

Building Bridges for Climate Action

Engagement Strategies for Millennials

A report by Tara Mahoney, Ph.D., David Suzuki Fellow



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By: Tara Mahoney, PhD, David Suzuki Foundation Research Fellow in Climate Change Communications

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report aims to assist the David Suzuki Foundation and the broader environmental advocacy community in understanding how millennials engage with climate change in order to help determine what frames, content and engagement projects resonate. The report's **first section** identifies 15 key characteristics of millennials that influence their outlook and behaviour, including the significant economic struggles they face, their views on government, their societal values and their patterns of civic and political participation. The **second section** dives into the complex sociological factors that influence millennial climate change engagement and identifies four mega-trends structuring their experiences and perceptions: neoliberalism, the democratic (and civic literacy) deficit, economic insecurity and participatory culture. The **third section** details 10 recommendations drawn from the best practices of groups and organizations effectively engaging millennials in climate change and other socio-political issues. The recommendations are organized into three key principles: openness, salience and capacity. Each recommendation includes a rationale, ideas for quick starts and longer-term projects.

The report draws on academic research from political science, media studies and climate change communication, and reviews polling data, news stories, websites and marketing literature associated with millennials (people born roughly between 1980 and 2000). Informal interviews with DSF staff and young climate leaders provided information on programs already underway and gave insight into DSF's role in the broader environmental movement.

Key findings

The millennial generation is large, diverse and educated.

The majority lean to the left on the political spectrum, are facing significant economic struggles and are concerned about affordable housing. They are less likely to vote and are less identified with political parties than older generations but they trust government intervention. They don't identify as activists but are active in social movements and believe in "everyday change-making." They are avid social media users, are highly influenced by their peers and want to co-create their participation. They highly value real life experiences and can adapt to complexity.

Millennial engagement with climate change issues is complex and contradictory. On one hand, they are increasingly engaged with and concerned about climate change — more than any other generation. On the other hand, many are disengaged and alienated from the political and democratic institutions and processes integral to meaningful climate action. The misalignment between formal approaches to engagement and informal ones is the central challenge of getting millennials to participate in effective climate action.

Neoliberalism creates a challenge and an opportunity for millennial climate change engagement.

Promoting norms of individualism and self-reliance through efforts of "green consumerism" can exacerbate challenges associated with inequality and undermine collectivist orientations required for climate action. However, individual modes of participation can also create opportunities for more adaptive, flexible responses to the complex set of issues associated with climate change.

Millennials lack faith in and knowledge about collective climate action via democratic institutions. As a result, millennials are "hacking together" a climate politics that includes a vast array of individual actions and engagement with populist movements, but few strategic collective initiatives focused on political institutions, especially at the local/municipal level.

Although millennials care about climate change, there are many socio-economic stressors competing for their attention, such as the immediate needs of employment, food, housing, health and child-rearing.

For many millennials in Western societies, “participation” is a cultural norm and form of collective meaning-making. Networked and mobile media has given rise to a “participatory culture” which has spawned “participatory politics,” activities that leverage technology, peer-to-peer communication and cultural production (via audio, video, text or performative art and media) to influence the political sphere.

Change is coming. The demographic characteristics and sociological context of millennials mean that legacy environmental organizations must adjust how they design campaigns, engage supporters and deliver on their theories of change to speak to them. In short, organizations that are accustomed to serving the baby boomer generation must transform themselves to appeal to the cultural sensibilities of millennials or risk losing relevance, influence and support.

An effective millennial strategy acts as a bridge. It connects do-it-yourself, informal participation with formal institutional participation; online communities and offline gatherings; participatory culture and participatory politics; individual action and collective movements; local practices and global mindsets; millennial climate champions with baby boomer allies; and the idea of democracy with its practice. What’s clear from the literature is that millennials can be a huge asset — as donors, employees and partners — and can amplify climate action through co-creation, peer-to-peer communication and crowd-sourcing.



Recommendations

1

Be open to transformation and nurture millennial leadership

Effectively reaching millennials requires significant transformation in engagement approaches, organizational culture and decision-making. Supporting millennial leadership (inside and outside DSF) is fundamental to building a strong millennial supporter base.

2

Be more human and transparent

Millennials grew up with the internet and social media and are accustomed to openness and transparency. Tangible, proactive transparency helps millennials understand how the organization is creating impact. Practicing transparency also allows the organization to tell its own story, rather than being misrepresented by opponents and helps pre-empt mischaracterizations from opposing groups.

3

Embrace co-creation and share power

Millennials want to play an active role in customizing their participation. This deepens commitment and enthusiasm, and allows supporters to contribute their professional or creative skills. Co-creation processes can provide precious insights, allow for more democratic decision-making and give rise to innovations by tapping into the community's collective intelligence.

4

Prioritize an intersectional lens and merge climate change with social equity issues

Research shows that environmentalism is largely dominated by white, middle-class people. Because climate change disproportionately affects racialized, Indigenous and low-income people and women, building relationships with these communities is crucial. In addition, people who face economic challenges tend to prioritize immediate concerns like how to make rent or get to work, which pushes climate change to be marginalized as “environmental”. There is a need to embed climate change issues in other social and economic concerns.

5

**Emphasize the “gain” frame
(while leveraging feelings of loss aversion)**

Research shows that a frame emphasizing the benefits of action produces more positive attitudes among millennials toward taking action on climate change and enhances perceived self-efficacy (Maibach, et al., 2010; Rabinovich, et al., 2010). While the gain frame is essential, it can be intensified by combining it with loss to leverage loss aversion. Combining gain and loss (or positive and negative outcomes) charges the political energy needed to mobilize existing supporters and activate new constituencies.

6

**Target “tribes” of millennials
through “relational activism”**

Millennials are the most diverse generation in Canada’s history, across ethnic, national and religious backgrounds, and in terms of values and life choices. Any serious effort to reach and engage them will require careful consideration of key segments and how actions can be incorporated in everyday life. Know your target audience, speak to their experiences and make engagement appealing. “Relational activism” focuses on making change happen through personal and informal relationships.

7

**Engage artists/creatives and
utilize popular culture**

“People don’t share policy papers, they share things that move them” (Duncombe and Lambert, 2018). Using pop culture and artistic activism as key communication strategies acknowledges that climate change is a cultural issue. It’s also suited for the age of cellphone cameras and social networks, allowing millennials to engage on their own terms and in more accessible ways.

8

**Teach civic/political literacy
related to climate issues**

Information about how to engage politically and the effects of political engagement is just as important as climate change science (Cross, et al., 2015). What’s needed is clear, consistent and easily accessible knowledge on how social change is made, how democratic institutions and processes work, how power dynamics operate, how to navigate political participation (beyond voting), what are current policy discussions, who the key players are and how to influence them.

9

Use Instagram to connect lifestyle politics to climate policy

Instagram is highly popular among millennials and peers are among the most “trusted messengers” as climate change information sources (Corner, et al., 2015). Instagram allows users to “talk in pictures,” offering a visual rather than textual way of grappling with the often-abstract notion of climate change (Smith and Joffe, 2013; Hodson, et al., 2018). The potential is in leveraging the compelling, persuasive impact of Instagram images and the social capital of Instagram influencers to engage millennials in more formal climate policy processes.

10

Facilitate “cool experiences” that build community

Research demonstrates that young people are more likely to understand, care and act on climate change if they can engage with it directly and experientially through some form of educational, outreach or social activity (Hickman, 2012; Senbel and Blair, 2014). Marketing literature on the “experience movement” shows that millennials are looking for meaningful experiences over consumption experiences (Eventbrite, 2017).





INTRODUCTION

Why millennials matter

It's no surprise that every marketer, politician and human resources manager wants to know who millennials are, what they want, how to get their attention and how to influence their behaviour. Millennials (roughly, people born between 1980 and 2000) are a large cohort that makes up more than one-quarter of Canada's population. It's the most connected and diverse generation in history and the largest voting bloc in Canadian society (EnviroNics, 2017a). Millennials will soon be the largest proportion of the workforce, with an annual income estimated at \$237 billion or about 21 per cent of all income earned in Canada (Retail Insider, 2015). They're also the beneficiaries of a huge transfer of wealth from older generations that will be passed down over the next two decades.

Millennials are a massive, consequential generation that will be acutely affected by the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation. They are key stakeholders in climate action and the most active cohort in climate movements. The combination of witnessing the failure of current political economic structures and possessing the collective capacity to organize communities through networked communication make millennials among the most receptive to modes of climate change communication that challenge the status quo.

Millennials' demographic characteristics mean that older, established “legacy” environmental non-government organizations (ENGOS) must adjust how they design campaigns, engage supporters and deliver on their theories of change or risk losing relevance, influence and support. Millennials are a crucial strategic imperative for all ENGOS — they're the staff, donors, volunteers and community members that will sustain organizations into the future. While many legacy environmental organizations understand **why** they need to engage millennials, it doesn't often translate into the **time and resources** necessary to create comprehensive millennial engagement strategies.

