

youth and eco-justice

strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

Spring 2015



what did we do?

85 people

Took an online quiz about endangered species in British Columbia

45 youth and young adults

Filled out survey about environmental engagement and their faith

15 youth, young adults and leaders

Participated in a workshop about ecological justice and environmental spirituality

20 youth, young adults and leaders

Shared art, symbols, music and scripture in a video and worship project



why did we do it?

Popular wisdom says that Ecological Justice and Global Climate change are key concerns of young people but we don't always ask youth and young adults what they think. This consultation is a chance for the diocese of New Westminster and the national church to hear from youth and young adults themselves about their understanding of the Fifth Mark of Mission.

What does it mean for young people in the Fraser Valley Watershed *to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew the life of the earth?* What are their concerns? How are youth and young adults engaged in ministries of creation care and how could those ministries be supported to grow?

The Written Report is Only Half the Story

Find the Video Report her:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vAXpeJYDUmI&feature=youtu.be>

what did we learn?

about youth in the diocese
and the Fifth Mark of Mission?
here's a summary



All youth participants:

Take personal action, like recycling or composting.

Almost All: (90-95%)

Worry about their future because of harm to the environment.

Feel a sense of peace or connection to God in nature or wilderness.

Most: (75-78%)

Consider creation, the environment or ecological-justice important.

Think the church has something relevant to say about environmental issues.

Want wilderness experiences like hiking, camping, kayaking, with friends, youth group, and church.

Many: (50-60%)

Pray about environmental issues.

Want to grow a garden.

Some: (41-50%)

Take structural actions like participating in boycotts or signing petitions.

Want to worship outdoors.
Want to do stream cleaning or invasive species removal with friends, youth group or church

A Few: (35-40%)

Consider environmental justice a high priority and commitment.

Want to learn about First Nations worldviews on creation.



Teens and young adults connect with creation most often at **sleep-away camps** and conference centres.

Hiking, camping, beaches and animals are other avenues of connection.



“highlight the sacredness of creation”

Of special concern are: clean water, endangered species, deforestation, plastics in the ocean, and global climate change.

Many young people who self-identify as environmentally connected or concerned are involved with **gardens**.

Good News and Challenges

The Good News

There is a great deal of good news here. **God is at work in the lives of young people**; a very high proportion experience spiritual connection in creation or wilderness. They want to engage in wilderness experiences with their faith communities. Many young people in the diocese are concerned about environmental issues, almost all can identify personal actions that they take to care for creation and there is an expressed desire to do more and be more effective. Many believe that the church has something relevant to say about environmental issues and those who are the most concerned are the most confident about this; they want the church to be a partner in their ministry for ecological justice. The project identified a small cohort (8-10 individuals) with the passion, engagement, and in some cases the skills, to become leaders and organizers.

Simply undertaking this project has been good news: it has raised the profile of environmental justice in the diocese, encouraged youth and young adults for whom environmental justice is a key concern, and the video report is a creative tool that can be used for future youth engagement. Several potential leaders have been referred to an interfaith training opportunity (fossil free faith).

“invite nature into our parish”

Challenges

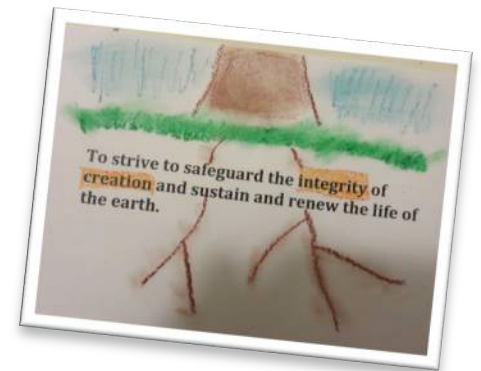
The project highlights challenges that the diocese faces in supporting young people in the Fifth Mark of Mission.

