

On screen Muriel Howden

Welcome, everyone, and thank you for joining our third Vibrant Voices webinar.

My name is Muriel Howden.

I am the executive assistant and senior outreach advisor for RTO ERO.

(in French)

As we begin the webinar today, we would like to pay our respects to the indigenous lands that connect us across Canada.

Then our board chair, Rich Profit, will introduce today's panellists.

We acknowledge, recognize and honour the ancestral traditional territories on which we live and work, and the contributions of all Indigenous peoples to our communities and our nation.

(in French)

Merci.

Thank you.

Miigwech.

Rich?

On Screen Rich Profit

Thanks, Muriel.

Hello, my name is Rich Profit.

I'm the chair of the board of directors at RTO ERO.

And I want to thank you for joining us today.

RTO ERO is a bilingual, trusted voice on healthy, active living in the retirement journey.

We work with our members and partners to advocate for critical policy improvements to address urgent needs now, and create a more secure and compassionate future for everyone.

Our three key advocacy issues are senior strategy, geriatric training, and environmental stewardship.

The topic for today's webinar is: Our Earth, our responsibility, take action.

Our talented panellists will provide insight on how to coordinate activities, accomplish goals, and take action oriented steps to help protect the planet.

We have three panellists for today's webinar.

Our first panellist, Katia Bannister, is joining us from British Columbia.

Katia is a 17-year-old youth climate activist and community organizer from Thetis Island, British Columbia.

Katia is a firm believer in climate justice and a strong advocate for global change.

She inspires youth to take action in their communities, develop skills and leadership, and use their unique voices and talents to create the change they want to see not only now, but also in the future.

Katia's mother is our second panellist, Dr. Kelly Bannister.

She is an ethnobotanist and bio-cultural ethicist.

Kelly works on ethical issues related to protecting biodiversity and indigenous knowledge.

She has been involved in ethics policy developments from local to international levels for the last 20 years.

Kelly is co-director of the POLIS project on ecological governance, which is a part of the Centre for Global Studies at the University of Victoria.

Lisa Mintz will be our third and final panellists for today.

Lisa is an environmentalist and birdwatcher from Montreal.

In 2015, she founded the Sauvons la falaise to protect the Saint Jacques Escarpment from a highway reconstruction project.

Her group, Sauvons la falaise, has been an extremely great success, and the escarpment is about to become the seventh-largest park in Montreal.

Lisa is a board member of the Green Coalition, and the director of the UrbaNature Education which teaches environmental education to people of all ages in urban settings.

I will now return to our moderator, Muriel Howden, to begin the webinar.

Muriel?

On screen Muriel Howden

Thank you very much, Rich.

Let's begin.

And we will start with Katia.

Katia, the floor is yours.

On Screen Katia Bannister

Uy skweyul, good day, everyone.

My name is Katia.

And before I begin, I'd like to acknowledge that I am reaching you today from the unceded, ancestral, and stolen lands of the Coast Salish and Hul'q'umi'num speaking peoples, whose language I addressed you in when I say Uy skweyu, good day.

And more specifically, the traditional territories of the Penelakut Mahasiswa.

So, my presentation for you today is about intergenerational collaboration for environmental action.

For two years now, I have self-identified as a youth climate activist and as a community organizer.

I have, ever since I went to my first climate strike when they took off in 2019, and youth all across Canada, and all across the world were striking for climate action, taking time out of their busy school lives to say, This is something that we care about.

This is something that is important, and lack of action on climate change is not something that we're going to stand for.

So, throughout my time as an activist and a community organizer, I have been a part of this youth-led movement, and that's something that's really important to the movement, to have young, fresh voices leading the call for change.

But something that is often forgotten or neglected is the importance of intergenerational change.

The importance of intergenerational collaboration and leadership in order to stimulate that change.

We need everybody's voice is involved in order to make things happen.

We can't have perspectives forgotten, and this is something that happens very commonly with youth, but it can also happen with older generations too, when they're trying to step back and make space for solely youth.

It's important to create space for youth voices, but there also needs to be intergenerational support set up in order to make our change effective, and to make sure that we were able to move forward together as a diverse collective.

So, I'm here today to talk about how you, as adult listeners, can help to create space and empower youth to make sure that they are able to step forward to call for change and to feel authentic in doing so.

So, I want to talk a little bit about intergenerational collaboration and three things that we can all keep in mind in order to facilitate that process.

So, number one is dismantling age-based stereotypes and assumptions.

Something that often comes up in discussion when talking about age and the social, environmental, and climate movements, is the negatives that youth and older generations can find within each other that can be used to divide us, and to polarize us, and are not things that will bring us together like we need to in order to effectively address climate change.

So an example here would be unfair assumptions that youth are not interested in social, environmental, and climate justice.

That they are lazy, or disinterested, or unpassionate about such topics, when that is simply untrue.

We have years now, years of a climate movement that has been headed by youth who are so passionate about the work they are doing all across the world, and have been creating truly effective change.

And something that happens on the other side of the spectrum to adults, is the reference as dinosaurs or old farts, saying that they need to take themselves out of the equation in order to make room for youth.

We need room for youth voices, but we do, again, need that intergenerational collaboration.

And in that, we need to make sure that youth feel empowered, to feel like their voices matter, and that they can genuinely affect change.

We need to make sure that there are opportunities for youth in order to add their voices to the movements to issues that affect them, but we also need to make sure that those opportunities for them are accessible, and that they are genuinely invited in, and they can be there, and listen to, just as any other member of a table.

And so, as adults, it's important to use your power and your privilege to create these opportunities and to make sure that youth can come to the table and represent themselves and share their perspectives, because we can't represent anyone else's perspective.

We need to make sure that people are able to pull up a chair, sit down with us, and share what is going on for them, and the issues that are affecting them.

So, thank you.

Yeah.

On screen Dr. Kelly Bannister

I guess I'll just continue after Katia's presentation, and I want to thank her for being a part of this.

Even though I'm her mom, or maybe especially because I'm her mom, she really inspires me.

And so I also want to acknowledge we're speaking from Coast Salish territory on a small island in what we call the Salish Sea.

And I'm really happy to be here.

What I'd like to do is complement what Katia has talked about in terms of intergenerational collaboration.

