

Environmental & Climate Justice

Dialogue Guide

for Museums, Cultural Centers,
and Historic Sites



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What's Culture got to do with Climate Change?

Our cultural practices are intertwined with the natural world, even if we might not always realize it. From the foods we eat to the way we work, travel, and have fun, natural and social systems rely on each other. We designed this project at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Rafael Cintrón Ortiz Latino Cultural Center (LCC) to help you link the environment and climate change to social issues, and to consider cultural diversity as an asset to find solutions to common challenges.

The Latino Cultural Center has a long history as a site of civic engagement, founded in 1976 out of an urban student struggle for educational equity. Today, as one of six Centers for Cultural Understanding and Social Change (CCUSC) on campus, we have played a pivotal role in the UIC Heritage Garden, a student internship program led by the CCUSC, for students to garden and explore cultural connections to environmental sustainability and social justice. Looking to expand these conversations to a larger audience, we've worked with our partner organization, Casa Michoacán, Pilsen, Chicago, and built on research conducted by the LCC director during her time at The Field Museum, which identified community concerns that could serve as a springboard for developing climate action strategies. We've also identified best practices for facilitation through the years in our Arts-Based Civic Dialogues Initiative.

Thanks to the generous support of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, we've been able to weave together all of these threads to design a dialogue program based on Environmental and Climate Justice. We hope this Guide will help you spark similar dialogues at a museum or cultural center in your own community!

Environmental & Climate Justice Dialogue Guide

For Museums, Cultural Centers, and Historic Sites

Museums and cultural centers have been called upon to provide critical perspectives on present-day social debates, because they provide inclusive space for people to consider multiple perspectives and learn from each other's stories. Personal and group identity is always in flux, just as culture is always changing with new circumstances and generations. Community museums and cultural centers have the power to help people shape identity in meaningful ways, by drawing on cultural heritage to address contemporary issues.¹ This Guide can help you to discuss environmental and climate issues with your community, utilizing institutional and regional assets, such as people's diverse cultural values and practices that are friendly to the environment.

Use this guide to:

- Create your own dialogue program, and train staff to facilitate.
- Bring your collections to life, using cultural heritage to address contemporary issues, connecting past and present.
- Understand your community better, connecting local social issues affecting residents to environmental and climate issues.
- Give visitors a meaningful experience that will prompt them to inquire more and even take climate action.

This guide contains:

Part 1

Defining Key Concepts for Civic Dialogue

pages 3 – 4

Part 2

Civic Dialogue Models

pages 5 – 15

Part 3

Tips & Resources

pages 16 – 26

This section can help you establish the foundation for a successful dialogue program. Facilitators should be comfortable with these concepts and ready to weave them into the dialogue.

What is culture?

Culture, as a concept, refers to the processes through which people create social relationships and imbue their everyday actions with meaning. Culture is demonstrated in the wide variety of practices that a social group may share and teach to children (such as gender roles, rituals, beliefs, languages, and customs). A given group's "culture" is always changing as people confront new circumstances, devise new solutions to problems, or encounter other social groups.² Therefore, culture is shared, learned, fluid, and adaptive. **Everybody belongs to a culture** such as American culture, Mexican culture, Polish culture, etc. Some people belong to multiple cultures and even subcultures, which are generally voluntary affiliations that are part of their identity, like fans of hip hop, veterans, etc.

What is climate change?

Earth's climate has changed throughout our planet's long history, from the ice ages to the extinction of the dinosaurs, but recently people have thrown off those natural cycles.³ Through activities like burning fossil fuels, we've released increasing amounts of "greenhouse gases" like carbon dioxide and methane. These gases add a dangerous layer to the earth's atmosphere, trapping in excess heat and causing a higher overall global temperature, known as Global Warming. Scientists at The Field Museum of Natural History describe the connection between these two terms: "Climate change refers to changing patterns in temperature, precipitation, humidity, wind, etc. Climate change and global warming are related, because the rise in temperature is what causes the other climate patterns to change."⁴ [Refer to Appendices 2 and 6 for additional information.](#)

What is environmental & climate justice?

Our definition of environmental (and climate) justice is based on the work of Julian Agyeman, as "a local, grassroots, or 'bottom-up' community reaction to external threats to the health of the community, which have been shown to disproportionately affect people of color and low-income neighborhoods."⁵ Many studies have shown that racial and class inequalities are significant factors, while other intersectional categories such as gender, age, and immigration status/citizenship have also been linked to high exposure of environmental and climate hazards. Environmental and climate justice issues unjustly affect certain people more than others, but we all have a responsibility to take action, to ensure problems are not just spread more evenly, but eradicated from our world.

What do we mean by sustainability?

Old definitions of sustainability usually refer to practices that have less harmful effects on the natural world. As a cultural center, we think it is also critical to acknowledge justice issues as we work towards social change under any understanding of sustainability. We draw from Julian Agyeman's definition of "Just Sustainability," as "the need to ensure a better quality of life for all, now and into the future, in a just and equitable manner, whilst living within the limits of supporting ecosystems."⁶

What do we mean by assets?

We recognize people's assets as tangible and intangible. People with valuable skills and talents (like gardeners, community leaders, artists and writers, public speakers, fundraisers, or educators) can be identified by their tangible assets. Assets that are intangible include **values** (like frugality or a sense of global citizenship), **traditions** (like cultural festivals or rituals honoring the dead), and **practices** (like conserving water, growing your own food, recycling and repurposing, or sharing with neighbors), in addition to **ideas** and **aspirations**. By identifying participants' tangible and intangible assets, participants are invited to imagine how each asset can be activated on its own or collectively to affect social change.

