



2SLGBTQI+ Dimensions of Climate Change and Environmental Justice in North America:

A scoping exercise to define a North American strategy

ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY¹

At a one-day in-person roundtable held at the CEC headquarters in Montreal, experts from Canada, Mexico and United States from the Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, + (2SLGBTQI+) communities were brought together at the CEC Secretariat to discuss priority actions and identify opportunities and challenges to promote the meaningful engagement of 2SLGBTQI+ persons and communities to strengthen environmental conservation and the advancement of environmental justice, combat discrimination, the respect of Indigenous Rights and inclusion of Indigenous knowledge and Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and integrate Two-Spirit, queer and trans need, experience, and perspectives into the work of the CEC at the North American level.

Brief Description of the Event

The one-day event was organized into open discussion blocks as follows:

- Indigenous Land Acknowledgment
- Welcome and introduction by the CEC Executive Director to the scope of the roundtable and a setting of group agreements
- Personal introductions through stories
- A brief overview of the CEC
- An open discussion focusing on key issues of the topic
- An open discussion on opportunities to advance a North American agenda on 2SLGBTQI+ consideration in environmental conservation and protection²
- A session with additional CEC unit teams to share conclusions of the discussion.
- A brief closing remarks session by the Executive Director

Notes:

The Roundtable Session began with a recognition of the territory of the Kanien'kehá ka (Mohawk) Ho-de-no-sau-nee-ga (Haudenosaunee) peoples and Nation in which we (all individuals present in-

¹ The CEC is thankful to the Roundtable participants for their efforts in co-creating this document.

² There was some discussion on the impact of climate change on 2SLGBTQI+ individuals and communities. This community, especially members who lack financial, food and/or housing security, is often the most impacted and these members often do not access services as a result of real or perceived homo/trans/bi-phobia.



person at the roundtable taking place in what is now referred to as Montreal, Quebec) were situated upon, given by Executive Director (ED) Jorge Daniel Taillant. Each participant shared their story, wisdom and knowledge related to being a part of the 2SLGBTQI+ community, and experiences with Environmental Justice (EJ). Once each participant shared their story, Daniel summarized keywords and concepts that had been shared by everyone (appendix 1), emphasizing that these words represent our connection and reason for the convening of this Roundtable. The head of Unit for Outreach and Partnerships, Georgina O’Farrill, introduced the participants to the involvement of the CEC, including its origins, mission, values, governance structure, and work. Throughout the following sessions during the day, the participants addressed key topics, as presented below.

Key Issues Discussion

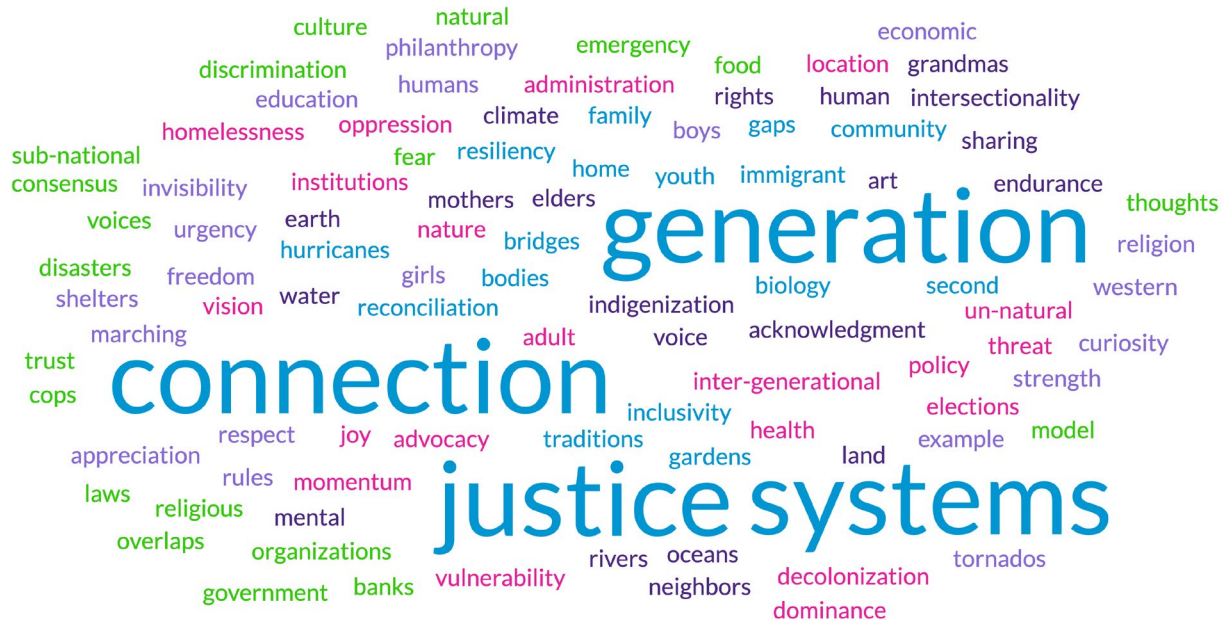
The introductions, through stories, were rich in background and the issues covered dovetailed seamlessly with the key topics of this session.

