that besides the 14 districts which voted in favor of MMP, there were another 9 in which the vote was over 45% (for a total of 23 districts). One eastern district voted 41%, but the three western districts voted 20%, 21% and 28%, totally skewing the vote. At the end of May, IPR wrote letters to each of the 23 MLAs (above 45%) indicating the percentage by which they were elected and the percentage who voted for MMP.

This was not meant to be a statistical comparison, but just a wake-up call. Later (September 25) when no MLAs had responded, it was decided to write to them again, reminding them that they had not answered the original letter, and asking them again what they would be doing in the Legislature to advance the PR cause. Four people responded honestly that they were not sure what they would or could do. The leader of the Official Opposition responded that the Green Party remains committed to PR, but in the Legislature they do not have PR on their immediate radar. They are of the opinion that there is “some fatigue with the public on PR at this time”. IPR had positive meetings with both the Premier and the interim leader of the Liberal Party.

IPR has had 4 opinion pieces published and has had excellent coverage by CBC. There is a good social media presence on [Facebook](#). The **current challenges** are to keep the issue alive in the media and in the community, to get a wider range of Islanders speaking up and to develop a concrete plan to fulfill the goal of *PR for the 2023 election*.

Seniors for BIG

Cooper Institute designed, coordinated and implemented for the Voluntary Resource Council its 2019-20 project called Seniors Promoting Livable Income for All. The project aimed to prepare seniors to encourage other seniors and soon-to-be seniors to promote Basic Income Guarantee in their community.

The participating seniors in the 5 three-hour

interactive training sessions heard about and shared knowledge about the following: participatory training & learning styles; general overview of Basic Income Guarantee; the need in PEI for BIG; learnings from various BIG pilot programs (related to health, education, dignity and participation in community); BIG: the goal, how it works, the costs, the sources of revenue; a model whole-province program for PEI, based on federal-provincial engagement and cost sharing; Frequently Asked Questions; Seniors' messages for engaging other Seniors to promote Basic Income Guarantee.

The seniors were also introduced to ways and means of engaging other seniors in the issue of Basic Income Guarantee and encouraging seniors to become promoters of BIG. The seniors from the training program are organizing a public, interactive symposium for February 22, 2020 entitled, *Basic Income Guarantee: We can make it happen*.

Eddie Cormier, Lifetime Member



Eddie Cormier, an outstanding Islander, joined Cooper Institute in 1986. He works tirelessly, and often quietly, on behalf of the sectors of people and individuals who are left on the margins of society

whether in PEI or in the Dominican Republic.

He is a prominent Acadian with a limitless commitment to promoting Acadian and French speaking communities. He is intimately attuned to the 400-year history of Acadie. He is immensely proud of the culture which has grown out of the pains and triumphs of Island Acadians over those four centuries. His generosity of spirit prompts him spontaneously to share with everyone how great a gift the Acadian people and culture are to PEI. He is especially gracious in his willingness to share with interested Anglophones his passion for the rights of Acadian communities.

His special concern over the past decades has been for the promotion of French schools in PEI. His tireless championing of this cause has made a tremendous contribution to the existence of French schools in six Island communities.

Thank you, Eddie, for walking with us and for accepting a lifetime membership in Cooper Institute.

Organizational Support

Members of the Cooper Institute collective work with and support many organizations in various ways:

Société Saint-Thomas d'Acquin

Parkinson Society Maritime Region (PEI)

Breaking the Silence Maritimes-Guatemala Solidarity Network

P.E.I. Supported Decision-Making Coalition

Voluntary Resource Council

National Farmers Union

Save Our Seas and Shores PEI

PEI People First

Atlantic Council for International Cooperation

Coalition for the Protection of PEI Water

Latin American Mission Program (LAMP)

Canadian Council for Refugees

Lennon House Association

Partners for Change

Cooper Institute Fundraising Committee

In collaboration with Cooper Institute members, a dedicated fundraiser, Des Duffy, took on a one-year task of raising funds by directly asking individuals for donations. Des was, and is, convinced that if people knew of the involvement in the Island community, they would want to donate. And so it was: he talked to people about the work of Cooper Institute and shared information cards and brochures. He persuaded 150 people to contribute. His effort raised \$11,900, which was a huge financial boost for Cooper Institute.

Des and his spouse, Yvonne Gallant Duffy, are themselves long-time generous contributors and personal supporters of Cooper Institute. So a heartfelt thanks to Des and Yvonne.