The good news is that DSF already embraces many of the best engagement practices for millennials, such as leadership development, distributed organizing, co-creation, social connectivity and a focus on solutions. These include Charged Up's use of storytelling and partnerships with youth-led organizations and artists; the CliMate conversation coach chatbot; “leading from behind” support for student climate strikes; Queen of Green lifestyle tips; Butterflyway Project and Camp Suzuki's use of experiential engagement; leadership development via David Suzuki Fellowships; Blue Dot's use of distributed organizing for environmental rights municipal declarations; the Prix Demain initiative and the climate emergency poster contest led by the DSF Quebec office.¹

While these initiatives are promising, what's missing is a more **comprehensive approach** to millennial engagement that strategically scales up what's working, experiments with new ideas and knits a diversity of efforts together into a focused strategy. What's clear from the literature is that millennials can be a huge asset — as donors, employees and partners — who can amplify DSF's capacity through co-creation, peer-to-peer communication and crowdsourcing. This work requires an openness to new ideas and a willingness to commit the time and resources necessary to address key questions such as:

- What drives and motivates millennials to give, take action and develop as climate leaders?
- How can we engage millennials as fundraising advocates?
- How can we involve millennials in program development and campaign execution?
- How can we attract millennial talent (staff and supporters) in envisioning what DSF will be over the next 50 years?

¹ Blue Dot and DSF Quebec's co-creative initiatives are two hot spots already implementing many of the recommendations in this report, in which innovation and experimentation appear to be working.

Methodology

This report draws on academic research from political science, media studies and climate change communication, and reviews polling data, news stories, websites and marketing literature associated with millennials. Informal interviews with DSF staff provided information on programs already underway and discussions with young climate leaders gave insight into DSF's role in the broader environmental movement.

This work also expands on the report *Decentralized Distributed Organizing* produced for DSF by NetChange Consulting in October 2018. The NetChange report explored how to best leverage technology to empower and increase citizen-led climate actions. It combined external research of best practices for effective digital engagement with an internal survey of existing practices to support DSF volunteer engagement. In contrast, this report takes a more sociological approach, looking at how millennials experience climate change in the broader societal context, and can be read in tandem with the NetChange work, expanding on this concluding statement:

Overall currents in demographics and cultural preferences, which are already shaping the future for non-profits, clearly point to the need for greater investment and attention towards engagement strategies that deepen ties with new cohorts and also leverage the energy of supporters towards greater scale and impact that could grow well beyond the organization's existing staff and resources (Mogus and Liacas, 2018).

While this report can be applied broadly to all of DSF's engagement efforts, it concentrates on the climate solutions focus area, specifically at how to engage millennials in the climate change issue and the transition to renewable energy.



PART 1: WHO ARE MILLENNIALS?

“Generational identity” is a conceptual tool for understanding how social structure and culture movements can shape a specific group of people based on age. Generational theory says that individuals born within the same historical and sociocultural context experience the same formative experiences, which creates unifying commonalities (Lyons and Kuron, 2014: 140).

Generational identity is based on averages (Twenge 2014). Inevitably, people within a generation will deviate from the averages within their cohort. Shared experiences are complex phenomena and their impact on values, beliefs and behaviour vary across factors such as race, class, ethnicity, gender and religion (Beier and Kanfer 2015). For example, the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s was a formative experience for the baby boomer generation; its impact on personal ideas of equality, justice and fairness depends on the individual (Rouse & Ross, 2018).

To get an understanding of the millennial generation, this section explores the demographic in two ways: generalized characteristics that can be observed through cultural trends, social scientific research and polling; and six unique values “tribes” based on motivations and attitudes classified in the *Canadian Millennials Social Values Study*.

Key characteristics

1

Millennials are a large generation.

Currently in their 20s and 30s, they make up more than one-quarter of Canada's population. They'll soon be the largest proportion of the workforce and the largest voting bloc in Canadian society (Environics, 2017a).

2

Millennials will soon be the largest generation of parents.

Approximately one in four millennials is a parent already and, over the next 25 years, 80 per cent will become parents (Fromm & Vidler, 2015).

3

Millennials are the most educated generation in history.

More than 75 per cent of women and 65 per cent of men aged 25 to 34 hold a post-secondary degree or diploma (Statistics Canada, 2015). Factors such as interest in politics, following news and current events, engagement in social issues, confidence that collective action can make a difference, volunteering and donating to social causes are all largely a function of educational attainment (Environics, 2017b).

4

Millennials are the most demographically diverse generation in Canadian history.

In Canada, 27 per cent of people aged 15 to 34 identify as a member of a visible minority and nearly 75 per cent report having friends from another ethnic group. From 2006 to 2016, the number of First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth aged 15 to 34 increased by 39 per cent, (compared to just over six per cent for non-Indigenous youth). More millennials identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual than previous generations (Statistics Canada, 2018).

5

Millennials face economic struggles.

Millennials are the first modern generation to be economically worse off than their parents. Most make under \$50,000 a year (well below the national median income of \$70,000 per year). They also tend to be underemployed, face stagnant wages, rising costs of living and deepening household debt (which is twice the level it was a generation ago) (Abacus Data, 2018b).

6

Millennials see affordable housing as their top issue.

Due to a sharp increase in property prices, rent in urban centres has increased and many millennials face housing insecurity (Abacus Data, 2018a). New, detached houses cost more than twice as much as they did when boomers were buying their first homes (Abacus Data, 2018b). As a result, the number of Canadians aged 18 to 35 living with their parents skyrocketed from eight per cent to 34.7 per cent (the highest number ever recorded).

7

Millennials are less likely to vote than older generations.

While Canada's 2015 federal election was the best showing so far for millennial voters (turnout rose by 20 per cent), the turnout of 57 per cent still lagged far behind the nearly 80 per cent of those aged 65 to 74 and the 75 per cent of 55- to 64-year-olds (Elections Canada, 2015).

8

Millennials are less likely to identify with political parties and more likely to identify with causes or social movements.

Millennials' political participation is often oriented around specific causes (rather than political parties), mobilized through "micro-political" actions and networked social movements. In Canada, there's been a clear generational decline in political party identity and the term "post-partisan"² has been used to describe millennial orientation to conventional partisan divides (Bernstein, 2014).

9

Millennials trust government intervention.

From policing and national defence to the environment and social services, the majority of millennials feel government should be a social justice advocate (Abacus Data, 2018e). They prioritize increased government spending over balanced budgets in order to tackle issues such as alleviating income inequality and addressing climate change. They believe corporations don't pay their fair share of taxes and that government has a big role to play in redistributing that money (Abacus Data, 2018d).

² Post-partisanship emphasizes moving beyond political factions, focusing on collaboration over party discipline.

10 Millennials lean to the left on the political spectrum.

Fifty-four per cent of millennials believe that Canada would be better off governed under a more socialist system and 36 per cent identify as being left-of-centre on issues such as gay rights, race, abortion and gender roles. Forty-two per cent identify as politically centrist and 22 per cent identify as right-leaning conservatives (Abacus Data 2018b, 2018d).

11 Millennials see themselves as “everyday change-makers” rather than “activists.”

“Everyday change-making” is the most prevalent form of public participation millennials practise, combining issue-orientated rallies, crowdfunding and petitions with day-to-day activities like reducing waste and changing eating habits and transportation methods (Case and Yu, 2017).

12 Millennials are avid social media users.

Social media is how millennials stay connected and find out what’s happening in the world. Nearly 100 per cent of those aged 15 to 34 in Canada (across all provinces and household income groups) use the internet on a daily basis and 94 per cent own a own smartphone (Abacus Data, 2018c; Statistics Canada, 2018). Eighty-five per cent of Canadian millennials check Facebook at least once a day, but now more frequently use Instagram (Abacus Data, 2018c).

13 Millennials are highly influenced by their peers.

Half of Canadian millennials have tried to convince their parents/caregivers/friends to change their opinions about an issue (Abacus Data, 2019c). Nearly half are likely to donate if asked by a co-worker and 65 per cent said they were more likely to volunteer if co-workers participate (Feldmann, et. al. 2015). Millennials use multiple sources (including TV, print newspapers and radio) to triangulate knowledge and form opinions rather than relying solely on personal recommendations (Duffy, et.al 2017).

14

Millennials want to choose, customize and co-create.

Millennials expect to be given opportunities to contribute to and customize their participation. As the “content creation generation,” 46 per cent post content online they have created and 40 per cent say that want to participate in the co-creation of brands and products (Millennial Marketing, 2015).

15

Millennials highly value experiences.

Millennials are increasingly looking for meaningful IRL (in real life) experiences such as social and cultural events and outdoor activities. More than three-quarters (78 per cent) would choose to spend money on a desirable experience or event over buying something desirable and 69 per cent believe attending events makes them feel more connected to other people, the community and the world. Research shows that millennials tweet, share and post more about the events they attend than any other age group (Eventbrite, 2014).

16

Millennials adapt to complexity.

The defining value across all millennial sub-groups is the tendency to adapt easily to social changes, not feel threatened by the uncertainties of modern society and treat complexity as a learning experience and an opportunity source (Environics, 2017).

Millennial “tribes” in Canada

Although there are common characteristics that can be used to describe millennials, there's significant diversity within the demographic in terms of perspectives, attitudes and activity in how they approach life and civic engagement. In 2017, The Environics Institute for Survey Research conducted the *Canadian Millennials Social Values Study*, which classifies millennials into six unique values “tribes,” each displaying a wide range of different motivations and attitudes. This typology offers a valuable framework for understanding millennials in Canada, and determining how best to consider their priorities and interests with respect to climate change engagement.