Figure 1. List of key words throughout the event

Resiliency Hurricanes Family Bodies Biology Gardens Community Youth Gaps Second Generation Inclusivity Home Bridges Reconciliation Immigrant Traditions Acknowledgment Water Oceans Earth Elders Art Land Indigenization Intersectionality Grandmas Endurance Connection Rivers Climate Justice Mothers Human Rights Voice Neighbors Sharing Mental Health Decolonization Advocacy Institutions Inter-generational Policy Administration Momentum Elections Location Nature Dominance Homelessness Un-Natural Oppression Vulnerability Threat Joy Adult Vision Example Strength Humans Freedom Education Urgency Western Rules Curiosity Respect Appreciation Girls Invisibility Tornados Marching Religion Boys Economic Justice Shelters Philanthropy Religious Organizations Systems Trust Fear Laws Overlaps Model Discrimination Now Emergency Food Banks Natural Disasters Culture COPs Sub-national Government Voices Consensus Thoughts Women Queer Equity Funding Two-Spirit Journey Mistakes Knowledge Systems Kindness Research Articulate Moon Learning Organizer History Ceremony Tomorrow Homophobia Translation Effort First Generation Roadmaps Fathers White Management Possibility Pity Domination Subjugation Humility Change Connection Relations Resistance Self-Determination



Figure 2. Word cloud proposed by one participant



Brief Summary

Participants described climate change and the loss of biodiversity as layers of compounding and cascading risks that create interlocking negative (physical, mental, emotional and spiritual) situations for members of the LGBTQI+ community. Ultimately, this places them on the frontline as one of the populations most impacted. This is especially true when confronted with unexpected disasters, something which is further developed in the following section. As members of the 2SLGBTQI+ communities face intense climate realities, sharing methods of response and effective solutions to combating climate externalities became an important discussion topic. It is important to consider intersectionality such as youth, race, and Indigeneity. Specifically, Indigenous, ancestral and elder's knowledge was emphasized by content lead(ers) because they hold valuable experiences and lessons that could be applied to combat current realities. This gave rise to the need to take care of each other and Mother Earth and/or nature, not only at a community and global level, but also at an intergenerational level. Climate adaptation measures should include an intersectional approach with gender lens and intergenerational equity.

Select issues that arose included (in no specific order, the list is exemplary and NOT exhaustive):

- The intersectionality of 2SLGBTQI+ persons who disproportionately experience the impacts of climate change due to a compounding set of exacerbating factors, such as the over representation of 2SLGBTQI+ youth experiencing homelessness, the prevalence of discrimination due to race, income level, etc. A shift is needed from a binary system to one of recognized intersectionality, respect for diversity and value of the natural world.



