THE PHOENIX MANIFESTO

EST. 15-18 JULY 2021

NORTH AMERICAN CONSULTATION:
CHILDREN’S RIGHTS TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT
Introduction

From July 15-18, 2021, children, young people, adults, and elders from across Turtle Island / North America (Mexico, US, and Canada) came together at The Phoenix Consultation: The Right of Children and Youth to a Healthy Environment: Building an Agenda for Justice, Equity, and Empowerment to share their insights with one another and to articulate our key demands for climate justice, environmental rights, and children’s human rights. Through a deeply participatory process and hundreds of pages of direct input, the diverse, intergenerational network at the Phoenix Consultation created a space for creatively imagining how we might transform and weave a more humane, just, and ecocentric collective future for all.

The Phoenix Manifesto encapsulates the most key interventions put forth by young people during the Phoenix Consultation. It is a living document, open to continuous evolution from sustained dialogue between children, young people, and intergenerational partners. This iteration of the Phoenix Manifesto was put forth on July 28, 2021.

Our Collective Demands

The Phoenix Manifesto belongs to no one, yet is owned by all. It builds on the continuous advocacy of young people for the future they want, drawing inspiration from and echoing the tangible policy interventions already put forth by youth-driven documents such as the Global Youth Climate Action Declaration.

This manifesto seeks to emphasize the importance of shifting the consciousness and the process of policymaking to center the wellbeing of all children, communities, and ecosystems. The following demands are a call to action across sectors, generations, and institutions, at the local, national, and global levels.
• **Ground solutions across social and environmental movements in both the theory and practice of Intersectionality.**

  - Recognize that Intersectionality clarifies the need for justice: “*La Interseccionalidad nos permite tener clara la necesidad de justicia*”;  
  - Understand that Intersectionality is a tool for understanding how some identities are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis and how just like in an ecosystem, our differences are a strength and resource for climate justice and are necessary for the co-generation of life;  
  - Promote and enact eco-social empathy across differences, identities, species, and nations;  
  - Recognize that privilege can be leveraged to benefit oppressed communities;

• **Commit to both people and nature's rights to health and wellbeing.**

  - Hold the health of children and ecosystems at the core of decision-making to ensure best practice policy for all (human and nature) and harm reduction;  
  - Recognize that environmental justice is foundational to securing the rights of youth and children; there can be no rights for children and youth -- or any human -- if there are no rights for nature;  
  - Shift the language of “rights” from being about individuals or humans to the ecocentric language of justice for the collective -- human and nature -- in all of our diversity;

• **Establish and protect the rights of water to health and wellbeing, recognizing that we are all sustained and interconnected through water.**

  - Honor the Indigenous principle of "*Mni Wiconi*" ("water is life" in Lakota);  
  - Limit privatization of water and recognize water's role as a fundamental human right;  
  - Impose strict legal consequences for industries and individuals responsible for damaging the health and integrity of bodies of water, whether through intentional or unintentional and direct or indirect pollution;
- Halt the use of harmful pesticides and chemicals that runoff into waterways and have detrimental impacts on both human and environmental health;

- **Shift economic metrics of success from Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to eco-psycho-social well-being of people and nature.**
  - Transform our current capitalist economy, which generates inequities and legitimizes unsustainable resource and human exploitation that has created and fueled the climate crisis, into a more sustainable, ecocentric model;
  - Acknowledge the harm that is perpetuated by using GDP, a wartime measure that places more value on a forest when it is logged than when it is living, as a measure of success;
  - Promote circular economies, gift economies, and well-being economies as practiced by many Indigenous nations here on these lands for millennia;

- **Strengthen and broaden environmental education.**
  - Prioritize proactive environmental education for all ages, bringing the global population into a stronger understanding of our current realities in a way that fosters innovation and creativity;
  - Commit to implementing early environmental education that equips humans to transform the self, institutions, and ways of being in ways that ensure rights for all humans and nature;
  - Prioritize emotional development in K-12 schooling;
  - Make respect for the environment a habit;