And I want to talk about the ethical dimension of our work, and particularly relational ethics.

And really, at the heart of what I want to say is the idea of before we decide what to do together, it can be really beneficial and important to decide how we want to be together.

So I want to start with the origins of ethics.

Ethics comes from the Greek word ethos, which refers to fundamental character.

But in the everyday world, and in professional organizations, and the medical system, ethics has lots of different kinds of meanings.

We might think of ethics in terms of morality, you know, right and wrong, virtuous and vicious, or we might think about formal codes of conduct or behaviour that guide how we are supposed to behave, particularly, for example, if we're part of a professional society or profession also guiding values and belief systems.

So, there's many different kinds of understandings of ethics.

And in my couple of decades in working in ethics, a very, very strong influence on me has been learning about indigenous understandings of ethics and indigenous understandings of law.

And the time is far too short to really properly talk about this topic, but it's so important.

I just want to kind of give a snapshot and spotlight that indigenous ethics are highly relational, are understood as living, and animate, and very action oriented.

In fact, elders have said a number of times, ethics in indigenous understanding, ethics is more of a verb than a noun.

So, it's something that I've held very dear.

And one of the ways that I, myself, understand ethics today is describing how we relate to one another, how we relate with one another, with the natural world, and with all our relations, which refers to that interrelatedness and interconnectedness that we have with all life forms and our ancestors that are of the past, of the present, and of the future.

And this is a widely used indigenous term.

Of course, indigenous people have their own languages and their own terms in order to express this understanding of interconnectedness.

In my work in ethics and in relation to biocultural diversity, it's very important to centre this sense of interrelationships.

And I work in an area called ethnobiology, which really is about interrelationships between people and the natural world.

And so, the kinds of ethical principles that show up in my work as important are things like respecting the inherent dignity of all beings, not just humans, all beings on the earth, and caring about the well-being of all of us, of our communities, of our relationships, of all creatures.

And, you know, you can read the summary of principles here that I'm working with.

I want to highlight one of them, honouring indigenous worldviews and teachings, including indigenous languages.

Indigenous ethics and laws come from the lands and the peoples of those lands.

So they will be different according to the different spaces, and places, and lands, and waters where we're located, and to have the privilege of learning about the indigenous laws and ethics of the lands upon which we reside is a great privilege and also, I think, a responsibility.

I think what I didn't do is mention that this work of John Burrows, an Anishinaabe legal scholar, has wide influence.

And John takes understandings of Anishinaabe teachings, the Seven Grandfather teachings, and brings those into the ethical and the legal realms in very helpful ways that, again, centre relationships.

And so, what I offer into this conversation is just an encouragement to think about the ethos, or the ethical dimensions of our environmental stewardship and action.

And think about, not only what do we want to do together, what are our environmental goals, but how is it that we want to be together? And that ethics can be an invitation to explore and build those very important relationships for not only intergenerational collaboration, but intercultural collaboration, and interspecies collaboration.

I'd like to leave that there, and thank you very much for your attention.

On screen Muriel Howden

Thank you Katia and Kelly, for a wonderful presentation.

And now, let's welcome our final presentation, our panellist Lisa Mintz.

Lisa, the floor is yours.

On screen Lisa Mintz

Thank you, Katia and Kelly.

I'm so happy to be here today.

I'm just going to start my presentation here.

So, 10 steps to change the world.

My name is Lisa Mintz, and I'm the director of UrbaNature.

We teach environmental education in an urban setting here in Montreal, to people of all ages.

I'm also the founder of a group called Sauvons la falaise.

We have worked for six years to save the Saint Jacques Escarpment in Montreal.

So, how do you do this? First of all, I'm actually, today, I'm going to just talk to you about how you can do this yourself.

What I found was I was sitting at home, sort of thinking that the world was going, you know, not the way I wanted it to, but I didn't know what to do about it.

So I found a local problem which I felt very strongly about, and that's this, the incursion into the falaise in 2015 by the Ministry of Transport.

So on your left, that this is what it looked like before.

I was told that no trees were going to be cut, and then I went away for a month, and that's what it looked like after.

So, this was two hectares of an eco-territory that was cut down.

And so, I started a group called Sauvons la falaise.

I talked to my city councillor to see if he could fix it.

This is Peter McQueen.

He's a city councillor of Notre-Dame-de-Grace in Montreal.

And he's been really, really helpful over the past six years, helping us out.

He was actually, we had a cleanup last week, and he was there, and he was carrying a stove out of the falaise Saint Jacques.

We actually also collected 130 tires.

This is the ex-mayor of Notre-Dame-de-Grace, who I also got to come down there, and he's checking out the water...

how clean it is there, which it isn't.

So three would be, start a Facebook group or a page.

This is a really easy way to get your word out there, because it doesn't cost anything, and there's all kinds of people out there that you can meet.

This is the Sauvons la falaise group, we have over 1000 likes, and we get tons of people to all our events.

Write a petition.

You can do it online.

Change.org tells you just how to do it.

I personally did it with a paper petition.

I created a paper petition with like, people's email addresses and a little box for them to check if they didn't mind me contacting them, and I would take it everywhere.

I took it to parties and events, and just anything, and I pass it around on a board, and I got all kinds of people involved.

Have a meeting and started group.

So, my first meeting was held at the headquarters of the Green Party of Quebec, and I thought there was gonna be nobody was going to show up, and we had 15 people, and we kept having to make the table bigger and bring more chairs.

And the really fun thing was that we hammered out our mission and our vision.

There's our mission.

This bird, here, that's our logo, which has been very, very successful.

The scarlet tanager is a beautiful bird, which means a shrill warning, and can be found on the falaise.

Six, go to borough and city council meetings and bring up your issue.

This is really, really easy now.

You don't even have to go, you can just go online, put in your question, and it will be answered.

Seven, use Facebook events and have an inclusive event in your area or a general meeting to discuss the issue.

These are some of the things we did.

On the right, you have a picture of a public assembly we did with some partners, the Notre-Dame-de-Grace community council, Heritage Laurentien, The Cycling and Pedestrian Group of NDG.

We got 100 people there when our group was very young, and we got to tell all kinds of people about this great initiative we had going.