What is civic dialogue?

Dialogue refers to a conversation that is a two-way street. Unlike a lecture or simple discussion, the idea is that each participant should learn from others as well as learning about themselves, by digging deep into assumptions, values, and experiences. Unlike a debate or argument, the purpose of civic dialogue is not to persuade or belittle but to find common ground and to understand difference. Participants are invited to suspend judgment, to work for equality among participants, and to encourage empathy. Many Sites of Conscience utilize the **Arc of Dialogue** (see below) as a way to structure dialogue in a manner that builds up to complex concepts and then synthesizes into action steps.



This section outlines two different civic dialogue models: **Object-Based** and **Theme-Based** models with directions to help you put together your own dialogue. Try the model that is more relevant for your institution and goals, or try them both!

Both models use a **Storytelling Circle** method as a democratic way of learning together. Storytelling is an important part of every culture. People make meaning, build connections, and create community through stories. Facilitators prompt people to tell stories, help them compare similarities and differences among their stories, and explore ideas to advance climate action and improve community quality of life. Stories are concrete personal examples that can help complement what people have heard about complex scientific theories and data sets about climate change, and relate to their lives and local issues.

Goals, Guidelines, Evaluations, and Logistics for both dialogue models:

Goals – To explore how...

- Our cultural values and practices inform our understanding and relationship to the environment and climate change.
- Environmental and climate issues affect communities in different ways and connect to social justice issues.
- Our assets (skills and talents) can be tools for collective climate action.

Feel free to add your own dialogue goals to suit your institution.

Guidelines

Defining group expectations at the beginning of the dialogue is important to having a meaningful experience. Facilitators can write these on a board to remind participants throughout the program. Some suggested guidelines:

1. Listen actively
2. Be aware of our limited time
3. Support divergent perspectives
4. Speak from your own experience
5. Be aware of body language & nonverbal responses

Evaluations

Think about the story of your institution, its local history, and why it's important to participate in this program. Create an evaluation plan to help track how well you meet your museum's needs and improve future dialogues over time. Plan time to process forms, and make sure to keep things organized. Share your feedback with partner organizations too, like a teacher who might be interested in knowing what students learned from their class visit. [Refer to Appendix 4 for Evaluation Examples](#). Evaluation can come in many forms, but here are two types we use:

Participants Summative Evaluation – This is a popular format, where you might have participants fill out a questionnaire right after the dialogue. Keep it short, since people are usually tired after a long program.

Internal Debrief – Have facilitators and staff debrief about the dialogue, preferably the same day. Taking notes during or right after the dialogue can help. Consider what was successful and what was challenging about that dialogue, and what could be done differently next time. Have someone take notes during the debrief as well.

Logistics

Make sure facilitators are prepared for their group and supported by additional staff as needed. Use co-facilitators to help relieve pressure in the moment and support each other. [Refer to Appendix 1 for Facilitation Tips](#).

Audience

This program is intended for adults, or people as young as high school.

Group Size

10 – 30 people are ideal for everyone to participate, and smaller numbers are better if time is limited.

Time

60 – 90 minutes are ideal to have a meaningful dialogue program.

Room set up

Make sure participants are seated in a circle so they can see and hear one another for full engagement. You might want a chalkboard, dry erase board, or large stickies to post notes on the wall for all to read. If you are using the Object-Based model, put objects in an accessible place. If you are adding the workshop component to the Theme-Based model, consider surfaces and additional materials needed for workshop activities.

Object-Based Civic Dialogue Model

This model is based on physical objects, which might include artifacts and art from your collection, or objects participants bring to discuss. People share stories about these objects as a way to make personal connections to environmental, climate, and social issues. This model can help people bridge the gap between past and present, using cultural symbols and memory to address critical contemporary issues.

Step 1

Create Your Own Environmental & Climate Action Collection Box

Dig into your collection

Identify what objects and images might resonate with visitors and diverse cultural practices and histories. Facilitators will use these objects on the day of your dialogue to spark storytelling. Try to look for objects people can touch and pass around, but fragile objects can be left untouched on a table in the center of the room.

Objects can help us to represent and remember stories, but a single object might tell many stories to different people, depending on cultural background and experience. Consider the **story behind the object** – what is it, where did it come from, how old is it, who used it, how was it used, how does it connect to the environment and/or climate change? Remember that any object can have infinite meaning, so be open to alternative stories and experiences, and help others break down assumptions about cultural values, practices, and stereotypes too!

[Refer to Appendix 3 for Object Examples.](#)

Step 2

Prepare Your Dialogue Session

Train facilitators over multiple sessions, if possible, before beginning dialogue programs.

Assign staff members specific responsibilities for the day of, like setting up the room, welcoming participants at the door, cleaning up after the program, and processing evaluation data. In addition to a facilitator and co-facilitator, additional staff might be helpful during the dialogue as time-keeper or note-taker, to pay attention to things the facilitators might miss.

Make a list of everything needed to prepare the room, including objects, evaluation materials, sign-in sheets, and pens. Make sure you have a place where notes can be visible to dialogue participants, like a chalkboard.

Step 3

Conduct Dialogue Session

We have divided the dialogue into four phases, known as the **Arc of Dialogue**, to help structure your questions in a manner that builds up to complex questions and then synthesizes into action steps.