- Prevalent systems of oppression such as heteropatriarchy, racism, and colonialism are the root cause of the multiple crises the world faces, including the climate and biodiversity collapse. These systems increase the negative impacts on 2SLGBTQI+ persons, leading to systemic and cascading risks and impacts from climate change. A system with co-existence, respect and resonance is possible and desirable.
- Systemic discrimination and systems of oppression, such as colonialism and racism are often at the heart of discriminatory homophobic, transphobic and biphobic systems that only exacerbate inequalities that 2SLGBTQI+ people face.
- Alternative proposal: There are opportunities to create better tomorrows, that re-writes our relations with land, Mother Nature and its biological diversity.
- The “invisibility” or lack of meaningful inclusion of 2SLGBTQI+ with respect to the topic, meaning that it has not been identified as a paramount issue in environmental vulnerability discussions, enables systemic discrimination and violence; it is needed to enhance diverse participation, including 2SLGBTQI+ and youth.
- There is limited consideration nor a full understanding in the current climate change debate regarding the impact of 2SLGBTQI+ individuals and the inequalities that they face.
- The idea that traditional “binary” systems tend to exclude or be counter to the needs of 2SLGBTQI+ persons was also prevalent in the discussion. We can and should think beyond binary systems to ones that are more inclusive and reflective of the diversity we see in society and nature.
- The question of “who” responds for example, to natural disasters, to aid impacted communities, considering commonly witnessed pre-existing prejudices against 2SLGBTQI+ persons has shown to result in serious undermining or violations of rights of affected persons in the delivery of post disaster aid.
- General needs of 2SLGBTQI+ persons are ignored during disasters, particularly those related to health.
- Two-Spirit and/or Indigenous approaches with the Earth at the center of the value system are more sustainable, while the dominant human-centric system leads to ecosystems collapse.
- A rights-based system, including the rights of nature, is desirable and needed to protect the human rights of all people, especially in the context of the climate crisis.
- Budget and finance are needed, with an intersectional approach, to properly address the topic.

Indigenous and Western Worldviews





- Language (words) must be re-considered and revamped to promote inclusion and consideration.
- The definition of “family” should be reconsidered in policies to include the diversity we see in society.
- 2SLGBTQI+ communities have much advocacy experience in dealing with disasters and pandemic health (such as HIV+ community) that can assist in environmental / climate disaster assistance and organization.
- Individuals and groups confronted with inequities and injustices must be consulted, and their views must be incorporated as central to evolving policy development.
- Historical and current inequalities lead many 2SLGBTQI+ persons to live in a state of fear, precarity, and danger. They are often on the front lines of the impacts of natural disasters, compounded by already existing discrimination.
- The lack of inclusion of 2SLGBTQI+ people in multilateral discussion, especially those related to environmental conservation and climate change, beyond those related to sexual orientation and gender identity framework of human rights and in a lesser degree, to their political representation.

Discussion of Key Solutions

Following the lunch break, participants focused on opportunities to advance 2SLGBTQI+ considerations in North America. The following are selected issues identified:

- Engage other agencies that are tackling key areas, such as extreme weather events.
- Promote coastal projects to document key cases.
- Replicate this initiative (the Roundtable) at the CEC and at other institutions across the region, for the creation of networks.
- Develop a policy brief on the issue of 2SLGBTQI+ dimensions of environmental and climate vulnerability.
- Expand research and treatment of intersectional relations into other impacts and factors of discrimination (youth, race, EJ, Indigenous rights, etc.).
- Seek advice from CEC bodies (JPAC, TEKEG, etc.).
- Ensure there is 2SLGBTQI+ representation across the different CEC advisory bodies
- Build data and other resources on the issue.
- Promote inter-governmental attention to these issues.
- Promote an inter-connected approach, streamlining the issue into other climate/environment-related work.
- Promote campaigns that highlight 2SLGBTQI+ issues in climate and environment and encourage discussions within 2SLGBTQI+ spaces.
- Promote the incorporation of Two-Spirit, queer, and trans voices in policy, programs, and environmental governance.