Eight, contact like-minded groups in your area and get their support.

So, this was my first walk in 2015.

We have the ex-mayor of Montreal West.

We have a city councillor from the Sud-Ouest, a city councillor from NDG, the head of the Green Party of Quebec, somebody from the Green Coalition, somebody from Bird Protection Quebec.

It was a really, really great thing, and it was amazing to see the support that you can get.

And that's me and Alex Tyrrell, he's the leader of the Green Party of Quebec, on one of our first walks, he was one of my first supporters.

Nine, get the media involved.

You can start with local newspapers and university papers.

The first article that was written about the falaise was done by a man who I later married, actually, and it was in a small local newspaper.

But when I first got my first interview by Global, the reporter had in her hand this article from the local newspaper.

So, it doesn't matter where you get published, just get published.

Ten, letter writing campaigns.

Letter writing campaigns, protests, cleanups, walks, awareness raising events, like, just do what you can, just get the word out there and then you can watch what happens.

In my case, we got a grand park.

This is NDG.

This is the Sud-Ouest in Montreal.

This is the falaise, the green strip at the top.

Below it is the bande verte, that's going to be the park part of the falaise, because the falaise itself will be left alone and left wild.

This is the Dalle Parc, it's a green cycling pedestrian path that goes over a railway line and two highways.

And then this was the gift of 30 hectares that used to be a construction zone and is now going to be a park, and then we're going to connect up to the Lachine Canal and all of the green spaces below.

So, this is what happened when I just put my foot out there.

And you know, there's a lot of people that have been inspired by what I've done, and they've all saved their spaces too, and it doesn't even have to be like, saving environments, environmental spaces.

It can be anything, anything that bothers you.

If you just get out there and do something about it that will make a change.

That's it.

Thank you.

On screen Muriel Howden

- Fantastic.

Lisa, thank you very much.

Thank you to our three panellists.

So I would like to invite the three presenters to join us on screen now for the questions and answer period.

Thank you, Lisa.

That's perfect.

For the question and answer periods, thank you so much Katia and Kelly.

Welcome back.

So I'm sure you can see we have a number of questions that have come in, so we'll get to as many questions as possible in the time that we have today.

Just a quick reminder that you can submit your questions in English or French using the Q&A box.

If your question is directed to one of our three panellists, so in particular, could be Katia, Kelly, or Lisa, please include that in your question.

(in French)

Okay, so I'm going to start right away.

The first question might be for Kelly, but that being said, if Katia or Lisa want to jump in, we're always delighted to hear from you and to have some add-ons.

So, Does anyone know of sources of info that would show/project what our daily lives would look like if we met all the conditions to reduce global warming to the recommended level, and what the lives of all the workers in low-income jobs in factories around the world and in agriculture would look like if not as many goods were produced and shipped? So, it's really big, but, Kelly, do you want to give it a shot?

On screen Dr. Kelly Bannister

I like how we start with such a simple question.

That's great.

I guess to me, the question speaks to...

It speaks to an inherent understanding of the interconnectedness of all of this, you know, that we've been speaking about, and presented and what we care about.

I think I need you to review the first part of the question.

What would the world be like if...

On screen Muriel Howden

- For sure.

On screen Dr. Kelly Bannister

Oh, you know what? The question is...

I can't see it anymore.

But I think the idea was what would the world look like if we were managing to basically go back to the recommended level right now on, you know, the good environmental level.

What would it look like for us in our daily consumption and for the workers of the world? - I guess what I would like to contribute to that question is that I don't think there's an on-off switch with this question.

In my work, I guess I would say I have more unlearning and unpatterning to do than I do or just as much as I have learning to do.

And I see it the same way that in society, we've built up these patterns and habits, and even just stopping, like, how do you even stop? There's a transition, of course, but they have to be replaced with new ones.

And so, I think there's so many dimensions to this.

And I think the question points to perhaps some of the consumerism kind of dimensions, and all the rest.

And I guess what I would do is I would centre something in this question.

I would centre, what's our priority? What's our value? What do we really care about? And then what's the strategy to get there? And to me, no matter what we are doing or not doing, if we actually centred care for one another and the Earth as the overarching guiding value or priority, then we could organize around something different than society tends to organize around today.

I guess I could contribute that to the question, but perhaps maybe Katia has something to say.

On Screen Katia Bannister

Yeah, I think in that, it's important to acknowledge that even if we were, say, to be able to limit a global rise in temperature to 1.5 or two degrees, which is not looking possible at this point in time, we're still going to feel ecological suffering and human suffering because those are those targets are actually too small.

They're not ambitious enough and we're not going to meet them.

And these the effects don't come to pass immediately.

You won't see an immediate change from a release of emissions or a complete ban on logging or anything like that.

Even if you were able to take those extremely drastic and probably...

actions that we actually don't want to take moving forward, we want to find better, more medium type actions, not to one extreme or another, because it's hard to operate in those extremes, and people suffer when we operate in those extremes.

Even if we were able to take extreme actions, we wouldn't see benefits right away.

And there will still be suffering that unfolds.

So part of the process is knowing that we need to do things in ways that are just.

We need to have just transitions.

We need to collaborate across any borders, or bridges, or gaps that we find ourselves facing other people across.

We need to be together, and share perspectives, and celebrate diversity in mapping this way forward because even if you were able to take actions in the extreme, it will be unpleasant.

It will probably discriminate against many people, and it wouldn't be the way forward that we're really looking for.

On screen Muriel Howden

It's so true.

Thank you so much.

It's so true, Katia, and it's a great message, and I guess we'll have to continue sharing this over and over.

Lisa, did you have anything to add on that specific local and world problem?

On screen Lisa Mintz

Well, I just wanted to say it sort of sounded to me like the question was, What are these people who are already in bad jobs going to do when they don't have any jobs? That's kind of...

I mean, if we're talking about an ideal world here, then people wouldn't be working low-paying jobs in factories to create plastic goods that are just going to end up at the bottom of the ocean.

There needs to be a whole rethinking about the way our world is structured.

Like, capitalism is actually the problem, the idea that we have infinite resources that we can use infinitely.

Like, we've proven now that that is absolutely not true.

