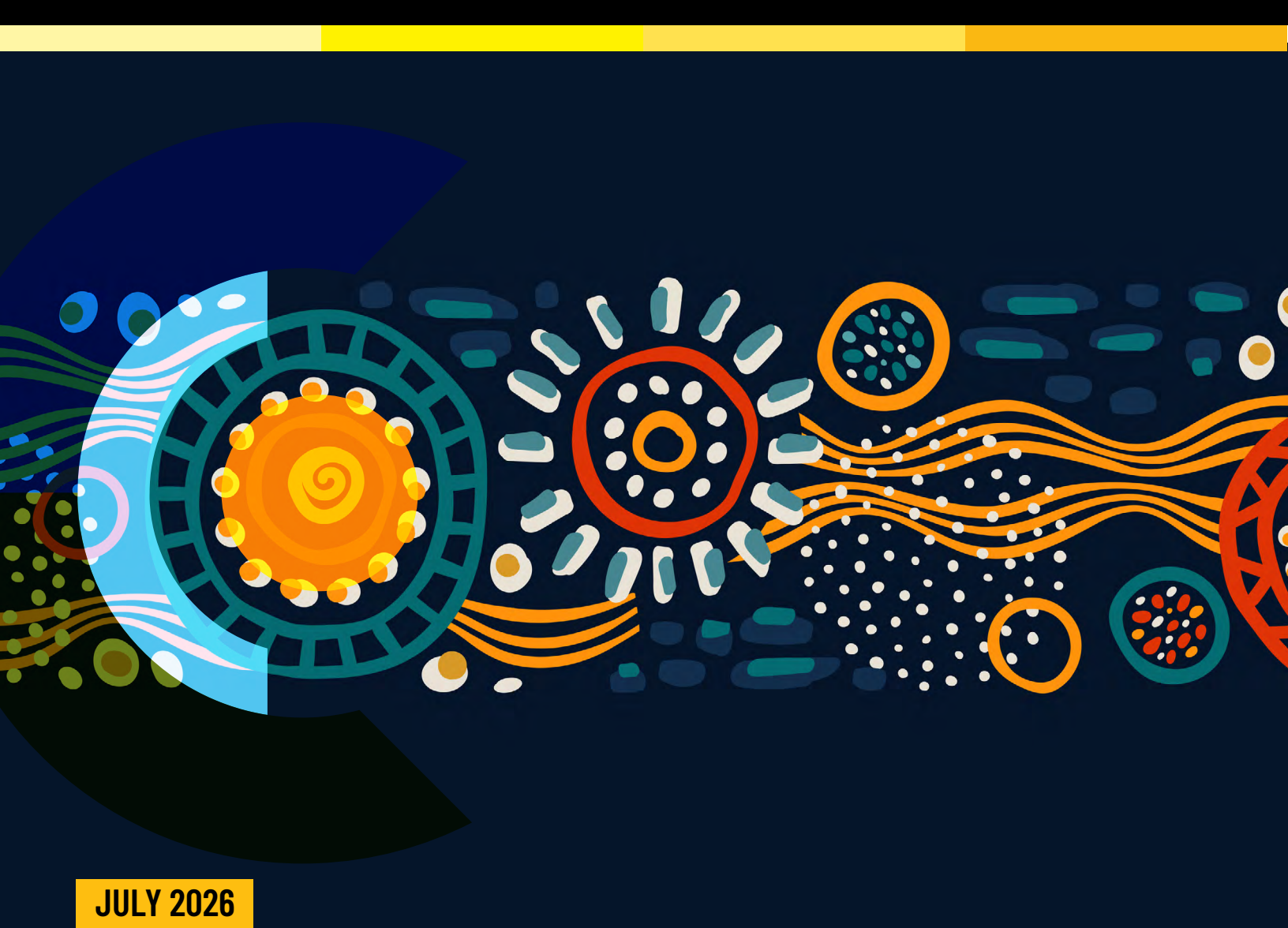




JULY 2026

Just Transitions from the Bottom-Up

**Stories from Migrant, Settler, and Indigenous Communities:
Towards New Community-Policy Relations in Phoenix,
Bogotá, & Toronto**

Waterloo Climate Institute Technical Brief
Authors: The Just Transitions Collective



Welcome

While corporations and governments fail to meet technical targets – jeopardizing the clarion call for “net zero by 2050” – community organizing efforts are confronting in myriad ways the underlying systems of oppression from which the climate crisis emerges. Welcome to a small yet powerful sample of three community-based struggles from across Abya Yala and Turtle Island, where **migrant, settler, and Indigenous communities** are learning how to organize themselves against dehumanizing and destructive conditions, while pointing towards **just transitions from the bottom up**.

This report invites you to **listen to the voices and stories of communities** on the frontlines of longstanding struggles for a more just and sustainable future. The emerging stories – from **Phoenix, Bogotá, and Tkaronto** – reveal various tensions and complementarities. They refuse top-down, technocratic approaches that fail to confront the complexity and interconnectivity of problems and solutions, yet each set of voices offers a unique vision for shifting power and putting the land, waters, and people first. The stories thus contribute to an ongoing history of constructing horizontal, **continental solidarities across different movements**.

Along with the stories themselves, we put forward a relational method emerging from practices recognized across the three frontline community struggles: **(1) territory listening**, beginning with lands, waters, histories, and community knowledges before defining solutions; **(2) circle articulations**, structured moments of shared interpretation and deep listening in which participants speak from their

locations, surface contradictions, and identify solidarities; **(3) embodied alignment**, practices such as food, music, ceremony, dance, silence, unstructured time, and solidarity songs, chants, and actions that help move knowledge into and out of the body; and **(4) collective praxis**, the ongoing work of acting together to change the material and institutional conditions communities face. This method is not a neutral recipe for just transitions. It is a way of orienting policy-community relationships toward reciprocity, accountability, and community authority. This method is not about collapsing different ways of being and knowing into one worldview, but rather signals a willingness to make space for each other's knowledge, to demonstrate different relational accountabilities, and to develop a shared practical orientation towards *understanding how dominant systems cause harm, and how to take collective action to redesign relations between lands, waters, and institutions to make alternative futures possible.*

In opposition to a fatalistic view in which humanity is inevitably destined for climate chaos, or a utopian view in which new technologies magically save the day, we argue that the real work lies in **challenging the continued reproduction of asymmetrical power imbalances. Consciousness** – understood not as a private awareness, nor individual psychological state, but rather as a dynamic relationship between specific groups and the total set of relations through which they encounter each other and the world (Lukács 1967) – plays a pivotal role both within the reproduction of dominance and as a potential key in challenging it. As such, this report documents both the dominant narratives through which we are *told how to think about problems, while also offering the counter narratives emerging through community-based struggles* in each of the three sites.