Knowing millennials' overarching characteristics and the targeted subgroup can help determine what frames, content and messages to use. Understanding and speaking to millennials' pain points, challenges, goals and desires can mean creating campaign messages that resonate and feel relevant to them.

For instance, knowing that Engaged Idealists and Diverse Strivers value learning from others and connection to community but struggle with climate anxiety and are looking to build their careers can lead to designing engagement initiatives and outreach accordingly. This requires ongoing consultation that explores questions like: What are the aspects of climate change and/or renewable energy that millennials struggle with day-to-day? Where are their frustrations? What campaigns or activities do they love participating in? What collective accomplishments are they most proud of?

Here is a summary of the six millennial tribes the Environics study identified:

Tribe	Description	Demographics	Key values
Bros and Brittanys 32%	Largest group that defines the “mainstream.” Avid risk takers but not looking to change the world. Enthusiastic technology users. “They start their day with a cup of Tim’s and end it with a beer.”	Males, older, born in Canada, and white, average income, slightly less education.	Clear gender roles, being respected, looking good, taking some risks, blowing off steam, getting paid.
Diverse Strivers 20%	Making it in life and doing things that bring new and intense experiences are top priorities. Crave success and pursue personal challenges. Work to inspire respect, look good and push forward in their goals.	Most multicultural of all groups, born in another country, more male than female, younger and live in the Greater Toronto Area, average employment and income.	Connection to community, thrills and excitement, buying things, status and respect, duty to others, pushing yourself.
Engaged Idealist 17%	Sociable, energetic, focused on personal growth. Believe in contributing to relationships, careers and community, that their actions matter and they can make a difference. Want meaningful life and careers, and to express creativity. “Millennials on steroids.”	Mostly Canadian-born and white, most female of the tribes, younger, live in Ontario and Western Canada, high education and income.	Being in control of destiny, learning from others, being open-minded, meaningful career, creativity, spontaneity.
Lone Wolves 16%	Deeply skeptical of authority. Cool and standoffish. Like to keep life simple and avoid connections to community and society, but not angry or hostile.	Equally male and female, older, reside in Quebec, born in Canada, and white, lowest interest in family and children, least apt to be employed or in school, lowest education and income.	Doing their own thing, cynicism, keeping things simple, buying things on a whim, laying low.
New Traditionalists 11%	Most religious and spiritual, believe in staying true to the values with which they were brought up. Respect authority figures more than peers, report a stronger sense of duty and a greater sense of identification with family roots and ancestors.	Oldest and most settled, more likely female and married with children, high proportion of immigrant and broad ethnic mix. Highest income group, but also more apt to be out of the workforce (stay-at-home moms).	Religion and spirituality, family, doing your duty, legacy.
Critical Counter-culturists 4%	Share progressive values with Engaged Idealists, but reject status and authority they see as illegitimate or superficial. More clear-eyed rationalists, lead when they can add value. “Don’t want to be judged by their jeans or smartphone.”	Smallest group, middle age range, reside in B.C., least family-orientated, by far the most educated, incomes below average, white with a high proportion of immigrants.	Political and social engagement, learning from others, control of destiny, autonomous action and thought, practicality versus impulse, authentic understatement.

PART 2:

MILLENNIALS AND CLIMATE CHANGE ENGAGEMENT

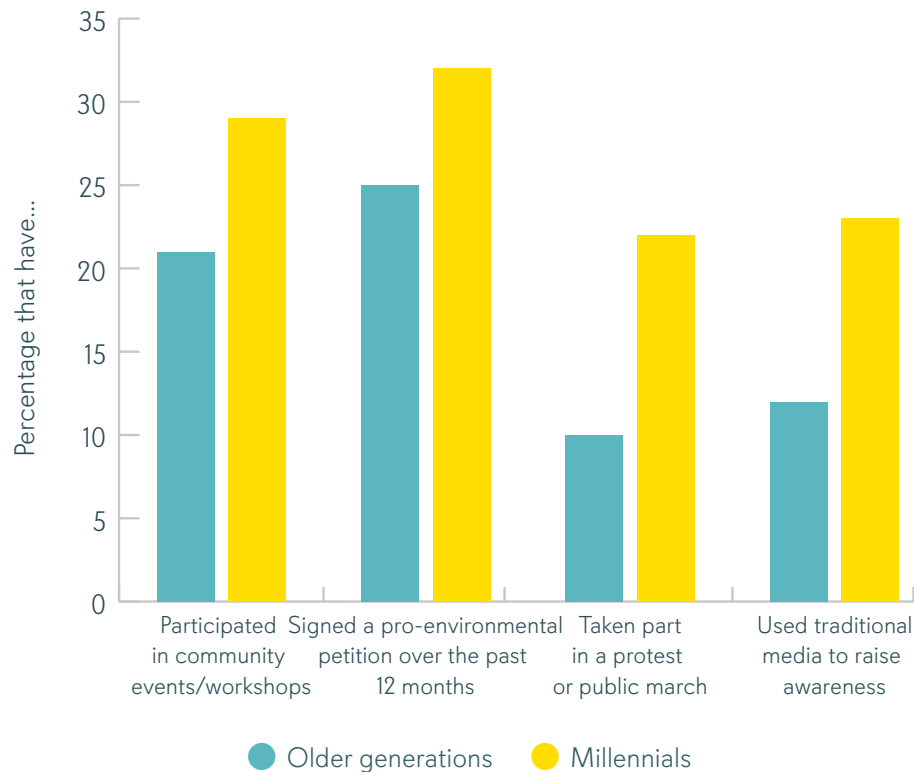
Millennial engagement with climate change issues is complex. They are increasingly engaged with and concerned about climate change — more than any other generation. But many are disengaged and alienated from institutions and processes integral to meaningful climate action.

Recent research reveals clear increases in personal concern and action among millennials — they are advancing the conversation on climate and leading by example through their actions (Fery, et. al, 2018). The 2019 Abacus Data *Canadian Millennials Report* shows 87 per cent of millennials consider themselves to be either environmental moderates or ardent environmentalists; 91 per cent believe stopping climate change is a moral responsibility; and 73 per cent are more likely than other generations to consider climate change as one of the top five factors affecting their vote (Abacus Data, 2019a; Abacus Data, 2019b). Ecoanalytics (2018) reports that 92 per cent of Canadians aged 18 to 34 say that climate change is a serious problem; 71 per cent say the government is not doing enough to address climate change; and 87 per cent agree Canada needs to transition quickly away from fossil fuels to renewable energy. A 2019 Abacus Data climate poll asked people to respond to the statement: “The climate emergency requires that our governments adopt a wartime-scale response, making major investments to retool our economy, and mobilizing everyone in society to transition off fossil fuels to renewable energy.” Nearly 65 per cent of those between 18 and 44 agreed.



Millennials' climate action takes a diversity of forms. People are launching small-scale and informal community-based projects, including art and media projects, awareness-raising events, educational programs and local sustainability initiatives. They're recycling, bicycling, posting on social media, consuming "green" products and following vegetarian or vegan diets (Fenton 2010, Manning 2013). They're participating in networked social movements like Extinction Rebellion and the student climate strikes that use decentralized and peer-to-peer

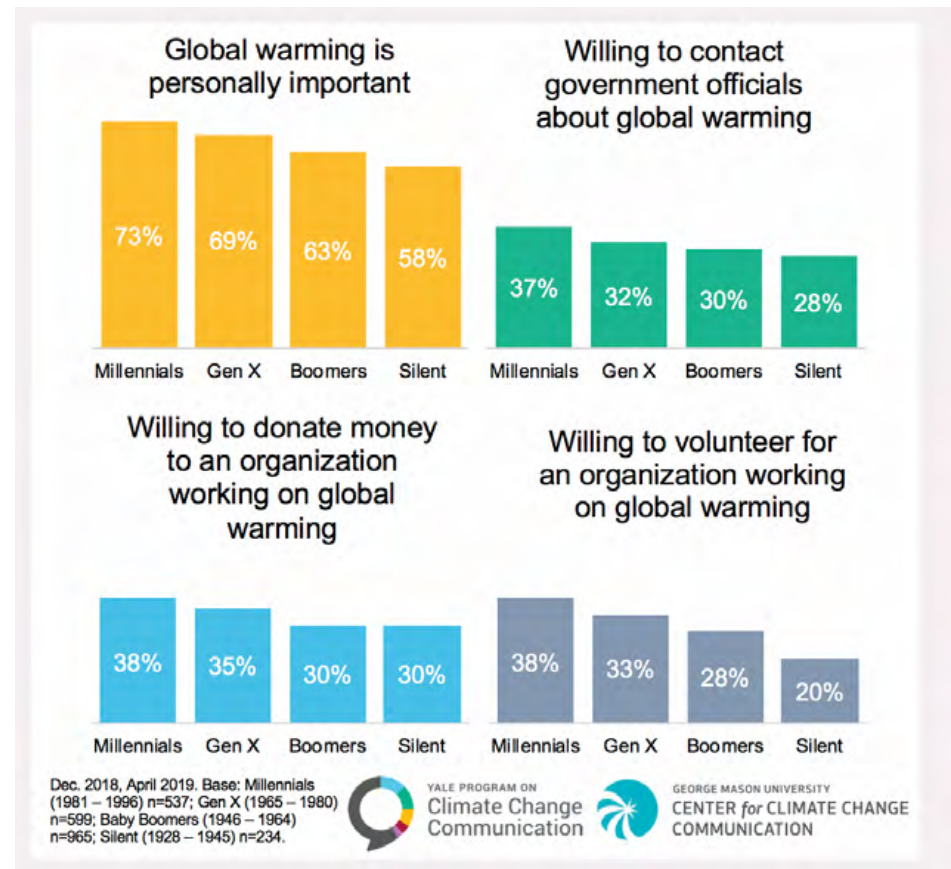
direct action to mobilize millions globally for bold action that addresses the climate emergency. They're also leading advocacy organizations such as 350.org and Youth Climate Lab that aim to shift political and economic power through divestment campaigns, policy development, green entrepreneurship and legal actions that emphasize environmental justice (Fisher 2016; O'Brien, et.al, 2018).



