

INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLES' LEADERSHIP IN CLIMATE ACTION:

CALL TO ACTION

These are my values in climate change, and this is what matters to me in climate action. I really value the land as a being. I don't see it as something separate from myself. The land is us. We are the land. Everything we do to the land, we do to ourselves. We see the treatment of the land and we are angry. If the land is a person we can hug or talk to, we wouldn't treat it that way. But we have disconnected so far from the land that we don't see it that way. We don't see that perspective. We have an angry reaction towards what is happening to the land, but the land needs help, guidance, compassion and care. That is what we have to move towards.

We have to start healing that relationship. It's from stuff that was done to us, like extractive industries, that we didn't have a say over. We have to start healing from that. Healing the emotional and spiritual, that is needed when something is taken from you. We didn't say yes to the oil being taken from the ground and now we have to deal with the consequences. And healing from not talking to each other. The other side needs to value our input and our ideas. Indigenous People are always pushed to the side. It's not just affecting Indigenous People, it's affecting all of us. But we, the Indigenous Peoples, are systematically being pushed out of the system.

There are many Indigenous Peoples globally and here on Turtle island, we are one of many, but when we talk about Indigenous People we are not just thinking of us but we are thinking on a global scale. We are one with the land, so we are thinking of everyone. But here and now, we want to share that Indigenous women and gender diverse people are some of the people who have experienced a lot of pain from extractive industries. These industries have become areas surrounded by pain and injustice. We are very connected to the land, and to be cut off from the land, is to be cut off from a very powerful source, a powerful part of ourselves. Telling the truth is the most important part of this, and not allowing women and gender diverse persons to be shamed because of this extraction. We didn't allow this to happen, it happened to us.

Written by Sekwanahcahk (Shelby) Anderson & Skw'akw'as (Sunshine) Dunstan-Moore



The way that we treat the earth is the way that the earth treats women and non-binary people. We plunder and hurt the earth the same way that we plunder and hurt women and non-binary people. It's a sensitive ecosystem. Non-binary and women are naturally connected to the earth, to the moon, to the energy in that kind of way. We feel both sides of it. We are so close. That's why women and non-binary people are attacked the most. They are the richest in resources. That's why so much pain comes to who we are. We are rich, we are abundant but people don't always treat us the best because we have those riches. But we will change it, we are 100% certain of that!

Getting to the table is a hard thing for us to do. I have had to push through several barriers and when I get there, as an Indigenous person I have to deal with being able to present my ideas and automatically having them shut down because Indigenous knowledge needs to have scientific value in order to be seen as valid. Respecting the land, treating the land as an equal, is not just about including Indigenous people in policy spaces but about creating meaningful spaces that allow them to be heard, not just be included. In the climate and clean energy sector, it is a male dominated industry and it's an unsafe space for women and gender diverse people. There are smaller communities that are working towards clean energy, but they have extractive industries in them, like man camps, that make it unsafe for women.

We have to change the game. It's like they are playing basketball, but we need to play another game. We need a real shift in thinking, a real shift in being. But we are working in a system that has been creating systemic barriers for us since the beginning. Inclusion of Indigenous women is a big thing in policy-making nowadays, but it should be more about creating a space where we feel safe to talk about these subjects. And it's not just about creating a space but about being heard and then being able to hold them, the policy makers, accountable. Talking about this issue is a step. It's starting a conversation.

The land is a being and we have to start showing up, we have to start taking care of her. The land is a being and so are we.

**Sekwanahcahk (Shelby) Anderson &
Skw'akw'as (Sunshine) Dunstan-Moore**

