

CANADIAN YOUTH BIODIVERSITY NETWORK POSITION STATEMENT



**OUTCOMES OF CANADIAN YOUTH CONSULTATIONS ON
BIODIVERSITY AND THE POST-2020 GLOBAL
BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK.**



About CYBN

The Canadian Youth Biodiversity Network (CYBN) is a chapter of the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN), which is part of an international coordination platform for youth participation under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). CYBN is committed to bringing young people's perspectives and positions into the negotiations so they are heard and considered. CYBN promotes and facilitates collaboration among youth from diverse backgrounds in order to build a stronger and unified voice to advocate for the rights of future generations within the biodiversity policy arena.



OUR STATEMENT

We represent Canadian youth who are concerned about biodiversity loss and the quality of our future. From April 23 to 24, 2021, CYBN organized a virtual consultation with 38 youth participants aged 19-40 from across Canada. Participants represented male, female, non-binary, and Indigenous perspectives and drew from backgrounds in academia, government, private sector, civil society, and youth organizations.

During the consultation, participants were asked to openly discuss their vision for living in harmony with nature by 2030, the values underpinning that vision, and the areas of policy to be used to achieve that vision in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). Here, we have presented our key outcomes and recommendations.

Vision and Values for Living in Harmony with Nature

Living in harmony with nature means respecting all life while recognizing humans as a part of nature, not above it. It means all people have access to a thriving natural environment, which is protected through conscious stewardship. To ensure this stewardship, we must transition to transparent economic and education systems that revolve around accountability, sustainability and the value of a healthy environment. We must ensure that all people, regardless of age or identity, have equitable access to environmental education that supports Indigenous Ways of Knowing and stewardship, which have long preserved the Earth through acts of reciprocity.

This vision must be based on values of **love** for nature, **respect** for all life, **equity** for all peoples, **hope** for an environmentally prosperous future, **courage** to drive change, **transparency** in government and business, **accountability** for one's actions, and **community** to empower local stewardship.



OUR STATEMENT

Issues & Priorities

Current Economic System

Our economy is heavily reliant on the unsustainable use of land and natural resources (e.g., fossil fuels, mining, agriculture, forestry, and fishing). Environmental best practices currently exist, but their adoption in Canada is fragmented and inconsistent. Canadian youth feel that economic growth currently relies on short term gain at the expense of long-term prosperity. We recognise the importance of urban development to the Canadian economy; however, there is a lack of ecologically conscious planning and accountability for environmental degradation.

Non-Transparent and Inaccessible Decision Making

Participants noted that the interests of corporations are disproportionately reflected in law and policy, resulting in weak and non-transparent environmental frameworks. The rationale behind decisions are often unclear and consultations are often inaccessible to citizens, especially those from marginalized communities. Multi-stakeholder perspectives must be sought out and included to have meaningful consultations that reflect different groups across Canada.

Lack of Environmental Education

There is a lack of adequate environmental curricula in grade school systems. This results in a lack of awareness of environmental issues and understanding of one's impacts on the environment. The dissemination of environmental knowledge through standardized education is currently not accessible to all students and fails to empower youth to drive positive environmental change.

There is also an insufficient amount of informal environmental learning opportunities through community-based initiatives (e.g. after-school programs, workshops, local engagement, etc.) and a lack of funding allocated to the engagement of all age groups. Such funding is necessary to effectively establish universal environmental awareness, improve stewardship and prevent Canadians from becoming disconnected from the environment.



OUR STATEMENT



Policy Recommendations

Transition to a Green Economy

Investments, laws, policy, and planning must be audited to divest/deter from harmful practices and promote/incentivize the sustainable use and development of land, food systems, consumption, and community-based solutions. The success of this transition should be reflected in the number of green/environmental jobs being created, the reduction of GHG emissions, standardized waste metrics, and regulations that prohibit harmful activities and promote green solutions. Collaborations among all levels of government are essential to this transition. Economic decisions must be shifted from short term gain to long term prosperity for people and nature by 2030.

Equitable Decision Making

Laws and policies must include clear stakeholder analyses at both the national and local levels. When conducting analyses and developing policies, governments must ensure that all impacted stakeholders, regardless of background, identity or age, are consulted and their input equitably reflected. Processes must ensure accountability and liability for actions that jeopardize equitable access to ecological benefits.

Enhancement and Dissemination of Environmental Education

The quality and access to environmental education must be improved for all citizens of all age groups while also reflecting both conventional science and Indigenous Ways of Knowing. Information about the economic benefits of ecosystem services and the economic hardship resulting from the degradation of those services must be highlighted. Investment in both formal and informal environmental education settings must be made and must emphasize the physical and mental health benefits of a healthy natural environment. This type of education must aim to facilitate and ignite a deep connection with nature while teaching individuals how to become environmental stewards.

Conclusion

The purpose of this report is to share our Canadian youth vision for living in harmony with nature by 2030 that we want reflected in the Post-2020 GBF. As Canadian youth, we hope that decision-makers will take meaningful action to achieve the transition to a green economy, inclusive and transparent decision making, and the enhancement of and accessibility to environmental education by 2030. The adoption of these goals into the Post-2020 GBF must advance environmental integrity, sustainable economies, and the empowerment of communities by 2030. These changes are essential to creating a harmonious relationship with nature and ensuring environmental prosperity for generations to come.

We would like to acknowledge the work and dedication of the CYBN team and volunteers for making this event possible. In particular, we would like to highlight the leadership of Darlene Coyle, Laura Gaitan, Ana Giovanetti, Fallon Hayes, Francine Pauvif, and Aleks Spasevski.

This report was based on discussions with youth participants and was written by two of CYBN's Policy Coordinators Darlene Coyle and Fallon Hayes.

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