This is where we find the crucial contradiction of millennial engagement in climate change. While millennials' engagement with climate change is diverse and growing, the majority are still not actively engaged in *institutional climate politics*—governance structures required for collectively addressing the problem. This is evidenced in millennials' growing disengagement in elections, political parties and policy processes at all government levels as the climate crisis has intensified. In Canada between 1988 and 2008, turnout in federal elections fell from 75.3 per cent to 58.8 per cent (Elections Canada, 2016). Although the national turnout rate rose to 68.3 per cent in 2015, it declined again to 66 per cent in 2019 (CBC News, 2019). Research from the non-profit group Samara Canada suggests that higher voter turnout has not translated into greater participation in other formal political activities. For instance, less than half of voting-age Canadians participate in a political activity, such as attending a political meeting (30 per cent), donating to a candidate or party (19 per cent) or being part of a political party (eight per cent) (Samara Canada, 2017).

A recent poll report by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication found that 73 per cent of millennials in the United States say that global warming is “personally important” to them, but only 37 per cent said they were willing to contact government officials about the issue. Just 13 per cent said they actually had contacted government officials about the issue in the last year (Ballew et.al., 2019). Referencing the U.S. context, Anthony Leiserowitz, director of the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, explains (2019):

It's not surprising that relatively few people in any generation report having contacted government officials in the past 12 months. Most Americans have no experience doing that, no one has ever asked them to, and many don't know how... The fact that 37 percent of Millennials are willing to contact government officials is an indicator of a potentially politically active public—those that might if asked, if taught what to say, if taught how, etc. But again, most have never been asked to.



While millennials see governments as having the greatest responsibility for catalyzing a response to climate change, they're not engaging with the political institutions and processes that enact and enforce climate policies. This discrepancy is most stark at the municipal level, where voting rarely rises above 50 per cent, yet cities are responsible for much of the front-line issues associated with climate change, such as emergency preparedness, public transit, water supply, waste management and urban design (Canadian Index of Wellbeing, 2014).

So, why doesn't millennials' concern for climate change translate into greater engagement with political institutions?

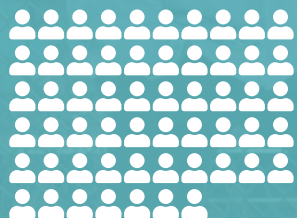
Like other demographics, they may be avoiding engagement with climate change for any number of reasons: fear or grief over current and future impacts; overconfidence in the potential for technology to solve the problem; the assumption that they'll be able to adapt to negative impacts; lack of time or knowledge; or disinterest or disbelief in climate change science (Ojala 2012a, Machin 2013, Liu et al. 2014, Head 2016; O'Brien, et al., 2018). Some researchers argue that many people may also be subjects of socially organized denial or "small-d" denial, in which climate change information is understood in the abstract, but disconnected from everyday political, social and private life (Norgaard, 2011).

Although these reasons point to important factors affecting the degree to which millennials engage in climate change issues, millennial disengagement from institutional climate politics is

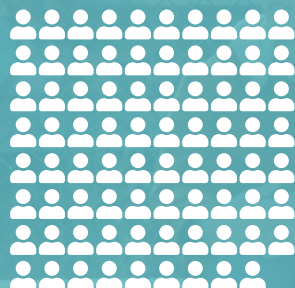
“ **Millennial disengagement from institutional climate politics is a crisis of neoliberal political culture, a consequence of political inequality (based on disparities of income, wealth, power and influence) and a misunderstanding about how and why people participate in politics**

about more than demographic, motivational and social barriers. It's a crisis of neoliberal political culture, a consequence of political inequality (based on disparities of income, wealth, power and influence) and a misunderstanding about how and why people participate in politics. To understand the inconsistencies in millennials' engagement with climate change, it's essential to understand the underlying societal dynamics structuring the cohort's experiences and sensibilities.

VOTER TURNOUT



57%
age 18–24



79%
age 65–74

Source: Elections Canada

ONLY 1 IN 5 CANADIAN YOUTH



IS POLITICALLY ENGAGED

Source: 2019 study of 1,000 Canadians
aged 15 to 30. Abacus Data

Megatrends impacting millennial engagement

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is a political-economic ideology that gained global influence in the 1980s and still dominates today. It's a way of governing that treats "the market" as the most legitimate, efficient way to organize society. It contends that tax and regulation should be minimized, unions should be constrained and public services should be privatized. Two of neoliberalism's key tenets are individualism and self-reliance. As neoliberalism has come to dominant Western societies, it has redefined citizenship in a two-pronged process through which being

“ While millennials see governments as having the greatest responsibility for catalyzing a response to climate change, they're not engaging with the political institutions and processes that enact and enforce climate policies

a "good citizen" is increasingly equated with spending and earning capacity (Gaventa, 2010: 62). The successful entrepreneur, sovereign consumer and hard-working taxpayer are key players in the culture of neoliberalism (Mcguigan, 2016: 118). In Western nations, neoliberalism is the *only* political-economic ideology millennials have ever experienced. As a result, many default to individualism even if they know these actions are inadequate. Feeling powerless to change institutions, they turn to forms of political participation that are market-orientated and evoke personal responsibility—buying organic, reducing air travel, changing eating habits, installing solar panels, having one less child. This can be detrimental to climate change engagement because people end up focusing on individual action in ways that take energy and attention away from collective solutions (e.g., buying an electric car versus organizing for better public transit).

For instance, many climate change posts on Instagram are consumer or lifestyle instructions, often posted by Instagram "influencers" with popular hashtags like #vegan, #plasticfree, #sustainableliving and #zerowaste, which offer actionable solutions by visually linking climate change to more tangible lifestyle ideas around clothing, diet, commuting and shopping habits. These posts rarely connect to policy or specific action people can take, which risks reinforcing neoliberal values of individualism, consumer citizenship and self-reliance.

Neoliberalism creates a challenge and an opportunity for millennial climate change engagement. Pervasive individualism

can exacerbate challenges associated with inequality and undermine collectivist orientations required for climate action, but individual modes of participation can also create opportunities for more adaptive, flexible responses to the complex set of issues associated with climate change. The value of individualism in this context is in supporting *entrepreneurial activism* or *everyday heroism*—dynamic and motivated “individuals” who use their creativity, social networks and digital technologies to assemble fresh forms of collective action and solidarity that open up new spaces for political engagement, for themselves and for others (Cross, et. a., 2015). This allows millennials to “live” their politics through “micro-political” actions and “everyday change-making.” An example of this form of political entrepreneurship: 17-year-old Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, who has called out rich elites for obstructing progress on climate change issues and inspired millions of students and supporters worldwide to take part in strikes.

BOTTOM LINE:

- Efforts to engage millennials must consistently connect the dots between the personal, the social and the political. This means **always** making the link between “everyday” individual action and the “bigger picture” policy change required. Simply encouraging “green consumerism” or lifestyle change on their own (without the broader policy context) risks reinforcing neoliberalism norms counterproductive to transformative climate action.



“ The value of individualism in this context is in supporting entrepreneurial activism or everyday heroism — “individuals” who use their creativity, social networks and digital technologies to assemble fresh forms of collective action and solidarity that open up new spaces for political engagement

Democratic (and civic literacy) deficit

Millennials lack faith in and knowledge (practical and theoretical) about collective climate action via democratic institutions. Tanguay (2009: 223) describes democratic deficit as “a widespread sense among voters...that the traditional mechanisms of representative democracy — political parties, elections, and territorially based legislatures — are simply not up to the task of articulating or defending the interests of the vast majority of citizens in the current age.”

This sentiment is reflected in a 2014 Canadian study that found two-thirds (65 per cent) of Canadians aged 15 to 30 give governments a score of five or less out of 10 for responding to the needs/views of young Canadians. Half of those polled say there isn't much difference between political parties, or that it would make little difference to their daily lives which party was elected (Abacus Data, 2019c). As a result, they're “hacking together” a climate politics that includes a vast array of individual actions and engagement with populist movements, but few strategic collective initiatives focused on institutions, especially at the local/municipal level.

“**Millennials lack faith in and knowledge about collective climate action via democratic institutions**

In addition to democratic deficit, millennials also exhibit **civic literacy deficit**. They lack basic knowledge and skills about how governments works, how decisions are made and how to influence those decisions. This is the result of poor civic education exacerbated by the decline in newspapers, information overload, fake news, filter bubbles and echo chambers (Morden, et, al, 2019).