In Phoenix, popular education, migrant organizing, decolonial healing, and environmental justice challenge the dominant criminalization of migration by recognizing the long history of movements of peoples that predate the current colonial borders. In Bogotá, the work of *arraigo* - growing roots in place - demonstrates community capacity to inhabit risk and care for the lands and waters through building networks of community gardens, seed sharing, and various forms of community organizing to dignify and defend people's right to resist displacement. In Tkaronto, Indigenous story sharing, land-based learning, and speaking back to institutional authority build accountability and relational research practices that decolonize the mind and contribute to Indigenous resurgence. Sharing these different understandings across distinct cultures and contexts is part of learning from each other's histories of struggle, to build a stronger and more coherent set of embodied and relational solidarity practices in the face of dominant and divisive systems of oppression (Walia 2013 and 2021; Fanon 1961; Wexler et al. 2025). As Masavi Perea – one of the Just Transitions Collective team members you will meet often reminded us – **“we don't need 'perfect' politics, we need the communities to be present.”** That is how a more holistic analysis, and promising future, can emerge.



The Policy Problem: Top-Down Transitions Reproduce Harm

This report starts from the premise that policy can and should support directions that communities themselves want to go. Communities are not obstacles to be ‘managed’ for the benefit of the most powerful; rather they are the protagonists in approaching policy as an ongoing decision-making process through free, prior and informed consent. Not only is it possible to approach community-policy relations in this way, it is necessary for addressing the world’s most complex and challenging problems.

Box 1: Policy takeaway: Community-policy relations must change before transitions can be just.

Policy actors should not ask communities to adapt to transition plans already designed elsewhere. Instead they should resource the processes communities already use to identify harms, build consent, care for land and water, and define collective futures. This requires changing institutional rules, timelines, mandates and funding relationships so that community authority can shape decisions from the outset. Governance is not only what formal state institutions do; it is an ecology of organizations, rules, resources, and relationships that can either reproduce existing power or be reorganized toward accountability (Abbott, Green, and Keohane 2016).

Why? So-called “world leaders” – those currently shaping policy – sit at the head of global systems (i.e. **colonialism, patriarchy, white-supremacy, and capitalism**) dragging the world into deeper and deeper climate chaos (Klein 2015; Wijsman and Feagan 2019; Malm 2018; Abimbola et al. 2021). These “leaders” have disembodied relationships with the planet’s living systems (Gumbs 2021; Whyte 2017, 2018). While supposedly in charge, they are not able to meet targets for achieving carbon neutrality because their “leadership” depends on the ongoing “success” of the very same systems driving the crisis (**see Box 2**).

Box 2: Top-down policy context:

As “leaders” continue investing in the fossil fuel economy, doubling down on new pipeline construction, offshore drilling, and critical mineral extraction, the need to learn from frontline community leadership has never been greater:

- The Trump administration has pulled the USA out of the Paris Agreement, gutted the Environmental Protection Agency, invested in offshore drilling, and cut corporate taxes, while illegally seizing Venezuelan oil supplies, threatening to take over Greenland and Canada, and following Israel into an illegal war with Iran.
- In Canada, Prime Minister Carney is promising to accelerate oil pipeline construction, increase offshore oil drilling, and fast-track community consultations on major infrastructure projects in the name of the national interest.
- In Colombia, the situation was different under the leadership of Gustavo Petro, who had oriented his political career on addressing climate change; however, the newly elected President Abelardo De La Espriella is promising to restart oil exploration, allow fracking, and build ten new mega-prisons.

By contrast, made-marginal communities are playing a key leadership role in fighting against oppressive systems, demonstrating in practice what **survival, self-organization, and solidarity** look like. While not to be romanticized or put on a pedestal, **community-based struggles hold critical knowledge** about what it means to face the climate crisis as a series of ongoing and interconnected crises, not as a mere technical problem to be solved by technical experts or new technologies. These forms of bottom-up leadership offer precisely the space needed to question the dominant social order and engage with a process of social reorganization, in which both technical solutions and deeper social transformation can actually occur (López 2021).

How do different community stories and struggles intersect? While migrant, settler, and Indigenous realities may appear mutually exclusive, they are interconnected through complex and ongoing world history, power dynamics, and the production of particular identities, ideologies, and their related forms of consciousness (Wolf 1982; Lowman and Barker 2015). The following pages showcase the territories, struggles, insights, and intersections that migrant, settler, and Indigenous organizers have shared with each other through the Just Transitions project—a **method for learning how to engage with just transitions from the bottom-up**.

The Just Transitions Project

This report is an outcome of the project, Just Transitions as Consciousness Change: Learning With Frontline Communities, made possible by long-term relationships with community organizers working on social change from the margins. Supported by a New Frontiers in Research Fund exploration grant, the project brought together differently marginalized communities to better understand each other's struggles and to answer the question: what shifts in perception, relationship, and practice are needed to support stronger solidarity practices across migrant, settler, and Indigenous communities and movements?

Building Horizontal Relations Across Three Sites

To listen to, and walk alongside, the different ways communities cultivate consciousness, the project assembled a team of community leaders, organizers, interdisciplinary scholars and educators working in three sites across the so-called "Americas":

In Phoenix, USA, we partnered with Chispa Arizona, a Latine environmental and climate justice organization building political power through civic engagement and environmental justice advocacy with migrant, low-income, and racialized communities.



In Bogotá, Colombia, we partnered with ARRAIGO, a platform for residents resisting displacement and asserting their right to remain rooted in the city's southern peri-urban communities, where the government is designating "non-mitigable high risk zones," while approving new high-rise construction.