So, we really need to restructure the way that we think and the way that our whole civilization is working the way it is working right now, in order to do something about this.

On screen Muriel Howden

Yeah, thank you very much.

Very true.

So, we have a few questions that've come.

I actually...

The first one is for Kelly.

I'll have one for Lisa after, and then I have one for Katia.

Just telling you, but again, don't hesitate to jump in.

It's actually wonderful to hear from all of you.

So the question, Kelly, I'll read it in French first, because I think it came in French first, and our little helpers were nice enough to put it in both languages for us.

So here's the question.

(in French)

So, in your experience, what is the great motivator that brings people together to achieve a common objective? I'll start with Kelly, but I suspect you all have something to say about this.

Kelly?

On screen Dr. Kelly Bannister

Thank you very much for the question.

I think I'll just pick up on what Lisa said near the end of her presentation, and you said, you know, if something bothers you, you can really rise up and do something about that.

And to me, the flip side of what bothers you is what you care about, and what Katia has indicated, what you're passionate about.

And so, I really think this sort of centering the caring piece is maybe the principle for me that rises up above all.

What do you care about? And, you know, what can you do about that? I think maybe is very highly motivating.

On screen Muriel Howden

Fantastic.

Lisa, the next question is actually for you.

How important is environmental education?

(in French)

On screen Lisa Mintz

So, I've actually been part of saving several green spaces, not just the falaise Saint-Jacques.

But I can save all the green spaces that I like.

If other people don't see a value in it, then I'm wasting my time.

So actually, environmental education is even more important than activism.

On screen Muriel Howden

Okay, thank you very much.

Thank you, Lisa.

Katia, the next one is actually for you.

I'll read it in French first and then in English.

So the question is...

(in French)

So, can you share some practical examples of feeling well supported, included, and valued as a youth?

On Screen Katia Bannister

Pretty sure, yeah, thank you.

And I think in that, it's also important to talk about the flip side, like things that will not make you feel welcome in spaces or even be able to get to spaces.

A time when I have felt supported is being the youth member of the city of Duncan, which is close to where I live, and where I go to school, Environmental and Sustainability Committee.

There is a youth position on that committee, and I was happy to fill it, and I've been filling it for more than a year now.

We have meetings, and I get to talk about different environmental and sustainability topics ongoing in the city of Duncan, and I appreciate the community that supports me in doing that.

We have a great relationship with the city of Duncan Youth Council, which I'm already a part of, and currently we're working on a bees and trees campaign, so there's a lot of support in between those two, and it's nice to feel not only myself, but the other youth members of the Youth Council be able to be supported by local government.

But on the flip side of that, there are instances within that position that I have felt sometimes like, Oh, this is really hard for me to participate in.

To no fault of any of the other committee members, but meetings are often held during the school day, which can not only be challenging for a young person, such as myself, who does go to school, but also for lots of very regular people who have to work 9-5 jobs and are not available during the day for such meetings, leaving it to older, retired people who have more freedom throughout their day because they're not going to school or work, to be the ones to share their perspectives.

And everyone's perspective is important, but when you have more of a homogeneous group of people being the only group of people that has the ability to share, simply because they're the only ones able to sit at the table at that time, then it can be really challenging.

I think something else that is important to acknowledge is that here today, we're meeting on Zoom, we now live in the Zoom Age, and that's something really special.

It allows us to create connections across provinces, across countries, across the entire world.

Because of Zoom, I now get to work very closely with lots of other youth climate activists from around the world doing local work in their communities that we're able to support as a connected network.

But pre-Zoom, when not many people were using online platforms such as Zoom or Skype, before COVID, meetings were often held in person, and at that time, I wasn't able to drive, and the public transportation in my community is really abysmal.

There'll be buses running every two hours, they won't run into the night.

So the last one for me to get home is at five o'clock, which is not very late.

But people will invite you to these night meetings sometimes which is a, yay! It's not in the school or work day, but challenging also, because if you want youth to be able to come to meetings, to be in spaces, to be able to share their perspectives, they actually have to be able to get there.

That's kind of key.

And sometimes, yes, there are people who are going to acknowledge this and say, I'm willing to give you a ride! I value your opinion so much that I am willing to ensure that you can be there.

And that's a really special thing to witness.

But a lot of the time, there will be a lack of understanding of, Oh, but I invited you to this meeting and you seem to care so much about this topic.

Why are you saying that you cannot come? Don't you want to be there? And it is, yes, I do want to be there.

But when working with youth, it's important to keep in consideration these sort of special circumstances that are kind of governing their lives.

And the same with people in the working world to have to work jobs throughout the day.

We need to make sure that you're able to be there if we're able to have effective and diverse, inclusive conversations.

On screen Muriel Howden

Katia, you're making such a great point on the importance of accommodation to have everyone around the table and to have all voices.

So this is really, really great.

Lisa, I think the next one is for you, although I suspect Kelly may have something to say.

It's a question that came from Helen, and she is writing, As a district president...

So she's referring RTO ERO, as a district president of RTO ERO...

...I would appreciate clear guidelines on how we can support local climate environmental issues and remain nonpartisan.

What would you say about that, Lisa?

On screen Lisa Mintz

Well, I'm actually doing that as an educational group, and I think that would probably work for you guys.

Looking at it from a point of view of education, then you can teach it rather than being a radical, or...

I mean, I've tried it the other way.

I have another group that does the politics part of it, but I wanted to be able to talk to everybody, and I could do that through education.

Education is the greatest thing.

Like, this is why we're all here, actually.

On screen Muriel Howden

Yeah.

Thank you.

Kelly, did you have something specific to say? Yeah?

On screen Dr. Kelly Bannister

Yeah.

I could just support what Lisa said about education.

I guess another dimension of my work in ethics, which also borrows, a lot of times, on legal issues and rights, there is a very, very active and important rights-based discourse which is highly political, and that's really important to note.

I'm involved in that, to some degree.

But for me, and I think with working with indigenous elders, and knowledge holders, and mentors for a lot of years, I understand that rights are always intertwined with responsibilities.

And so, for me, if I explore more the responsibilities, it takes us, I think, a little outside of the political and then the partisan.

And it ends up being, as Lisa said, collaborative education and, you know, co-learning together.