- Create inter-generational spaces in discussions.
- Hold panels or participate in panels where 2SLGBTQI+ issues can be presented.
- Hold a conference on the issue.
- Create representation across groups and institutions.
- Simply name the issue and refer to 2SLGBTQI+ perspectives in key work.
- Increase funding for deepening considerations of the issue.
- Promote Two-Spirit considerations in future work, particularly when advancing Indigenous issues.
- Develop grant programs to advance 2SLGBTQI+ considerations in climate and environmental actions.
- Repeat this roundtable next year to evaluate progress and expand action.
- Promote communication on the event and future action.
- Utilize the CEC's JPAC as a conduit for action.
- Create a website/webpage about the issue on the CEC platform.
- Develop and incorporate concepts of "2S/Queer Ecology".
- Work with key partners (such as Out for Sustainability) to expand and advance action.
- Need to weave "2S/queer ecology" into public discourse.
- Devise strategies differentiating federal, state, and local government responsibilities and actions.
- Promote accessibility and sensitivity to 2SLGBTQI+ issues.
- Need to "Call In" as opposed to "Call Out".
- More inter-agency collaboration is needed.
- Need to broaden climate adaptation scopes to include 2S, Trans and Queer adaptive capacity, for example, through community-based adaptation.
- Collaborate with other multilateral alliances such as the LGBTI Core Group and the Equal Rights Coalition.

Afternoon Open Discussion with CEC Staff

The afternoon session with the CEC units offered an opportunity to share the discussions more openly. The exchange returned to the central issue of needing to change systems and the responses needed to address impacts and vulnerabilities that are part of a larger and intersectional problem, with multiple vulnerabilities that need to be addressed. Some of the issues shared included:

- The need to rethink the relationship between people and the planet and the natural world.
- That there is much to be done and that we can do.
- The need to respond to the violence faced by 2SLGBTQI+ persons in relation to environmental and climate impacts.
- The need for a foundational document (White Paper) to analyze the issues.
- The CEC could and should have a position statement regarding 2SLGBTQI+ issues.
- There is a lack of data and information regarding 2SLGBTQI+ issues as it relates to climate/environment.
- There must be a shift in language used in the narrative, discourse, and policy approach related to the issue.
- That we need to work holistically with Mother Nature, not as the center, but as a part of a greater system.



- Two-Spirit, Queer, and Trans voices need to be included.
- There is an excellent opportunity to hold conferences, workshops, seminars, etc.
- Consultations need to be more extensive and inclusive of Two-Spirit, Queer, and Trans voices.
- We can build on existing precedents and mandates.
- We need to explicitly mention the issues.
- Words are very powerful and must be used carefully.
- We currently have a distrust of government and historically oppressive systems.
- The CEC should start with a review of its own internal policy. Do Two-Spirit, Queer, and Trans people want to work at the CEC, and are they comfortable expressing their identity?
- We need to have repeated meetings on this issue—the next one at the CEC for 2 or 3 days.
- The CEC should be sensitive to pronouns in its work and communications.
- A “2S” for Two-Spirit should be added at the start of LGBTQI+.
- We must ask communities before assuming what their answers on issues will be.
- Indigenous notions around sex, sexuality, and gender are different than Western/colonial notions.
- When you start with Indigenous considerations, the outcomes are different.
- Humble recognition is key as a starting point.
- Healing is critical.
- Front-line communities are essential to consider.
- We must build relationships to advance.
- The 2SLGBTQI+ community has a lot of expertise and capacity already.
- Individuals must be paid for their contributions.
- Those most affected must be in the room when policy and actions are crafted.
- We must guarantee cross-cutting inclusion of the diversity we see in society.
- We can bring interns to the CEC to help advance the issue.
- Trauma and violence are prevalent in the circumstances we face.
- Food insecurity is often prevalent in 2SLGBTQI+ communities.
- We need to break down silos to adequately address the issues.
- Key indicators that can help relate to health (housing, food and employment).
- Migration and human displacement are critical issues to consider.
- Treaties, mandates, and decisions do not presently mention 2SLGBTQI+ individuals/issues.