In Toronto, Canada, we partnered with the Indigenous Curriculum Specialists' Network (ICSN), a national network of Indigenous educators advancing Indigenous ways of knowing in colleges and universities, challenging the dominance of colonial knowledge systems, while advancing Indigenization, reconciliation, and decolonization.



Community organizers from each of the three partner organizations were invited to spend a total of six weeks travelling together to witness and participate firsthand in each other's movement organizing spaces and practices, initiating a process for learning from the ground up:

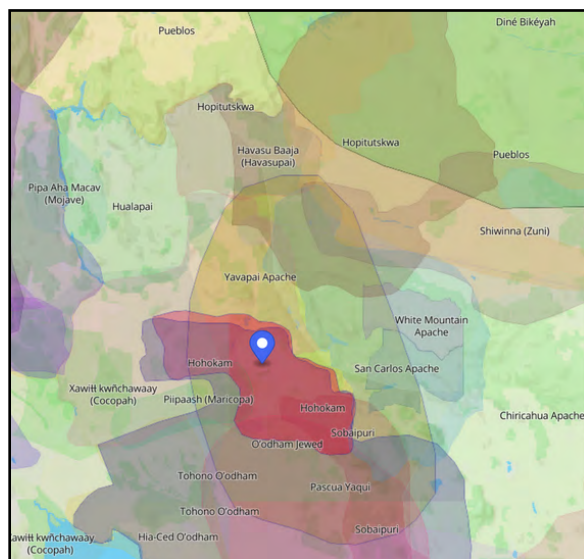
- What is the territory of struggle?
- What is the dominant story framing mainstream understandings of this place?
- What do the lands, waters, and territories have to teach?
- What are the consciousness-raising methods that community struggles employ?
- What contradictions and tensions are present?
- What solidarity practices are emerging?
- What can be scaled and what must stay local?

These are the sub-questions guiding how the team engaged with each site. Note that – from the outset – the community organizers knew very little about each other's territories, struggles, and practices. Aside from co-developing the funding proposal and planning the logistics of the journey, none of the three groups had prior relationships, except with the principal investigator, Mathieu Feagan, who had completed separate projects with each community partner. This created the opportunity for community organizers to learn directly from other community organizers, building their own horizontal relations of trust, while discovering each other's territories, struggles, and organizing practices from the ground up. But it also posed the challenge of climbing a steep learning curve in a relatively short time period: holding the required patience and space to approach relationships with care, while still moving through the logistics of three major field excursions within just 10 months (Nov 2024-Aug 2025).

Each member of the team had their own reasons to say yes to the project, but Mariela Caro (one of the community organizers in Bogotá) captured something everyone felt when she said **“I wanted to see what the people on the other side of the wall were doing.”** Her words are both literal and metaphorical: they literally refer to crossing over the border walls separating her community gardening work in Colombia from the work happening in Phoenix and in Toronto, but they also conjure up images of so many different walls separating people, such as uneven access to legal documentation, financial resources, or language interpretation services. However, across these differences surged feelings of human solidarity, or so we would discover.

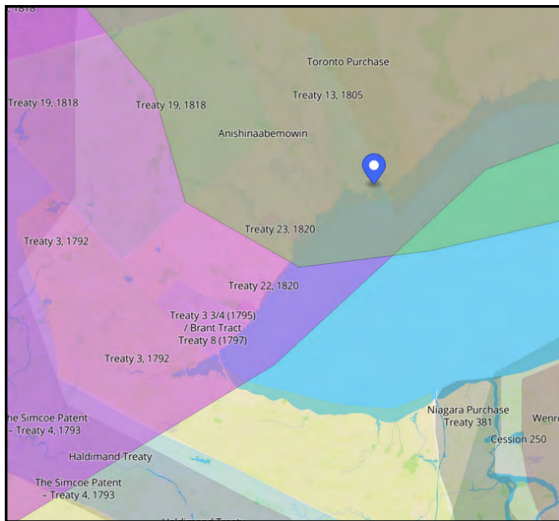
Timeline of the Journey: November 2024, March 2025, & August 2025

The travelling team arrived in Phoenix (the traditional territories of the O’odham Jeved, Akimel O’odham (Upper Pima), and Hohokam – among twenty-two federally recognized tribes in Arizona) in November 2024, just as racialized communities, undocumented people, and their allies were preparing to defend themselves against Trump’s promised ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raids. Over a two-week period, we engaged in solidarity acts with various community organizers and Indigenous land defenders; we met with gardeners, environmentalists, city planners, librarians and museum curators; and we visited border communities who challenge dominant narratives about the wall protecting anyone, revealing instead the violence and environmental costs it imposes by artificially dividing communities.



Source: Maps Retrieved from <https://native-land.ca>.

In March 2025, the team was received in Bogotá (the traditional territories of the Muisca) to meet with residents in the southern peri-urban communities, where those displaced from violent conflict in the countryside have arrived in the capital city, built their own neighbourhoods and livelihoods, only to have the government declare these



areas “non-mitigable high risk zones.” Now, communities are banding together to resist the government’s forced relocation program and call out the hypocrisy of new government-approved high-rise construction in the very same locations.

In August 2025, the team met in Toronto, the traditional territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Anishinabewaki, Haudenosaunee, Wendake-Nionwentsio, and Mississauga to attend the All My Relations / Relationality: Gathering of the Indigenous

Curriculum Specialists’ Network exploring themes of Indigenous presence and erasure through art, resistance, and resurgence. Through a storywalk, circle sharing, and land-based learning activities with Indigenous knowledge keepers and allies, we engaged questions of Indigeneity, migration, and the colonial working conditions in which Indigenization, reconciliation, and decolonization are playing out in higher education.