Example Outline – For a 90 minute dialogue:

Phase 1 – 10 min Creating Community

Phase 2 – 25 min Sharing Our Experiences

Phase 3 – 25 min Exploring Beyond Ourselves

Phase 4 – 25 min Synthesis & Action, Evaluations - 5 min

• PHASE 1 – Creating Community

Facilitators start the dialogue by welcoming participants to the space, introducing themselves, sharing the **goals** and **guidelines** of the dialogue program, and explaining the ice-breaker below:

Breaking the Ice

Facilitators ask participants to work in pairs and learn three details from each other:

1. **Name** – First and/or last
2. **Asset** – A word that represents a skill or talent
3. **Environmental word** – What’s the first thing that comes to mind when you think about the “environment” or “climate change”?

Examples: Mario: graphic design, biking. Edith: community organizer, urban planning.

Jocelyn: bilingual, food. Lena: quilter, polar bears. Ian: singer, native plants.

Facilitator Directions:

1. Provide instructions and asset examples to start, reminding participants of limited time.
2. Have participants meet a partner sitting next to them for about a minute.
3. Go around the room and have each participant introduce their partner to the group, sticking to the three main words: **Name, Asset, & Environmental word.**
4. Write Assets & Environmental words on the board as they’re shared.
5. Quickly synthesize. Environmental words can help create a shared understanding of climate change as something beyond polar bears and ice caps, with local affects that bring a distant issue closer to home.

Note: Be aware that “climate change” might be a challenging concept for some audiences. Younger audiences might have a limited knowledge base, while the term might prompt conflict with some groups. With any audience this activity can be a learning opportunity to gauge prior knowledge and build shared understanding together.

Step 3

continues...

• PHASE 2 – Sharing Our Experiences

Facilitators transition into the storytelling component of the dialogue by drawing attention to the objects in the center of the story circle.

Story Circle

Each participant will share why they selected one object, highlighting how it represents sustainable practices and/or environmental threats. Facilitators will:

1. Explain the storytelling circle: One person shares at a time for 2 – 3 minutes, depending on time available. If no one volunteers to speak next, the last speaker can select someone.
2. Invite participants to take a few minutes to look at the objects up close and select one.
3. Ask the question: **Which of these objects speaks to your (or your family/community) relationship to the environment and/or sustainability?**
4. One facilitator will write key words from stories on the board. Pay attention to cultural practices and barriers to environmental sustainability.

Note: Asking participants to “share a story” can feel like a challenging task, since we have high expectations for riveting tales. Asking participants to explain *why* they chose an object is easier to answer, yet their answer becomes a story. As people reminisce about their families and communities, facilitators might point out how particular cultural backgrounds (including American culture) inform core values and practices, in ways that are both friendly and unfriendly to the environment. For example: taking public transportation instead of driving, gardening for summer vegetables and herbs, or overconsumption and waste.

• PHASE 3 – Exploring Beyond Ourselves

Facilitators transition to the third phase by pausing storytelling to point out the practices and barriers written on the board, and consider what’s missing from the discussion so far. [Refer to Appendix 2 for tips on Communicating Climate Change.](#)

Considering justice

Participants are invited to think about an injustice that might come to mind, to understand how **environmental and climate justice** affect people. Facilitator will:

1. Ask the question: **Have you heard of an environmental or climate injustice?**
2. Continue sharing stories about objects, prompted by these two questions:
 - a. **What are some barriers to doing things that are friendly to the environment?**
 - b. **What are some of the challenges to ensure that all people are healthy and safe?**
3. One facilitator will write notes on the board as stories are shared.

• PHASE 4 – Synthesis & Action

Move participants to action steps by inviting them to think back on the barriers/injustices discussed in Phase 3, the practices discussed in Phase 2, and the assets discussed in Phase 1, and consider the next steps for taking action.

Planting the seeds of change

Participants break into groups to discuss how their assets can be used to address an environmental or climate justice issue. Facilitators will:

1. Provide instructions, and pick an issue from the barriers and injustices noted on the board.
2. Break participants into small groups by counting off, and identify a note-taker per group.
3. Ask the key question: **How can we use our assets as tools for positive change?**
Groups should come up with a project idea, using their personal assets to complement one another's to collectively take action in addressing that issue.
4. Bring groups back together to report back to the circle. Emphasize how different skills can complement each other when considering local, attainable action steps.

Examples: Mario (graphic designer), Edith (community organizer), and Jocelyn (bilingual) are in a group together. They decide to create a campaign about ways to save water. Mario could design posters, Jocelyn could translate the message to more audiences, and Edith could contact community groups to help distribute posters around the neighborhood.

Note: If you have a larger group or limited time, you might not want to break into smaller groups, although keeping the group together might demand more involvement from the facilitators to maintain engagement.

EVALUATION

In the last minutes of your time, invite participants to fill out questionnaires about their experience. Make sure everyone has signed in for your records, and share contact information with anyone who wants to find out more about the issues discussed. [Refer to Appendix 4 for Evaluation Examples.](#)

Theme-Based Civic Dialogue Model

This model is designed to connect a particular community concern to climate change and environmental issues. You'll create a dialogue theme out of community concerns and then decide a program format based on that theme, incorporating an additional activity of your choice. In a way, this activity stands in for the objects of the other dialogue model, providing context for the theme and grounding dialogue discussion. In addition to the Four Phases of the Arc of Dialogue, this additional activity might come in various forms like an exhibit tour, short performance, presentation, or photo collage.

