



their thinking & behaviour about climate change? CAN you give examples?
2. How do you think other generations are the same as yours with respect to their behaviour about ?



Families Talk Climate



A Toolkit for Intergenerational Conversations



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Introduction

Talking about climate change across generations can be both difficult and deeply rewarding. We live in a time where the reality of climate impacts is undeniable, yet public dialogue often leaves people feeling isolated, powerless, or polarized. Families Talk Climate was born from a desire to create a new kind of space—one where parents, grandparents, and young people can sit together, listen deeply, and discover how their stories, concerns, and hopes intersect.

Between October 2024 and July 2025, For Our Kids hosted Families Talk Climate events in London (Ontario), Ottawa (Ontario), Nanaimo (British Columbia), and Vernon Bridge (Prince Edward Island). Each gathering tested different approaches: story circles, action mapping, playful, family-centred activities, and structured dialogues. This toolkit distills what we learned into a practical, adaptable resource that you can use to host intergenerational climate conversations in your own community.

This guide will help you design gatherings that are locally relevant, emotionally resonant, and action-oriented. Use what serves your context, leave what doesn't, and remember that the act of convening across generations is itself a form of climate action.

Gratitude and Acknowledgements

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Why Intergenerational Climate Conversations Matter

Intergenerational climate dialogue embodies the principle of climate justice. The climate crisis imposes disproportionate burdens on younger and future generations, and dialogue across ages makes visible both accountability and solidarity. Elders bring historical insight; youth bring urgency and imagination. Both co-create a shared moral and practical roadmap for the future. Psychologically and socially, intergenerational dialogue strengthens social cohesion, community resilience, and hope. By bridging age divides, communities build relational capacities that enable them to withstand not only environmental challenges but also social polarization and despair.

The Limits of Conventional Climate Engagement

In much of climate education, outreach, and organizing, the dominant mode is this: present facts, evidence, projections, expert testimony, and calls to action. While these are essential, scientific grounding matters, they often fall short on a relational level. Audiences may feel overwhelmed by abstract statistics, distant projections, or crises framed in global terms. Many disengage not because they doubt climate science, but because they feel powerless, isolated, or emotionally taxed.

In families and communities, the topic of climate change can be especially fraught. Conversations may be avoided entirely, for fear of conflict, generational blame, guilt, or despair. Younger people may feel older generations haven't acted; older people may fear being accused or feel disempowered. Because of these emotional dynamics, even people who care deeply about climate may shy away from cross-age discussions in their households or community settings.

Thus, there is a gap: climate engagement that centers relationality, narrative, shared agency, and emotional safety is relatively rare—but this is precisely what intergenerational climate conversations can deliver.

What Research Tells Us: Core Insights

From recent research and For Our Kids' literature review, several consistent themes emerge about why intergenerational climate dialogue is both a promising and challenging approach.

Storytelling as Bridge and Catalyst

Stories outperform facts when it comes to eliciting emotional resonance, connection, and behavior change. Narratives facilitate experiential engagement and emotional arousal—both of which increase the likelihood of pro-environmental intent and action. In intergenerational settings, shared storytelling allows each generation to place climate within their lived experience, older people may recall past environmental shifts, while youth recount recent extreme events. This co-narration bridges temporal, emotional, and experiential divides, fostering empathy and shared agency.

Gustafson, A. et al. (2020). Personal Stories Can Shift Climate Change Beliefs and Risk Perceptions. *Communication Reports*, 33(3), 121–135

Collaborative Methods Bridge Knowledge, Values, and Experience

Beyond storytelling, structured tools such as climate timelines, dialogue cards, and collaborative exercises help participants blend perspectives. Older participants contribute historical context and experiences, while youth bring urgency and innovation. The shared process transforms generational differences into collective wisdom.

Emotions Are Central: Grief, Hope, and the Tension Between Them

Emotional dynamics are central to any effective dialogue. Climate conversations often evoke grief, anxiety, guilt, and hope. Spaces that balance emotional acknowledgment with empowerment help participants process these feelings while sustaining engagement.

Trust, Respect, and Shared Agency

Power dynamics between generations can be subtle yet potent. Facilitators play a key role in creating conditions of respect and balance. Trust-building practices, active listening, and structured participation norms prevent domination and promote equity in dialogue.

From Dialogue to Action: Tying Conversations to Concrete Steps

Dialogue without pathways to action risks leaving participants inspired but directionless. Linking discussions to locally meaningful projects, such as community gardens, school initiatives, or local advocacy, translates empathy into agency. These tangible steps reinforce hope and create enduring engagement.

Principles for Intergenerational Dialogue

Intergenerational climate conversations work when they move beyond information-sharing to emotional connection, mutual learning, and collective purpose. The following principles can help facilitators create spaces where empathy and agency can flourish.



Beyond Facts: Stories and Values

At the heart of meaningful climate dialogue lies storytelling. While science provides the “what” of the crisis, stories provide the “why.” Personal narratives connect head and heart, translating abstract data into lived experience. Encourage participants to share not only information, but values: what matters to them, what they cherish, and what motivates them to act. This shift from persuasion to connection builds mutual understanding rather than defensiveness.



Build Trust and Belonging

Intergenerational spaces thrive when participants feel seen, heard, and respected. A circle format, shared meals, or small-group settings can soften hierarchies and foster intimacy. Begin each conversation with clear community agreements—for instance:

- Share time equitably.
- Listen to understand, not to respond.
- Speak from personal experience (“I” statements).
- Respect differences and maintain confidentiality.





Honour the Emotional Journey

Climate conversations often surface powerful emotions: grief, guilt, anger, fear, hope, joy – sometimes all in a single session. Facilitators should expect and normalize this emotional range, neither suppressing pain nor forcing positivity. Use gentle facilitation like breathing pauses, reflection prompts, or art, to help participants process feelings and leave grounded rather than heavy.



Balance Power and Voice

Design for equity: alternate who speaks first, use timed turns or dialogue cards, and mix age groups thoughtfully. Empower youth to speak without being tokenized, and invite elders to share wisdom without dominating, so that everyone contributes insight.



Centre Hope and Joy

Hope is a discipline; joy is fuel. Integrate music, laughter, and art to remind participants that climate work protects what we love.