Throughout this international story exchange, local videographers were hired in each city to document the journey, creating videos and photographs capturing key moments – including the images in this report. These visuals are part of the project’s relational documentation process; **no generative-AI content was used in this report**. Furthermore, the travelling team made time to process their experiences, debriefing collectively in virtual meetings with the interpretation support of Cenzontle, a language justice cooperative, as well as through one-on-one interviews after each leg of the journey, thanks to the work of graduate students hired as research assistants – the in-text quotes come from these transcripts. Elements of our work together have been presented at the United Nations World Cities Day (held in October 2025 at the University of Waterloo, Canada), at the Festival de Bolonia in Usme (in September 2025) and at the 10th anniversary celebration of ARRAIGO in Ciudad Bolívar (in December 2025), as well as during several virtual sessions with the Indigenous Curriculum Specialists’ Network (in September 2025, and in February and May 2026). In July 2026, the entire travelling team is scheduled to attend the North American Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) conference in Temuco, Chile, to present additional findings and share new pedagogies for engaging a wider audience through a popular education activity.

A Note on the Method: Learning with Community Knowledge and Protocol

The knowledge produced through the work of communities organizing against systems of oppression is critical knowledge not only for understanding how dominant forms of social organization are driving climate change, but also for understanding how to actively challenge that dominance—naming it, resisting it, and demonstrating in action how alternative futures are possible. This community-based knowledge lives in the work that different groups are carrying forward continentally (Choudry 2015; Wynter and McKittrick 2015; Wagamese 2019; Maynard and Simpson 2022). Learning with that knowledge in respectful, accountable, and reciprocal ways entails challenging the assumption that knowledge and wisdom only live in academic spaces (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014; Basso 1996). Following Indigenous “re-search” methodologies, this also means locating who is doing the listening, naming the responsibilities and institutional conditions that shape participation, and treating knowledge as relational rather than transactional (Absolon 2022). A key claim of this research is that different ways of knowing can support collective learning and institutional transformation, allowing each person to be both a learner and teacher at different times (Burke, Wexler, and Feagan *forthcoming*).

How this ensemble of learning and teaching comes together includes moments of high convergence as well as ongoing divergences, in a dynamic and open-ended process. Convergence happens when artificially imposed borders that previously obstructed analysis are lifted to reveal inherent coherences. For example, while in Toronto, DJ invoked the Eagle and Condor prophecy, recognizing that there was a time when Indigenous peoples from all the way in the south and all the way in the north were connected through trade relations and that this time might come again—when the Eagle, symbolizing peoples in the north, and the Condor, symbolizing peoples to the south, would fly together again. Achieving this convergence requires overcoming the borders that currently parcel and contain people within colonial nation-state boundaries and capitalist logics (Choudry 2010; Walia 2013; Walia 2021). Ongoing divergences remain and new ones emerge depending on the arc of different learning trajectories, different timelines, and the context of different struggles. For example, while they may align in certain institutional contexts, anti-oppression frameworks (Smith 2016) and Indigenous resurgence practices (Coulthard 2014; Simpson 2017) are not the same thing, as you will read about in the Toronto case study section on “Tensions and Contradictions.”

It is therefore important to acknowledge that the stories shared across the three sites do not arrive as neutral accounts. They emerge through relationships to land, histories

of displacement and resistance, and ongoing struggles over how futures are defined and lived. As participants moved across each other's territories, it became clear that what was being exchanged was not only narrative, but ways of seeing, listening, and relating developed over long periods of collective organizing in their respective struggles. While the community organizers shared experiences resisting different systems of oppression, their responses – analyses, strategies, and community actions – reflected the different epistemologies, ontologies, and real-world living conditions in each context.

This raised an important question for the project: if the conditions under which stories are shared shape what can be known, **how might engagement begin not with predefined solutions, but with embodied practices that allow communities to articulate their own realities on their own terms?**

The method that emerged included listening to territory, recognizing community knowledge, sharing/debriefing feelings, and engaging in solidarity practices in each site. We present this method not as a simple tool to be applied, but rather as a relational method-in-action, crafted from different traditions of critical social theory and Indigenous epistemologies, to support the group in its present context and conditions. This method recognizes policy/governance failures as the result of a fragmented perception structurally limited by institutional apparatuses that position communities as objects rather than relational actors. Reclaiming relational agency is not simply a matter of intention; it requires changing the constraints imposed by current institutional mandates, funding structures, regulatory frameworks, and historical relations that shape how engagement is conducted (Althusser 1971; de Sousa Santos 2014; Butler and Athanasiou 2013). By intentionally (re)structuring collective processes that move participants from lived fragments to systemic awareness (Goodchild 2021), this method supports more durable and equitable policy development and implementation. The method also reflects a commitment to intergenerational learning in which achieving “just transitions” includes surfacing and working with tensions between different theories of change, different positionalities, and group dynamics, in an ongoing process of care and transformation (Alook et al. 2023; Gobby 2020; Garza 2021).

A note on **circle articulations and protocol**: “circle articulations” does not mean that policy actors should adopt Indigenous ceremony as a generic consultation technique. Some circles in this project were ceremonial or protocol-specific and were held by people with the relationships and responsibilities to do so; others were dialogical debriefing spaces or structured storytelling activities. When Indigenous protocols are involved, they are defined and led by the relevant Indigenous people, knowledge holders, Elders, or community-authorized facilitators. Non-Indigenous policy-makers should not lead or brand such circles as their own in this context. Their role is to ask what process the community wants, seek consent, resource the

work, compensate those holding the responsibilities for the group, participate when invited, and listen and act without controlling the agenda. This distinction reflects the Indigenous “re-search” methodologies grounded in location, responsibility, and respect for knowledge that is not extractable from the people and lands that carry it (Absolon 2022).

Case Studies (3 locations: Phoenix, Bogota, Toronto)

1. Phoenix/Chispa Arizona
2. Bogotá/ARRAIGO
3. Tkaronto/ICSN

The three case studies are available on [the Waterloo Climate Institute website](#).

What Policy Actors Can Do: Support Solidarities in Practice

Across the case studies from Phoenix, Bogotá, and Tkaronto, the method begins with listening to territory, honouring Indigenous knowledges and community authority through ongoing consent, and engaging in collective struggle to better understand how systems of oppression intersect in place.

Policy recommendation: Support community authority before designing transition policy.

Policy actors should shift from treating communities as stakeholders to be consulted and toward recognizing them as knowledge holders, decision-makers, and relational actors already engaged in transition work. This requires institutional changes in how policy is funded, timed, evaluated, and governed.