Step 1

Identify Local Community Concerns

Dig into your community

Explore what people are concerned about. Look for stories of community connections to nature, or research events where environmental health or pollution have been big concerns. Any community has diverse perspectives, so consider various sources. Utilize the additional resources and appendices provided at the end of this Guide, ask your staff, or ask your community members for suggestions when they come to visit through an informal chalk-board or digital poll. Here are some examples:

- Maintaining cultural identity
- Improving safety on the streets and schools
- Developing youth skills
- Improving local health and wellness
- Accessing fresh foods
- Making housing affordable
- Improving transportation infrastructure
- Creating "green" jobs

Create your dialogue theme

Think about local community concerns, your own institutional assets, and environmental and climate change issues to create your dialogue theme. Is your community currently facing a particularly pressing social and/or environmental issue? Do your museum exhibits touch on a forgotten history, which might provide insight to current challenges? Are you hoping to attract a particular new audience with an identifiable concern? You might highlight a current project in your community that addresses a social concern and explore its relevance to climate change. [Refer to Appendix 5 for ideas.](#)

Step 2

Prepare Your Dialogue Session

Create a format

Review the community concerns identified and select one or two concerns that can be organized under a theme and supported with an activity that your institution is already doing or has the capacity to do. A program that combines an activity with a dialogue can help attract more visitors and help facilitators contextualize the theme in creative ways. [Refer to Appendix 5 for some activity examples.](#)

Consider one of the following activities as a prelude to the dialogue:

Exhibit tour

Do you have an exhibition on display that you can link to the theme? Or, can you create a new exhibition about the theme?

Performance or presentation

Can you identify a local artist that can lead with a song, poem, or other kind of artistic performance related to the theme? Or, can you identify an expert speaker that can give a short presentation on the theme?

Image Collage

Create or gather a series of images about the theme and invite participants to look at them in the beginning of the dialogue. This could be presented as an exhibition (see above) or you can simply place them on the floor inside the story circle for participants to reference throughout.

Note: For any of these activities you will need to develop a series of questions to transition from the activity to the dialogue and to link environmental issues and climate change to your theme.

Other preparations

Train facilitators over multiple sessions if possible before beginning dialogue programs. Assign staff members specific responsibilities for the day of, like setting up the room, welcoming participants at the door, cleaning up after the program, and processing evaluation data. In addition to a facilitator and co-facilitator, additional staff might be helpful during the dialogue as time-keeper or note-taker, to pay attention to things the facilitators might miss. Make a list of everything needed to prepare the room, including objects, evaluation materials, sign-in sheet, and pens. Make sure you have a place where notes can be visible to dialogue participants, like a chalkboard.

Step 3

Conduct Dialogue Session

This Theme-Based Civic Dialogue Model is divided into an activity and four phases to help you structure dialogue questions around your central theme, drawn from identified community concerns. You might choose an activity that comes before or after the four phases of dialogue, depending on your theme and your space. We've provided an example of an exhibit tour and dialogue option below.

Refer to [Appendix 5](#) for more ideas.

Example Outline for a 2-hour exhibit tour and dialogue. You can adapt this outline to incorporate another activity, or change the times to suit your needs.

Activity – 60 min Exhibit Tour

Phase 1 – 10 min Creating Community

Phase 2 – 20 min Sharing Experiences

Phase 3 – 15 min Exploring Beyond Ourselves

Phase 4 – 10 min Synthesis & Action, Evaluations - 5 min

• ACTIVITY – Exhibit Tour

Tour guides welcome participants to the space, and provide an exhibit tour that creates context for the dialogue to follow. Tour guides highlight and expand on exhibit content that connects to environmental/climate issues and community concerns. After the tour, dialogue facilitators will take participants to the space where the dialogue will happen. They should sit in a circle so they can see and hear one another for full engagement.

• PHASE 1 – Creating Community

Facilitators start the dialogue by introducing themselves, sharing the **goals** and **guidelines** of the dialogue program, and explaining the ice-breaker below:

Breaking the Ice

Facilitators ask participants to work in pairs and learn three details from each other:

1. **Name** – First and/or last

2. **Asset** – A word that represents a skill or talent

3. **Environmental word** – What's the first thing that comes to mind when you think about the "environment" or "climate change"?

Examples: Mario: graphic design, biking. Edith: community organizer, urban planning. Jocelyn: bilingual, food. Lena: quilter, polar bears. Ian: singer, native plants.

Facilitator Directions:

1. Provide instructions and asset examples to start, reminding participants of limited time.
2. Have participants meet a partner sitting next to them for about a minute.
3. Go around the room and have each participant introduce their partner to the group, sticking to the three main words: **Name, Asset, & Environmental word.**
4. Write Assets & Environmental words on the board as they're shared.
5. Quickly synthesize. Environmental words can help create a shared understanding of climate change as something beyond polar bears and ice caps, with local affects that bring a distant issue closer to home.

Note: Be aware that “climate change” might be a challenging concept for some audiences. Younger audiences might have a limited knowledge base, while the term might prompt conflict with other groups. With any audience this activity can be a learning opportunity to gauge prior knowledge and build understanding together.

• PHASE 2 – Sharing Our Experiences

Facilitators transition into the storytelling component of the dialogue, utilizing a set of questions that help people connect their views and personal experiences to the exhibit and dialogue theme. The theme should be based on community concerns and environmental and climate change issues.

Example questions: How did you first come to understand this theme? How does the exhibit inform your understanding of this theme? What does this theme mean to you?

Note: As people share their views and personal experiences, facilitators might point out how particular cultural backgrounds (including American culture) inform core values and practices, in ways that are both friendly and unfriendly to the environment. For example: taking public transportation instead of driving, gardening for summer vegetables and herbs, or overconsumption and waste.