Select Recurring Issues and Discussions

Our Relationship with Mother Nature

A societal transformation of ensuring inclusivity and enabling more intersectional ways of living was also a significant discussion topic. It was discussed how we see the environment as economic units rather than as a system of which we are a part. It was described that we are nature, and we form a complete synergy in communities and as a collective. Queer Ecology was acknowledged as an approach to working with the environment in a more respectful way, emphasizing our strong interconnection with Mother Nature. We need to work with Mother Nature rather than try to manage it and use it merely for economic purposes. The slogan “Somos del ambiente” was raised as a phrase to emphasize our deep connection with nature and our Queerness.

Systemic Changes



There was a significant amount of discussion regarding the challenges that emerge in the current economic and societal system. Participants used terminology such as ‘heteropatriarchal’ to define the economic system in which we live and categorized its current functionality as oppressive, according to the institutionalization of ‘phobias’ that do not enable issues to be addressed. In turn, participants highlighted the need for systemic changes to reflect the nexus of how environmental policy impacts queer and trans prosperity in our world today.

Participants emphasized that to advance toward a science-based, climate-resilient pathway of development, countries should follow the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report system transitions in energy; land, ocean, coastal, and freshwater ecosystems; urban, rural, and infrastructure; and industry and society—always putting equity and justice at the front. A shift in the electoral system was also mentioned, suggesting that there is a need to repair the social tissue of our guiding systems with new visions, including Queer and Trans perspectives and demands. It was also mentioned that we are in a *movement generation*, where society is too focused on developing the economy. However, participants emphasized that the economy is heavily embedded within ecology, not vice versa. In relation to environmental responses, it is crucial that we step back from an emphasis on exhausting natural resources and, instead, consider environmental issues within the economic framework of decision-making, ultimately ensuring nature is not only a transactional good.

Approaches to Collecting Data

Participants identified the importance of ensuring inclusive and representative methods of collecting, processing and presenting data that represents the connection between 2SLGBTQI+ individuals and the environment. This was regarded as an important pathway to enhancing awareness of 2SLGBTQI+ individuals as significant actors who experience environmental injustices and disproportionately poor environmental conditions.

By using maps and tools such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), we would be able to better visualize different correlations and allow for statistical evidence to support claims of unjust climate realities confronting 2SLGBTQI+ individuals. Introducing more accessible data would allow different individuals to better connect with each other and share different approaches to challenging environmental situations and would be an important bridge in enabling communication amongst different communities.

Two-Spirit Considerations

Participants discussed the meaning of being ‘Two Spirit (2S) and acknowledged that the lack of recognition of this concept within the LGBTQI+ community can be seen as a modern form of colonization. Excluding 2S from LGBTQI+ discussion, is an active erasure of Indigenous history, particularly within Canada and United States.

It was explained that same-sex marriage has been recognized in many Indigenous Nations as equal to opposite-sex marriage and is a central component to Indigenous ways of knowing. Disproportionately valuing the term ‘Queer’ more than 2S is actually an erasure of an Indigenous tradition that has been known for centuries prior to Western notions emerged and replaced the term 2S. This also introduced the importance of verbalization, ensuring 2SLGBTQI+ communities verbally acknowledge they are willing to support and listen to each other.

Extreme Weather Events

Climate change has made extreme weather events increase in intensity and occurrence. As such, its impacts are no longer seen as random events, but rather as a constantly increasing experience.



