

CLIMATE JUSTICE AND PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH: BUILDING CLIMATE-RESILIENT COMMONS

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ISBN 978-1-77385-408-3

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Saving Our “Common Home”: A Critical Analysis of the “For Our Common Home” Campaign in Alberta

Chrislain Eric Kenfack

Introduction

The recent years have witnessed a fast-growing wave of social collaborative mobilizations, demands for a more aggressive fight against climate change, for climate justice, and for a Just Transition to a post-carbon society around the world. This chapter is a case analysis of one of these collaborative and solidarity struggles, the “For Our Common Home” campaign in Edmonton, Alberta. Led by Development and Peace—Caritas, the official international development organization of the Catholic Church in Canada, the “For Our Common Home” campaign is a multi-year, faith-inspired, climate-justice campaign aimed at pushing Canadian companies operating in the Amazon to be more environmentally responsible in their activities and to respect the voices of local Indigenous environmental activists. With a third of Canadians (about 12.8 million) citing Catholicism as their religion, and with churches’ considerable social influence worldwide, their role in motivating climate action and cultural transformation is receiving attention (Müller & Ozyürek, 2021; Jenkins et al., 2018). Moreover, as Jenkins et al. note (pp. 85, 101), “Responses to climate change by Indigenous people challenge the categories of religion and of climate change in ways that illuminate reflexive stresses

between the two cultural concepts.... (R)adically new religious formations and imaginations may be under development in the many cultural spaces of climate change.”

I explored this broad issue by means of the following question: How can a faith-inspired movement like Development and Peace—Caritas Canada, through a religious environmental campaign involving Indigenous communities in Canada and Brazil, participate in the development of social cohesion and the advancement of social justice?

As Pope Francis stated in his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*, though it is true that the Amazon region is facing an ecological disaster, it also has to be made clear that “a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (Pope Francis, 2015). The endemic persecution of environmental activists in the Amazon makes it almost impossible to raise up that combined voice of the earth and of the poor. It is therefore in a solidarity effort for an environmentalism “that is concerned for the biome but [does not ignore] the Amazonian peoples” (*Instrumentum Laboris*, quoted in Pope Francis, 2020, p. 7), that the “For Our Common Home” campaign was developed to support environmental struggles in the Amazon with a focus, among others, on advocating for Canadian mining companies operating in the Amazon region to take their environmental responsibilities seriously and be held accountable and liable for their environmentally destructive activities.

After describing the campaign’s context and its supporters, methods and goals, along with my research methodology, I explore the implications of this form of Catholic climate action.

Care for Our Common Home: When Indigenous and Christian Environmental Demands Meet

The key demands of the care “For Our Common Home” campaign fall within the scope of the ecological teachings of Pope Francis, developed in his encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*, namely his call for *integral ecology*, *ecological conversion*, and the *culture of care*. In Pope Francis’ words, “it cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected. Time and space are not independent of one another, and not even atoms or subatomic particles can be considered in isolation. Just as the different aspects of the planet—physical,

chemical and biological—are interrelated, so too living species are part of a network which we will never fully explore and understand. A good part of our genetic code is shared by many living beings. It follows that the fragmentation of knowledge and the isolation of bits of information can actually become a form of ignorance, unless they are integrated into a broader vision of reality (Pope Francis, 2015: Number 138). From this perspective, integral ecology points at the nature and level of interconnectedness that exists between the living and non-living, and that defines the very essence of our common nature as fundamentally relational beings. In other words, nobody and nothing in the order of creation can live in isolation; our very existence is essentially relations and connections to other living and non-living things as well as everything surrounding us. The understanding of nature as integrality and interconnectedness among all its constituencies, including humans, leads us to the need for ecological conversion: simultaneously a call and a responsibility. It is a call for a complete paradigm shift from the way we look at nature, and its human and non-human inhabitants, not as means and objects of profit and capital accumulation; they must instead be contemplated as manifestations of the creator and as sisters and brothers in the order of creation. Ecological conversion is a call to shift away from the culture and practices of overconsumption, and the belief that humans are masters of the earth, as patriarchal colonialist imperialism has accustomed us to, towards a culture of care and sustainability-partnership with Mother Nature and with other creatures. Such visions, which also recall the Indigenous concepts of *Rematriation*, *interconnectedness*, and *stewardship*, support my analysis in this chapter.