Democratic and civic literacy deficits result in what Cross, et al. (2015) refer to as “**reluctant cynicism**” — a strong desire for more aggressive political action to address climate change, but deep skepticism that governments, corporations or fellow citizens can be convinced about the need to address the problem. In other words, the authors discovered a strong desire for information and stories about concrete, positive action that provides “a different kind of news” that counteracts cynicism and shows examples of effective political engagement.

BOTTOM LINE:

- Efforts to engage millennials must address the deep intertwining of the climate and democratic crises and provide road maps for how to use democratic systems and processes to address the climate crisis. One effective way of doing this is by using historical examples of how change has been made in the past.
- Addressing democratic and civic literacy deficits also means fostering a democratic culture within the ENGO sector by making decision-making more participatory.



Economic context

Millennials have matured in an economic context characterized by uncertainty, anxiety and stagnation intensified by the 2008 Great Recession and continuing today. Several factors have contributed to the difficult financial position facing millennials: wage stagnation; the rise of precarious work and the decline of unions; an aging population and the resulting increase in the cost of pensions; increasing government debt; increased housing and tuition costs; and a fiscal context in which millennials receive less government support than older generations (Kershaw, 2018). This has garnered descriptors like “the Unluckiest Generation” (Thomson, 2013), the “Burnout Generation” (Peterson, 2019) and inspired Canadian advocacy organizations like the right-leaning “Generation Screwed” and the left-leaning “Generation Squeeze.” Most millennials are financially far behind where their parents were when they were in their 20s and 30s. They have far less saved, far less equity, far less stability and *far* more student debt.

Although millennials care about climate change, there are many competing priorities for their attention — such as immediate needs of employment, housing and food — that feel, in many ways, more immediate than climate change (Corner, et. al., 2015).

BOTTOM LINE:

- Any effort to engage millennials needs to be rooted in a transformational vision for the next economy, particularly in regard to jobs, debt, housing and the cost of living.

The rise of participatory culture and politics

As millennials withdraw from formal political institutions, they’re creating new participatory political cultures. For many millennials in Western societies, participation is a cultural norm and form of collective meaning-making. Networked and mobile media has given rise to a “**participatory culture**” in which it’s much easier for average people to take part in social, cultural, economic and political phenomena. For instance, the “**participation economy**” allows customers to engage directly in business models of companies such as Airbnb, Uber, TripAdvisor and Yelp or shape new products, as with initiatives by numerous brands that have taken a “co-creation” approach, such as McDonald’s, Old Spice and Starbucks.

“**Participatory culture has also spawned “participatory politics,” activities that leverage technology, peer-to-peer communication and cultural production to influence the political sphere**



Participatory culture has also spawned “**participatory politics**,” activities that leverage technology, peer-to-peer communication and cultural production (via audio, video, text, or performative art and media) to influence the political sphere. Much of

participatory politics promotes values such as self-organization, networked governance and “do-it-ourselves” maker culture. It’s often motivated by personal values and a self-actualization. It’s dynamic and can be aimed at a variety of targets, ranging from governments, parties and candidates to individuals and corporations (Bennett, 2012: 22). Building an app, starting a social enterprise, coining a hashtag, creating a meme, becoming a vegan, boycotting or “buycotting” a product, planting a garden, posting a photo, throwing a street party, forwarding emails, yarn bombing or attending a poetry slam can all be considered emerging forms of participatory, do-it-yourself climate action.

Combined with networked communications and digital tools, this approach to participation allows forms of **“new power”** (Heimans and Timms, 2018) to emerge that operate largely outside formal political institutions and often manifest in conjunction with networked social movements.

BOTTOM LINE:

- Engagement efforts need to draw on participatory culture, where supporters act as contributors or producers.
- Engagement efforts need to make a link between the climate emergency, participatory culture movements (e.g. selfies, testimonials, how-to videos) and formal modes of decision-making (elections, political parties and policy-making).

“While millennials want to participate, they will resist situations where their contributions are reduced to tokenism or “decoration” within projects or at events or forums.* This is particularly true for those from ethnic minorities or low-income communities who often feel especially excluded from meaningful participation in current climate change debates and decisions.”

* (Hart 2008, Checkoway 2011, Taft and Gordon 2013; O’Brien, et. al, 2018)

- Engagement efforts need to be specific, clearly explaining what needs to be done, and who, when, where and how millennials can use their professional skills, creative talents and personal networks to have influence.

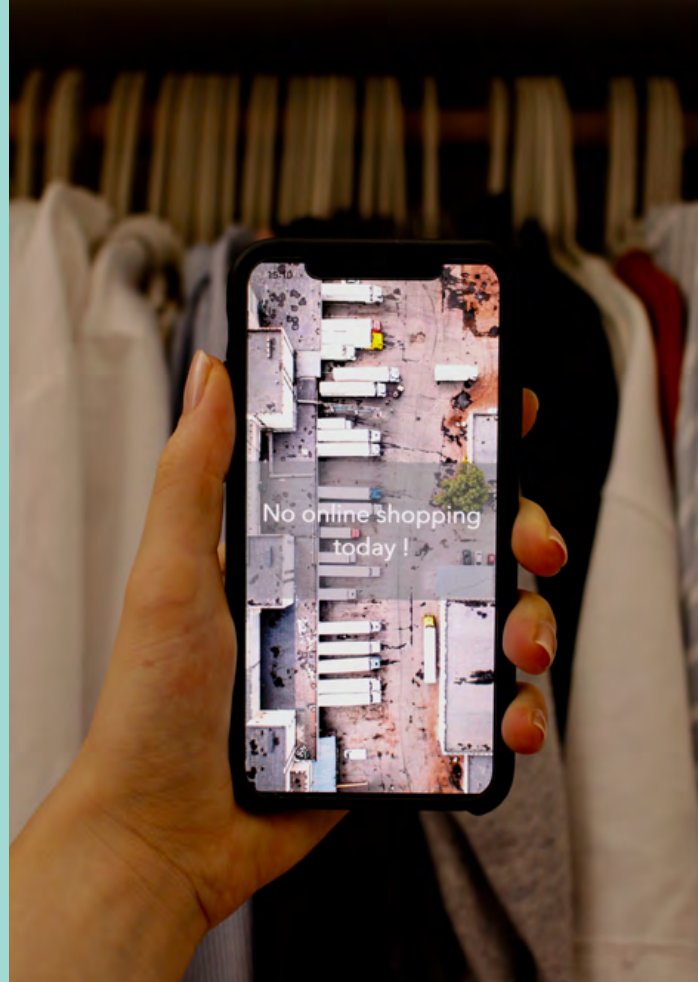
PART 3:

BUILDING BRIDGES

Crafting a millennial engagement strategy

Millennial climate change engagement is not an attitude problem. Millennials care about climate change. It's an action problem — there's a disconnect between how millennials choose to be heard on climate change and how climate policies are changed. Millennial engagement with climate change is rising, manifesting in the workplace, the home, in social circles and at the checkout counter. But millennials are not consistently showing up in formal political spaces, such as voting on election day or in policy processes. The misalignment between older, more formal approaches to engagement and newer, more informal ones is the central challenge of getting millennials to participate in climate action.

At a broad level, an effective millennial strategy acts as a bridge — connecting do-it-yourself, informal participation with formal institutional participation; online communities and offline gatherings; participatory culture and participatory politics; individual action and collective movements; local practices and global mindsets; millennial climate champions with baby boomer allies; and the idea of democracy with its practice.



Recommendations

These are drawn from looking at best practices of groups and organizations effectively engaging millennials in climate change and other socio-political issues. They're wide-reaching, ambitious and meant to spark ideas and discussion about how DSF can evolve to meet millennials' needs and remain relevant in rapidly evolving participatory culture. Each includes a rationale, and ideas for quick starts and longer-term projects and organizational changes.

PRINCIPLE 1: OPENNESS

A millennial engagement strategy needs to model a democratic culture through face-to-face gatherings, greater transparency, co-creation and a more human approach to online communications.

Recommendation 1:

Be open to transformation and nurture millennial leadership.

Rationale: Effectively reaching millennials requires significant transformation in engagement approaches, organizational culture and decision-making. Supporting millennial leadership (inside and outside DSF) is fundamental to building a strong millennial supporter base.

QUICK STARTS:

- Survey millennials to find out what they want to see from DSF.
- Capture age information from supporters whenever possible.
- Stay up-to-date on millennial views, behaviours, cultural trends and opinions through EcoAnalytics surveys, subscribing to Abacus Data's millennial research or commissioning Abacus Data for millennial-specific polls.

LONGER TERM:

- Make it policy that 50 per cent of DSF board of directors be occupied by people under 40 years of age or establish a youth council that has decision-making power.
- Recruit/promote millennials to leadership positions.
- Build long-term partnerships with youth-led organizations like Hua Foundation, Climate Hub, Apathy is Boring, CityHive, Youth Climate Lab, Gen Squeeze and others.
- Hire a change-management consultant to help get buy-in from staff and facilitate organizational evolution.
- Establish an "innovation lab" for millennial engagement (see conclusion).

Recommendation 2: Be more human and transparent.

Rationale: Millennials grew up with the internet and social media and are accustomed to openness and transparency. Tangible, proactive transparency helps millennials understand how the organization is creating impact. Practising transparency also allows the organization to tell its own story, rather than being misrepresented by opponents and helps pre-empt mischaracterizations from opposing groups.