Our diocese does not have a robust and identifiable presence in wilderness—the place where so many youth find a source of spiritual connection. This is particularly true with the suspension of activities at Camp Artaban: an identifiably church place in the wilderness where spirituality is nurtured and young leaders are trained. The church is not very present in the public outdoor places where youth connect—municipal and national parks, beaches, nor in sports. Neither is the diocese strongly and visibly engaged in environmental justice issues in a way that registers with youth. From a youth perspective, the church is absent from the place where most connect spiritually and is failing to address environmental justice, the key justice issue that impacts them.

A high proportion of youth are worried about their future(s) but many do not pray about it, or do not experience their faith communities praying about it in a way that is meaningful to them. The young people who most passionate about creation care have high hopes for and expectations of the church this shows great potential for change but also for disillusionment.

Workshop participants emphasized their desire for action over talk; unfortunately the church (youth and adult) is often better at talk and slow to action. Youth expressed concern and a desire to be effective, but they thought and operated almost exclusively at the level of personal

responsibility, were engaged in very little “structural” change work, and had little analysis about corporate accountability and institutional mechanisms for achieving change. Some made explicit observations about the **gap between words and actions**.



“bring environmental issues to the front of what we do in worship, talk and concrete action ”

Many participants emphasized the importance of self-education and public education on environmental issues but very few indicated that they would be willing to attend films, speakers or other education events. For adult-led diocesan justice groups and campaigns

“financially help companies and organizations that help the environment”



Recommendations

Youth and young adults should be invited and included in our diocesan ministry of creation care in ways that are engaging and meaningful to them. To address the ecological concerns of young people and to more deeply participate in the Fifth Mark of Mission, the diocese of New Westminster can make a few strategic and interrelated changes to our current worship, programming and leadership development.

Worship

This is an area where relatively little is required to make an observable difference at parish and diocesan levels.

Intercessions: Youth and young adults can be invited to contribute to, write (paint, film, act...) and lead intercessory prayers that represent their concern for creation.

Contextual Worship:

Additional liturgical elements can be contextualized for this bioregion—eg. locally grown wine, native plants, new collects.

Outdoor Worship: Thoughtful, well-planned outdoor worship opportunities can be added to parish life and youth programming.

****A word of caution:** participants in this project emphasized action; some articulated their sense that “saying a prayer” was hardly an adequate response to ecological crisis. So we should not pray for what we are unwilling to do and we can always incorporate prayer into our actions.

Youth -Focused Programming

The project suggests several strong possibilities for growing deeper engagement in the ministry of creation care. These can happen at parish, deanery and diocesan levels, should integrate spiritual practice and could include collaboration with the Eco-Justice Unit.

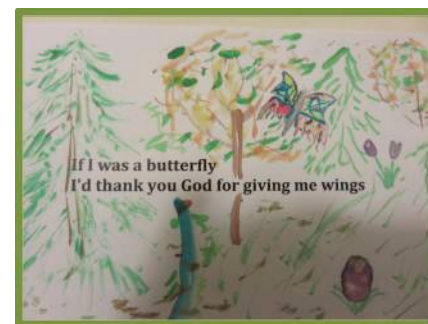
Wilderness and Outdoor

Experiences: camping, hiking, kayaking, bike hikes can be low-budget, youth specific or all ages, and increase the church’s visible presence and commitment to commons like parks. Extended sleep-away experiences are especially important for community building and identity formation. (cf Christian Camping Task Force 2013 Report)

Gardens: gardening and environmental concern were highly correlated and 60% of participants expressed the desire to be involved with gardens. If communities have time, commitment and experience there is energy among young people for new garden projects. However many existing garden projects in the region would welcome youth involvement through work parties.

Environmental Impact

Projects: stream cleaning, invasive species removal, salmon release, bird counts, bat boxes. Satisfying activities with clear, practical accomplishments were particularly requested by younger youth.



“the church needs to see environmental issues as central to our mission, vision and purpose”

environmental issues are Indigenous land-justice issues

First Nations, have a holistic worldview being part of land and relationship to Mother Earth in a real, familial and animate way. Our values and beliefs tell us to take care of our own Mother on whom we depend for sustainable living.