It should be noted that the visionary calls of Pope Francis are not unique among world religious leaders. In fact, on November 10, 2016, on the eve of the global climate change conference called COP (Conference of the Parties) 22, some 304 religious leaders from 58 countries issued a joint declaration on climate change. Their declaration calls world leaders to “ground their [climate] decisions in a humble and compassionate reverence for the interconnectedness of all life,” and invites believers and their communities to reduce emissions, divest from fossil fuels, and reinvest in low carbon solutions (Interfaith Statement on Climate Change, 2016). This call represents a confluence with the one made by Pope Francis in mid-June 2015 in advance of the previous year’s climate change conference, COP 21, when both as religious authority and head of state he issued a radical encyclical entitled *Laudato Si’: On care*

of our common home, with the aim of influencing the then-forthcoming Paris summit on building a legally binding post-Kyoto climate agreement. In his encyclical, Pope Francis developed the concepts of integral ecology and ecological conversion, which together allow for a focused analysis of the current climate crisis from a holistic perspective. For Pope Francis, climate change is symptomatic of socially unjust neo-liberal capitalist models that oppress the poor and workers for the sake of profits and capital accumulation (Pope Francis, 2015). As such, to address the resulting challenges, we should: 1) respect nature, its laws and equilibrium; and 2) go beyond partisan interests to put the well-being of current and future generations, particularly the most vulnerable, at the centre of political preoccupations (Pope Francis, 2015; Pope Francis, 2016).

While the Pope uses a religious vocabulary, concepts similar to what he names as integral ecology have long been incorporated into other worldviews. According to many Indigenous cosmologies, nature is perceived as a whole, and Indigenous cultures are often based in worldviews that do not put humans at the centre of creation, as ultimate masters, but situate them “within a web of life in which all entities, be they inanimate, plant, animal or natural, possessed a spiritual dimension of their own” (Stonechild 2005, p. 2). “Species of animals and plants are siblings or close relatives of human communities among many Indigenous peoples and thus must be treated respectfully as they too have rights and needs” (Kapyrka & Dockstator 2012, p. 101). Saint Francis of Assisi, far from any anthropocentric or anthropomorphic representation of nature, embraces such relationship views when, in his famous *Canticle of the Creatures*, he praises “Brother Sun,” “Sister Moon and the stars,” “Brother Wind,” “Sister Water,” “Brother Fire,” “Sister Mother Earth,” “and Sister Bodily Death” (Saint Francis quoted in Gatlif, 2012).

The two sets of visions above (Christian and Indigenous) stress a conception that goes beyond the normative Western understanding of nature as an externality, or a “commodity to be exploited or owned,” to include a spiritual relationship (Richardson, 2008; Cardinal, 2001; Verney, 2004) and an inalienable dimension of mutual respect (Steinhauer, 2002; Alfred, 2010; Kovach, 2013). The holistic, spiritual, and reciprocal respect dimensions are key to Indigenous worldviews and therefore, from Indigenous perspectives, defending nature is not simply a matter of protecting an externality, but it is a matter of defending an identity, maintaining relationships, and protecting survival.

From a non-Indigenous perspective, religious ecological conversion is not about adapting production and consumption patterns (within the existing neo-liberal capitalist system) through multiple market mechanisms, techno-fixes, and patches, but rather ecological conversion involves a systematic and systemic change, in order to adopt models that respect nature, workers, and the specificities of affected populations (Kenfack, 2018). In short, “what is required is an act of re-orientation away from unsustainable practices. This act is part of a larger process that can be named ‘essential recovery,’ which needs to occur both on the level of worldview and in terms of bringing forward past sustainable practices” (Hrynkow, 2014, p. 119). This environmental model can only become possible if societies and individuals learn to live according to sustainable modes of resource use, consumption, and care through acts of transformative learning—so transformative that it will lead to changes in our worldviews, to make them more holistic (O’Sullivan; 1999; Goodman, 2002; Hrynkow, 2014; Hrynkow & Creamer, 2015) and accelerate the ecological transition based on ideas and projects of essential recovery and ecological Rematriation. In fact, “the Indigenous concept of Rematriation refers to reclaiming of ancestral remains, spirituality, culture, knowledge and resources.... It simply means back to Mother Earth, a return to our origins, to life and co-creation, rather than Patriarchal destruction and colonization” (Muthien, 2021, Rematriation section). As such, Rematriation mostly appears as a counter-narrative, countermovement, and an alternate sustainability lifestyle. From such a perspective, and applying this concept to the specific case of ecological crisis, I understand Rematriation as an Indigenous reaction to the current dominant colonial, paternalistic, and capitalist-inspired view that has turned nature into fragmented simple commodities. Beside that oppositional stand, ecological remediation puts forward a feminist-based view that claims a humble return to Mother Nature, understood as an inexhaustible network of relations among human and non-human as well as living and non-living beings, in a continuity that involves past, present, and future generations from a horizontal perspective, and the divine from a vertical perspective. In fact, the return to the ancestral teaching and approaches of Indigenous people offers the possibility of learning from those who, around the world, have always and continue to be uncontested stewards of nature. As Pope Francis, taking the example of Indigenous people of the Amazon, states:

If the care of people and the care of ecosystems are inseparable, this becomes especially important in places where “the forest is not a resource to be exploited; it is a being, or various beings, with which we have to relate”.... The wisdom of the original peoples of the Amazon region “inspires care and respect for creation, with a clear consciousness of its limits, and prohibits its abuse. To abuse nature is to abuse our ancestors, our brothers and sisters, creation and the Creator, and to mortgage the future”.... When the indigenous peoples “remain on their land, they themselves care for it best,” ... provided that they do not let themselves be taken in by the siren songs and the self-serving proposals of power groups. The harm done to nature affects those peoples in a very direct and verifiable way, since, in their words, “we are water, air, earth and life of the environment created by God. For this reason, we demand an end to the mistreatment and destruction of Mother Earth. The land has blood, and it is bleeding; the multinationals have cut the veins of our Mother Earth” (Pope Francis, 2020, p. 42).

Sustainability can be fostered through acts of essential recovery in which past practices are re-contextualized to meet present challenges. In this scenario, historically sustainable ways of life can be rediscovered, not simply to clone or appropriate past practices, but rather as a renewing *ressourcement*, a return to the sources, in the spirit of Vatican II (O'Malley, 2008). With regard to the importance of *ressourcement* in the Christian tradition, it should be emphasized that, a few years after his election, Pope John XXIII launched the idea of the second Vatican Council with a statement that became emblematic in the history of the Roman Catholic Church. In the conservative-dominated context of the bi-millenary institution, he called Catholics to “throw open the windows of the church and let the fresh air of the spirit blow through.” These words of the pope gave a new strength and breadth to the progressive wing of the Church that was already and is still divided into two movements: the partisans of *aggiornamento*, and the partisans of *ressourcement*. *Aggiornamento* refers to the radical progressive movement demanding a complete adjustment, adaptation, and accommodation of the Church to the standards and demands of the modern world. The disciples of *ressourcement*, on the other hand, endorse a more balanced position: *ressourcement* implies “a return to the authoritative sources of Christian faith, for the purpose of rediscovering

their truth and meaning in order to meet the critical challenges of our time” (Echeverria, 2014, p. 1). In other words, *ressourcement* demands a creative and fruitful dialogue between the past, the present, and the future. In my use of this concept, I insist on the interconnectedness it implies among various epochs and the importance it gives to the past as an inspirational source for current human-nature-divine relations. Thus, an ecological conversion that is based on a return to the “authoritative sources of Christian faith” implies a renewing *ressourcement*, or rather a continuous reliance on the biblical, traditional, and hierarchical sources of the Church that all advocate respect for nature, or, better said, a genuine spiritual environmentalism. In this regard, our shared humanity with its common survival needs and its shared environmental concern, in the sense of care for life-sustaining ecosystems, can become potential sources of wisdom for living out proper human-earth-divine relationships (Hrynkow, 2016a), as opposed to something to be discarded in favour of narrowly understood manifestations of progress and development. In line with the eco-ethical imperatives laid out in Pope Francis’s *Laudato Si’*, this energizing movement is about rediscovering green roots that can be cultivated to branch out in a contemporary context (Pope Francis, 2015; Hrynkow, 2016b). Such a transition to ecological sustainability could gain inspiration from and respond to an Indigenous holistic worldview and traditional knowledges, as “Indigenous peoples interpret and react to the impacts of climate change in creative ways, drawing on traditional knowledge and other technologies to find solutions which may help society at large to cope with impending changes” (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2008, p. 2; see also Kuhn and Duerden, 1996; McGregor, 2004). It is also inspired by Pope Francis’s integral ecology, motivating an ecological conversion and the achievement of adaptive and resilient eco-ethical living.

