



The North Policy Briefing

Here's how teachings from the First Nations of the North are leading the way



Climate action built within a system that sees ourselves as disconnected from the land and each other is unhealthy and unjust for all humans, write Shauna Yeomans-Lindstrom and Jewel Davies. Photograph courtesy of Flickr/ Umnak

To lead the way towards true climate action, we need to bring ourselves back into a good relationship with the places where we live and where we are from.

Shauna Yeomans-Lindstrom & Jewel Davies

Opinion



One of the best parts about going to conferences is the networking. We're curious about the connections we'll make, the diversity of people we'll meet, and the teachings we'll bring back

home. That, and getting to experience this together.

The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity's Conference of the Parties, also known as COP15, begins in Montreal on Dec. 7. One of the outcomes we are hoping to see is a lot of space dedicated to Indigenous voices and youth. We see climate change from a relational lens and are excited to share our message and worldview as First Nations of the North.

To us, commitments like "30 by 30" by the federal government—protecting 30 per cent of land and waters in Canada by 2030—are an opportunity *and* just a starting place. These commitments come from a western perspective, meaning they tend to overemphasize quantitative measures, silo issues, and focus on symptoms of a problem, rather than the root causes. Think of the manufacturing of electric cars without considering the massive mining operations required to make the batteries. Or why we are so dependent on individual ownership of vehicles in the

first place, rather than prioritizing shared or public transportation.

Climate action built within a system that sees ourselves as disconnected from the land and each other is unhealthy and unjust for all humans. We are intrinsically connected to this planet and our First Nations cultures have been able to hold onto this connection, despite generations of colonization. It's what we need to lead the way today towards true climate action, ultimately bringing us back into a good relationship with the places where we live and where we are from.

That's why we've been working for the last year and a half in our Yukon First Nations Climate Action Fellowship to develop a Climate Vision and Action Plan. The main message we've decided to raise is that "Reconnection Is Climate Action," meaning disconnection from all parts of ourselves, each other, and the land is at the heart of climate change. You can view our draft plan, which we'll

be releasing in February 2023, at yfnclimate.ca/yfnrvap.

We are attending COP15 as two representatives of our Fellowship and in relationship with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Yukon Chapter. We're excited for the chance to meet Indigenous people from around the world and to amplify the importance of upholding different ways of being, knowing and doing. We are interested in conversations about re-education and equity.

For one of us, growing up in the community of the Taku River Tlingit First Nation, I remember travelling to our first fellowship gathering, and I had this realization that this was the same road that my grandmother took when she was taken away to residential schools. Now, I am driving down this road to go hang out with Indigenous youth and mentors, to learn from and teach each other.

This is what reconciliation can be. And that's when we realized there's opportunity here—that perhaps there's something good to be gained. Rather than working against each other, how do we move forward together in a good way? We want to make it easier for all the youth coming after us.

Geehaadastee/Shauna Yeomans-Lindstrom is a part of the Yanyedi house of the Taku River Tlingit First Nation. In 2016, she began working for the Taku River Tlingit First Nation as a Land Guardian. She currently lives in Atlin, B.C. Jewel Davies (Yekhnashin/Khatuku) belongs to the Dakl'awedi (Eagle/Killer Whale) Clan of the Inland Tlingit people. She is a member of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, grew up in Teslin and has lived in the Yukon her whole life. She is now furthering her education with the Indigenous governance bachelor's degree program at the Yukon University.

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