• PHASE 3 – Exploring Beyond Ourselves

Facilitators transition to the third phase by pausing storytelling to point out elements of the story that might be missing. They define Environmental & Climate Justice, discuss environmental challenges, and write notes on the board as needed.

Example questions: Can you think of an example of an environmental injustice? What are some challenges we haven't yet addressed about this theme? Why is there controversy around this issue? Why do you think our interpretations of this topic are so different? What are the differences you notice?

Step 3

continues...

• PHASE 4 – Synthesis & Action

Facilitators move participants to action, by helping them synthesize what has been discussed. Now that participants have explored their personal connections to the theme, and explored the theme further through a discussion of environmental and climate justice, they can use their assets as tools for change. Make sure your theme continues to address community concerns in conjunction with environmental issues, so participants are moved to explore solutions for both.

Example questions: What did you hear today that challenged/confirmed your assumptions? What new information did you learn, how will you use that information? How can we consider other climate actions beyond this room, by enhancing activities and cultural practices discussed earlier, trying something new, or talking to friends, family, or politicians? **How can our personal assets be tools for positive change?**

EVALUATION

In the last minutes of the dialogue, facilitators invite participants to fill out questionnaires about the dialogue experience. They make sure everyone has signed in for museum records, and share contact information with anyone who wants to find out more about the issues discussed or return for future programming.

Use these additional resources to prepare for and facilitate a successful dialogue program.

Good luck and have fun!

Appendix 1: Tips for Dialogue Facilitation

Facilitators should be comfortable leading, reading a room, and responding to situations with calm curiosity. Train facilitators to understand key concepts, to communicate clear messages, to listen, and to ask astute questions. These suggestions can help facilitators think critically about their own assumptions, consider others' experiences, and synthesize collective learning. The right question can help a group work through conflict or shift focus for further exploration. Hold post-dialogue feedback sessions and learn from staff and participant evaluation forms to improve facilitation over time. [Refer to Appendix 4 for Evaluation Examples.](#)

General Tips

- Be flexible and keep your cool when the unexpected happens.
- Ask open-ended questions with no hierarchy of expected responses.
- Turn facts into stories with follow-up questions: *How did you start doing that? How have you learned more? Who else does that? Can you tell me more?*
- Don't dumb down critical questions for younger participants, but use accessible language and incorporate group interests.
- Look for clues that a quiet participant might want to speak, but doesn't know how to jump in.
- It's okay if there's silence, let people think.
- Participants can get bored of sitting in the same spot for too long. Consider breaking people up into pairs or small groups to discuss.
- Be aware: breaking people into groups takes time to rearrange and come back together.
- Take mental notes of stories shared, to point out similarities and differences.

Using Astute Questioning

- What do other people think of this idea?
- What experiences have you had with this?
- Could you help us understand the reasons behind your opinion?
- How might others see this issue?
- We've been focusing on views 1 & 2. Does anyone have another viewpoint?
- What don't you agree with?
- What bothers you most about this?
- What experiences or beliefs might lead a person to support that point of view?
- What is at the heart of this disagreement?
- Why does that seem to be the best solution for you?
- What makes this topic hard to discuss?
- Does anyone else in the room have some insight into this disagreement that might help us better understand?

Appendix 2: Communicating Climate Change

Many people know about Climate Change, but they might not connect it to their daily lives. Cultural and social backgrounds also play a big role in shaping attitudes and beliefs about climate change, nature, and the environment. However, most people already engage in a wide variety of green practices, and there are many concerns we share across a spectrum of political and cultural groups. To have a successful dialogue, **build on cultural values and identity, and scale up existing positive behaviors**. Consider the issues people are already concerned about, like poverty, job security, and community safety. Climate action can provide recognizable community-level co-benefits, including but also beyond cost-savings.

Know your Audience

Learn from your community

Understand the sources they know and trust, research the issues they might be facing, and if surprised, ask questions to dig deeper for the benefit of all dialogue participants.

Respect and acknowledge multiple perspectives

Conflict might arise if audiences feel their perspectives are under attack, so acknowledging multiple perspectives can help diffuse situations. This acknowledgment also shows respect and can produce the real fruit of dialogue when participants come away with a better understanding of other's perspectives.

Build on your audience's connection to nature

Not everyone uses natural resources the same way, but that doesn't mean they don't care or don't have a stake in environmental concerns. Find the points of connection.

Know your Message

Know your institution's position

Frame messages within the framework of your institutional mission and message. You can discuss controversial issues by emphasizing critical curiosity, neutral tone, and solid scholarship. Refer to other institutions or authorities for questions beyond your scope.

Diffuse conflict creatively

Be able to identify when visitors are trying to bait facilitators or other participants into an argument, and learn how to quickly diffuse it. Use curiosity to turn attacks into learning opportunities. Point the conversation to concrete examples like art, artifacts, or local geography to bring broad theory down to the concrete. Refer back to guidelines if needed.

Avoid oversimplification

Use clear and straightforward messaging, but don't exaggerate, oversimplify, or make claims that are not founded on solid scholarship, in order to avoid causing conflict or confusion.

Inspire Action

Scale up existing behavior & focus on solutions

Frame climate action as achievable and avoid using guilt. Everyone has things they do already that are good for the environment, and they should feel confident and proud to scale up these behaviors, rather than feeling demoralized, ashamed, or helpless.

Build a sense of belonging and personal choice

Pre-decided solutions might feel incompatible with cultural values, while distant arguments might not feel relevant. Build upon participant's sense of connection, pride, and reciprocal benefits, while being open to new climate action ideas.