To support bottom-up just transitions, policy and institutional actors should:

- **Begin with territory listening.** Fund and participate in processes that allow communities to define the territory of struggle, the histories that shape it, and the land and water relations that must guide decision-making before solutions are proposed.
- **Move from consultation to ongoing consent.** Replace short-term extractive engagement with relationship-based processes that give communities real authority over timelines, priorities, risks, and outcomes.
- **Resource relational infrastructure.** Support interpretation, facilitations, food, ceremony, travel, accessibility, childcare, unstructured time beyond the agenda, and community-held gathering spaces as necessary conditions for

meaningful participation, not as optional extras.

- **Support community-led praxis.** Align policy tools, funding structures, and institutional mandates with the actions communities are already taking to protect land, water, housing, cultural life, and collective dignity.
- **Make room for contradiction.** Do not treat disagreement, discomfort, or different worldviews as failures of engagement. These tensions are often where deeper accountability, better analysis, and more just policy directions emerge.

Conventional policy development typically proceeds through linear stages - defining goals, conducting stakeholder consultation, deploying interventions, and measuring outputs - often under conditions that are time-constrained, expert-driven, and extractive. Rather than treating communities as stakeholders to be consulted within predefined frameworks that reproduce existing power relations, our method calls for engaging community members as bearers of knowledge, relation, and practice already in motion (Wilson 2008). It creates conditions for these existing assumptions, framings, and institutional positions to be surfaced, questioned, and reworked through encounter, reflection, and shared practice (Ahmed 2000).

The role of policy is to support this emergence, not circumvent it.

Bottom-up just transitions do not automatically deliver alternative futures. But because they confront systems of oppression directly, they offer a more intentional approach to challenging dominant forms of social organization, which do not simply disappear by themselves, even when they are causing tremendous harm to people and the planet (Angus 2016; Malm 2018). Our method is grounded in collective inquiry into the conditions of each site as revealed through the relational ontologies, community practices, and organizing strategies used by each group to bring about the world they want future generations to inhabit.

In this sense, the work is not simply interpretive but also “world-making” (Escobar 2018, 2024; Watts 2013). Participants articulate and reconfigure their relationships to land, institutions, and one another through processes that unfold across discursive, social, and material levels. These levels do not always move together, and shifts in meaning do not automatically transform structural conditions. The ensuing tensions and contradictions that arise are not treated as a flaw in the method. They are part of the work of just transitions, where relational transformation and structural constraint must be navigated together.

For example, in Phoenix and Toronto, participants describe water not just as a resource to be managed, but as a relative they sit with, connected to ceremony, memory, and responsibility. Yet dominant policy and infrastructure systems continue to govern water as a commodity for extracting wealth, for example, through privatization, approving mining exploration that threatens to contaminate rivers, or

prioritizing the use of water for data-centre cooling when neighbouring Indigenous communities lack access to clean drinking water. Just transitions begin by recognizing the asymmetrical power relations that shape water policy, and take action to shift power toward the communities whose work protects the future of water, rather than allowing extractive systems to define what is possible.

Policy and institutional actors can either listen to communities in ways that allow these complex tensions to be articulated, or they can proceed without such listening, reinforcing pre-existing frameworks and limiting what becomes possible. The former opens relational possibilities for a context-specific design justice, centring those most affected in shaping processes of change (Costanza-Chock 2020). The latter reproduces disconnection, mistrust, and extractive forms of engagement.

To support the former, our method operates as a cyclical and iterative process that unfolds through four interrelated phases: **territory listening, circle articulations, embodied alignment, and collective praxis**. *Territory listening* begins with land, recognizing that knowledge emerges through situated, embodied engagement with place, including walking, visiting, and learning with the territories in which these struggles unfold (Simpson 2014; Escobar 2024; Watts 2013; Basso 1996). *Circle articulations* create space for participants to surface contradictions and tensions through dialogue and deep listening (Archibald 2008; Oliveros 2005; Kovach 2009). *Embodied alignment* moves knowledge into lived practices through ceremony, movement, unstructured time, song, dance, chants, and solidarity actions, reflecting emergent and adaptive approaches to change (Brown 2017; Haraway 2016). Collective praxis is a navigation through – and intervention in – existing structures and systems of oppression, to loosen their allure of permanence, recognize alternative possibilities, and create pressure to advance new arrangements deemed more just, ecological, and reflective of a world where oppression is replaced with sustaining solidarity practices (Walia 2013).

Our method is but one among others. Bullard (1983) maps the proximity of waste disposal sites to communities of colour, Campbell and Gregor (2002) offer tools for mapping the social relations of knowledge production in institutional contexts, while popular education and community organizing traditions offer activity-based approaches for raising consciousness and shifting power (Arnold and Burke 1983; Nadeau 1996; Algava 2006; Freire 1970; hooks 1984). Our specific contribution is to show how intersectional solidarity practices among migrant, settler, and Indigenous communities can help policy actors move beyond consultation toward more accountable relationships that build – rather than hinder – the ongoing work of horizontal solidarity practices across Turtle Island and Abya Yala.

Conclusion: Towards Community-Driven Policy Responses

Throughout this journey, migrant, settler, and Indigenous communities have created good ways of interacting and learning together, leading to stronger relations of trust and greater possibilities for further collaboration over time, without collapsing tensions or ignoring ongoing questions. We conclude with a summary (Box 3) of what policy actors can do differently to help design policy from the ground up.

Box 3: In Sum: Designing Policy from the Bottom-up

- Consider our method. Start by acknowledging Indigenous territories and existing community practices, knowledges, and authority, in learning how to listen to the land, waters, and wisdom that sits in specific places.
- Learn how to read the problem before developing solutions. This takes time but we offer three case studies - Phoenix, Bogotá, and Toronto - showcasing key elements of the longstanding history of struggle, relationships, and achievements in each site.
- Make your choices. “Just transitions” has been narrowly conceived as an energy transition, yet our case studies offer a more holistic analysis of the underlying and interconnected systems of oppression driving the climate crisis. The more you can learn with communities directly affected by oppressive systems, the more likely you can contribute to policy solutions that do not reproduce asymmetrical power imbalances but rather work to correct them, leading to more just, dignified and sustainable futures.
- Abya Yala and Turtle Island have provided a home to – and have been cared for by – many peoples carrying intergenerational knowledge over thousands of years, and this present moment is a critical time for migrants, settlers, and Indigenous peoples to continue developing traditions of horizontal and continental solidarity practices.