The rediscovery of the interconnectedness of all living and non-living beings and the return to the sources through acts of Rematriation are aimed at bringing humanity to develop a deeper sense of ecological conversion based on responsible stewardship (Kenfack, 2020). The call for responsible stewardship is an invitation to a radical shift in the way we view nature and our relationship with nature. Nature, from this perspective, is not just a provider of goods and services, and we are not “masters of creation”; we are part of nature and, at the same time guardians (not owners) of nature, because the whole creation belongs to a supreme and transcendent entity called God, Great Spirit, Great Mystery, the Great One, the Mighty Spirit, the Divine, the

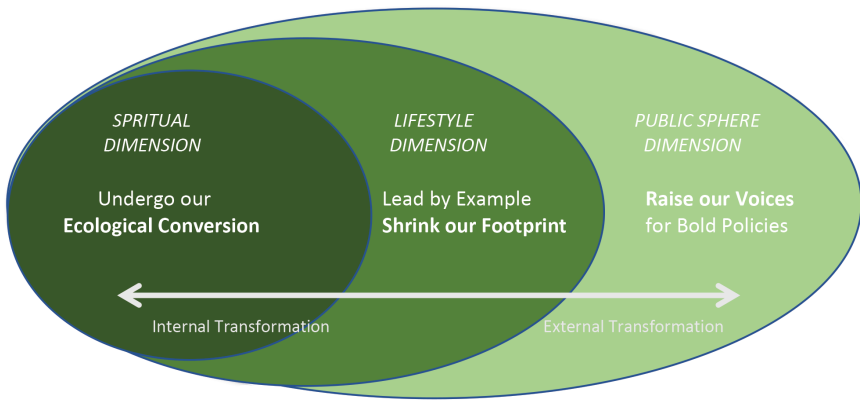


Fig. 15.1 Diagram from *Laudato Si'* Movement's online training webinar for Catholic climate activists, explaining the steps involved to "turn *Laudato Si'* into action and tackle the climate crisis." **Source:** *Laudato Si'* Movement, 2021. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ep7tIWtf1KR5suv0icv3P7e4A6M0dzX6/view>.

Transcendent, the One who lives above, or Creator, among others, depending on spiritual traditions. From the Biblical perspective, we are called to have dominion over the earth, but this does not imply the kind of dominion involving majestic royal power of modern-time kings and leaders, a domination and mastery that lead to unsustainable exploitation. Dominion, from the Biblical perspective, refers to the stewardship-dominion of the ancient Kings of Israel who were chosen by God to serve the people and "to exercise care and responsibility for God's domain particularly in the interest of those who were poor and marginalized" (Butkus, 2002, p. 1). "The steward is one who has been given the responsibility for the management and service of something belonging to another, and his office presupposes a particular kind of trust on the part of the owner or master" (Hall, 1994, p. 32); that is why, in the context of human-induced unsustainable exploitation and destruction of our common home, Pope Francis, like Indigenous communities around the world, calls for a radical change of patterns and the adoption of those that are more respectful of living and non-living beings. Such a conversion, following in the footsteps of the *Laudato Si'* Movement, is to be undertaken at three important levels: the spiritual, the lifestyle, and the public sphere dimensions (Figure 15.1).