So I think that's a really helpful dimension to be exploring from.

On screen Muriel Howden

Fantastic.

So I see that we have a question that has come from Theresa.

I suspected it's for Lisa.

I'm just gonna remind everyone that this fantastic presentation and Webinar is being recorded, which means that we will see all the steps, we will see the wonderful PowerPoint presentation and the visuals from Lisa, Kelly, and Katia.

But Lisa, very briefly, do you think you could release the 10 steps that you mentioned earlier in your presentation?

On screen Lisa Mintz

So, I saw the questions.

So I thought I'd just share my screen, and I have a list of the 10 steps here, I think.

Let's see.

On screen Muriel Howden

Fantastic.

On screen Lisa Mintz

There we go.

And it will also be on our Website.

So, UrbaNature.org.

And I'm gonna put it up as a blog so that people can use it, 'cause the whole idea is to have people use these steps, like that's it.

On screen Muriel Howden

Amazing.

And just a reminder as Lisa is sharing, that this is going to be...

this is being recorded.

You are all going to receive, all the participants will be receiving a link to this presentation, so you can review it at your leisure, and it will be posted as well once it's fully translated on the RTO ERO Website.

So lots to think about and to write down.

Thank you so much, Lisa.

This is very appreciated.

Thank you.

On screen Lisa Mintz

Thank you.

On screen Muriel Howden

So the next question, I think I'm gonna start with Lisa again, but I feel that Katia and Kelly are going to have something to say about this.

So Lisa, the next question is, Wondering...

Actually, it's for all of you.

Wondering if any of the panellists have had to deal with people opposed to their mission, even, you know, climate deniers, and how they've dealt with that.

So, I think, Lisa, you can actually, you can stop sharing if you want, so that we can see your...

the beautiful hues.

What do you think about that?

On screen Lisa Mintz

Oh, my God.

So, I showed you that beautiful green cycling pedestrian bridge which is going to go over the Turcot project and connect up these two neighbourhoods that haven't been connected since the highway project was put in in the 80s.

And it's a social project as well, and it was a promise.

It was a promise that the Ministry of Transport Quebec made when they started this Turcot reconstruction project, which has been a total disaster for the past 15 years.

It's just been, it's been absolute...

well, hell for all the people that live around there.

And these are people that don't have cars.

The reconstruction project itself is for people coming out of town to downtown.

So, when we...

So, we wanted to get this bridge reinstated, the Dalle Parc.

And at first, people would say to me, No, there's no Dalle Parc.

There's no nothing.

They wouldn't, they pretend they didn't know what I was talking about.

But I had found an old newspaper that had a picture of it from The Gazette, like, it was on the front of The Gazette newspaper.

And so, I would just go show it around.

You know what? I just went, and...

When people say no, it just means you have to try harder.

And I mean, two years later, we had that bridge reinstated.

We had so many partners, and so many people came to support this, this thing that would do such great things for so many neighbourhoods, that it was reinstated.

And then there's other things.

So, I tried to fight, I've tried to fight the Réseau Express Métropolitain in Montreal, and that's a train system which is extremely not carbon-neutral, which is being put forward as a carbon-neutral project.

And even though we had huge partners, and we even won the consultations, the project still went ahead.

So you do what you can, and you try and do your best, that's all you can do.

On screen Muriel Howden

Yeah.

Yeah.

Thank you.

Thank you, Lisa.

Katia and Kelly, did you have some fighters of some of your movements and projects? Katia, you want to take that one?

On Screen Katia Bannister

Yeah.

I think it can be really easy for a climate denier, or any other kind of person who doesn't believe in the work, in the social, environmental, climate movements that we're doing it can be easier for them to bully a youth, to beat down on a youth to say that what I'm doing, or what my peers are doing, or what my colleagues are doing isn't worth it and that we should stop, and it can have bigger impacts, I would say, on young people, especially people who are...

they maybe haven't had this strong commitment yet.

They're investigating.

They're interested.

Okay, well, climate change is an issue.

What can I do about that? Who can I get involved with? What sort of actions can I take? And as they're in that sort of exploratory phase, they're just trying to figure things out, they're trying to get involved, and meet people, and see, like, is this something I'm really passionate about? Is this an issue that I want to work on? And those really negative interactions, particularly with adults who are like, in our lives, supposed to be supporters, supposed to be role models, it can be really hard to face negative criticism, whether that's just, That stupid! Or saying that a youth cannot be a part of this sort of systemic change that we're aiming for if they have a cell phone, or drive a car, or participate in the society that we live in whilst striving for something better, something a brighter future, something that we can all aspire to.

And it can be really hard to see my friends, my peers suffering that way, because they are able to be taken advantage of in that way almost, where uh an older person might see an opportunity to nip it in the bud, and kind of stamp out that light.

And at the same time, of course, I am a huge advocate for intergenerational collaboration and working together, but this is a known phenomenon that I'm experiencing in my life and my work, and we've done some sit-ins in the past couple of years, nothing big, just a few youth sitting in local, high-traffic areas with signs, talking about current issues, trying to get people to see us and hopefully talk to us, because just that visibility is important, right? And there will be some people that come along and they'll argue, or they're name calling, or they're going to kick up whatever setup that we've got and walk away without a word, or just glare.

And that sort of stuff can be really unnerving, and it can really snuff out that light, and it's just sad to watch.

And even online, right, people are so much braver from behind a screen and the Facebook comment section can often look like a war zone.

I think it's just important to keep in mind that with young people in particular, were hoping to like, foster passion.

We're hoping to foster excitement about these things, and idea generation, and really doing hands-on, tangible work that makes a difference and words from older people can really make a difference, but in a negative sort of way.

So I think that's something to hold in our hearts and be aware of.

On screen Muriel Howden

Well, first of all, we want to continue to see you, that is for sure, and hear what you have to say, so here's what I'm proposing.

The next question is...

oh, go ahead, Kelly! Yes!

On screen Dr. Kelly Bannister

I would just love to weigh into this as well, because it's been downright shocking as Katia's mom to witness some of the online aggression and bullying.

And at the beginning, when she was really just sharing and putting herself out there as a fairly knowledgeable youth, and a well-spoken youth, and some of the meanie bo beanie comments are just almost unfathomable.