Co-Create and Connect to Action

Participants identify themes, imagine solutions, or plan small next steps. By linking emotion to action, participants leave with direction rather than despair. Every conversation should end with a sense of agency, however small. Facilitators can ask:

- “What’s one thing you’ll take from today?”
- “Who could you have this conversation with next?”
- “What’s the next small action we could take together?”



Include Everyone

Intergenerational work must reflect the diversity of family and community experiences. A commitment to inclusion turns participation into belonging and belonging into care. When designing events:

- Offer childcare and flexible timing to welcome parents.
- Provide translation or bilingual facilitation where needed.
- Ground the dialogue in a commitment to decolonization and reconciliation. Offer meaningful land acknowledgements, share teachings on treaties, and honour Indigenous-led approaches to climate justice.
- Practice placemaking by integrating local cultural references such as community rituals and/ or regional climate stories.
- Be mindful that not all families share the same access, privilege, or safety when discussing climate issues.



Designing the Conversation

Hosting an intergenerational climate conversation is as much about how you design the space as it is about what you discuss. The most meaningful dialogues don't happen by accident, they are intentionally shaped to balance emotion, curiosity, and collective purpose. This section offers guidance on how to design conversations that invite empathy, trust, and action, drawn from the Families Talk Climate pilots and best practices in community engagement.

Start with Values and Intent

Before planning logistics, take time to clarify why you are bringing people together. Conversations grounded in clear values are easier to design and more likely to resonate. Consider what outcome you most hope to achieve:

- **Building mutual understanding:** Creating space for people to listen across generations, cultures, and experiences.
- **Sharing stories:** Fostering emotional connection through personal narratives and lived experience.
- **Sparking collective action:** Moving from reflection to collaboration, inviting participants to imagine tangible next steps together.



A well-designed event may touch all three, but it helps to decide which purpose is central. For example, if your goal is empathy-building, you might focus on storytelling and reflection; if your goal is mobilization, you might use dialogue as a springboard for planning.

Framing your event around shared values, such as care, justice, hope, and responsibility sets the tone. These values can be named directly in invitations (“Join us for a conversation about hope, legacy, and climate action”) or made visible through visual cues, quotes, or opening remarks.

Designing for Connection, Not Persuasion

Intergenerational climate conversations differ from public lectures or debates. The goal is not to convince others, but to connect through shared experience and curiosity. When people feel seen and heard, they become more open to change and collaboration. Facilitators should focus on:

- Encourage Balanced Participation ([Step Up, Step Back](#)): Consciously monitor who is speaking. Gently invite quieter participants to share their ideas, concerns, or excitement (‘step up’). If you or other speakers are dominating the conversation, make a deliberate effort to hold back (‘step back’) to ensure space and safety for all voices, young or old.
- Active listening: Encourage participants to respond with curiosity, not correction.
- Psychological safety: Create a norm where emotions like grief or frustration are welcomed, not judged.
- Cultural awareness: Acknowledge diversity of lived experience, including Indigenous, newcomer, and rural perspectives.

You can model this tone through simple practices, such as opening with a land acknowledgement, offering gratitude round, or inviting participants to share one memory or hope related to the natural world.



Choosing the Right Format

Once your purpose and tone are clear, select a format that aligns with your goals, audience size, and community context.

- **Story Circles:** Small, facilitated groups sharing personal stories prompted by questions such as “When did you first feel the climate changing?” or “What does responsibility mean to your generation?” Story circles build empathy and trust.
- **Structured Conversations:** A series of guided prompts with time limits (e.g., 3 minutes each) ensures all voices are heard. Use a talking piece or timer to prevent one age group from dominating.
- **Action Workshops:** Use tools like Climate Cards or Action Mapping to brainstorm solutions and commitments. These sessions work best for groups already connected through schools, teams, or community groups.
- **Kids-Centred Activities:** Combine play and dialogue. For example, artmaking, storytelling, or role-play where kids interview adults about environmental memories. These activities normalize climate talk at home and make space for younger voices.

You can also experiment with hybrid formats, such as combining a short storytelling circle with an action-planning exercise or concluding with a shared art or reflection activity.



Making Informed Design Choices

There is no single right way to host an intergenerational conversation—what matters is alignment between purpose, participants, and process. Before finalizing your design, ask:

- Who is likely to attend, and what motivates them?
- What level of trust or familiarity already exists among participants?
- Which mix of dialogue, storytelling, and action will sustain engagement?
- What follow-up or next steps will make the conversation feel meaningful?

Using these guiding questions, you can make informed design decisions about format, tone, and facilitation. Remember: intergenerational conversations thrive when they balance listening and doing, reflection and action, honesty and hope.



Methods You Can Use

The following methods have been tested and refined through the Families Talk Climate pilot events across Canada. Each method invites a balance of reflection, storytelling, and collective imagination. You can use one or several mixes within a single gathering.

Climate Cards



Suggested Duration: 90–120 minutes

Climate Cards are a deck of prompts, short, open-ended questions or statements that are designed to spark reflection, emotional resonance, and generative conversation around climate change. The idea is to move participants beyond abstraction to personal experience, values, and possibilities.

A well-designed Climate Cards deck will include a balance of question types, such as:

- **Introspective & Reflective questions:**
 - When did you first notice climate change in your surroundings?
 - What impacts of climate change concern you most?
 - How has climate change affected someone close to you?
- **Intergenerational & relational prompts:**
 - What advice would you give someone from another generation about caring for Earth?
 - Which generation do you feel most hopeful for, and why?
- **Forward-looking & Hopeful questions:**
 - What gives you hope for the future?
 - What is one climate solution you would like to see in your community?
 - What change do you want your grandchildren to see?



Materials Required:

- Printed Climate Cards Deck
- Flipcharts
- Pens or markers
- Timer or bells



Resources

- [Climate Card Questions](#)
- [Sample Facilitator Agenda](#)

- Action & agency prompts:
 - What is one small climate step your family or neighborhood could do together?
 - Which local climate project would you support or join?
- Values & meaning questions:
 - What does responsibility for the planet mean to you?
 - How do your personal or family values shape your climate perspective?

You can choose to mix all kinds of prompts or consciously pair a serious (introspective/emotional/challenging) question with a hopeful or solution-oriented question so that the discussion is balanced.