Briefly, the spiritual dimension that entails ecological conversion calls for a complete mindset change, a renewed look at nature from a holistic, relational, and interconnectedness perspective. The lifestyle dimension calls for change in our exploitation, consumption, and disposal patterns to adopt those that are sustainable, less consumerist, less polluting, and more environmentally friendly. The public sphere dimension basically calls for mobilizations, advocacy, and solidarity. For the purposes of this chapter, even though the “For Our Common Home” campaign integrates all three dimensions, I focus mainly on the public sphere dimension. Decentralized and participatory governance, as increasingly advocated by climate and religious institutions, gives more opportunities to non-sovereign actors to raise their voices, and the “For Our Common Home” campaign aims at making the voices of the formerly voiceless heard by decision-makers. In fact, unlike the former decision-making approach in global climate organizations where negotiation texts were unilaterally prepared by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) secretariat and discussed by states during COP meetings, in the current approach the main responsibility in building climate policies is transferred to states through institutionalization of their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) (UNFCCC, 2015). In such contexts, the international community mandates the future of climate politics and actions to states under the coordination of the COP, and only has recourse to “naming and shaming” tactics to encourage countries to action (Busby, 2016; Ivanova, 2016; Falkner, 2016; Morgan, 2016). In this scenario, climate justice movements, Indigenous environmental defenders, and faith-inspired environmentalists who had little to no impact in the former political context are able to influence the conception of intra-national and national climate policies, and the elaboration of national reduction pledges. Given this new context, it is interesting to study the metamorphosis that faith-inspired movements are going through, and the mechanisms they are putting in place to induce decision-makers to take their views and perspectives into consideration.

Deep “reflexive stresses” (Jenkins et al., 2018, p. 1), related to the meaning of spirituality and religion, are also entangled with the many people’s growing resistance against environmentally destructive practices, investments, and policies, which have huge impacts on Indigenous lands, resources, and health in Canada in general and Alberta in particular. Faith-inspired environmentalism and the solidarity of that form of environmentalism with Indigenous

struggles for the protection of their lands, livelihood, and the environment, have spiritual as well as political implications. The “For Our Common Home” campaign, as a faith-based initiative that tries to emphasize the importance of fighting climate change, ensuring social-climate justice ideals, and building solidarity with Indigenous environmental and climate leaders, offers an opportunity to examine these questions in detail.

Methodological Considerations

This chapter discusses the results of a participatory research approach involving both direct participant observation and participation in virtual meetings and events as part of the “For Our Common Home” campaign, which carried on its activities despite the restrictions imposed as a consequence of the global COVID-19 pandemic. I attended events held at the Saint Thomas Aquinas French Catholic Church of Edmonton and at the Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton, which is a “unique Catholic community of Indigenous peoples and settlers who pray together using symbols, music, and ritual which are meaningful to our People and to our ... Native and Métis culture” (Sacred Heart, 2022). Taking into consideration the Indigenous backgrounds of the members of one of these communities, this research was governed by the guidelines for “Research Involving First Nations, Inuit and Metis Peoples of Canada” (University of Alberta, 2018). Upon establishing firm connections with Indigenous communities through my earlier involvement and work with Development and Peace—Caritas Canada, and subsequently receiving other participants’ free prior informed consent at the first meeting, I made sure the basic principles of ethical research with Indigenous people were respected at every level and step of the research initiative. Abiding by such principles was aimed at minimizing risks and maximizing benefits to participants and communities. Far from being a simple arms-length observer, I participated in the development and implementation of “For Our Common Home” campaign.

The “For Our Common Home” Campaign in Alberta

The “For Our Common Home” campaign was launched by Development and Peace—Caritas Canada in 2020. It deals with ecological justice and Indigenous rights issues, with a specific focus on solidarity with Indigenous peoples in the Amazon region. The campaign, officially called “For Our