Focus on community-level solutions

While it might be tempting to wait for some powerful hero or technological innovation to save the day, most often the best answers lie in the less glamorous realm of grassroots community change. Everyone has the power to make a difference, especially working together.

Communication Examples:

A) A participant in Wisconsin picks up a pinecone and tells a story about hunting with his family in the woods. Another participant is shocked at the thought of killing an animal, but mentions that she often hikes through those woods with her dog. A facilitator might point out that both participants value their local nature preserve, even if they utilize it in different ways.

B) Neighbors in a historically African-American neighborhood of Chicago are working to shift perspectives around relations to the land, after a local school gardening club was questioned by parents for "teaching their children to be slaves."⁷ Legacies of rural life and poverty continue to shape negative associations with agriculture in a community striving for a more urban, middle-class image. Cultural institutions can remind members about stories of self-sufficiency and nutritional health, repositioning positive heritage as a tool for addressing contemporary urban challenges.

C) A group of students are asked about their cultural connections to nature, but one student dismisses the question, saying that he doesn't have a culture because he's "just American." A second-generation immigrant student sits silently, but starts to think that his experiences must be weird or bad because they're different. A facilitator might point out that everyone belongs to a culture or multiple cultures and American culture is constantly being shaped by diverse cultural groups. Whether sixth generation or first, the facilitator should work to make sure all students feel welcome to share their experiences.

Relevant terms and issues to know:

Mitigation & Adaptation

Mitigation strategies are ways to slow or prevent the effects of climate change, like burning less fossil fuels. Adaptation strategies are ways to prepare for the inevitable effects of climate change, like improving infrastructure in preparation for floods.

Phenological Mismatch

An effect of climate change on plants and animals as the planet becomes warmer. Species might move to cooler areas, or bloom earlier than usual, which has ripple effects on the rest of the food web, as other species that relied on them are left without food.

Food Deserts

Communities that have limited access to grocery stores. Often liquor stores and gas stations are the only thing nearby, providing junk food rather than fruits and veggies.

NAFTA

The North American Free Trade Agreement was signed in 1994, opening up free-market trade between Canada, the U.S., and Mexico, although many attribute various economic and environmental woes to this agreement.

GMOs

Genetically Modified Organisms are plants that have been altered for various purposes, like higher output, pest-resistance, and the ability to withstand weed-killer. Although humans have bred plants for millennia, recent alterations have prompted significant critique and have been banned from over 60 countries worldwide.

Climate Refugees

People who have been displaced due to the effects of climate change, like extreme natural disasters, rising sea levels, or drought.

Extreme Weather Events

Some believe hurricanes like Sandy and Katrina, earthquakes like those in Chile and Japan, and droughts like California and Syria have become more intense due to climate change. Their effects are compounded by human error and social inequality.

Enbridge Line 5

Oil pipelines criss-cross the country, bringing energy to our cars and homes. **Line 5** crosses Michigan through the Straits of Mackinac, a 60+ year-old pipe on the floor of the Great Lakes. It has prompted significant critique for recently shifting to heavy crude oil, after a horrible spill from Michigan's Line 6b in 2010 caused irreparable damage to the Kalamazoo River. Many fear a similar spill from Line 5 could devastate the Great Lakes.

Combined Sewer Overflows

In many cities across the country, sewer systems were designed to combine rainwater with raw sewage. The combined "effluent" is normally sent to sewage treatment plants for cleaning and disinfection, but on particularly rainy days it overflows directly into natural waterways like rivers and streams.

Petcoke

Petroleum Coke is a by-product of oil refining sold as an energy source to countries with lenient environmental laws, referred to as "coal's dirty cousin." It's piled near refineries for storage, where microscopic particles are known to affect air quality in neighboring communities.

Flint, MI Water Crisis

This small post-industrial town in Eastern Michigan recently moved their drinking supply source from Lake Erie to the local Flint River. Water deposits scraped away protective linings inside lead pipes, leaching lead into their drinking water, which is known to produce devastating health effects. People have sent bottled water from across the country to help Flint residents, while local leaders face lawsuits and criminal charges.

Kyoto Protocol

An international treaty adopted in Kyoto, Japan in 1997 and entered into force in 2005, which extends the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. State parties are committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, based on the premise that global warming exists and human-made CO2 emissions have caused it.

Appendix 3: Object Examples

Here are some object and story examples from previous dialogues at the Latino Cultural Center.



Quilt Patch

"I made this quilt patch out of an old sheet, a dress, and a few shirts. I learned to sew from my mom, and loved that I could make old things new."



Gardening Tools

"I love gardening in the backyard with my abuela. We have fresh green beans, tomatoes, and herbs all summer."



Water Jug

"I have family in India who walk long distances for water. It's hard to see people waste it so much here, when it's so incredibly valuable."



Bike / Skateboard

Most people have ridden a bike in their lives, and this simple act is also sustainable, since it's transportation without using fossil fuels."



Reusable Water Bottle

"We're lucky to have public infrastructure to provide water. We shouldn't support privatization of water through disposable bottles, which just end up in the great ocean garbage patch."



Historic Photo

Jump rope - "I used to skip double-dutch as a kid at school. I heard my mom used to skip on the streets with her friends when she was a kid, but it's too dangerous now."



Clothspin & Line

"We always used to hang dry our laundry back in Guatemala, but when we got to the States, our neighbors looking down on us like weird poor people."