QUICK STARTS:

- Post video blogs and stories offering a behind-the-scenes view of DSF and interviews with staff about their roles and why they work for the organization.
- On social media, highlight citizen donors and share images of how small donations contribute significantly to how DSF is funded.
- Speak like a person, not an organization, expressing emotions and personal takes on issues (e.g., Sunrise Movement).
- When engaging with supporters, tell the history of DSF often and be explicit about DSF's "theory of change".



UBC Climate Hub is at University of British Columbia.

April 7, 2019 · Vancouver · 🌐



Next up: Adriana Laurent! Adri is our wonderful Events and Engagement Lead! She is the official Climate Hub DJ (but actually, find her on Spotify). She is a 5th year undergrad in Land and Food Systems in the Global Resource System major. She can speak FOUR (4) languages and preference crunchy over smooth peanut butter. She also 13/10 likes dogs. Her favorite fruits are 🥭 (mangoes) and raspberries. @ University of British Columbia



Grace Nosek, Rohina Dass and 31 others



Sunrise Movement

January 2 at 2:14 PM · 🌐



Thank you to the thousands of Sunrise Movement members who took part in our Presidential Endorsement process. ❤️

We are currently verifying the data and will be releasing the full results of the vote to the movement and the public a week from today on January 9th.

Our movement took this process very seriously and engaged in thoughtful and deliberate conversations. No matter what, we remain united as a movement as we work towards our north star of building the people & political power needed to make this the Decade of the Green New Deal.



259

13 Comments 6 Shares

LONGER TERM:

- Adopt the “public narrative model” developed by Marshall Ganz (2009) and provide workshops to DSF staff and supporter on how to be “compelling climate storytellers” using this model.
- Explain or show how you make decisions, and discuss (some) challenges openly (e.g., OpenMedia’s [“Under the Hood” blog series](#)).
- Regularly invite and listen to supporter feedback; ask them questions and request suggestions on ways to improve through email surveys or social media polls (see Appendix for examples).
- Embrace SMS/texting as a core communication tool.



Recommendation 3:

Embrace co-creation and share power.

Rationale: Millennials want to play an active role in customizing their participation. This deepens commitment and enthusiasm, and allows supporters to contribute their professional or creative skills. Co-creation processes can provide precious insights, allows for more democratic decision-making and give rise to innovations by tapping into the community’s collective intelligence.

QUICK STARTS:

- Amplify social content from supporters.
- Allow supporters to customize and adapt campaign messages and visuals to better suit local contexts.
- Share social capital by creating spaces for millennials to connect with decision-makers (e.g., invite millennial supporters to meetings with elected officials, business leaders, influencers, topic experts, etc.).
- Conduct an annual survey with supporters to inform organizational goals (see Appendix for examples and [Blueprints for Change how-to guide](#)).

LONGER TERM:

- Promote more internal, democratic decision-making via collective decision-making software (e.g., Loomio).
- Consider adopting participatory budgeting where staff and supporters help determine how some funds are spent.
- Explore merging public engagement with government relations through crowdsourcing policy recommendations (see Appendix for examples).
- Conduct pilot projects that experiment with crowdsourcing and small co-creation projects that invite supporters to pitch campaign ideas, co-create visual materials, give feedback on campaign messaging or test a digital tool (see Appendix for examples).

PRINCIPLE 2: SALIENCE

A millennial engagement strategy needs to connect climate change (and the transition to renewable energy) to other salient issues such as the economy, housing, health and wellness, affordability, racial/gender equality, education, careers, wages/debt, work-life balance/quality of life, child care/parenting. Increasing salience requires understanding key segments of the millennial demographic and speaking to their experience, values and needs.

Recommendation 4:

Prioritize an intersectional lens and merge climate change with social equity issues.

Rationale: Research shows that environmentalism is largely dominated by white, middle-class people. Because climate change disproportionately affects racialized, Indigenous and low-income people and women, building relationships with these communities is crucial. In addition, people who face economic challenges tend to prioritize immediate concerns like how to make rent or get to work, which pushes climate change to be marginalized as “environmental”. There is a need to embed climate change issues in other social and economic concerns.

QUICK STARTS:

- Frame climate action as a common-sense affordability issue, especially when discussing transportation, housing, land use and renewable energy.
- Emphasize the economic and job opportunities of transitioning off fossil fuels (e.g. Green New Deal).
- Prioritize and test “climate justice” frames that connect climate solutions to environmental racism, inequality and decolonization (e.g. positioning climate change as a “movement of movements”).
- Have internal conversations about race, privilege, inclusion and equity and adjust organizational policies to account for inequities.

- Tell emotionally compelling stories of working class and black, Indigenous, people of colour millennials and millennial parents that explore the loss, grief and hardship caused by climate change and how individuals and communities are coping with these realities.

LONGER TERM:

- Prioritize diversity and recruit BIPOC to empowered roles as managers, staff, volunteers, content creators, consultants, etc.
- Partner with millennial-focused organizations that serve BIPOC communities to create opportunities to engage about climate change in ways that reflect their experiences and values.
- Apply a social equity lens to all energy transition and climate campaigns.
- Provide child-minding at all public events and offer transportation vouchers to attendees.
- Partner with organizations like Generation Squeeze to emphasize the #TaxShift message, which advocates for shifting the tax burden away from millennials and on to polluting corporations.
- Launch a campaign (or support an existing one) that asks corporations to pay their fair share for climate adaptation costs (such as West Coast Environmental Law's "Climate Law In Our Hands").

Recommendation 5:

Emphasize the “gain frame” (while leveraging feelings of loss aversion).

Rationale: Research shows that a frame emphasizing the benefits of action produces more positive attitudes among millennials toward taking action on climate change and enhances perceived self-efficacy (Maibach, et al. 2010; Rabinovich, et al. 2010). While the gain frame is essential, it can be intensified by combining it with loss aversion. Combining gain and loss (or positive and negative outcomes) charges the political energy needed to mobilize existing supporters and activate new constituencies.

QUICK STARTS:

- Use images and memes that show a stark difference in daily life between the benefits of a “low-carbon heaven” and “climate change hell.”
- Focus on the health (mental and physical) benefits of addressing climate change (e.g., via health/wellness practitioners in videos or guest blogs).
- Tell stories about how engaging in climate action provides authentic community experiences that give people meaning, reduce anxiety and facilitate and produce tangible benefits (e.g., the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' The Good Life — The Green Life project).
- Link climate change to things people love and need such as

clean air and water, weather, food/farming, seasons, recreation, health and way of life (Comeau, et. al, 2018).

LONGER TERM:

- Run annual contests for artists, students, designers and media makers to submit work that offers a compelling vision of “low carbon heaven” or visions of a “practical utopia” (Dauncey, 2019).
- Host events and create media that facilitate or encourage “happy activism” (Forman, 2019), in contrast to the isolation of climate grief and anxiety, and invite millennial supporters to contribute their talent through music, art and local food and drink.
- Connect climate leadership to national pride in “progressive Canadiana” by positioning climate justice as a nation-building, public enterprise that benefits all people in Canada while also respecting Indigenous sovereignty. Draw out the similarities between taking bold climate action and historic/iconic events, places, people, activities and other objects in the collective Canadian psyche (Gunster, et. al, 2018).
- Use compelling visuals, memes and short videos to emphasize the *economic* benefits to millennials of quickly transitioning from fossil fuels (affordability, efficiency, savings, rewarding careers, green jobs) while showing the consequences of not transitioning fast enough.

Recommendation 6:

Target “tribes” of millennials through “relational activism.”

Rationale: Millennials are the most diverse generation in Canada’s history, across ethnic, national and religious backgrounds, and in terms of values and life choices. Any serious effort to reach and engage them will require careful consideration of key segments. “Relational activism” focuses on making change happen through personal and informal relationships. It emerges from a resistance to traditional forms of activism (which may feel exclusionary or intimidating) and a desire to avoid being paralyzed by complex social problems (Dove and Fisher, 2019).

Millennial parents illustrate how relational climate activism can work. The ubiquity of online forums, parenting blogs, Facebook groups and community meet-ups means that many are highly networked and potentially effective “trusted messengers” for climate change communications. The commonality of child rearing can forge new climate narratives of solidarity through relationships that can transcend the political, racial, socioeconomic and geographic barriers that have plagued the mainstream environmental movement.

QUICK STARTS:

- Test social media strategies targeted at specific segments (e.g., Instagram influencers who speak to new Canadians,

Facebook groups for younger parents).

- Find “vouchers” (representatives) from each millennial “tribe” to speak to their own (EnviroNics Analytics, 2017a).
- Frame supporters as the protagonists in a climate melodrama.

“**Millennial parents illustrate how relational climate activism can work. The commonality of child rearing can forge new climate narratives through relationships that transcend political, racial, socioeconomic and geographic barriers that plague the mainstream environmental movement**

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LONGER TERM:

- Experiment with relational engagement technology (e.g., Outreach Circle and Team).
- Use human-centred design³ to understand targeted millennial tribes, determine their climate change communication and engagement needs and how to best meet them. *Listen and act* on what they say.
- Prioritize partnerships with organizations that serve subgroups or tribes.

³ Human-centred design is a suite of ethnographic approaches that seeks insight into user behaviour, goals and challenges to design products, services, experiences and communication that address the user's needs.