Common Home: A Future for the Amazon, a Future for All,” is a call to reflection, solidarity, and action with Amazonian Indigenous peoples who are continuously battling against 1) deforestation (with new highways and railroads opening the forests to cattle ranching and industrial agriculture, the Amazon is losing one to three soccer fields’ worth of forest cover every minute!); 2) resource extraction (essentially driven by insatiable consumer demand, oil extraction and mining that are polluting the Amazon’s land, air, and waterways); 3) life-threatening and livelihoods-threatening risks (from megaprojects like hydroelectricity dams that are uprooting communities, and where those who defend their territories are being threatened, criminalized, and killed). The campaign was built around activities such as education and training on integral ecology, ecological conversion, and calls for solidarity with Indigenous communities fighting for the protection of their land and of the Amazon Forest, as an expression of the culture of care by Canadian Catholics. Education and training activities mostly took place during Sunday celebrations during which campaigners elaborated on the meaning of those concepts developed by Pope Francis, and on their implications for the life of Catholic communities and believers. Stories of lives, struggles, and persecutions of Indigenous communities and some environmental activists in the Amazon were presented. The culmination of this activity was the collection of solidarity signatures and messages from Canadian Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Those signatures were initially supposed to be handed over to two Amazonian Indigenous communities (the seringueiros of Machadinho d’Oeste and the Mura people of Manaus) in solidarity and support of their struggles during a visit that ended up being cancelled because of travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, those signatures were given to representatives of the two Amazonian Indigenous communities, who received them with great satisfaction and gratitude on behalf of their respective communities, during a webinar organized by Development and Peace and entitled “From Canada, with love, to the defenders of the Amazon,” on October 4, 2020. Other activities included advocacy, reflections, and pledges to reduce carbon footprints through individual or community actions to be taken as participation in the global fight for the protection of the environment. Pledges were “invitations [to] people of all ages to commit to at least one lifestyle change for the sake of the environment. Examples include reducing meat consumption and using public transport” (Development and Peace, 2019a, p. 5), as acts of communities’ and individuals’ ecological

Fields marked * are required

For our Common Home, I pledge to (check one or more boxes): *

- ☐ Choose more plant-based meals
- ☐ Choose eco-friendly transport and reduce my emissions
- ☐ Consume wisely (buy less, organic or fair trade, reduce waste)
- ☐ Reconnect with nature (gardening, hiking, walking or playing outdoors, etc.)
- ☐ My own idea

<p>First Name *</p> <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	<p>Last Name *</p> <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
<p>Email</p> <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> <p><small>If the signatory does not have an email address (e.g., a child), please leave the field blank</small></p>	<p>Your age group *</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> v - Select - </div>
<p>City *</p> <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	<p>Country *</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> v Canada </div>

Fig. 15.2 “For Our Common Home” online pledge form. **Source:** Development and Peace, 2019b. “Intergenerational pledge for our common home.” Available at <https://www2.devpo.org/en/campaign/forourcommonhome/pledge>.

conversion. The advocacy component as initially planned was to involve strategic meetings with local members of Parliament to invite them to consider taking a specific stand on the destructive activities (mostly mining) of Canadian corporations in the Amazon; however, in-person advocacy was prevented by the COVID-19 pandemic situation and health restrictions.

Based on my observations, there was far more stress on expressing solidarity with Indigenous communities fighting in the Amazon than on taking individual and community actions to reduce carbon footprints at the local and parish levels in Canada. The part of the campaign that was geared toward individual and community pledges and actions to reduce carbon footprints at the local level seemed to be down-played and only minimally considered as the campaign went on. Figure 15.2 shows the pledge options that individuals and communities were called to select from. However, no data have been made available to demonstrate the pledges’ trends or success rates.

Pledges, even though not much valued during the campaign, were in line with the ecological conversion Pope Francis called for, and the lifestyle dimension advocated by the *Laudato Si'* movement. In real life both dimensions cannot be strictly separated; a real conversion always leads to lifestyle changes. In this context, ecological conversion calls for a complete change of mindset to see the environment and nature differently, no longer simply as resources, but as a common home with which and in which we are all interconnected and have the shared responsibility to care for. The lifestyle dimension focuses on concrete actions that could be taken to reduce our carbon footprints and ensure the protection of our common home, both individually and as communities of faith. As communities, no church in Edmonton or Alberta, to the best of my knowledge, made pledges to reduce carbon footprints as a result of the campaign.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic caused difficulties that forced the campaign to put several of its activities on hold, Development and Peace Canada continued to work with local partners in the Amazon to maintain pressure on corporations involved in mining activities in the Amazonian region. Following Pope Francis's statement that "the colonizing interests that have continued to expand—legally and illegally—the timber and mining industries, and have expelled or marginalized the indigenous peoples, the river people and those of African descent are provoking a cry that rises up to heaven" (Pope Francis, 2020, p. 9), the official development organization of the Catholic church of Canada continued to stand by the Indigenous communities in the following terms, expressed in its letter of support prepared for the campaign and signed by 66,447 inhabitants of Canada:

Dear seringueiros of Machadinho d'Oeste and Mura people of Manaus,

Thank you for protecting the Amazon rainforest, your traditional home and humanity's common heritage.