How to Use Climate Cards

- Divide participants into small groups (4–8 people), ideally mixing ages.
- Distribute the cards or piles of cards to each group.
- Explain the process and intention. Encourage participants to treat cards as invitations, and to speak from personal experience, not expertise.
- Selection phase:
 - In London, the piles were colour-coded: one colour for introspective questions, and another for forward-looking ones.
 - Each group drew one card from each colour. This ensured every group would respond to both a deeper, challenging question and a hopeful, future-oriented question.
 - The dual-card system helps balance emotional depth and forward momentum.
- Response round: Each participant in the group takes a turn reading the card they drew (or the group may decide together which card to answer first) and responding in the allotted time. Others listen without interruption.
- Group reflection: After responses, the group discusses briefly:
 - What resonated or surprised me?
 - What common themes or generational differences emerged?
 - Did one card lead to deeper insights than the other? Why?
- Harvest insights: A facilitator or note-taker captures key reflections on a flipchart, sticky notes, or shared digital board, especially noting cross-generation points of connection or tension.

You can run multiple rounds (e.g. draw new cards) or move from cards into storytelling or action mapping, depending on your flow and time.

When to Use Climate Cards

Climate Cards are particularly effective:

- At the start of a gathering, to lower the barrier to personal sharing and warm up the group.
- When your goal is to introduce reflection zones before deeper dialogue or storytelling.
- In mixed-age or intergenerational settings where you want to equalize voice entry.
- When time is limited, but you still want to surface personal experiences.
- As a transition between segments, e.g. after a short scientific presentation, to help participants internalize and personalize concepts.
- In breakout rooms, which can return with fresh insights to the larger group.

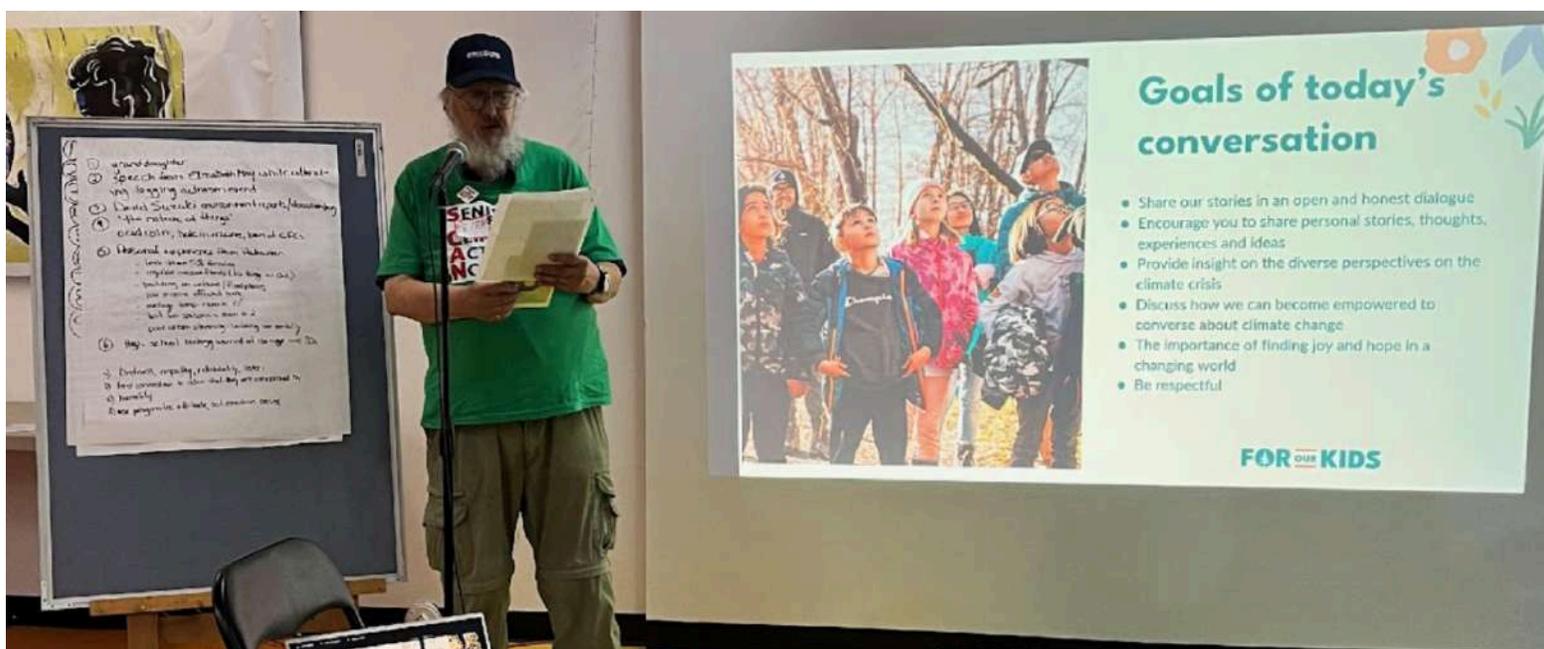
Because the method is flexible and low on resource demand (just cards, paper, and pens), it can also be used in pop-up settings, community fairs, school classrooms, or outdoor spaces.



Tips for Facilitators

- Use concise wording; short prompts are easier for all to engage with.
- Use different colours or visual icons for categorizing types (serious vs hopeful, past vs future, action vs reflection).
- Rotate cards between groups for cross-pollination of perspectives if time allows.
- If participants are shy, invite them to pass or write instead of speaking; encourage voluntary sharing over compulsion.

Case Study: Families Talk Climate, London



For Our Kids used colour-coded climate cards to initiate intergenerational climate dialogue. The deck was divided into two categories:

- 1 One set (red cards) contained introspective or serious prompts and questions inviting participants to reflect on anxieties, memories, climate impacts, responsibilities, or intergenerational tensions.
- 2 Another set (green cards) contained hopeful or forward-looking prompts and questions about aspiration, solutions, imagined futures, or collective action.

The 40 participants were divided into groups, and each group was instructed to draw one card from each pile. That meant every group would respond to one deep or serious question and one hopeful or imaginative question. This pairing intentionally balanced emotional depth with optimism and prevented the conversation from being one-sided either toward despair or platitude. Groups shared their reflections in rounds. Facilitators observed that this system:

- Encouraged participants to move from grief to agency in the same segment.
- Helped bridge generational differences: younger participants were often more comfortable with the hopeful cards; older participants sometimes preferred the introspective ones, leading to mutual exchange.
- Kept conversations balanced and dynamic, by design.
- Reduced the anxiety that sometimes accompanies “heavy” prompts by coupling them immediately with hopeful ones.