We would we don't treat each other that way.

So I wanted to save two things.

One, that has opened the opportunity for Katia, and myself, and others, to kind of explore, what is this person really being triggered about, and what could be a response that would be respectful, in light of a really disrespectful kind of, you know, attack? And is there another way to reshape that conversation? And we've had, really, some good successes in reaching back to people to figure out what they're triggered by.

And sometimes they do get it where you come to agree in a neutral zone, or maybe they even come on board.

So that's a neat opportunity to explore, which kind of requires some developmental maturity and awareness.

And so we continue to develop that.

And I wanted to say, we can't have this conversation for us without acknowledging the tremendous adult community that Katia has around her on the other side.

So supportive, so encouraging.

Just so for the youth, and in our area, we're really blessed to have those adults as well to counterbalance the minority who don't behave that way.

On screen Muriel Howden

Thank you so much.

I mean, this is amazing, and your words are very precious.

We certainly believe at RTO ERO in intergenerational relationships and work.

So what I'm gonna do, what I propose is I'm going to ask the next question to Lisa, which came from Claudia, and after Lisa has responded, I will actually call on the chair of the board, Rich Profit, and our CEO, Jim Grieve, to talk to us a little bit about the RTO ERO vision, you know, and how they see their mandate towards environment.

So before we welcome Jim and Rich, let me ask Lisa question from Claudia.

So, Lisa, where are you able to get plantings done to recreate the woodland area after it was decimated by urban sprawl? So, how did you make that work?

On screen Lisa Mintz

Well, what actually happened was, it was the Ministry of Transport, cut down those trees, and they actually destroyed the entire hill and made it into a wall because they had to cut down the trees because the soil wasn't stable, which, as we all know, trees make the soil stable, and they put a wall and instead, this is just the type of engineering old kind of thinking.

It's antiquated thinking.

I mean, it's similar to a lot of projects that go on.

We really need to, sort of, take a look at our engineering and revamp it to be more integrated with the environment rather than trying to fight the environment.

And so no, that whole area is gone.

And what we have done, though, is managed to save the rest of it, and get another 30 hectares added to it.

On screen Muriel Howden

Amazing, wow.

Okay, so I will now welcome Rich Profit, the chair of the board, and Jim Grieve, our CEO, to talk to us a little bit about what RTO ERO is doing at the moment.

On screen Rich Profit

Thanks, Muriel.

What we do, we mentioned at the outset, is that we have a very, very vibrant, advocacy program that will affect not only those of us on the border directors, but in also all the districts across Canada, from British Columbia down to Newfoundland.

We have forwarded information to people how they can influence by a power of one or a few people, or a power of many, what they can impact, how they're going to influence people at municipal level, at the provincial level, and at the federal level with respect to that.

But also, I mentioned that about capitalism, the individual companies we have to have.

We would have a check for them, to check performance to see how well they're doing, each individual company.

Because let's face it, companies are interested in selling their products, and their products are going to be bought by individuals if they show that they are concerned.

If we could present to them a project, let's say, to see how well they're doing, a check how well they're doing with respect to, not just the environment, but their waste management, their green buildings, their waste hazardous.

Things to this effect, and we can go and on with more of them.

But we would like to develop people in our districts to meet with other organizations that have common interests.

And what we can do, not a group of nine, but a group of 81,000, we can impact the environment very, very positively.

And infect other people to change their concept with respect to it.

Because I look at the Ontario Teacher's Pension Plan Board, they have documents out on defining the ESG factors, environment, social, and governance factors, the climate change.

All of these are coming about because of people, like you and I, who are trying to influence them to become more aware of the environment.

Jim?

On screen Jim Grieve

Yeah.

Thanks, Rich, very much.

I am just loving this conversation.

I'm loving the fact that Lisa is basically standing in front of the bulldozers in Montreal and I don't know whether Muriel remembers this, but when we visited to set up the district in Quebec, we drove that road and saw the devastation.

It was quite unbelievable.

I love the diagram that you showed of the park, not only being ceded to a park, but also that you're getting back, giving back to some of the neighbours, an ability to access, because it was a concrete mess when we went through a couple of years ago.

Katia, wow, I am so impressed with the way you've taken on this issue as a young person.

I'm not surprised, because I've worked in teaching.

I know the power of young people in speaking their mind and getting the message out.

So, you are clearly doing it brilliantly.

What I will say to you though, is you're speaking on this Webinar largely to a group of Boom-ennials.

People who are Boomers, who were very active, are very active, very receptive.

What have we got, 264 so far that are listening carefully and getting ready to take the kind of action, intergenerational action that you're advocating, so it may feel like you're starting small, but this is getting out and across the country in many, many different ways.

And Kelly, the whole ethical issue around, you know, looking to the indigenous respect for land and the kinds of learnings that we can achieve from our indigenous neighbours and partners is so, so important.

I think we're learning that.

It's been a long time coming.

And all I'd say about RTO right now, RTO ERO, is that...

I still go back to that Think globally, act locally.

You've got to do something yourself.

So, we have taken on an action within our plan at RTO on behalf of our 81,000 members, to make sure that we've got our personal house in order.

I'm talking about our office and the way in which we're dealing with one another.

So we've completely changed the way in which our building is lighted, we completely changed the way in which the efficiency of our system, our heating system has been renewed.

We are dropping all kinds of personal printers, and actually, we stopped printing paper pretty much almost exclusively, and we're working on some of our key members to get rid of paper.

We're doing our part to try and make sure that what we're preaching, in terms of environmental sustainability, we can actually open the door to our building and to our practice and say, We're doing this.

We would love to have a LEED building.

It would be fantastic.

And we're dealing with a 120-year-old house that is now our building.

So we're making sure we reuse, of course.

But I love this notion of, well, I'm not sure how much the Inconvenient Truth still resonates, but it is an inconvenient truth, for many people, and that's why they yell at you when you stop them on the highway, because they've got to get to wherever they got to get to.

It's inconvenient to do this.

It's inconvenient to do all the kind of separation of recyclables at home and disturbing, that when you've done all of that, it doesn't even go to where you think it should be going.

It just doesn't go there, it ends up in landfill.