—Brander McDonald,
Indigenous Justice Ministries

rights, title, treaty, corporations, government, sovereignty

it's all connected



recommendations continued

Introduce Indigenous Worldviews

One third of participants, particularly teens and young adults expressed a desire to learn about First Nation worldviews. This is a diocesan priority. Through partnership with Indigenous projects like Salmon are Sacred, Takaya Kayak Tours, Indigenous Plant Garden, local resource people and our diocesan Indigenous Justice coordinator, Indigenous knowledge can be respectfully included in program planning.



“give me a voice”

Growing Engagement

Young people in the diocese *strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth* in different ways and to different degrees. We want to encourage movement up the ladder of engagement (see appendix) in ways that is habit-forming, rewarding, and challenging at all levels.

Leadership Development Program:

develop a diocesan program for a small group of the most engaged young people to grow the skills that will equip them as environmental ministry leaders.

Detailed Project Review

Goals and Intentions

Short term: take a “snap shot” of diocesan youth engagement with the Fifth Mark of Mission using tools that educate and encourage action.

Mid-term: determine direction and next steps for diocesan programming and leadership development in regards to youth and environment.
identify potential leaders.

Long term: invite youth to greater engagement, ownership and action on the Fifth Mark of Mission at every level from exploring their interests to empowered leadership inside and out of the church.
move the diocese along a continuum from consulting with youth to equipping, empowering and partnering with youth in ministry and mission.

Project Elements

What Kind of Endangered Species Are You?

www.onlineassessmenttool.com/assessment-16060

Over two weeks, eighty-three participants took an online, fourteen-answer multiple-choice quiz that asked questions about spirituality and place, environmental justice issues, endangered BC species, environmental themes in scripture, and explicitly introduces the Fifth Mark of Mission. Based on their answers, each participant was identified with an endangered BC animal. The quiz was designed to advertise the workshop, educate about endangered species in BC and associate the Diocese of New Westminster with environmental justice; no data was collected. The quiz was promoted through Anglican social media networks and at the Winter Youth retreat. For an estimated ten to twenty youth, this was their only participation in the project.

Survey

At the Winter Youth Retreat at Sorrento Centre forty-five young people between the ages of twelve and twenty-six (and five older adult leaders) filled out a thirteen-question, fifteen minute survey (see appendix), answering questions about environmental engagement, ecological justice and faith, and desires for future programming. The survey was designed with input from two environmentally active young adult leaders in the diocese, diocesan ministry resource associate and an educator with MA in non-coercive practices with secondary school students.

Workshops/Focus Groups

During the retreat, thirteen youth and two adult leaders chose to participate in a sixty-minute workshop/focus group on environmental justice. Participants spoke about their own connection to the environment, talked about the Fifth Mark of Mission, created art based on scriptural or liturgical material pertaining to eco-justice, filled in the survey, and evaluated the survey results as a group.

The group ran twice with eleven in the first group and four in the second. Both discussions were passionate and wide ranging—the first group talked about orcas in captivity, dumping first world waste in developing world, their concern for future generations, the importance of positive experiences and concrete projects in programming, the problem of anthropocentrism in intercessory prayer and the gap between our stated concerns and our practical actions. The second group discussed shade grown coffee, the Fukushima nuclear accident, and the importance of education; they disagreed about the relevance of church.

Prayer Place

During the evening at Winter Retreat a quiet worship space with live music was set up. Twenty workshop participants and survey takers took the opportunity to place their artwork, quotes, native plants and other symbols of creation on an altar. The space was hosted by youth, and these non-verbal offerings and reflections were recorded for the project's video report.

Analysis and Observations

Participants

This is a qualitative rather than quantitative study, the sample size is small, and the meanings are revealed in conversations, and group interpretation. Participants were not asked about gender or racial identity but the group was fairly evenly divided between those who identified as male and as female. There was with a significant white majority (80-90%). The consultation took place at the Diocese of New Westminster and BC/Yukon Anglican Youth Movement Winter Retreat so participants came from families and congregations that are connected to youth ministry structures and can afford to send youth to a \$150 weekend or can access subsidies. While most participants (62%) belonging to a parish or youth group from the Diocese of New Westminster, several who do not identify as Anglicans live within diocesan boundaries.