Rain Barrel

This rain barrel collects runoff from the roof, preventing sewer overflow, and providing a reserve for dry days for watering the plants or washing the car."



Cooking Utensils

Cooking at home uses less packaging & transportation energy than microwavable or to-go meals, eating more vegetables than meat reduces our contribution to greenhouse gases, and our traditions of eating intrinsically tie us to the land."



Paper Fan

"When we lived in the Philippines, we would use the windows, shades, and paper fans to regulate temperature. When we moved here our new apartment had windows that didn't open, so we're forced to use the AC, and our paper fans sit useless in a drawer."



Art - Mural

This painting features imagery representing the natural world in symbols like birds, snakes, and lightning, influenced by the artistic heritage of the neighborhood population."



Art - Ceramic

This ceramic vase features the butterfly, an important symbol for many immigrant communities. "The Monarch migrates, just like people, from Michoacán. Crossing borders is natural, it's beautiful, and it's necessary for survival."

Appendix 4: Evaluation Examples


**Rafael Cintrón Ortiz
Latino Cultural Center**

Environmental and Climate Justice Dialogue Evaluation

Date: _____

What valuable thoughts will you take away from today's dialogue session? _____

Was there a confusing question or a moment that fell flat for you? How can we make this dialogue program better?

C - About yourself (circle one)

Undergrad Grad Student Faculty Staff
 High School Student Chaperone Community Visitor Other

School or community group: _____
Ethnic background(s): _____

If you would like to find out about everything coming up at the LCC, please provide your email:

Name: _____
Email: _____

Please return this form at the end of the ABCD session. Thank You!


**Rafael Cintrón Ortiz
Latino Cultural Center**

ECJ Debrief Form

Date: _____ Name: _____

How well do you think you did in these categories? **Circle/comment**

- Time keeping
- Public speaking (intro)
- Pivoting to a new topic
- Keeping discussion open to multiple viewpoints
- Identifying difference of opinion or similarities
- Inspiring participant action

Were there any particular challenges with your group/discussion?

How can we make this dialogue program better?

Please turn over for more questions. Thank You!

(back of internal debrief)

To help jog your memory, these questions are divided by dialogue phases, to elaborate upon questions from the other side.

Phase 1- Any memorable moments in the introduction or ice-breaker?

Phase 2 – Did people make the connection between the objects and their own values/practices? Were there any questions that particularly worked to get people thinking/sharing?

Phase 3 – Did people respond well to the Environmental Justice question? Were there any other questions asked that either fell flat or worked really well?

Phase 4 – Were there any memorable action steps discussed using skills/assets?

Appendix 5: Theme-Based Dialogue Ideas

These examples utilize specific themes for a variety of dialogue programs and activities. Think about your own community concerns, your own institutional assets, and the environmental and climate change conversations you can weave into your dialogue.

Pickling and Preserving Peace Dialogue & Activity

Jane Addams Hull-House Museum, Chicago, IL

Institutional assets: The historic Hull-House settlement was an early 20th century community center, which tackled issues of poverty and discrimination. A new exhibit explores the feminist origins of the Home Economics movement, which saw food and sustainability at the center of larger social justice issues.

Community/environmental concerns: Contemporary communities on Chicago's west side struggle with high rates of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease, where grocery stores and fresh food are scarce and the lack of safe outdoor public spaces limit physical activities and play time for children.

Program description: This program draws on the importance of preservation in historic house museums and the local food movement. After a regular tour of the museum, participants sit down to chop cucumbers and mix pickling ingredients, while discussing food and green space issues. This combined activity/dialogue encourages participants to waste less food, to support community gardens, and to share healthy recipes. Participants also consider city-wide transformation to create more public green spaces for gardening, play, and natural enjoyment.

Consider: How might your institution address unequal access to food and green space? Do you have art in your collection that represents local agriculture? Do you have artifacts in your collection about historic grocery stores? Is there community knowledge of healthy recipes that could be shared with younger generations?

Día de los Muertos Dialogue & Seed Bomb Workshop

Casa Michoacán, Chicago, IL

Institutional assets – This hometown organization provides direct services and arts programming to immigrants from the southern Mexican state of Michoacán in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood. Casa Michoacán's strong networks, informal knowledge, and connection to the Monarch are assets for programming.

Community/environmental concerns – Pilsen is a densely-populated, predominantly Mexican neighborhood, where recent immigrants work to find their place in a new land but also wish to maintain their cultural identity. Many people worry about their safety now that anti-immigrant sentiments are on the rise.

Program description: This program is scheduled in the beginning of November to coincide with *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead), a Mexican tradition to honor departed loved ones with offerings and festivities. Monarch butterflies return to Michoacán, Mexico at this same time of the year, after crossing the North American continent through places like Chicago, seen to symbolize the souls of departed loved ones returning home. The Monarch is also an important symbol for many immigrant communities because it embarks long journeys across borders. Participants discuss holiday practices, family migration stories, and butterfly conservation issues, while creating “seed-bombs” out of prairie plant seeds enveloped in skull-shaped clay. These can be planted in vacant Chicago lots to grow more butterfly food and improve neighborhood green space, as an offering to the earth, the butterfly, and departed loved ones as well.

Consider: How does your institution address immigration? Are there traditions in your community that rely on the natural world? How can you address a local concern and an environmental concern with the same activity?