Structured Conversations

This is a facilitated discussion format designed to help participants listen deeply across differences of age, experience, or worldview, without the conversation being dominated by any one voice. It uses intentional sequencing, small-group reflection, and guided questions to create safety and curiosity rather than debate.

In intergenerational settings, the structure allows youth and elders to share perspectives both within their own generation and across generations. It emphasizes equal voice, emotional honesty, and respect for lived experience.



Suggested Duration: 2–3 hours



Materials Required:

- Printed prompts (optional)
- Name tags
- Flipcharts
- Pens or Markers



Resources

- [Sample Facilitator Agenda](#)

When to Use Structured Conversations

Structured Conversations are best used when you want participants to:

- Explore differences and commonalities in attitudes or experiences across generations.
- Organize both intra-group (speaking with peers) and cross-generation discussions (listening to others).
- Engage with complex emotional or social questions where open dialogue is the goal.
- Balance participation among people with varying levels of confidence in public speaking.

It can serve as:

- One of several method segments in a larger event (e.g., following an ice breaker or another method in this section).
- A stand-alone conversation (1.5–2 hours).
- A follow-up activity for participants who already know one another but want to go deeper.

How to Use Structured Conversations

1. *Set the Tone*

Open with ground rules emphasizing shared respect:

- Share the time and space.
- Listen with curiosity rather than judgment.
- Speak from personal experience (“I” statements).

A simple icebreaker helps—such as introducing oneself with a place that shaped your love of nature, or a book or talk that changed your perspective (see case study).

2. *Divide by Generation (Intra-group Dialogue)*

Split the participants into groups based on age. Each generation meets separately to discuss questions such as:

- How do you think other generations differ from yours in how they think or act about climate change?
- How are they the same?
- What frustrates or inspires you about the other generation’s approach?

Allow 25–30 minutes. Encourage groups to capture key insights on flip-chart paper. Note that an intra-group dialogue can be removed from the program to jump straight into the cross-generation dialogue if the timing is limited, or if the participants are self-identifying and are engaged in the climate sector already.

3. *Exchange Perspectives (Cross-Generation Dialogue)*

Bring everyone back together in plenary or mixed small groups. Each generation briefly shares what emerged from their intra-group conversation. Then open the floor for clarifying questions and use prompts for reflection:

- “What surprised you about what the other generation shared?”
- “Where do you see common ground?”
- “What new questions does this raise for you?”

4. Second Round: Listening and Response

Return to the generation groups to debrief:

- “What did you hear that challenged or affirmed you?”
- “What new questions do you have for the other generation?”
- “How could we collaborate more effectively?”

Afterward, reconvene mixed groups again to exchange reactions and deepen understanding.

5. Synthesis or Closing Reflection

End with a whole-group discussion or a visual reflection tool such as a ‘temperature graph’, participants chart their emotional highs and lows through the conversation. This exercise can surface how people felt seen, hopeful, or stretched.

To create a temperature graph, use a large board or multiple flipcharts on a wall, map the event agenda (welcome, activities, etc.) along the horizontal axis and emotions (happy/neutral/sad faces) on the vertical axis. Ask participants to draw a line showing their experience at various points. This offers organizers a quick, visual overview of event highs, lows, and where group feelings converged.

Encourage each participant to name one takeaway or action—something they learned or will do differently after the conversation.

Tips for Facilitators

- Balance time carefully: introductions often take longer than planned but are vital for trust.
- Alternate grouping styles: begin within generations to build comfort and shared understanding, then mix the generations to foster empathy.

- Use visual tools like flip charts or temperature graphs to track emotional dynamics.
- Document themes as they can inform future collaborations.
- Follow up with the participants promptly, sharing key learnings and exploring interests for future dialogues.

Case Study — “Been There, Fought That” Dialogue Ottawa



In April 2025, Climate Legacy hosted an intergenerational climate conversation in Ottawa that brought together 20 participants, 10 seniors and 10 youth, mostly university students.

The design included alternating phases of intra-generation and cross-generation discussion. Participants first spoke in their own age groups to explore perceptions of similarity and difference. Each group noted highlights, then returned to plenary to share.

Seniors reflected on the sense that their generation “took up too much space,” while youth expressed appreciation for being heard and curiosity about historical activism. The final phase, planned as small mixed groups, was replaced by an open plenary due to time constraints, but the result was still rich. Participants identified common concerns such as:

- The need for shared climate actions that bridge youth energy with elder experience.
- Curiosity about how to sustain faith in political processes as a tool for climate action.
- Recognition that both groups face eco-anxiety and moral complexity, though it manifests differently.

Climate Timeline

The Climate Timeline is a visual storytelling method where participants co-create a shared map of climate experiences across time to see patterns across generations. Using a long piece of paper on a wall or a big whiteboard, people mark key moments: personal, local, or global that shaped their understanding of climate change.

When to Use Climate Timeline

Use this method when:

- You want to explore memory, history, and perspective together.
- You are working with multi-generational or community groups with diverse backgrounds.
- You have a larger group and want a collective visual artifact.
- You are seeking to build empathy through shared context rather than debate.

How to Use Climate Timeline

1. Set up the Stage

The Climate Timeline works best when it feels big and interactive, a collective canvas for shared memory. Choose one of the following setups, depending on your venue:

- Wall display: Tape a long roll of paper horizontally along a wall.
- Floor mural: Use sidewalk chalk or tape on the floor to create a visible line stretching across the room or outdoor space.
- Board or string version: Pin a string across a bulletin board or easel and attach index cards or sticky notes.



Suggested Duration: 30–90 min



Materials Required:

- Long roll of kraft paper or mural paper (minimum 10 ft) OR string/board alternative OR chalk
- Painter's tape (for wall or floor setup)
- Sticky notes or index cards (multiple colors – assign colors by generation,
- Markers or pens
- Flipchart or whiteboard for reflection notes
- Optional: newspaper clippings, photo printouts, glue/tape for visual storytelling



Resources

- [Build your own climate timeline](#)
- [Sample facilitator agenda](#)

Although it is best used at the beginning of an event, as an ice breaker to help participants connect and make them feel comfortable with one another, this activity can also be the centerpiece for the intergenerational dialogue.