While **current leadership structures are actively taking humanity deeper into climate chaos**, there is a groundswell of communities holding knowledge and advancing practices of **leadership from the bottom-up – this is where the change towards just transitions will come from.**

In Solidarity! The Just Transitions Collective



Collective Authorship and Voice

This report is written through a process of collective authorship. Different sections carry different voices, shaped by the roles, relationships, and experiences of those involved in the project. Some sections foreground narrative and lived experience, while others offer conceptual framing and methodological articulation. These distinctions are intentional and reflect the relational approach of the project itself.

Rather than presenting a single unified voice, the brief holds multiple ways of knowing and speaking in relation, which includes the voices of community participants, organizers, and researchers, whose contributions shape both the substance of the work and the way it is expressed. The case studies reflect distinct sets of relationships and are grounded in the voices, experiences, and interpretations of participants working within each site: DJ Portugal and Masavi Perea provided the content for Jessica Rumboldt to assemble for Phoenix; Duván López drafted the content for Bogotá, with editing and accuracy verification from Mariela Caro and Maicol Ramirez; and Leslie Wexler and Sara Mai Chitty led the Toronto case study. Mathieu Feagan and Leslie Wexler wrote the overall framing of the entire report, pulling all the voices together.

Please contact members of the Just Transition Collective using the email addresses provided in the following bios.

The Just Transitions Collective

Meet the community organizers that make up the core travelling team:



I am Masavi Perea. I grew up in the reality of a lower-income working family. Living alongside the Rarámuri community on one side and practicing some of their traditions, and on the other side experiencing the classism and the vast poverty gap of a Latin American country. I am a migrant from the NAFTA generation (90's) that migrated from Chihuahua, Mexico. Now living in Phoenix AZ (O'odham and Piipaash ancestral lands) organizing Latinx communities fighting against the corporations, the racism, classism, language superiority (English only). I am a construction worker and community organizer who has learned more from survival than from strategy. On my way fighting for human labor, environment rights, I learned the Popular education methodology from Paulo Freire. Email: masaviphoenix@gmail.com



I am DJ Portugal. I am a Xicano organizer, father of four, and a ceremonial member of Calpolli Tlacahuatzin. My lineages come from the lands of the Purépecha, Rarámuri, and Chichimeca peoples. Born and raised in South Central Los Angeles, I stand on the shoulders of those who came before me. I began organizing in 2006 during the fight against anti-immigrant policies—supporting marches, hosting “know your rights” workshops, and creating movement art. A social worker by training and education, I bring over a decade of experience in trauma-informed youth work, behavioral health, and community healing spaces. At Chispa Arizona, my team and I are building autonomous cohorts of community members, teaching people how to organize, and funding their grassroots efforts. I also organize group hikes, camping trips, and cultural events to help families reconnect with Tonāntzin Tlalli, Mother Earth, and find the courage and endurance to defend her. I strive to use my positionality within the nonprofit industrial complex to support grassroots movements, including my work for the Protect Ha’Kamwe campaign and support for grassroots efforts for justice in Palestine. Email: dportugal@lcv.org



I am Mariela Caro de Cadena. Born in Nuevo Colón, Boyacá, Colombia. Descendant of the Chibcha (Muisca) people. I arrived in Bogotá when I was only 10 years old. I have four children: three sons and one daughter. I live in the Nueva Colombia neighborhood of the Ciudad Bolívar district, in southern Bogotá, where I have been a community leader for forty-three years. Above all, I am an environmentalist. I dedicate myself to the care of all the plants in my garden, which I have planted and transformed over the last 25 years into a family garden, with the support of some people in the community. This space is used for various workshops for people of different ages: teenagers, young adults, and adults. Additionally, we learn about medicinal, ornamental, and fruit plants, among others. I am a poet, a chef, and a worker—a woman who always strives to be or do more than what is truly within my reach. Even some gendered ideas about women's place or capabilities—for example, that we are the weaker sex or incapable of certain tasks—are false. We are multitaskers, willing to fight for our families and those in need, in some cases even being both mother and father. I am creating a world that offers future generations more options than I had, so they too can learn to love this planet. Email: yomary1252@yahoo.es



I am Duván López. I am from Bogotá, Colombia, shaped by my father, a union organizer, and my mother, a woman of rural origins. They saw education as both a path to social mobility and a responsibility to society. Thanks to them, I became a geologist and began my career at Bogotá's Disaster Prevention Agency. Beyond geological analysis, I came to see climate risk in Bogotá as deeply tied to inequality. Since then, I have supported communities facing risk-related relocation by co-creating Arraigo, a platform for dialogue with public institutions. I also question the logics that produce and distribute risk in the city and the epistemologies behind decision-making—concerns that shaped my master's and doctoral research that I concluded in 2024. I joined the Just Transitions as Consciousness Change project, aimed to bridge global insights on urban ecology with diverse efforts in socially-driven transformations, including my articulation with communities in Bogotá through the platform Arraigo. Email: duvanhernan@gmail.com



I am Maicol Ramirez, a self-taught researcher of social movements (since 2014) and an artist (since 2009). I have lived almost 40 years in Bogotá, the city where I still reside, witnessing its changes and contradictions. My parents were displaced by violence and economic marginalization from Quindío (Calarcá) and Bolívar (Valle del Cauca), settling in Bogotá in 1985. I grew up in the locality of Ciudad Bolívar, the city's most violent locality in the 1990s, its largest mining zone, landfill, and key periphery of urban and financial development. There, stratified privilege and segregation push poor and racialized communities to the south, where peasants,

Indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples, and demobilized fighters co-exist under structural state abandonment. From this marginalized and dispossessed place I am calling for transitions toward equity, an empathetic praxis, and a recognition that the rule-of-law state is badly eroded by corruption, and must be addressed with vocation and coherence. Email: mtrixdoor@gmail.com