So, all kinds of these things are ringing in my brain right now.

But I love the fact that you are so active, so standing in front of the bulldozers, Lisa, and really getting your message out.

So we'll try and live up to your expectations as well.

Thanks.

On screen Muriel Howden

Fantastic.

Thank you, Jim.

Thank you, Rich.

Very, very much.

So, I see a question here.

This one is actually for Kelly, and I know we still have a little bit of time, not too much, but we'll try to get to a few more questions, for sure.

So, Kelly, in your experience, what is the great motivator that brings people together to achieve a common objective?

On screen Dr. Kelly Bannister

I thought that we already raised that question, but maybe I'll just recap.

I really think that Lisa mentioned what bothers you, and Katia, you know, mentioned your passion.

On screen Muriel Howden

Right.

On screen Dr. Kelly Bannister

And I mentioned care, and I think, you know, just figuring out what we care about and centering that.

On screen Muriel Howden

Great, thank you.

So, I'm going to direct the next question to Lisa, although I suspect all panellists have something to say.

So, Lisa, I'll start with you.

Any specific recommendations on how to take action now? And I know Katia talked about being online and all that, but Lisa, any recommendations on how to take action now, during a pandemic? So virtual actions, I guess.

On screen Lisa Mintz

So this makes it so much easier, actually, because people don't have to get anywhere.

I live in the suburbs now.

So for me, this is...

I can go to all these meetings and I don't actually even have to be there.

The one thing that you're sort of missing, is you're missing, you know, that one-on-one.

Me being able to go give my card to somebody and say, Look, this is my issue and can you help me? But I mean, you could put something in the chat there.

It's easier to get meetings with government officials because they're all online.

It's easier even to do in person things if you keep them very small and stick to your guidelines.

You can still do them here in Quebec.

We have eight people, is what's allowed.

So you can still have events and get people out there, do small walks, whatever it is that interests you.

But I actually personally think that this virtual environment makes life easier.

On screen Muriel Howden

That's great.

Fantastic.

Thank you, Lisa.

A question, I'll start maybe with Kelly.

But it's a good one for the three of you, really.

What's a good response to people who feel that their individual contribution to environmental stewardship is futile? You know, that it's not sufficient, and I know Lisa, you talked about it too.

You know, that we're too small maybe to make a difference or a positive contribution.

I mean, the three of you are so involved in that.

On screen Dr. Kelly Bannister

-I think I would just like to highlight, I think all of us spoke to collaboration, so maybe using that motivator of what we care about, and what bothers us, and finding others who share that concern and that care, and that's a start.

So, you know, one can become two, and two can become four in that way.

And, you know, I really think that finding ways to connect with others who share those priorities and having that openness to the how, I think is really a good start to being able to make a difference being just one.

And, you know, I practice a martial art called aikido, and the founder of the martial art, he's quoted as saying...

It's called the Art of Peace, and he's quoted as saying, The art of peace begins with you.

So, the whole idea that any change really, has to begin with us as an individual, and I would suggest not just our outward action, but actually, that inward action.

And an equivalent to what Jim was talking about cleaning up your own house, physically your own office building, and making sure that's all in line with what the environmental sustainability values and actions you're professing, we need to do the same, I think, within ourselves.

So, there is no better investment, I think, than starting with yourself.

On screen Muriel Howden

Amazing.

Lisa, I'm sure you'd agree with that.

On screen Lisa Mintz

I do want to say something about burnout and trying to do too much, and also getting too involved in your issue and not being able to step back.

It's really important to try your best, but not to become so personally involved that every little defeat, like, hurts you.

So, it's important to take a certain amount of, you know, look at the big picture, do your best, try everything and, you know, if it doesn't work, try something else.

That's all.

On screen Muriel Howden

That's great, of course.

Thank you.

Thank you, Lisa.

So the next question is from Kyla, and it's for Katia and Kelly, and it's actually in relation to what was discussed before, Katia.

So, do you think that there's an opportunity for seniors and younger generations to activate more community awareness towards environmental awareness online? So, in regards to how difficult Katia mentioned that organizing in person can be, could there be an opportunity to explore for younger generations, maybe to help seniors transfer to a more digitally connected world to do some of this work?

On Screen Katia Bannister

Yeah, I don't remember saying that it was difficult to be organizing in person, perhaps in relation to the pandemic, but at the same time, my local organizing group, the Cowichan Valley Earth Guardians, we've still been able to organize small distanced get-togethers in person with indigenous and non-indigenous elders in our community who have, so much to share, just wealths of knowledge, and many of whom are eager to share with youth, and to begin passing on their knowledge as they feel themselves aging and getting to a point where maybe that knowledge might be lost and they want to keep it alive, and that's a huge priority for them.

So it's an honour to hear just in itself, but also to be a part of that transference, and a part of the next generation of knowledge keepers.

I feel incredibly blessed to know some of the things that I do, as they have been imparted onto me.

And we have been making strides to organize online as well.

Sometimes, that can be a barrier, particularly with older people and with younger people too.

I know people of all ages who have struggled getting online, and using Zoom, and just doing all these things that maybe they're not used to, or maybe they're not used to in the degree that we're currently doing.

But we have hosted intergenerational Webinars and conversations online.

At the beginning of the year, we had a larger vision planning meeting for what we wanted to be doing this year and we invited all of our supporters.

We have a huge mailing list of people of all ages who live in our community, who are supporting the work that we're doing, and we had people come.

It was really lovely to see the turnout of older people who came to listen, to give suggestions about where they thought that youthful energy could be interjected into the community.

And yeah, I think that COVID doesn't necessarily mean that we can't get together.

We can do it online and try to make those online actions bigger, and we can do it in person, and we can try to keep them smaller.

It really depends on where you live too.

Like, I know some places in the world, they don't really have any restrictions, and other places are almost completely locked down, so we really need to take that into account in our organizing but not feel like it's impossible to connect, because it's not.

We can still connect, and we can still take action.

On screen Muriel Howden

That is so true, and we've connected so much in different ways, but so much it has not stopped us.

Look what we're doing right now.

So the last question has come in and it's actually a beautiful question, and I would like the three of you to give a bit of your point of view on that one.