Mark the decades (e.g., 1960s, 1980s, 2000s, 2020s, 2030s) so participants can orient their entries. Provide markers, sticky notes, or index cards. Facilitators can prepare a few anchors of global, national and local events on the timeline (e.g., 1998 Ice Storm, 2016 Fort McMurray wildfires, 2021 BC floods, 2023 wildfire smoke season) to spark recognition and give participants a sense of scale.

2. Introduce the Activity

Explain that this timeline is a shared story of when and how we each became aware of the climate crisis. Invite people to think not only about data or disasters, but also about turning points of awareness, moments that made climate change real to them.

You might say: “This timeline represents our collective climate awareness. Add a moment that stands out to you. A time when you first realized the gravity of the climate crisis, when an event impacted you personally, or when something inspired hope. There are no wrong answers; each experience adds a piece to the story.”

Prompts could be:

- When did you first hear about climate change or global warming?
- What climate event made you realize its seriousness?
- Was there a time when you felt hopeful about a solution?
- What local or community event stands out for you?

Encourage participants to write briefly and add their name or generation (e.g., “Youth,” “Parent,” “Grandparent”) beside their contribution. You could also provide different colored markers or index cards to each generation to differentiate the response by age. If using this as an ice breaker activity, use one prompt only.

3. Build the Timeline

Give participants time (10–15 minutes) to move around and fill in the timeline. Encourage conversation as they do, and people often start remembering together. You can also allow participants to add drawings, photos, or newspaper headlines to make it visually rich and story driven.

As the timeline fills, people will start to notice overlaps and connections, multiple notes about the same wildfire year, the same news story, or similar experiences of extreme heat or flooding. These points of connection become the foundation for deeper discussion.

4. Facilitate the Reflection

Once the timeline is full, gather everyone around it. Invite them to step back and observe what they see.

Reflection prompts could include:

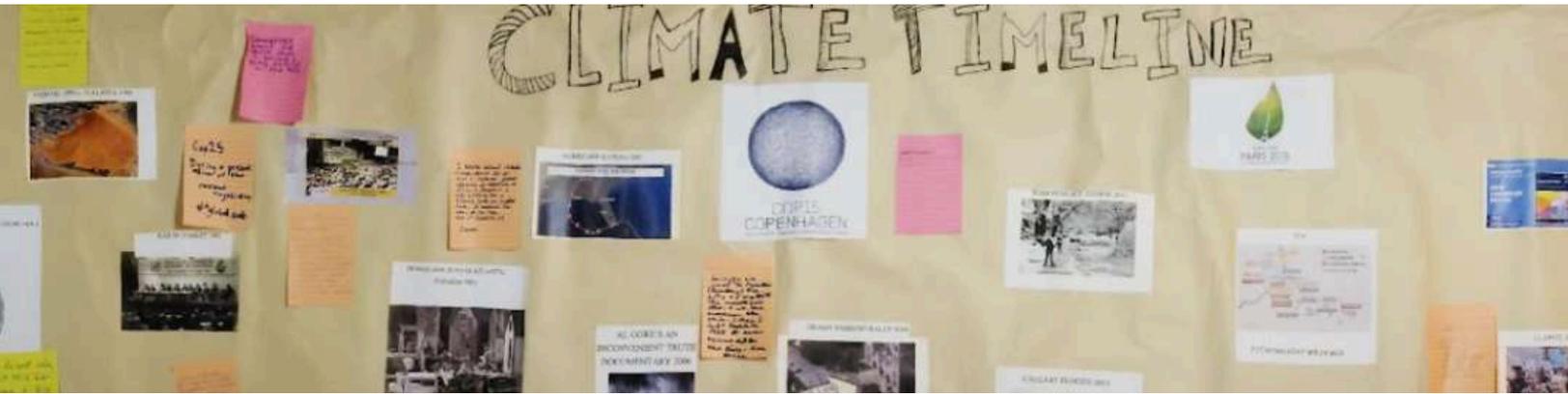
- What patterns or themes do you notice?
- Are there shared events that connect different generations?
- How did people’s awareness change over time?
- What emotions come up as you look at this together?
- What lessons or inspirations can we take into the future?

Encourage cross-generational dialogue, for instance, invite youth to ask elders about older events, and elders to ask youth about recent experiences. This reflection often deepens empathy and helps participants realize that while awareness may have come at different times, the underlying concern is shared.

Tips for Facilitators

- **Mix of Scales:** To enrich discussion, include both global (e.g., Paris Agreement 2015, 2021 COP26), national (e.g., Canada’s carbon pricing introduction, school strikes), and local (e.g., city floods, municipal initiatives) milestones.
- Photograph the timeline and share it in your post-event summary or digital toolkit. It is a powerful visual for storytelling and follow-up communications.
- **Future-oriented twist:** Ask participants to add future hopes “By 2030, I want to see...” or “A change I hope my children experience...” This turns awareness into aspiration.

Case Example — Families Talk Climate London, Ontario



At the London Families Talk Climate event, the Climate Timeline was the centerpiece of the room – a long roll of paper taped across a wall with a timeline showing various climate events across multiple decades. Various sticky notes were scattered along the line. Participants including children, parents, and grandparents walked up to add their moments of realization and connection with the climate crisis using sticky notes.

Some wrote about *hearing news of the 2021 BC floods or the 2023 wildfire smoke that reached Ontario*; others reflected on *school climate strikes or personal experiences with rising summer heat*. As people added entries, conversations sparked naturally, grandparents and teens noticed they had learned about climate change from similar sources decades apart, including news sources, famous personalities and in high school.

Facilitators noted how the activity shifted the tone of the gathering. What started as quiet reflection turned into a buzz of dialogue and laughter as participants found common ground through shared memories. As one attendee put it:

“It felt like watching our collective consciousness unfold across the wall.”

The completed timeline became both an artifact of the day and a mirror of the group’s shared awareness, as well as a reminder that while climate change is often described as divisive, many of our stories begin in the same place: noticing, caring, and wanting to act.

The Work That Reconnects

The Work That Reconnects (WTR) is a globally recognized framework developed by Joanna Macy, for group process and emotional resilience in the face of ecological crisis. It helps people transform despair, grief, and overwhelm into connection, inspiration, and action. The process is rooted in systems thinking, deep ecology, and mindfulness, and has been adapted worldwide for schools, community groups, and climate movements.