Most of the young people on the retreat (>85%) chose to complete the survey, indicating a fairly high level of interest. There were two natural ways to divide the survey takers. Firstly between those who took the workshop (28%), who self-identified as people for whom environmental justice and/or a sense of connection in creation was important and those who filled out the survey because they were asked to. The second division was by age –younger youth (12-14), teens (15-18), and young adults (19-25). Half the group was age 15-18, with younger youth and young adults forming one quarter respectively.

Connections to creation

Three questions addressed how young people connect with creation.

I spend time with nature or creation most often through: (choose up to 4)

Sorrento or Summer Camp 53%

Hiking/Camping 53%

Beach 49%
Parks 44%
Animals and Pets 40%

For teens and young adults Sorrento Centre and sleep-away camps were even most often cited as the place where they most often connect with creation—this is particularly significant in light of the suspension of activities at Camp Artaban. For workshop participants, those who self-identified as environmentally concerned or connected, 61% said that a garden was their most frequent place of connection.

86% agreed with the statement **“The environment: or “ecological justice” is important to me.”** 73% agreed, or strongly agree.

93% agreed with the statement, **“I worry about my future because of harm to the environment.”** This was the strongest response to any statement in the survey and the proportion of those who agreed increased with age.

Faith and Creation

Three questions addressed connections between faith and creation.

91% agreed with the statement **“I feel a sense of peace or connection to God in nature and wilderness.”** Workshop participants and young adults were more likely to agree with this statement.

87% agreed with the statement **I think the church has something relevant to say about the environment.** Workshop participants and young adults were more likely to agree. The question generated significant discussion in the workshop with a small number of participants who felt the church did not have relevance or had lost credibility.

56% agreed and 42% disagreed with the statement **“I pray about environmental issues with my church or on my own.”** This statement had greatest diversity of answers, very few survey takers strongly agreed, the youngest were least likely to agree and the oldest most likely. In the workshop there was a great deal of discussion about personal and corporate prayer, ideas for improving intercessions, and the impatience with prayer without action.

Issues

To me the most important environmental issues are: (choose 4)

Access to clean water 51%
Endangered Species 49%
Deforestation 47%
Plastics in the Ocean 47%
Global Climate Change 44%

There was no single issue that was important to a significant majority of survey takers, although workshop participants tended to be more oriented towards analysis and cause/solution with a strong focus on green energy and wasteful lifestyles. Younger youth were most concerned about climate change.

Making an impact

Every survey taker identified at least one *personal* way that they make an environmental impact, many identified more than one:

Recycling 82%

Composting 71%

Riding my bike/taking the bus 69%

Educating myself 47%

While it is encouraging that everyone could identify some means of personal engagement, these answers also reflect the accessibility of municipal programs and the economic status of young people.

Across all age groups only 50% of survey takers could identify *structural* ways in which they positively impact the environment.

Signing petitions 29%

Participating in a boycott 18%

Belonging to an environmental group 15%

85% of the workshop participants were engaged in structural change and of the 7 people who belong to an environmental group, 6 were workshop participants. Of the 6 people who had given money to an environmental group, 4 of them were younger youth (12-14); –this says something about their income vs expenses but the pattern of concern and giving is worth further investigation and cultivating.

This stands in contrast to stated concerns, desire to “be effective” and “make a difference” stated in surveys and workshops most of these forms of structural engagement are quite “low barrier” and relatively “low-impact” they can be completed on impulse, and require little follow-through. Only 2-4 individuals had been involved in leadership, activism or a sustained campaign for change.