Recommendation 7:

Engage artists/creatives and utilize popular culture.

Rationale: “People don’t share policy papers, they share things that move them” (Dunbcome and Lambert, 2018). Using pop culture and artistic activism as key communication strategies acknowledges that *climate change is a cultural issue*. It’s also suited for the age of cellphone cameras and social networks, allowing millennials to engage on their own terms and in more accessible ways.

QUICK STARTS:

- Jump on popular hashtags, memes and culture trends then link them to messaging on climate change and renewable energy (e.g., Lady Gaga as renewable energy).
- Find and share art and culture projects (TV shows, films, music, video games, comedians, etc.) that depict climate change as an ethical issue and use these to engage in social media conversations.
- Experiment with using video-sharing social networking service TicTok and invite the DSF community to contribute.

LONGER TERM:

- Work with content creators, arts organizations and culture makers as partners, not technicians.



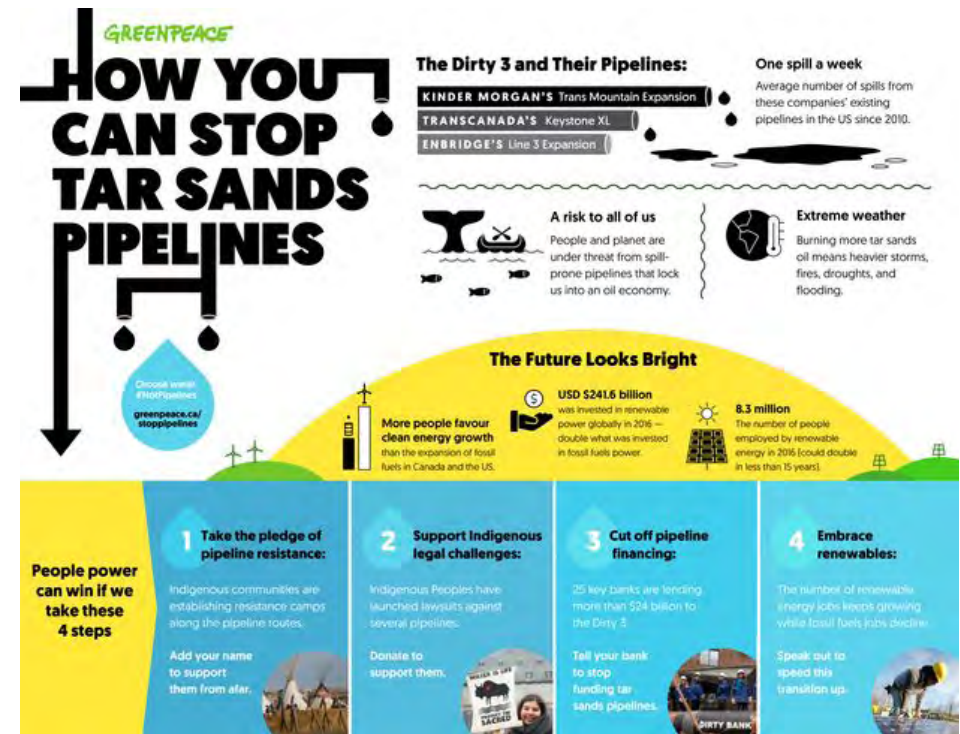
- Create an artist- or storyteller-in-residence position to help interpret climate change/renewable energy through a pop culture and artistic activism lens and integrate visuals arts, performance and music as a central tactic in movement-building.
- Run crowdfunding campaigns for art/media projects depicting “awesome solutions.”

PRINCIPLE 3: CAPACITY

Millennials are accustomed to a participatory culture in which they can use digital tools to contribute and influence. A millennial strategy needs to use participatory culture as a way to build civic literacy by inviting them to be producers, makers, convenors and collaborators.

Recommendation 8: Teach civic/political literacy related to climate issues.

Rationale: Information about how to engage politically and the effects of political engagement is just as important as climate change science (Cross, et. al, 2015). What’s needed is clear, consistent and easily accessible knowledge on how social change is made, how democratic institutions and processes work, how power dynamics operate, how to navigate political participation (beyond voting), what are current policy discussions, who the key players are and how to influence them.



QUICK STARTS:

- Survey DSF community members about what civic/ democratic skills they need to engage in climate change and what skills they can contribute.
- Host “ask me anything” discussions on Reddit with climate activists, authors and experts.
- Repeat the message that a single political action (e.g., voting, joining an organization, participating in a campaign) can — with other people’s single actions — create a collective political force with transformative consequences (Cross, et. al, 2015).
- Create sharable how-to quick tips and tricks (perhaps

partnering with millennial-serving, media-producing organizations) on topics such as how to present at city hall, talk to your family about climate change, strategically question political leaders, and facilitate an info session on renewable energy.

LONGER TERM:

- Adopt the “[Full Spectrum Engagement](#)” framework, especially the engagement principles.
- Provide a compelling, specific theory of change for every campaign that includes a road map to how change happens, how government decisions are made, specific actions that need to be taken at what time, DSF’s role, supporters’ roles and stories of successes/what has worked in the past.
- Host (and record) regular mass Zoom calls with supporters that update supporters on campaigns and next steps.
- Partner with civic engagement organizations like Samara, Apathy is Boring and Civix to lower the voting age to 16 and connect this effort to climate change issues.
- Create a network of volunteer mentors who act as “movement coaches”, offering informal support to emerging climate leaders.
- Evolve the fellowships program into a “climate leaders bootcamp” where cohorts of emerging climate leaders participate in a 3–6 month program where they are exposed to movement-building skills, networks and strategies.



Sunrise Movement

17 mins · 🌐

Have you ever wanted to learn more about video production, help win a Green New Deal, and become friends with an awesome crew of creative people across the country? WELL, have we got the training for you. From March 27th –29th, you'll learn video strategy, production, and team leadership. We need a distributed mass media network to tell the story of the Green New Deal at a massive scale. The right has Fox News, so we're building the scrappy socialist film school known the Sun... [See More](#)

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Recommendation 9:

Use Instagram to connect lifestyle politics to climate policy.

Rationale: Instagram is highly popular among millennials and peers are among the most “trusted messengers” as climate change information sources (Corner, et. a. 2015). Instagram allows users to “talk in pictures,” offering a visual rather than textual way of grappling with the often-abstract notion of climate change (Smith & Joffe 2013; Hodson, et. al 2018). The potential is in leveraging the compelling, persuasive impact of Instagram images and the social capital of Instagram influencers to engage millennials in more formal climate policy processes.



QUICK STARTS:

- Use popular hashtags like #vegan, #plasticfree, #sustainableliving and #zerowaste.
- On Instagram, repeatedly acknowledge the social and structural constraints that currently make it much more difficult to adopt a lifestyle of sustainable consumption (e.g., it's hard to go #plasticfree when there are inadequate laws to stop/disincentivize production).
- Monitor DSF's influence on Instagram to see what content is best or most successfully shared.
- Publicly recognize those taking your message to their networks and creating impact.
- Use Later.com to review best practices for Instagram social marketing.

LONGER TERM:

- Create a Dropbox folder or Slack channel that acts as a climate change communication toolkit for influencers with ready-to-share images, videos, files or messages.
- Explore partnerships with Instagram, Later.com or dating apps to connect lifestyle to “climate citizenship.”
- Provide opportunities for influencers to do something unique or valuable with their participation such as field trips, photography, interviews or how-to videos (e.g., mend clothing, cook a vegan meal, reduce plastic consumption, etc.).

- Thoughtfully scope potential partnerships with influencers and pitch the win-win potential in partnership (the opportunity to be a community leader, express their creativity, gain more followers, and contribute to society by helping others and the environment).

Recommendation 10: Facilitate “cool experiences” that build community.

Rationale: Research demonstrates that young people are more likely to understand, care and act on climate change if they can engage with it directly and experientially through some form of educational, outreach or social activity (Hickman, 2012; Senbel and Blair, 2014). Marketing literature on the “experience movement” shows that millennials are looking for meaningful experiences over consumption experiences (Eventbrite, 2017).

QUICK STARTS:

- Partner with local millennial-serving groups to host “climate social” events or workshops that bring together culture and climate change (e.g., The Vegan Project, local event organizing platforms like Hoovie for film screenings and SideDoor and So Far for music shows).

LONGER TERM:

- Hire an “experience co-ordinator” to focus exclusively on social and outdoor events targeted at millennials (e.g., live music shows, movie nights, tree planting, beach cleanup, citizen science projects, etc.).
- Partner with restaurants on dinners that celebrate local food and facilitate discussions there on climate change issues.
- Expand Camp Suzuki to include field trips where participants visit and learn about local renewable energy projects.



MEC OUTDOOR NATION SUMMITS



CAMP



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MEC Outdoor Nation is about making young Canadians feel welcome outside.

FOR THE
WORLD

CONCLUSION

Creating an “innovation lab” for millennial engagement

Innovation labs are operating structures (often within large organizations and governments) that experiment with new ways of addressing public challenges through methods such as co-creation, crowdsourcing, user-centred design and behaviour economics. They come in a variety of formats, but the basic operating system usually includes:

- Scanning for and identifying key issues, priorities and tasks.
- Developing ideas that impact on these areas.
- Testing and prototyping solutions.
- Creating routes into larger-scale impact or systems change (Puttick 2014).

