



# Organizing a People's Assembly on Climate Justice

In early fall 2010, the Council of Canadians, alongside KAIROS, the Indigenous Environmental Network and the Canadian Youth Climate Coalition, endorsed a call to action for hosting People's Assemblies on Climate Justice during the next major round of UN climate negotiations in Cancun, Mexico, November 29 to December 10.

For more information: [www.canadians.org/assembly](http://www.canadians.org/assembly)

To read the full call to action: <http://canadians.org/energy/documents/assemblies/callout.pdf>

## **What are People's Assemblies on Climate Justice?**

People's Assemblies on Climate Justice are interactive processes that provide the opportunity for people to listen and be heard about what climate justice means to them, in their community and globally. They are about gathering people to discuss and analyze climate justice, and can feature a local climate justice issue or campaign. Assemblies are spaces to discuss demands, commitments and visions for how things could be different. They are aimed at transforming awareness into action by invigorating ongoing and new climate justice actions in your community.

## **What does an assembly look like?**

There is no set agenda or process for holding an assembly. There is no right or wrong way to hold an assembly. Any process that gets people talking about climate justice issues and ways forward for local action is a good one.

There are lots of good ideas, resources and some examples of assemblies available that can help local organizers get started – a number of which are provided here.

People with facilitation experience in your community will be able to offer useful ideas and other models.

## **Examples of People's Assemblies:**

There was a People's Assembly on Climate Justice – moving forward from Cochabamba – held in Toronto in June 2010, during the G20 meetings. The first post on their website is from a local organizer explaining the process for the assembly: <http://torontopeoplesassembly.wordpress.com/>

The U.S. Social Forum's Organizing Kit for People's Movement Assemblies has some useful ideas about how a people's movement assembly works, and how to organize an assembly: <http://abc.ussf2010.org/assemblies> (Note: the guide is not specifically for climate justice assemblies)

## **World Café Model:**

The World Café Model is an innovative yet simple methodology for hosting conversations about questions that matter. It is a useful model for fostering the type of dialogue envisioned at People's Assemblies on Climate Justice.

The model emphasizes the need to be clear in the purpose for bringing people together, creating a hospitable space and identifying framing questions that matter to participants. It involves progressive rounds of conversation in smaller groups, with key insights being recorded and shared during a final whole group conversation. This offers the group an opportunity to connect overarching themes and questions.

There is a World Café Model website that explains its principles and processes. It provides a number of helpful examples, guidelines and formats for using the model: [www.theworldcafe.com](http://www.theworldcafe.com)

This short reference guide can get you started: <http://www.theworldcafe.com/articles/cafetogo.pdf>

## **Example agenda for a People's Assembly on Climate Justice:**

Saturday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010, 1-4pm,  
Winchesterntonville Community Centre, 111 Winchersterntonville Way

*(this example draws from the Toronto People's Assembly on Climate Justice, June 2010)*

### **1:00-1:10**

- Welcome and introduction to the process for the assembly.
- Circulate contact list collecting people's emails for follow up work.

### **1:10-1:15**

- There will be a short video report-back from Cancun prepared by the Council of Canadians available at [www.canadians.org/assemblies](http://www.canadians.org/assemblies) by December 1st which you can use to kick-off the assembly.

### **1:15-1:20**

- Global climate justice campaign update: You can feature a short presentation from someone who was at the Copenhagen negotiations, the World People's Conference on Climate Change and Rights on Mother Earth Cochabamba conference about the UN, or has been involved in the growing global movement for climate justice.

### **1:20-1:25**

- Local climate justice issues / campaign update: You can feature a short presentation from someone engaged in a campaign related to climate justice. For example, someone from a local transition town group could be invited to make a short introduction, framing transition towns as a real solution to the climate crisis that relies on local action. Alternatively, someone could speak about a campaign to challenge a local polluter, such as a campaign to oppose hydraulic fracturing (more commonly known as fracking) for shale gas, a coal mine project, the tar sands and more.

### **1:25-1:30**

- Introduce a framing question(s): Since the focus of an assembly is on dialogue, a framing question can be provided to get the discussion rolling. In choosing the question(s), local organizers should take into consideration: does the question challenge people to discuss their understanding of climate justice? Is it thought-provoking? Will the question generate discussion that teases out key themes and questions that can guide the second round of break out groups focused on potential local actions?
- Example framing questions: What does climate justice mean locally? What does climate justice mean globally? AND/OR Does advancing climate justice mean questioning and changing society's model of overproduction and overconsumption, a driving force of climate change? AND/OR Given our government's lack of leadership on the climate crisis and failure to respect the rights of impacted communities at home and abroad, and given the call of climate justice coming out of Cochabamba – what do you think the connection is between climate change and justice in your community?

### **1:30-2:00**

- Break out into smaller groups that will give all participants an opportunity to speak and/or engage in the conversation if they choose to. One person takes note of key discussion areas and themes, someone is chosen to report-back to the larger group.

### **2:00-2:30**

- Reconvene in one group: Brief 3-5 minute report-backs on the smaller group discussions. Hold a larger group discussion identifying themes and key questions or ideas that emerged from the smaller group discussions.

### **2:30-2:35**

- Transforming awareness into action: Use the themes that emerged from the larger group discussion to set up a second round of smaller group discussions. Each group can focus on one theme, discussing what kinds of actions are already underway locally or could be started locally, that respond or react to the theme. Focus areas for the break out discussions can be decided on by the group as a whole, or by a smaller group of organizers.

### **2:35-3:15**

- Break out into smaller groups that will give all participants an opportunity to speak and/or engage in the conversation if they choose to. One person takes note of key discussion areas and themes, someone is chosen to report-back to the larger group.
- Example theme #1: Advancing climate justice requires changes to the patterns of overconsumption in the Global North. A discussion group can focus on what can be done in their community to address this which could include examples such as: starting a climate justice education campaign encouraging people to 'buy less, buy local' or developing 'buy local and sustainable' community guides; supporting municipal local procurement requirements (quotas which encourage municipalities to source local products in their contracts); or local farmers markets (the global agriculture system is a major source of carbon emissions).
- Example theme #2: Advancing climate justice requires deep emission reductions in the Global North. A break out discussion group can focus on ideas for a community campaign challenging a local polluter or advancing emission reducing actions such as energy conservation and efficiency programmes and renewable energy development that is accountable to the community.

### **3:15-4:00**

- Reconvene in one group: Brief 3-5 minute report-backs followed by a larger group discussion.
- Identifying next steps: Identify a process for staying in touch with participants wanting to continue the dialogue and take action locally for climate justice. This could involve starting a new email list or adding to an existing list or group. There may be one or two action ideas that emerge from the break-out groups as priority areas. Identify some concrete next steps, such as a next meeting or an action that people can join.