Program Activities

I would like to participate in these activities with my friends, youth group or church community: (choose up to 4)

Wilderness Experiences: hikes, camping, boating 76%

Grow a Garden 60%

Worship Outdoors 44%

Stream Cleaning or Invasive Species Removal 40%

Learn about First Nation worldviews on creation 30%

Workshop participants were interested in more activities than other survey takers. Wilderness experiences were top for all groups. Both those with and without gardening experience, expressed a desire to garden. Younger youth (12-14) were interested the practical hands on activities—stream cleaning and invasive species

removal and teens (15-18) and young adults were more interested in worship outdoors. Learning about First Nation worldviews was more appealing to teens and young adults. Despite strong emphasis on education/educating myself in the surveys and workshops, attending education events like films and speakers was the least popular activity.

What can the church do

Give me a voice

Highlight the sacredness of creation

Invite nature into our parish

The church needs to see environmental issues as central to their mission/vision/purpose

Bring environmental issues to the front of what we do, in worship, talking, and taking concrete actions

Perform worship services/youth activities in nature without profaning or damaging

Always educate yourself

Simply go outside

Bring us into nature more

Financially help companies and organizations that help the environment

Integrate environmental program into youth activities

Encourage environmental respect, outdoor experiences, talking about it

Picnics camping trips outdoor activities

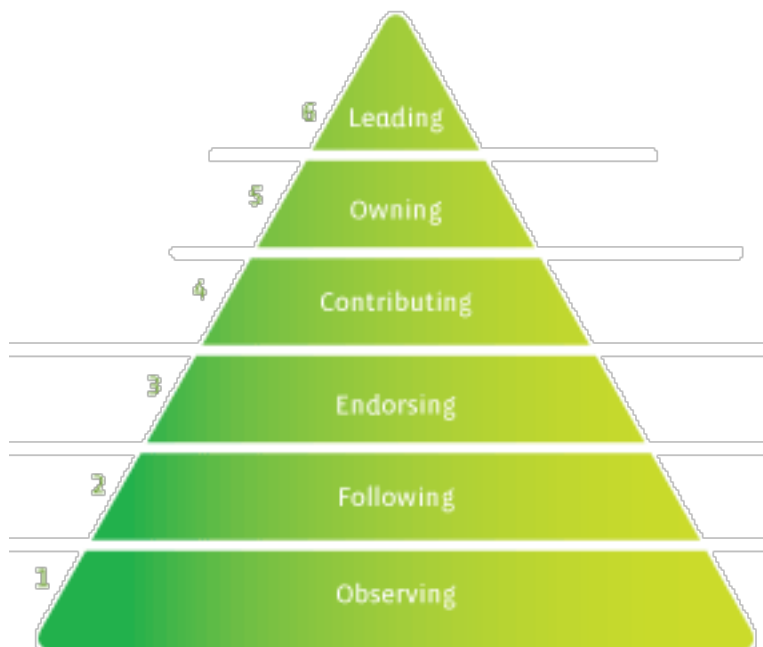
Growing a garden

Summer worship outside

Appendices

Levels of Engagement--pyramid

1. Leadership: has voice in diocese, --is seen and acts as an effective leader/organizer/for change in and out of church, structural and lifestyle stuff, grounded in healthy connection w/ creation
2. Ownership: Participates actively in campaigns for structural and lifestyle changes in church and out, identifies as a person of faith for env justice, gives time or money to make things happen
3. Contributing: Attends events, occasionally engages in structural change activities, mostly at lifestyle level, responds to specific requests
4. Endorsing: agrees in principle, does lifestyle stuff,
5. Passive: does what is easy, what friends are doing, recycles, composts if it is easy
6. Not yet engaged



This model is patterned after and can be developed further.