I am Jessica Rumboldt, a biracial woman of mixed Mi'kmaq (maternal and paternal) and European settler ancestry, and a proud member of the Newfoundland Indigenous Peoples Alliance (NIPA), I recognize that my identity and lived experiences shape how I engage with research, institutional spaces, and community relationships. I am also aware that I am a white-presenting, cisgender woman, and that this positioning can afford me certain forms of privilege and access within academic and institutional environments. I remain attentive to how these dynamics influence my responsibilities and accountability in the work that I

undertake. Acknowledging this positionality requires ongoing reflection on how power, identity, and representation operate within research and institutional contexts. I approach this work with humility and with the understanding that Indigenous knowledges, lived experiences, and community perspectives must be respected and centred. My role within these spaces is not to speak for Indigenous communities, but to support work that honours Indigenous voices, relationships, and community priorities. This awareness informs how I approach my work in Indigenous education and research, particularly when engaging with topics connected to colonial histories, systemic inequities, and intergenerational trauma. I strive to remain mindful of the responsibilities that come with this work and to approach institutional change with care, reflexivity, and respect, recognizing that meaningful change must be grounded in relationships, accountability, and ongoing learning. Email: rumboldtj@gmail.com



I am Sara Mai Chitty, a Michi Sagig Anishinaabe woman and member of Alderville First Nation who grew up in rural Canada, cradled by the Great Lakes. My father was a third generation British White Settler. I carry an Anishinaabe lens rooted in my responsibility to the land, the pursuit of mino-bimaadiziwin (the good life) and an ongoing anti-colonial praxis. My family's experiences—including displacement from Alderville due to the Indian Act's forced enfranchisement of my great grandmother—deeply influence my understanding of historical trauma and systemic barriers. My positionality sits at the intersections of a mixed-Indigenous and white, straight woman with

light skin. At times, this mixed heritage grants me privilege within navigating colonial spaces, however I also do so with another privilege - a master's degree from a Canadian university. These are some of the elements that inform my approach to research, necessitating methodologies that center Indigenous epistemologies and challenge colonial knowledge systems. Email: ramaichitty@gmail.com

Meet the Co-Principal Investigators, bridging community organizing with academic research:



I am Leslie Wexler, a Métis woman of Iroquois/Haudenosaunee and settler ancestry with family ties to Treaty 6 territory in Saskatchewan and Michel Band in Alberta. I grew up in mid-western provinces and have lived, studied and worked in Toronto, ON for the past twenty years, and I am a citizen of the Métis Nation of Ontario, which represents the interests of the western Métis provinces for those living outside their territories. My father's relatives are English/British settlers who settled in Rosetown, Saskatchewan. I move through the world as a white-presenting Indigenous person situated within universities and working in Indigenous

pedagogies. These locations give me institutional and educational privilege while Indigenous curriculum work is made precarious or expendable. In the Just Transitions as Consciousness Change project, I try to use this bridge position responsibly, keeping our methodological approach grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing, centring relational accountability, land-based learning, and storywork in Toronto, Phoenix, and Bogotá. Email: leslie.wexler@georgebrown.ca



I am Mathieu Feagan, the descendant of settlers in so-called southern Ontario, Canada. I was born and grew up in Tkaronto (Treaty 13), and now live on the Haldimand Tract, land promised to the Haudenosaunee, Anishnaabeg, and Neutral peoples. I am a father of two, a spouse, and a critical social scientist working in community within networks seeking the knowledge and practices to sustain humanity in just, ecological, and socially meaningful relations. I use the framework of ecological consciousness to explore different historical-materialist, Indigenous, and systems thinking approaches to building power horizontally, and transforming dominant power relations into other possible arrangements: new social relations, institutional practices, and ways of being human together. I conceived the Just Transitions project with everyone here and played the role of the ship's rudder, the listener in helping each community define the terms of engagement in the project, the lead for communications and translation across sites, and the learner accompanying the team for every part of the journey. Email: mattfeagan@proton.me

Acknowledgments

The Just Transitions Collective has benefitted from countless efforts by all those involved in the project. In particular, we want to mention the videography teams who help document and tell the stories of community organizing with us: Noemi Gonzalez, Joel Farias Jr., Steven Luna in Phoenix; Sonia Hita, Cory Forero, Johan Cuellar Reyes in Bogotá; and Ajani Williams in Toronto. We also want to acknowledge the graduate students without whom the project would not be possible: Laura Blanco conducted the first and second round of interviews with travellers after Phoenix and Bogotá, while also providing hours of translation support accompanying the team on the Bogotá visit; Stephanie Cruz Maysonet provided budget oversight, coordination support, translation, and conducted the third round of interviews following the Toronto visit; Ayesha Rahaman processed invoices and paperwork for travel, interpretation, and any other project payments.

We are especially grateful to the communities working with Chispa Arizona in Phoenix, the communities of ARRAIGO in Bogotá, all those participating in the Indigenous Curriculum Specialists' Network in Toronto and across Canada.

References

- Abbott, K. W., Green, J. F., & Keohane, R. O. (2016). Organizational Ecology and Institutional Change in Global Governance. *International Organization*, 70(2), 247–277. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818315000338>.
- Abimbola O, Aikins JK, Makhesi-Wilkinson T , & Roberts E. (2021). Racism and Climate (In)Justice: How Racism and Colonialism Shape the Climate Crisis and Climate Action. Washington DC: Heinrich Böll Stiftung.
- Absolon, K.E. (Minogiizhigokwe). (2022). Kaandossiwin, 2nd ed.: How We Come to Know: Indigenous Re-Search Methodologies. Fernwood Publishing.
- Ahmed, S. (2000). *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Postcoloniality*. London: Routledge.
- Algava, M. (2006). Jugar y jugarse: Las tecnicas y la dimension ludica de la educación popular. Pañuelos en Rebeldía. Rosario : Ediciones América Libre, 192p, ISBN: 9871231245
- Alook, A., Eaton, E., Gray-Donald, D., Laforest, J., Lameman, C., Tucker, B. (2023). *The End of This World: Climate Justice in So-Called Canada*. Toronto: Between The Lines Publishing.
- Althusser, L. (1971). "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Angus I. (2016). *Facing the Anthropocene: Fossil capitalism and the crisis of the Earth system*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Archibald, J.-A. (2008). *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Arnold, R and Burke, B. (1983). *A Popular Education Handbook: An educational experience taken from Central America and adapted to the Canadian context*. CUSO Development Education, Ottawa, Canada.
- Basso, K. (1996). *Wisdom sits in places: Landscape and language among the western Apache*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.
- brown, a.m. (2017). *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. Chico, CA: AK Press.
- Bullard, RD, ed (1983). *Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots*. Boston: South End Press.