We, the people of Canada, are pained to learn of your persecution, dispossession and criminalisation by those who would rob your lands, livelihoods, waters and way of life to exploit the gifts of the Amazon for profit.

We join you in urging your government to stop privileging corporate interests over your rights and the integrity of the forest.

We will impel our government to hold Canadian companies to account for what they do on your lands. Keeping you in our hearts, thoughts and prayers, we wish you more power in your fight for justice and dignity. (Development and Peace, 2019c)

However, it is important to mention that Catholic environmentalism, from a hierarchical perspective, is still quite limited in Alberta. Despite growing concerns for the protection of the environment and for environmental justice, there is limited engagement from the local church hierarchy. In Alberta, even though some church groups or movements such as Development and Peace are involved in the advancement of environmental justice, this is a movement pushed from below. The “For Our Common Home” campaign did not gather specific, strong, large-scale momentum, even though it was endorsed, at least in principle, by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Edmonton and the pastors of parishes and churches where it was implemented. But neither the Archdiocese of Edmonton nor the parishes where the campaign was implemented officially took any pledge, and there exists no structure to advance environmental education or advocacy at the archdiocesan or parish levels. This brings me to argue that, despite Pope Francis’s calls, the efforts of Development and Peace, and the “For Our Common Home” campaign, issues related to integral ecology and ecological conversion are still seen as peripheral matters by the local church in Edmonton. Obviously, the deployment of the campaign, in a province largely dominated by a deeply rooted petro-culture, helped educate the faithful about concerns for the protection of the environment and for environmental justice, and helped enhance the culture of care through the development of a sense of solidarity with Indigenous environmental activists among Catholics in Alberta. However, it is important to mention that such solidarity is still very much oriented toward the Global South. The campaign, right from its conception, was externally oriented rather than focusing on internal situations of environmental persecutions of Indigenous peoples in Canada, taking responsibility for church-related environmentally harmful activities or investments, or taking a strong stand on provincial and national situations of environmental injustice.

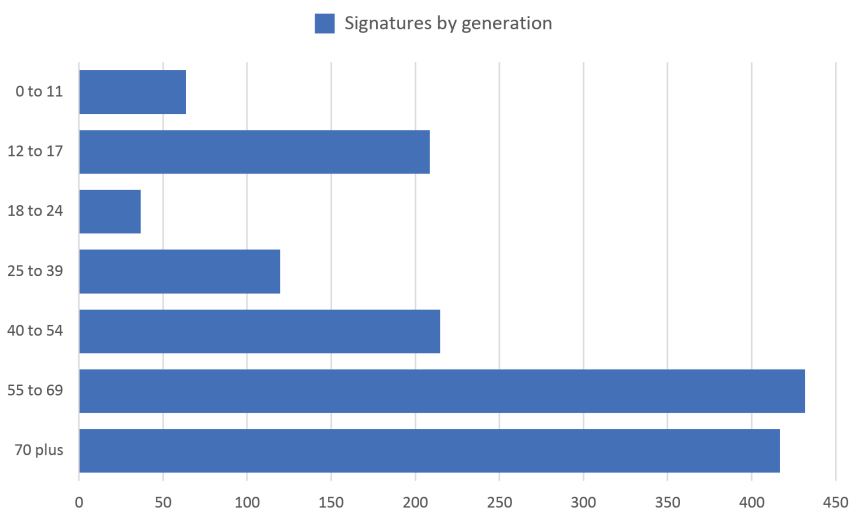


Fig. 15.3 Age distribution of “For Our Common Home” solidarity petition signers. **Source:** Presentation of solidarity signatures to Amazon Indigenous representatives on 4 October 2020.

As this campaign was being implemented, calling for solidarity with Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon who are persecuted and even killed for asking that their lands, environment, and livelihoods be preserved, the Wet’suwet’en blockades and struggles to stop the Coastal GasLink pipeline from crossing their unceded territory were intensifying amidst violent repression from the Royal Canadian Mountain Police (RCMP) in British Columbia, here in Canada. The “For Our Common Home” campaign did not issue any solidarity statement or action to support those Indigenous activists and Peoples struggling locally for the protection of their unceded lands, environment, and livelihoods. Proposals from some campaigners at the Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples and Saint Thomas French church in Edmonton called for such local solidarity, but those calls were not really considered. I argue that this was an important shortcoming of the campaign because, even though the culture of care needs to be global in scope, it needs to start with our closest neighbors here in Canada. Truths spoken in support of environmental leaders in the Amazon apply equally to environmental leaders in Canada. Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples abroad is great, but it should be accompanied by solidarity with Indigenous Peoples of Canada.