<http://www.idealware.org/articles/engagement-pyramid-six-levels-connecting-people-and-social-change>

Youth Environmental Engagement Survey

1. My age is (choose one)

- A. 11-14
B. 15-18

- C. 19-25
D. Other _____

2. I am connected to an Anglican church or youth group, in the Diocese of New Westminster

YES NO

3. I spend time with nature or creation most often through:
(choose up to 4)

- A. Winter sports
B. Hiking/camping
C. Boating –sail, canoe, kayak,
D. Sorrento or Summer Camp
E. Parks

- F. Farms and Gardens
G. Beach
H. Pets or other animals
I. Other _____

For questions 4-8 circle the most accurate number for you. 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= mildly disagree, 4= mildly agree, 5= agree, 6= strongly agree

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4. I feel a sense of peace or connection to God in nature or wilderness. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 5. “The environment” or “ecological justice” is important to me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 6. I worry about my future because of harm to the environment. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7. I think the church has something relevant to say about the environment. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 8. I pray about environmental issues with my church or on my own. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

9. To me the most important environmental issues are: (Choose up to 4)

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| A. Endangered Species | H. Access to clean water |
| B. Deforestation | I. Plastics in the ocean |
| C. Global Climate Change | J. Pipelines |
| D. Environmental Racism | K. Wasteful lifestyles |
| E. Industrial Polluters | L. Farm Worker justice |
| F. Green Energy Sources | M. Other _____ |
| G. Canadian mining corporations | |

10. I am making an environmental impact personally by: (Choose all that apply)

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| A. Recycling | E. Eating vegetarian/vegan/local |
| B. Composting | F. Consuming less |
| C. Riding my bike/taking the bus | G. Educating myself |
| D. Gardening | H. Other _____ |

11. I am making a structural environmental impact by: (Choose all that apply)

- A. Giving money to an environmental group
- B. Participating in a boycott
- C. Signing petitions
- D. Writing to politicians or the paper
- E. Attending demonstrations
- F. Belonging to an environmental group
- G. Participating in a long-term campaign with a specific goal
- H. Participating in or attending a direct action—tree sit, blockade, lock down

12. I would like to participate in these activities with my friends, youth group or church community: (Choose up to 4)

- A. Wilderness experiences: Hikes, camping, boating
- B. Worship service outdoors
- C. Learn about First Nations worldviews on creation
- D. Stream cleaning or invasive species removal
- E. Go to actions, demonstrations, campaigns together
- F. Grow a garden
- G. Education events—films, speakers,
- H. Other _____

13. (Finish this sentence) The church could help me connect with the environment, in the way that I want to, by...

Video Report text:

The Anglican Diocese of New Westminster
Is located on unceded coast salish territory
Where the fraser river meets the salish sea
Youth from the diocese and around BC
Met to talk about the Fifth Mark of Mission
Shared by Anglicans around the world
To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

We connect with God
In wilderness and nature
Love of God's creation grounds and roots our faith

At your command all things came to be
The vast expanse of interstellar space
Galaxies, suns the planets in their courses
And this fragile earth, our island home

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters (Genesis 1"1-2)
We Are The Wind

Therefore with angels and ancestors,
Orca and salmon
Cedar and salal, bear and eagle
We join our voices with all creation in their unending song of praise.
Holy, holy, holy...

Praise the Lord!
Praise God, sun and moon;
Praise God, all you shining stars!
Praise God, you highest heavens,
And you waters above the heavens!
(Psalm 148:3-4)

If I was a butterfly
I'd thank you God for giving me wings

And in that moment I saw the deepest depth of love, empathy and connection that I had ever experienced. In that seal's eyes, I saw God. And I wept with the purest joy at the divinity I had beheld. In this animal's gaze I had discovered God's acceptance.

We thank you for the gift of water. Over water the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through water you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise: In water your Son Jesus received the baptism of John.

We pray and we worry about the destruction of God's creation

We care about environmental justice

The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers: the heavens languish together with the earth. The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. (Isaiah 24:3-4)

How long will the land mourn,
And the grass of every field wither?
For the wickedness of those who live in it,
The animals and the birds are swept away (Jeremiah 12:4)

Now the green blade rises
From the buried grain
Wheat that in the dark earth
Many days has lain
Love lives again that with the dead has been
Love is come again like wheat arising green

We are all doing something for the environment
Many of us want to do more

With church and friends we want to learn how to make real effective change for the future

From the primal elements you brought forth the human race, and blessed us with memory, reason and skill; you made us the stewards of creation

To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

2015
made for the diocese of new westminster's
Marks of Mission Champion project

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