At its heart, the WTR invites participants to move through a spiral journey of experience, beginning with gratitude and ending with empowerment to act. The four key stages are:

1. **Coming from Gratitude** – Reflecting on what we are grateful for to help ground participants.
2. **Honoring Our Pain for the World** – Naming grief, fear, or anger about the state of the planet.
3. **Seeing with New/Ancient Eyes** – Expanding perspective through connecting with past and future generations, and other sibling species, building empathy and interconnection.
4. **Going Forth** – Committing to action grounded in renewed courage and community.

The spiral model is not linear; it can be revisited in any order and adapted for different audiences or settings. This framework is particularly useful for intergenerational groups, helping participants acknowledge emotions while fostering shared resilience and hope.



Suggested Duration: 2–3 hours



Materials Required:

- Printed spiral diagram (optional)
- Climate Emotions Wheel Sheet
- Paper sheets
- Pens or markers
- Flipcharts



Resources

- [Sample facilitator agenda](#)



When to Use Work That Reconnects

- Help participants process climate emotions such as grief, guilt, or overwhelm.
- Move from awareness to empowerment and collective motivation.
- Support intergenerational empathy, ensuring both older and younger participants feel seen and supported.
- Deepen the tone of a gathering following lighter or informational segments (e.g., after a Climate Timeline or Story Circle).

The process is flexible: it can fill a full afternoon, or it can be condensed into a 60–90-minute segment as part of a broader event.

How to Use The Work That Reconnects

1. Preparing Space

Choose a quiet, comfortable, and natural setting if possible. Facilitators usually prefer a welcoming atmosphere, warm lighting, circular seating and refreshments, to create safety and trust.

- Materials can include:
- Flipcharts or whiteboards for capturing reflections
- Printed Climate Emotions Wheel sheets for emotional exploration
- Colored name tags or stickers to distinguish age groups
- A bell or chime for timekeeping between stages

2. Facilitating the Spiral

Each stage of the spiral can be adapted for your group size and time. The Families Talk Climate – Nanaimo event followed this structure:

Step 1: Gratitude – “What We Love, We Want to Protect”

Participants reflected on what they cherish most about Earth and what they would not want to live without. This step set a positive emotional tone, grounding the group in care and connection.

- Prompts included: “What brings you joy or gratitude in nature?”
- Facilitators invited participants to speak or write their answers, which were captured on flipcharts.

Step 2: Honoring Our Feelings – “Exploring Our Emotions About Climate Change”

Rather than using the traditional WTR phrasing “honoring our pain,” facilitators modified the language to be more inclusive and age-appropriate. Participants used the Climate Emotions Wheel to identify and share their feelings: ranging from grief and fear to hope and determination.

- Mixed-age pairs were encouraged to share across generations.
- This adaptation helped younger participants engage without feeling overwhelmed.

Step 3: Seeing with New Eyes – “Understanding Through Another’s Perspective”

Participants formed mixed-generation groups of 3–4 and responded to prompts like:

- “How have you been impacted by climate change?”
- “What gifts does your generation bring to address climate change?”
- “How do your generation’s concerns differ from others?”

The ensuing conversations–built bridges of empathy, showing participants that while experiences differed, motivations often aligned.

Step 4: Going Forth – “Taking Action Together”

The final stage invited groups to merge and brainstorm collaborative next steps:

- “What actions can we take together?”
- “What commitments can we make to each other?”

Tips for Facilitators

- Use visuals. Display the spiral diagram to show participants the emotional flow of the session.
- Modify language for your audience. For families or youth, use phrases like “climate feelings” instead of “honoring pain.” Frame the language and the event design to make it less appropriate for all ages.
- Balance sharing and structure. Use time signals (bell or chime) to ensure all voices are heard.
- Incorporate embodiment. Include moments for silence, art, or movement (as Nanaimo did with a short outdoor “labyrinth walk” for reflection).
- End with connection. Invite each participant to name one hope or action they will carry forward.

Case Example — Families Talk Climate Nanaimo

The *Families Talk Climate* gathering in Nanaimo (June 21, 2025) was co-hosted by For Our Kids and the Nanaimo Climate Action Hub. It featured 40 participants, from children to seniors, and followed the *Work That Reconnects* framework as the central design of the afternoon.

Facilitators intentionally modified the WTR spiral for an intergenerational audience, softening the “grief” language, balancing emotions with creative activities, and integrating breaks for reflection. The group used colored dots on name tags to differentiate between different ages to form age-diverse groups, and a bell was used to manage speaking turns, ensuring that everyone’s voice was heard.

Participants described the atmosphere as “warm, collaborative, and unhurried.” The mix of structured conversation and emotional exploration allowed participants to connect authentically. The facilitators noted they valued the adaptability of the WTR spiral, and the gradual emotional progression from gratitude to action in helping manage vulnerability.



Key lessons for future adaptation:

- Allow more time for the “Going Forth” stage to harvest commitments.
- Anticipate that some participants may not have ideas for the “Going Forth” stage, and be ready with suggestions that are local and actionable.
- Provide ways for participants to stay connected afterward (e.g., mailing list, WhatsApp group).
- Consider integrating family-based prompts, so relatives attending together can reflect as a unit.

Finding Joy in Climate Solutions

Finding Joy in Climate Solutions is a reflective, action-oriented workshop model designed to help participants discover how their unique skills, passions, and values intersect with meaningful climate action. Based on Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson's [Climate Action Venn Diagram](#), this method invites people to consider:

- What are you good at?
- What climate work needs doing?
- What brings you joy?

Reflecting on where the three circles intersect helps participants come up with new ideas for how they can contribute to climate action in a way that is personally sustainable. This method reframes climate action from obligation to opportunity, reminding participants that sustainable activism starts from joy, not guilt. It also strengthens community resilience by allowing families and intergenerational groups to connect around shared values and inspiration rather than fear.