- **Use proactive, preventative policymaking.**
  - Mitigate future harm through clearly defined, effective policies and procedures around challenges such as electronic waste (e-waste), ecosystem loss, and natural habitat destruction;
  - Limit the decision-making power of corporations and extractive industries proactively, so as to prevent future abuses of the Earth;
• **Defend the sacred through ecocentric and ecofeminist policy.**
  
  - Center an ethic of care in all forms of policy and governance, shifting away from anthropocentric models and towards ecocentric ways of being;
  - Reintegrate ecocentric perspectives into societal frameworks, honoring the Earth as an animate and generative life force that cares for us and that we must care for in return;
  - Prioritize the wellbeing of mothers and children as a key intervention for sustainable policymaking;

• **Acknowledge ecoanxiety as an emergent mental health crisis and create adequate systems of support;**
  
  - Create support networks for processing the complexity of emotions that the climate crisis produces in all generations across all identities and communities;

• **Decolonize policymaking, societal institutions, and respected diverse forms of knowledge.**
  
  - Ensure policies are informed by Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) and governance systems, which are rooted in ecocentric ways of being;
  - Approach modern climate issues through a decolonial perspective, including understanding and actively disrupting the legacy of historical colonialism, refusing ongoing present-day colonialism, and respecting the sovereignty of Indigenous nations;
  - Move away from extractivist, exploitative, colonial methods of engaging with the earth and its resources, and partnering with the earth as an animate agent for change;

• **Support self-determination of Indigenous peoples and center Indigenous knowledge.**
  
  - Support Indigenous communities to practice their traditional ways of being and in their pursuit of self-determination;
- Center Indigenous voices in systems; Indigenous-led discourse on local, national, and international environmental policy is key to co-creating systems grounded in a reciprocal relationship with nature and long term sustainable change;

- **Support the flourishing and diversity of localized social and environmental ecosystems.**
  - Ground national and international decision-making in local community structures and economies of scale.
  - Prioritize local food systems, traditional agroecological practices, heirloom seeds, community care structures, accessibility and sustainability of urban planning;

- **Call for accountability for harm against both ecosystems and communities.**
  - Create systems of legal accountability at all levels of governance for ecocide and environmental health harms.
  - Hold high-income countries and multinational corporations that drive consumption and overexploitation of natural and human capital to a high standard of responsibility;
  - Protect communities forced to migrate due to climate change, including both preventative strategies and support for current climate refugees;

- **Prioritize youth empowerment and meaningful, sustained intergenerational partnership including fair payment of youth advocates.**
  - Create partnerships across generations, with non-performative, meaningful inclusion of children and youth in all decisions and actions. This includes not only empowerment of children and young people in these spaces, but also education for adults and elders on how to listen to and respect young people as equal partners in creating lasting change;
We demand these actions, to be taken at the local, national, and international level, to address the threats to the air, water, and forests and the realities of climate change, the local experiences of flooding, wildfires, heatwaves, drought, sea-level rise that impact us all globally. We need to address the colonial, heteropatriarchal, and consumerist cultures that fuel climate change and its disproportionate effects on low-income countries and post-colonial communities.

We remain committed to actualizing and embodying the above demands in order to co-create the just, sustainable, resilient future we deserve.

- Participants of the Phoenix Consultation

- Include and genuinely listen to young people in decision-making processes;
- Connect young people to funding streams and support young people in being fairly compensated for their mental, physical, and emotional labor in pushing forward advocacy movements;

- **Protect Activists.**

  - Create safety through comprehensive legal frameworks for intergenerational activists, particularly Indigenous land defenders and abolitionists who face ongoing threats to their safety and wellbeing;
  - Ensure safety for activists who are women and girls;
  - Promote physical and virtual networks, platforms, and spaces where activists have access to protection, support, outreach, and amplification of their cause;

- **Ensure accessibility for all.**

  - Center disabled communities in decision making, creating a just and accessible world for people who have disabilities, understanding that this creates a more just world for all;
  - Address current ableist culture that limits equal participation and further threatens the rights of those with disabilities;
  - Integrate the needs for disabled communities into climate emergency responses and planning;

- **Reframe reform as reimagination.**

  - Dare to dream up the world we want to live in from the ground up;
  - Create spaces for young people and older generations alike to reimagine our systems and societies to most adequately protect both people and the planet;
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28 July 2021