- Burke, J., Wexler, L., and Feagan, M. (forthcoming). "Weaving Indigenous and Western Knowledges as a Relational Approach to Decolonize Climate Complexity Education." Special issue of *New Directions in Teaching and Learning*, Walking together on parallel paths.
- Butler, J. and Athanasiou, A. (2013). *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Campbell, M., and Gregor, F. (2002). *Mapping Social Relations: A Primer in Doing Institutional Ethnography* (2nd ed.). University of Toronto Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3138/j.ctt2tttt0>
- Choudry A. (2015). *Learning Activism: The Intellectual Life of Contemporary Social Movements*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Choudry A (ed.). (2010). *Learning from the Ground Up: Global Perspectives on Social Movements and Knowledge Production*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Costanza-Chock, S. (2020). *Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Coulthard G. (2014). *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press.
- de Sousa Santos, B. (2014). *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.
- Escobar, A. (2018). *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Escobar, A., Osterweil M, & Sharma K. (2024). *Relationality: An Emergent Politics of Life Beyond the Human*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Fanon, F. (2004 [1961]). *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by R. Philcox. New York: Grove Press.
- Freire, P. (2000 [1970]). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by M.B. Ramos. New York: Continuum.
- Garza A. (2021). *The Purpose of Power: How We Come Together When We Fall Apart*. New York: One World.
- Gobby, J. (2020). *More Powerful Together: Conversations with Climate Activists and Indigenous Land Defenders*. Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing.
- Goodchild, M. (2021). Relational Systems Thinking: That's How Change is Going to Come, From Our Earth Mother. *Journal of Awareness-Based Systems Change*, 1(1), 75–103. <https://doi.org/10.47061/jabsc.v1i1.577>

- Haiven M & Khasnabish A. (2014). *The Radical Imagination: Social Movement Research in the Age of Austerity*. London: Zed Books.
- Haraway, D. (2008). *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Haraway, D. (2016). *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- hooks, b. (1984). *From Margin to Center*. Boston: South End Press.
- Kirkness, V.J. and Barnhardt, R. (1991). "First Nations and Higher Education: The Four R's—Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility." *Journal of American Indian Education*, 30(3), pp. 1–15.
- Klein, N. (2015). *This changes everything: capitalism vs. the climate*. First Simon & Schuster trade paperback edition. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.
- Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- López, D (2021). Los riesgos climáticos y el sentido de lo humano. *Razón y Fé*, 284(1453) 198. Disponible en <https://revistas.comillas.edu/index.php/razonyfe/issue/view/1128>
- Lowman, E. B., & Barker, A. J. (2015). *Settler: Identity and colonialism in 21st century Canada*. Fernwood Publishing.
- Lukács, G. (1967). *History & Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Written: 1919-1923. Translator: Rodney Livingstone; Publisher: Merlin Press.
- Malm A. (2018). *The progress of this storm: Nature and society in a warming world*. London/New York: Verso.
- Nadeau, D. (1996). *Counting our Victories: Popular Education and Organizing*. New Westminster, BC: Repeal the Deal Productions. <http://208.89.55.99/devel/wp-content/uploads/CountingOurVictories2001.pdf>
- Oliveros, P. (2005). *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice*. New York: iUniverse.
- Simpson, L.B. (2014). "Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg Intelligence and Rebellious Transformation." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 3(3), pp. 1–25.
- Simpson LB. (2017). *As we have always done: Indigenous freedom through radical resistance*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- Smith A. (2016). "Heteropatriarchy and The Three Pillars of White Supremacy: Rethinking Women of Color Organizing" in INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, *Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology*, New York, USA: Duke University Press, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822373445>
- Wagamese R. (2019). *One Drum: Stories and Ceremonies for a Planet*. Madeira Park (BC): Douglas & McIntyre.
- Walia, H. (2013). *Undoing Border Imperialism*. Oakland, CA: AK Press.
- Walia H. (2021). *Border and Rule: Global Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism*. Chicago: Haymarket.
- Watts, V. (2013). "Indigenous Place-Thought and Agency Amongst Humans and Non-Humans." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 2(1), pp. 20–34. Available at: <https://ikdll.nau.edu/id/eprint/80/>
- Wexler, L., Borland, M., and Sellen, K. (2025). Decolonizing the Engineering Designer, in Clemente, V., Gomes, G., Reis, M., Félix, S., Ala, S., Jones, D. (eds.), *Learn X Design 2025*, 22-24 September 2025, Aveiro, Portugal. <https://doi.org/10.21606/drslxd.2025.083>
- Whyte K. (2018). Indigenous science (fiction) for the Anthropocene: Ancestral dystopias and fantasies of climate change crises. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 1(1-2), 224-242. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2514848618777621>
- Whyte K. (2017). "Indigenous Climate Change Studies: Indigenizing Futures, Decolonizing the Anthropocene." *English language notes*. 55. 10.1215/00138282-55.1-2.153
- Wijsman, K and Feagan, M. (2019). "Rethinking Knowledge Systems for Urban Resilience: Feminist and Decolonial Contributions to Just Transformations" in *Environmental Science & Policy* 98 (2019) 70–76. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1462901118310827>
- Wilson, S. (2008). *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing.
- Wolf, E. R. (1982). *Europe and the people without history*. University of California Press.
- Wynter S & McKittrick K. (2015). "Unparalleled catastrophe for our species? Or, to give humanness a different future: Conversations." In Sylvia Wynter: *On being human as praxis*, pp.9-89.