Suggested Duration: 2–2.5 hours



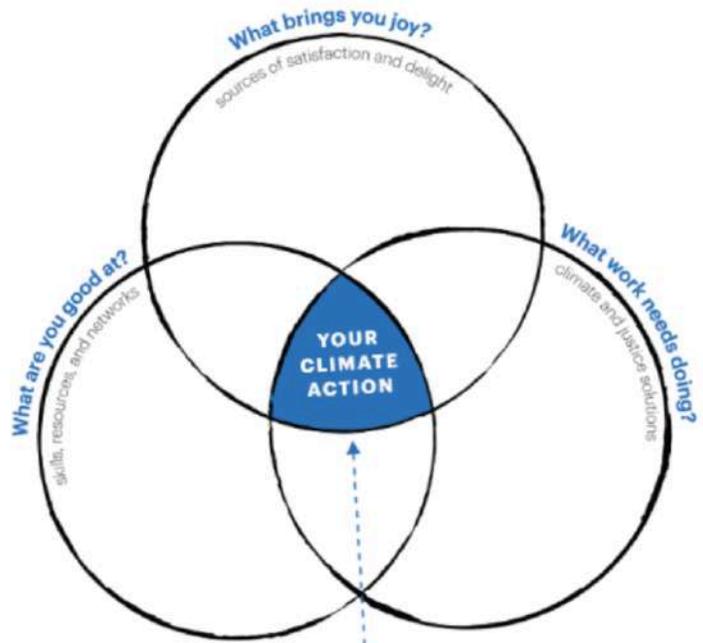
Materials Required:

- [Climate Venn Diagram template \(one per person\)](#)
- [Areas of work examples](#)
- Pens and markers
- Flipchart or board



Resources

- [Sample Facilitator Agenda](#)
- [Social Change Ecosystem Roles chart](#)



When to Use Finding Joy in Climate Solutions

- Organize an event on a hopeful and actionable note
- Help participants move from reflection to personal and collective action
- Inspire new volunteers, parents, or For Our Kids teams to find their entry point into climate work

- Re-energize existing For Our Kids teams who are feeling burned out or unsure of next steps
- Facilitate cross-generational learning, as different ages identify joy and skills differently

How to Use Finding Joy in Climate Solutions

1. *Prepare Space*

- Provide tables for writing or drawing (round or square formations create an inclusive feel).
- Offer snacks and drinks.
- Provide handouts: Climate Action Venn Diagram templates, guiding questions, climate solutions handout, and sample examples.

2. *Open with a Visualization*

Begin with an imaginative prompt: “What might it look like if we got our response to climate change right?”

Encourage participants to visualize a world where climate solutions are flourishing. This helps ground the conversation in possibility rather than fear. In the PEI event, participants envisioned thriving coastal ecosystems, community gardens, and renewable-powered schools, setting a tone of collective optimism.

3. *Introduce the Climate Action Venn Diagram*

Explain the three circles and encourage participants to jot ideas, this is exploratory, not evaluative:

- **What Brings You Joy:** activities, communities, or experiences that replenish energy and meaning.
- **What You’re Good At:** skills, roles, and capacities (personal, professional, or relational).
- **What Needs Doing:** tangible areas of climate and justice work that call for attention (draw from the climate solutions handout, community needs or national priorities).

4. Guided Reflection

Facilitate reflection in timed stages, using a bell or chime between transitions. Example prompts include:

- Joy: “What activities bring you meaning? Who inspires you?”
- Skills: “What are your strengths, resources, or roles you play naturally?”
- Needs: “What local or systemic changes are you most drawn to?”

Participants then explore the center of their diagram, identifying overlaps, potential “next step” actions that feel both joyful and impactful.

5. Small-Group Discussion

Organize participants into groups of 3–4 for 20–30 minutes of sharing and reflection.

- Each person presents their Venn Diagram.
- Others offer observations or encouragement.
- Rotate after 5–6 minutes per person.
- Be ready to extend the amount of time spent in this part of the workshop if people are having good conversations. In the PEI session, facilitators noticed this step was key for motivation: participants realized how much creativity already existed in their communities.

6. Collective Reflection and Closing

Invite everyone back for a short “round” to share takeaways.

- What inspired or surprised you?
- What might your next step be?
- What will you bring home or try with your family or group?

Tips for Facilitators

- **Time Flexibility:** Plan for at least 2.5–3 hours; every workshop since 2023 has reported that 2 hours felt too short.
- **Encourage creative thinking:** Remind participants that this is about brainstorming, not crafting the perfect plan.
- **Adapt Tone:** For youth or mixed ages, focus on imagination and creativity; for adult groups, blend strategy with meaning.
- **Include Movement:** Incorporate breathing or stretch breaks between Venn circles to maintain focus.
- **Capture Outcomes:** Photograph diagrams with participants' permission, or create a 'gallery wall' to showcase ideas before the session ends.

Case Study — Finding Joy in Climate Solutions in Prince Edward Island

The PEI Families Talk Climate workshop held on July 26, 2025, brought together an intergenerational audience to explore how joy could be a catalyst for sustained climate engagement. The event was structured as a hybrid of workshop and community circle, integrating the Climate Action Venn Diagram with storytelling and creative reflection. Key elements of the PEI event included:

- Childcare support and flexible setup, increasing parent participation.
- Creating a lending library of climate books at the venue.
- Use of Ayana Elizabeth Johnson's TED Talk as a pre-session resource to introduce the Venn concept.

The event closed with participants motivated to carry the momentum into community projects, schools, and municipal climate conversations.



Practical Tools for Organizers

This section equips organizers to confidently plan, host, and follow through on an intergenerational climate dialogue. It includes practical tools: sample agendas, facilitator scripts, setup checklists, communication templates, and printable materials.

Event Planning Checklist

Clarify Purpose & People

- Define the why: connection, storytelling, or collective action?
- Identify who to invite and where can you find your target audience (parents, grandparents, youth, educators etc.)
- Choose 1–2 methods from Section 4 of this toolkit.



Design the Experience

- Pick a date & venue (child-friendly, accessible, welcoming).
- Decide on event length.
- Recruit helpers – facilitator, greeter, note-taker, childcare support.
- Plan the room layout (circle or ballroom or small tables).
- Prepare materials including event agenda/plan, slide deck and other resources needed for the event.
- Arrange for snacks and refreshments.



Set Up & Promote Your Event

- Create an RSVP form
 - Use NationBuilder event page if you want automatic list building, or
 - Use the [FTC Sign Up Form template](#).
- Design promotional materials (sample poster, social post, and short video reel template included later in this toolkit in section 5.).
- Start promotion 2–3 weeks before the event:
 - Post in local parent groups, school newsletters, social media, and community pages.
 - Share personalized invites to local partners or climate allies.
 - Appear in traditional or digital media like podcasts, radio etc.
 - Encourage registrants to bring a friend or family member.

Prepare for Inclusion

- Provide childcare or kids' corner.
- Offer translation or bilingual facilitation if needed.
- Check accessibility (washrooms, seating, transport).
- Have photo-consent signs and opt-out stickers ready.