Navigating millennial climate change engagement is complex and necessitates experimentation. An innovation lab at DSF could be container for experimentation while offering a way to open decision-making to new voices and ideas—particularly from millennial supporters. It could allow DSF to be more nimble and responsive to millennials’ needs by adopting an ethos of co-creation. It’s also an opportunity to create a new,

millennial-friendly brand that can draw on DSF's credibility without being weighed down by any baggage associated with the brand.

The climate emergency is taking place at a time when culture has never moved faster. The speed of societal change demands that legacy environmental organizations think differently about how they attract supporters and share power with a new generation of climate leaders.

“ **There will be no solutions to climate change that are done to people. The solutions to climate change have to be done by people — and by diverse groups of people — if they’re going to endure and ... bring about the changes needed.**

— Craig Bennett, CEO, Friends of the Earth

APPENDIX: EXAMPLES OF CO-CREATION

Participatory culture can be leveraged to facilitate co-creation — an innovative approach to millennial engagement that operates on the principles of collaboration, openness, and experimentation. Over the past decade, improved communication technologies have helped co-creation and crowdsourcing harness collective intelligence in public engagement processes ranging from urban planning (Brabham, 2008; 2009) to open source journalism (Fink and Anderson, 2015) and, more recently, public policy development (Aitamurto, 2015).

Examples from business

The marketing literature stresses co-creation to engage millennials in the participation economy. It's been widely adopted in the business and marketing sectors and used by numerous global brands such as McDonald's, Starbucks, Samsung and Airbnb looking to attract millennials. In the business context, it involves developing new product and service ideas with customers who are going to use them. It turns market research into a more dynamic, creative and democratic process. Some popular models deployed by the business sector include:

Crowdsourcing

An open call to a large network of people inviting them to participate in a task online (by sharing an opinion, ranking ideas, submitting information, knowledge or talent).

Example: Craft beer brewer Samuel Adams used a Facebook app to crowdsource ideas for a new product. Participants helped determine its colour, clarity, body, hops and malt.

Insight communities

Closed communities for insight on products, services or marketing (akin to a large focus group). **Example:** Danone set up the Activia Advisory Board, a community of 400 women called to help create new products and drive marketing campaigns.

Brand planning communities

Closed communities for insight into strategic brand planning.

Example: Sony handpicked 1,000 people from across the U.K. for their Sony Music Backstage community that helps shape their campaigns through brainstorming, debates, workshops and surveys and provides regular updates on its impact on internal decision-making.

Project-based communities

Open call for a group to be formed around a specific (and often significant) problem or challenge. When it's solved, the group is dissolved. **Example:** Kraft created an online community across 50 countries to reinvent their company mission. The project lasted four months and produced insights that defined a new corporate mission, vision and values.

Marketing communities

An open group formed to turn people into advocates for a brand and drive word of mouth, often run through social media. **Example:** Lego allows users to design new products and, at the same time, test demand. Any user can submit a design that other users can vote for. The idea with the most votes moves to production and the creator receives a one per cent royalty on net revenue. By promoting their idea, creators promote Lego, too.

Internal collaboration communities

Leverage creativity, skills, knowledge and insight from employees to pitch concepts, build on ideas and get feedback.

Case studies: Co-creation and non-governmental organizations

Some NGOs have applied co-creation principles in innovative engagement campaigns:

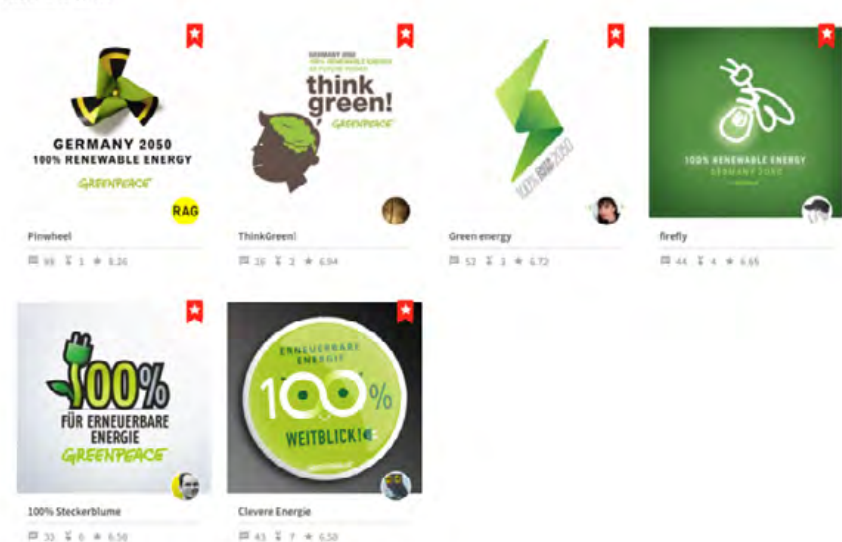
Case study 1: Greenpeace

Greenpeace has run several crowdsourcing campaigns, including to save the Arctic from oil drilling, targeting McDonald's about genetically modified organisms, demanding transparency on the cost of cheap meat and campaigns on renewable energy. Greenpeace uses the online crowdsourcing platform Jovoto to run contests that invite people to submit ideas. Winners receive cash prizes. Depending on the campaign, participants submit ideas for campaign visuals, key messages, quotes and design ideas.

In 2013, Greenpeace India invited people to design a climate solution: a replacement for dirty diesel pumps. Using the Jovoto platform, they defined the challenge, target group (small- and medium-scale Indian farmers in Bihar state) and mandatory requirements (the pump needed to be powered by clean energy, portable, locally serviceable, cost-effective and provide sufficient pumping performance). Proposals were judged on capability, viability, affordability and feasibility and



Awarded ideas



four cash prizes were awarded, including a consulting contract (where the winner received up to €5,000 — about C\$7,260 — to support prototype development). The Jovoto platform allowed Greenpeace to create a project briefing describing the problem they were looking to solve. Creatives in the community submitted ideas, which were discussed and rated by other members. The open collaboration forum allowed community members to provide feedback to build on ideas and make them better. The project's publicness allowed everyone to take part. Passionate people with average skills could submit ideas alongside professional designers or illustrators with a high level of creative work. Because the contest was live, people could see the creative process as it happened, from floating, updating and commenting on ideas, to receiving and working on feedback.

In most cases, co-creation is used as a way to maintain pressure on decision-makers, keep public engagement high and collect fresh ideas outside of what people within Greenpeace would usually create. An advantage of this approach is that it engages the community in co-creation while increasing the campaign's profile by providing more opportunities to talk about it and build excitement for the outcome.

Case study 2: OpenMedia

Through a combination of widespread digital engagement and collaboration with policy experts, several of OpenMedia's campaigns have culminated in crowdsourced policy recommendation reports, submissions and interventions that forge new roads into the notoriously opaque processes of telecommunications policy-making. OpenMedia's process for producing crowdsourced policy recommendation reports is multi-phased and can last anywhere from six to 18 months. It includes a combination of targeted in-person consultations with specific stakeholder groups and broad online actions (including petitions, social media comments, drag and drop interactive surveys and internet town halls to discuss the policy with OpenMedia staff and policy experts). Once significant data have been gathered, staff work with policy experts, scholars and legal professionals to identify themes and core concerns. The crowdsourcing process works in tandem with OpenMedia's advocacy and is deployed strategically to take advantage of policy windows and consensus mobilization to win campaigns.



Canada's Privacy Plan

A Crowdsourced Agenda for Tackling Canada's Privacy Deficit

How would you rank the priorities below if you were developing privacy safeguards relating to government entities? **Drag the items below** to rank them in order of priority from top to bottom.

Tough penalties for when govt breaks privacy laws
Privacy rules should be shaped democratically
More transparency around govt collection of personal data
Independent oversight and review of spy agencies
Require a warrant for govt to spy on personal information
End blanket surveillance of law-abiding people

First name *

Last name

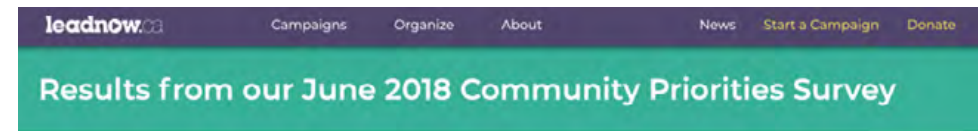
Your email address *

That was fun! I'd like to provide more input!

I'm done!

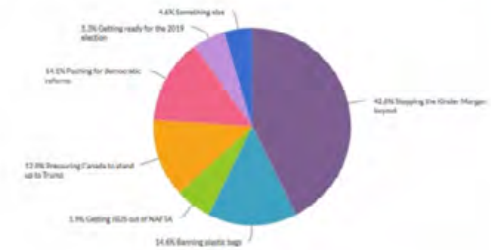
Case study 3: Leadnow

Since launching in 2011, the advocacy organization Leadnow invites its members to participate in a major survey in order to understand how they feel about the current political context and to set campaign priorities for the next year. Between 5,000 and 10,000 people complete the survey. Once it's complete, Leadnow shares the results with its community with commentary on what the results mean for its work. Leadnow has embedded deliberative democracy and consultations into its organizational culture and its work is driven by community priorities.



Canada (excluding BC & ON)

3. What should be our top priority this year?



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