An Gorta Mor Exhibit & Dialogue

Irish American Heritage Center, Chicago, IL

Institutional assets: This cultural center hosts dance and music classes, literature and theater events, and more. Their museum collection houses artifacts which reference *An Gorta Mor*, the Irish potato famine of the 1840s, which killed over a million people, and led another million to emigrate to places like the United States. Irish farmers became reliant on one variety of potato as a result of extreme poverty under British imperial control, but that reliance turned disastrous when blight hit, and the primary food source was wiped out.

Community/environmental concerns: Irish elders hope to transmit a connection with their cultural heritage to the next generation. Facilitators also hope to highlight unsustainable agriculture as a motivator for migration, since the recent rise in the use of mono-crops again puts us at risk in the face of climate change disaster. Like the Irish of the 19th century, contemporary immigrant communities move, because life in their homeland presents a series of life-threatening challenges. Just as Irish immigrants have shaped American history by providing innovative solutions to problems of the past, new immigrants bring unique cultural perspectives that can provide keys to solving environmental challenges today.

Program description: Visitors tour an exhibit displaying artifacts about the famine, then they sit down to discuss potato recipes, family immigration stories, and current issues of biodiversity and immigration. Participants might be motivated to plant more heirloom veggies and support recent immigrant communities.

Consider: How can you connect historic immigration to contemporary struggles to help build empathy and understanding? How can we make our communities more resilient in the face of climate change by protecting both biodiversity and cultural diversity?

Appendix 6: References & Additional Resources

References

1. R.M. Cabrera, *Beyond Dust, Memories and Preservation: Role of Ethnic Museums in Shaping Community Ethnic Identities*, Unpublished Dissertation, 2008.
2. "The Cultural Connections Guide to Teaching Diversity" ECCo, The Field Museum, 2010
3. "Climate Change exhibit educator guide" The Field Museum, 2010
4. "Climate Change in the Windy City and the World" The Field Museum, 2012
5. Agyeman, Julian "Sustainable Communities and the Challenge of Environmental Justice" New York: New York University Press, 2005. p. 1
6. *ibid*, p. 6
7. Hirsch, Jennifer & Winter, Alexis "Engaging Diverse Communities in Climate Action: Lessons from Chicago" *Solutions Journal* vol. 5, issue 1, May 2014

Additional Resources

Climate Change

Chicago Community Climate Action Toolkit – By the Field Museum of Natural History, in partnership with local community organizations and scientists, 2010–2016 <http://climatechicago.fieldmuseum.org/>

Chicago Climate Action Plan – By the City of Chicago under Mayor Richard M. Daley to improve sustainable efforts by 2020 <http://www.chicagoclimataction.org/>

Climate in the Parks report – By the Institute at the Golden Gate, National Park Service, 2009

Climate Change Action Plan – By the National Park Service, 2012–2014

http://www.nature.nps.gov/climatechange/docs/NPS_CCAActionPlan.pdf

Global Warming's Six Americas – An Audience Segmentation Analysis produced by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, 2009–2015

Public History in a Changing Climate – A digital publication from the Public History Commons of the National Council on Public History, edited by Cathy Stanton, March 2014

Fifth Assessment Report – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change policy report intended for policymakers, 2016 <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/>

National Security and the Accelerating Risks of Climate Change – CNA Military Advisory Board, May 2014 https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/MAB_5-8-4.pdf

Care for Our Common Home – Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si* of the Holy Father Pope Francis, 2015 http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

Our Common Future – Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, 2007 <http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf>

Culture

- Beyond Dust, Memories, and Preservation** - The Role of Ethnic Museums in Shaping Community Ethnic Identities Dissertation, by Rosa Cabrera, 2008 <https://latinocultural.uic.edu/files/2013/04/Beyond-Dust-Memories-and-Preservation.pdf>
- The Cultural Connections Guide to Teaching Diversity** – ECCo, The Field Museum, 2010 http://archive.fieldmuseum.org/culturalconnections/?_ga=1.141304626.106354573.1443466304
- Engaging Chicago’s Diverse Communities in the Chicago Climate Action Plan** – Community studies conducted by the Field Museum to explore interest and awareness of climate change, community issues, environmentally-friendly practices, and models for engagement https://www.fieldmuseum.org/sites/default/files/DOE%20Roseland%20Report%20FINAL_1.pdf

Environmental Justice

- Human Rights, Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration: A New Paradigm** – by Rabab Fatima, Anita Jawaradurovna Wadud & Sabira Coelho, Migration Policy Institute, International Organization for Migration, March 2014 <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/human-rights-climate-change-environmental-degradation-and-migration-new-paradigm>
- Sustainable Communities and the Challenge of Environmental Justice** – by Julian Agyeman, New York: New York University Press, 2005
- New Allies for Nature and Culture: Exploring Common Ground for a Just and Sustainable Chicago Region** – by Jennifer Hirsch, Environmental Justice Journal, Vol. 1, No. 4, 2008
- Little Village Environmental Justice Organization History** – 2014 <http://lvejo.org/about-us/history/>

Facilitating Dialogue

- Embrace Controversy – Avoid Conflict** – Communication Strategies for Interpreting Climate Change pamphlet produced by the National Park Service’s Interpretive Development Program, 2012 <http://earthtosky.org/content/pdf/controversyorconflict.pdf>
- Basics of Arts-Based Civic Dialogue** – Arts & Civic Engagement Tool Kit, by Tammy Bormann & David Campt, Animating Democracy, a program of Americans for the Arts, 2011 http://www.tucsonpimaartscouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Basics_of_Dialogue.pdf
- Mural Dialogues and Tours** – webpage for the Latino Cultural Center <https://latinocultural.uic.edu/mural/dialogues-and-tours/>



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