Event Hosting Checklist

Before Participants Arrive

- Arrive early; do a quick setup walk-through.
- Arrange chairs/tables for comfort and visibility.
- Prepare sign-in table, nametags, evaluation forms, and snacks.
- Display the Community Agreements Poster (“Share the Air,” “Listen to Understand”).
- Check lighting, sound, and music (if used).
- Brief your team on flow and timing.

During the Event

- Open with welcome, land acknowledgment, and tone-setting.
- Review the event’s shared values and goals.
- Facilitate chosen methods with balance and care.
- Track time gently; use a talking piece or timer for equity.
- Capture participant quotes, visuals, and moments of connection.
- Name emotions that arise and model calm and empathy.
- Close with gratitude and hope.
- Take photos and videos to record the event.

After the Event

- Thank participants and share next steps.
- Clean up the space and pack reusable materials.
- Debrief briefly with your team while memories are fresh.



Event Evaluation Checklist

Collect Feedback

- Gather evaluation forms or QR survey responses.
- Record total attendance, including youth and seniors.
- Note recurring themes or insights from discussions.

Follow Up with Participants

- Send a thank-you email (template in Section 6).
- Share photos and highlights (with consent).
- Invite participants to join your local FOK team or next event.

Debrief as a Team

- What worked best?
- What felt challenging or surprising?
- What were the emotional highs or lows?
- What follow-up ideas or actions came up?

Reflect & File

- Store photos, notes, and quotes in your shared team folder.
- Update your Support Lead from Network Support Team and upload outcomes to shared drive.

Communications Templates

Your outreach sets the tone for your event. Keep it welcoming, emotionally resonant, and clear about who it's for. Below are ready-to-use templates you can adapt for your e-blast, social media, and newsletters.



Email Invitation / E-blast Template

- **Subject Line Options**

- Join us for Families Talk Climate – a community conversation across generations
- Your story matters. Let’s talk about our climate future – together.
- Families Talk Climate: Share stories, hope, and ideas for action.

- **Body Text**

Hi [First Name],

You are invited to join our Families Talk Climate event, a space for intergenerational climate dialogue. Where parents, grandparents, youth, and community members come together, share stories, and imagine solutions that connect us across generations.

Join us for [Event Title or Theme], where we’ll use [chosen method: Climate Cards / Timeline / Finding Joy in Solutions / Story Circles] to spark conversation, reflection, and connection.

Date & Time: [Insert details]

Location: [Insert venue name + address]

Who’s it for: Parents, grandparents, youth, and anyone who cares about the future.

What to expect: Guided conversations, creativity, snacks, and hope.

Whether you’ve never talked about climate before or do it every day, you’ll leave with fresh perspectives and ideas for action.

👉 RSVP here: [NationBuilder event page link / Google Form link]

🍷 Childcare and light refreshments provided.

We can’t wait to see you there,

For Our Kids [Your team’s name]

Optional Add-ons for Tailoring

- Add a speaker bio or co-host group name if relevant.
- If you're using an artistic or interactive method (Timeline, Cards), include a one-line teaser: We'll co-create a living climate timeline and see how our stories connect.
- Link to your social media or local For Our Kids chapter.

Social Media

• Image Ideas:

- Use For Our Kids' editable Canva Poster Template
- Create your own poster. Here are some ideas:
 - Smiling families at past FTC events (with consent)
 - A table with Climate Cards or sticky notes
 - Kids drawing or coloring under a "Families Talk Climate" sign

• Post Caption:

Families Talk Climate – [City/Region Name]!

Join us for an intergenerational conversation about what climate change means for our families, our communities, and our shared future.

This is a space to listen, share, and build hope together.

We'll be using [chosen method: Climate Cards / Timeline / Joy in Solutions] to guide the conversation.

 [Date & Time]

 [Location / Venue]

 All ages welcome!

 RSVP: [link]

🌟 Let's talk — across generations — about what matters most.

#FamiliesTalkClimate #ForOurKids #ClimateConversations #ParentClimateAction

#IntergenerationalDialogue #ClimateHope #CommunityClimateAction

#StorytellingForChange

Optional Variations:

- Add a *carousel post* with 3 slides:
 - - “Why talk about climate?”
 - - “Join a conversation across generations.”
 - - “RSVP today for Families Talk Climate – [City Name].”
- Use local imagery (schools, parks, community halls).
- Tag @forourkidsCanada (if applicable).

Newsletter Blurb

- **Headline:** Families Talk Climate: A Community Conversation You’re Invited To
- **Blurb:** Climate change can feel overwhelming but it’s easier when we talk about it together.

Join [Local Team Name] for Families Talk Climate, an intergenerational gathering where parents, grandparents, and youth come together to share stories, hopes, and ideas for action.

Through [chosen method: storytelling, climate timeline, joy-in-solutions workshop, etc.], we’ll explore how our experiences connect and how we can create change, starting close to home.

 When: [Date & Time]

 Where: [Venue]

 RSVP: [NationBuilder/Google Form link]

 Who: Open to all ages and backgrounds.

This is a chance to listen, reflect, and build community across generations. Join us as your voice matters.

- **Optional Closing Line (customizable by teams):**

“This event is part of a growing network of Families Talk Climate events across Canada – connecting parents and children in conversations that lead to hope and action.”



Thank you for demonstrating the courage and commitment required to host these vital conversations. By using the principles and methods in this toolkit, you are not just facilitating dialogue; you are strengthening your community's capacity for hope, social cohesion, and collective action.

Next Steps: Sustain the Momentum

The toolkit is a starting point. We invite you to carry the momentum of your intergenerational conversations forward and connect with the broader movement:

- **Share Your Stories:** Your experiences, the successes, the challenges, and the unique ways you adapted the toolkit are invaluable. Please share them with us and the For Our Kids network so your locally relevant work can inspire and inform other groups across the country.
- **Get Support & Ask Questions:** If you have questions about next steps, need guidance on a particular challenge, or have ideas for improving this resource, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us at hello@forourkids.ca
- **Deepen the Dialogue:** Use the methods to facilitate ongoing conversations within your family, school, faith group, or local organization.
- **Link Emotion to Action:** Ensure the shared purpose and hope generated in your dialogue translate into tangible, action-oriented next steps that reinforce agency in your community.

Thank you for your partnership, your commitment to intergenerational wisdom, and your vital contribution to creating a future where families talk climate.