Furthermore, as shown in the latest Assessment Report (AR6) of the Inter-Governmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC), vulnerable communities are disproportionately impacted by climate change, while contributing less toward GHG accumulation in the atmosphere. The ongoing threat of these impacts was regarded as a key challenge faced by members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community. Climate disasters also cause severe negative externalities such as human migration. As disasters often leave victims homeless, 2SLGBTQI+ individuals often experience discrimination in obtaining assistance for food and shelter, enduring forced separation of non-traditional families. Each nation experiences the adverse effects of climate change differently. Insular territories are endangered when confronted with disasters because they often lack sufficient resources on their islands and thus rely on support from their country's mainland. However, in response, the solution of sharing disaster preparedness and response methods was also discussed, emphasizing the importance of communication amongst the community.

Institutional Representation

Ensuring representation of 2SLGBTQI+ individuals, including their intersectionality, was emphasized to address climate change. It was acknowledged that there is a lack of 2SLGBTQI+ representation in the decision-making processes, especially of young people, related to climate issues at the community and national levels. Although there are elected officials in government who are a part of the 2SLGBTQI+ community, they are often limited to focusing on issues of public health and inclusivity and are rarely elected to focus on climate action. This raised the importance of intersectionality and the need to weave queer and trans visions throughout different institutional levels to uphold representativeness in climate-related decision-making. Recognizing the different hardships, lessons and approaches to survivorship is another reason members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community should have a role in developing responses to climate and environmental issues. To ensure representation, leadership can be allocated to individuals who have overcome state-based violence and have learned to navigate a world filled with oppressive challenges. Finally, there was notable emphasis on the need to repair the social fabric of our system and weave into it new colors and visions that will allow more effective responses to climate change to develop.

Health

Mental and physical health are both important elements in understanding how members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community are impacted by intensifying environmental conditions. Participants discussed the numerous challenges they face related to health care, ranging from unequal access to necessary medication, specifically impacting transgender individuals, to the severe mental health impacts that individuals undergo as a result of fear of discrimination. This raised the importance of addressing the challenges of accessing basic services for 2SLGBTQI+ individuals, especially, because of the health-based repercussions that could arise if their conditions are neglected. In cases of disasters, members of the 2SLGBTQI+ communities discussed facing intense health vulnerabilities, particularly when there is insufficient inclusive disaster relief.

Policy Considerations

A shift in policy and governmental relations was emphasized as an important step in responding to environmental injustices faced by the 2SLGBTQI+ community. This was emphasized because it was noted that queer needs are frequently neglected at the governmental level, which poses a challenge to ensuring that policies are inclusive and considerate. Different ways of approaching this shift in policy were proposed by the participants. The first emphasized the importance of using language that is defined by queer and trans communities. This would allow for signaling of safety and inclusivity to queer individuals and ensure that policy briefs are understandable to 2SLGBTQI+ individuals. This is particularly relevant in multilateral fora.



Intersectionality

Intersectionality was a key concept in discussion throughout the roundtable. The need to focus on topics ranging from disasters, food insecurity, Queer ecology and air pollution are all interrelated, demanding an intersectional perspective when focusing on 2SLGBTQI+ communities. Participants emphasized the need for a holistic approach, enabled through an intersectional lens, which is needed when addressing environmental issues. This was discussed in relation to the several environmental issues such as food insecurity, air pollution, and climate disasters that impact individuals at all levels. Approaching these environmental issues with methods such as Queer ecology and Queer theory could assist ensuring that all individuals are considered equally when developing climate-relief responses.

Youth and Indigenous Representation

There is a need for greater youth and Indigenous representation in decision-making processes. In the context of trilateral and global cooperation, youth and Indigenous people will face the burden of the decisions made today. It is key to enhancing their participation in policymaking that will strengthen environmental governance in the region. Intergenerational equity and human rights should be central to every decision.