Figure 15.3 shows the distribution of the internationally oriented Indigenous solidarity signatures collected by the campaign, at the national level, in Canada, by age groups. From a first-level observation, it appears that those above fifty-five years of age are more concerned than younger people with environmental justice issues, and ready to show their solidarity with Amazonian Indigenous communities and Peoples fighting for climate justice and for the protection of our common home.

A deeper observation and analysis of the situation brings me to the hypothesis that the dominant support from people aged fifty-five and above may not necessarily be as a result of their higher environmental sensitivity, but perhaps simply reflects their greater involvement (far more than younger generations) in churches' activities. Such a hypothesis seems plausible when we observe other environmental and climate justice mobilizations locally, nationally, and internationally. It would have made sense for more solidarity signatures to be from young people, perhaps in the eighteen- to twenty-four-age range, since social mobilizations in general, and climate justice mobilizations in particular, gather more momentum and are usually led by young people more than older generations. The Fridays for Future movement and the boldness of prominent, young, globally known climate-justice activists such as Autumn Peltier, Greta Thunberg, Xiuhtezcatl Martinez, Licipriya Kangujam, Lesein Mutunkei, Nyombi Morris, and Vanessa Nakate, among others, speak eloquently in this regard. In the specific case of religious climate justice activism, the global youth-dominated Catholic "*Laudato Si'* Generation" movement clearly demonstrates the vigour of youth involvement through faith-inspired climate justice activism (*Laudato Si'* Generation, 2019). The overall *Laudato Si'* work advances the teachings of Pope Francis through a variety of activities such as prayers and retreats, training of communities and animators, advocacy for the respect of people and nature, circles where people meet in small groups and deepen their relationship to God, to nature, and to ways leading to individual and community ecological conversion among others. The overall mission of the movement, based on the environmental teachings of Pope Francis developed in his Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, is "to inspire and mobilize the Catholic community to care for our common home and achieve climate and ecological justice" (*Laudato Si'* Movement, n.d.). The force of such global movements, which include education, personal commitment, faith, and solidarity, lies in their ability to link these action steps and encourage people to begin where they can, hopefully

expanding their engagement and learning from the situations and actions of others in the larger movement, both far and near. From this viewpoint, “For Our Common Home” is hopefully an initial step in a much wider and longer-term climate justice trajectory.

Conclusion

The implementation of the “For Our Common Home” campaign, at least in Alberta, did demonstrate a growing consciousness for environmental issues in general and, in particular, environmental justice concerns. Throughout my participation in the preparation and implementation of the campaign at the Saint Thomas of Aquinas Catholic Francophone parish and the Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton, I witnessed strong involvement and desire to learn more from members of the two congregations. It is important to mention that both parishes had no prior history of environmental actions, and there are no known or self-declared climate justice/environmental activists’ movements in either of the congregations. However, even though in both congregations, climate justice and environmental issues in general were not particularly familiar, their respective pastors took advantage of the campaign and created a space for members of their congregations to be educated on environmental justice issues and to engage, from a Christian perspective. Nevertheless, the limited interest in taking personal and community pledges to reduce their individual and collective carbon footprints, and the considerable level of participation in solidarity with persecuted Indigenous activists and communities fighting for the environment in the Amazon, were indications of a belief that fighting against climate change, and climate justice, are still largely other people’s business; there seemed to be a conviction that the planet can be saved, but it has to be done largely through other people’s actions, and that the expressed solidarity of communities from the Global North is enough. There is still a deeply rooted sense that Catholics in Alberta can continue maintaining their petro-culture, silently witnessing the persecution of local Indigenous climate justice activists and communities fighting to defend their unceded territories, environment, and livelihoods, while supporting Indigenous people leading similar struggles in the Global South. It made me wonder: How can we deepen our ecological conversion to face and include local climate justice?

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