From its beginning, the Cooper Institute Fundraising Committee, of which Des Duffy is a founding member, aimed to be a promotional voice to raise the profile of Cooper Institute. Its goal was soliciting financial support for the work of Cooper Institute emphasizing that all money raised is used to better the lives of Islanders. In particular it aims to raise enough money annually to cover the cost of

running Cooper Institute's programs with priority on livable income for the staff. Another goal is to encourage donors, preferring long-term sustainability donations, to contribute and/or make bequests to the Cooper Foundation.

Cooper Institute thanks again our ongoing donors who over the years make many generous donations. We invite other interested people to donate. More than half of the funding for our work in the community comes from private sources. Cooper Institute Fundraising Committee encourages long-time donors to continue with their generosity and is seeking to expand the Institute's financial capacities.

Donations can be made by using the "donate" button on our website www.cooperinstitute.ca. Contributions can also be made in the following ways: pre-authorized monthly donations; an annual contribution; a memorial for a deceased family member or friend; a bequest in your Last Will and Testament. Cooper Institute is a charitable organization (Registration #10114 4541 RR0001).

Members of the Cooper Institute Collective:

Paola Flores

Irene Burge

Marie Burge

Joe Byrne

Eddie Cormier

Irene Doyle

Michelle Pineau

Shelby Downe

Maureen Larkin

Leah MacLeod

Reg Phelan

Selvi Roy

Debbie Theuerkauf

Ann Wheatley

Paul Hines



Celebrating 35 years of the collective!

Connect with Cooper Institute

You can find us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/cooperinstitute) or visit our website – www.cooperinstitute.ca.

Better still, come and visit us at 81 Prince Street in Charlottetown!



THE CLIMATE CRISIS IS A SOCIAL JUSTICE CRISIS

In October of 2018, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a Special Report which received ample media attention. The report outlines the detrimental climate-related risks that a global temperature increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius or more above pre-industrial temperatures will pose to ecosystems, biodiversity, and human life. It calls for an immediate global policy response to the climate crisis. Since its release, the report has often been cited by the public calling on governments to declare a state of climate emergency. Campaigns have been launched to redirect public money from oilsands to wind and solar powered energy. Many Canadians now support government subsidization and tax-breaks for the purchase of personal electric vehicles. Funds have been offered up to award the individuals behind new and ground-breaking “green” technologies.

The popular rhetoric of the climate crisis circles around the use of human ingenuity to decrease greenhouse gas emissions, all within the context of our current capitalist economic system. This is a legitimate approach to the problem of greenhouse gas emissions. However, when framed as such, this approach does little to address the full reality of the climate crisis. What the media often omits when covering the IPCC’s Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 Degrees Celsius is the implications of climate change for vulnerable populations. These populations include Indigenous people, people of colour, disabled people, the poor, elderly people, homeless people, and young children.

Some of the risks of climate change are threats to physical and mental health, food security, access to shelter, and water supply. These risks apply to all people. However, vulnerable groups are at a disproportionately higher risk than are otherwise privileged groups, and they are less likely to have access to supports that could lessen the impact of climate-related threats. For example, many at-risk populations do not have access to imported food in the event of local crop failure due to climate change. To further complicate matters, they often don’t have the resources necessary to make personal choices in order to mitigate climate change.

Evidently, the climate crisis is not simply an issue of technological feasibility; most of the world’s population does not have access to these technologies, anyway. And why not? The climate crisis is largely a social justice issue, but most of our “solutions” end up serving the interests of the privileged and perpetuating systems of oppression. These systems - patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism - uphold the institutionalized power of certain groups of people over others, undermining the world’s ability to curb climate change.

A pertinent example is the way personal electric vehicles (realized with materials extracted using exploited labor in the global south) aid only the wealthy and privileged in reducing their carbon footprints. Free and accessible urban-rural public transit would reduce the carbon footprint of all populations. Economic-based approaches to solving climate change, such as various carbon taxation schemes, are extremely disadvantageous to people in poverty, many of whom are people of colour or Indigenous people. The inability of the poor to pay for climate change mitigation is framed as a fault of their own. Further, these taxes encourage the rich to pay a price and continue polluting. It is the privileged and the colonizers who are most responsible for climate change, but it is the oppressed and the colonized who bear the brunt of its effects.

Any approach used to address climate change in the context of systems of oppression will prolong the issue. The solution must dismantle these systems and make way for radical system change that is inclusive of all people. Decisions made by a small portion of society clearly do not address the needs of most people, nor do they spur the scale of change needed to protect humanity and the planet from climate change. Instead, community and Indigenous led policy planning is needed. This approach is vastly more efficient, and it eliminates the need for uninformed guesswork on the needs of marginalized communities.

The global climate crisis requires accessible and culturally relevant solutions for all. Not only must we ask ourselves which changes to make, we must also ask *for whom* these changes will be made.