So maybe actually we can start with you, Katia, if you want, and then move to Kelly, and finish with Lisa.

And then after that I'll give the mic to our CEO, Jim Grieve.

So here's the question.

Katia, let's start with you.

Can you identify what inspires you, gives you the energy to go forward with joy regardless of the challenge?

On Screen Katia Bannister

Thank you, that is a really beautiful question.

So as long as I've been alive, ecology has been a big part of my life.

My mom took me around in her womb when she was talking to knowledge holders and elders, and then around in the baby carrier when she was doing fieldwork.

And I found my own ways into doing that work as well.

Because not only do I work in organizing community, but I do a lot of ecological restoration, surveying, monitoring, remediation work, and I'm going to pursue a career in ecology.

I'm graduating high school this year, and I've just looked at my potential course opportunities for next year.

As I enter university, I'm going to be doing environmental studies and geography, and that's the stuff that really brings me joy.

I'm not doing this work solely because I feel a need to, a need to secure a livable future, a need to exist as a member of the sapien species, as a part of reciprocity and the interconnected systems that sustain us, not only to be a good component and a part of those systems, but also because this work, ecology, being a part of community, those things are the things that give me joy, and they're the things that I'm basing the rest of my life on, and the things that I'm basing my career aspirations on.

I can't help but smile when I'm able to work with my friends, my peers, my intergenerational relationships, when I'm able to bring all those things together and work on the things that I truly love, but also will be the things that will help us move forward and create a more sustainable and just future.

It gives me joy.

On screen Muriel Howden

Well, know, Katia, that when you're the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, RTO ERO will be ready to work with you.

Kelly, you next.

On screen Dr. Kelly Bannister

Well, I can't explain why I started caring about this area.

I mean, I just maybe grew up in a beautiful naturescape in BC, and always ran around in nature, and just care and interest grew.

But I think the rubber really hit the road for me after having kids and then having this kid in particular, I guess.

What I love and continues to inspire and challenge me is trying to keep up with Katia.

But also just like she said, like, I was doing all sorts of really intense field work and interviews, and very important work with indigenous elders in our area, working on issues of rights, and ethics, and legalities of indigenous rights.

And Katia was in the womb at a lot of these interviews, and the elders would talk about that.

She is, you know, your baby is hearing this, she's taking this in.

And I said, Oh, you know, that's a neat idea.

But it's actually been true.

And that is what inspires me so much, to have this accountability mechanism right here beside me, and a partner in this work.

On screen Muriel Howden

Fantastic.

Thank you, Kelly.

And Lisa, what inspires you?

On screen Lisa Mintz

Birds.

It's all about the birds for me.

I do this...

We've lost 50 percent of the birds in North America since the 70s, and you can really see it now.

I see a big difference in the amount of birds between when I was a kid and now, and one of the reasons that we're losing all the birds is loss of habitat.

So I do what I can by saving green spaces.

On screen Muriel Howden

- Thank you.

Thank you so much.

Thank you Lisa, Katia, and Kelly.

I will now call our CEO Jim Grieve for the final remarks.

A big thank you again.

On screen Lisa Mintz

Thank you.

On screen Jim Grieve

As I said before, I'm so thankful for you, the speakers, but I'm even very grateful for the hundreds of people who joined us today.

There's a passion on this issue right across the country, probably across the world that Katia, Kelly, and Lisa have really brought to mind.

I mean, this whole notion of the responsibility of protect, respect, and restore the environment.

Those are the three Rs of these days.

You know, it's funny, I was thinking as you were talking about the kind of personal action that people can take and should take.

You know, people should be asking themselves the question, Well, why is it that I can buy grapes all year in my supermarket? And why is that I can accept materials packaged in huge big plastic bubbles when it's completely unnecessary and it all ends up either in the landfill or it ends up burning up all kinds of fossil fuel to get those precious new grapes, or whatever they are, apples, from South America or South Africa into our stores? It falls to the kind of, you drive an automobile, it falls the kind of automobile we choose.

Take a look at the best-selling automobile in Canada, which for years now, has been the Ford F150.

No offense to people who like trucks, but when I see them pass me on the highway, I know that they're spending a ton of money moving many tons of metal around.

So honestly, we recorded this session.

I'm so thrilled that we've had Katia, Kelly, and Lisa here, all of whom are activists in their very own way.

I love the notion of the just transitions from where we are now and making sure that we're respecting both the environment and the opinion of others as we move forward.

But there is no choice.

The choice is we have to do something.

And the only way you can do that most easily is to do it, begin with yourself, and then reach out through your own network and influence as much as you can.

I too, will look forward to having Katia as a serious environmental leader here in Canada.

You already are, so it's good news.

So, we've recorded this, we'll post it on our Website, we will email the recording to everyone who attended and who registered for this so that you'll be able to review some of the wisdom that has come out through here.

You can also access recordings of our first two Webinars on vibrantvoices.ca.

And by the way, we're thrilled to announce that there are three more of these in the works right now for the fall.

On September 15, look at that, who else do we want to hear from these days than Andre Picard? He's written a beautiful book.

He is the most assertive person on the issues of long-term care, and our attention to-- not attention to detail in some of the issues related to this pandemic.

So, join us on the 15th of September.

In October, Diana Beresford-Kroeger is going to share, again back on the environment, this whole notion of saving the forest, saving us.

Looking forward to that.

She's a medical biochemist, as you can see, and a botanist, and she's probably sitting in what looks like one of the pieces of the rainforest in BC right now.

And then on November the third, Paths to Wellness for Older Persons: Body, Mind and Spirit.

So, Isobel Mackenzie, she's the seniors advocate for the province of British Columbia.

We are advocating as RTO, to get that here in Ontario as well.

If not, we'll steal her from British Columbia.

And Dr. Keri-Leigh Cassidy, a professor of geriatric psychiatry at Dalhousie University on the other coast.

And they're both talking about these paths to wellness, and I love that notion.

So for more information or to register, you just need to go to vibrantvoices.ca -and we'll be glad to have you back.

I'm sure you'll be there.

In the meantime, to Katia, Kelly, and Lisa, thank you so much.

To Muriel, as always, a fabulous job in moderating and keeping the questions flowing and going.

And we will see you in September.

Take care.