



Listen to the Voice of the...

Right for a Healthy Environment!

Awareness

- “The right to a healthy environment is grounded in the underlying principle that all humans have basic, non-negotiable needs, including clean air, clean water, clean soil, and a liveable climate”. (1)
- The concept of the right to a healthy environment as a human right has been growing ever since the establishment of the UN Stockholm Declaration in 1972 which states under Principle 1: “(hu)man have the fundamental right to freedom, equality, and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being”. (2)
- In October 2021, for the first time, the UN passed a resolution recognizing that having a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a universal human right. A huge victory, decades in the making. (3)

(1) [Environmental Rights](#)

(2) [UN Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm 1972](#)

(3) [The right to a healthy environment | UN News](#)

- “Environmental degradation disproportionately affects the poor, women and girls, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and children, among others. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has recognized that for people in vulnerable situations, a rights-based and inclusive approach to environmental action can make a real difference in their lives while also supporting better environmental outcomes.” (4)
- “In Canada, Indigenous people and other marginalized communities are far more likely to be the site of high-risk industry activity or a waste dump than a non-racialized one, and certainly not one that is affluent.” (5)
- “Polluting factories near a neighborhood populated by racialized minorities. Lack of clean water in Aboriginal communities. High levels of air pollution in a First Nations community. This is not random. It’s environmental racism, say experts”. (6)

What is environmental racism?

It refers to racial discrimination through the disproportionate location of environmentally hazardous projects in Indigenous, Black, and other racialized communities Broadbent Institute (7) // ... a form of systematic discrimination that links race and socio-economic status with increased environmental risk ”. (8)

There are many Canadian neighbourhoods with higher visible minorities and lower socio-economic status that have less green space, less tree canopy, more concrete, and higher polluting industries than their neighbouring demographics. These scenarios favour a higher heat island effect as well as position some of the most vulnerable communities in Canada to be hit first and worst by the impacts of climate change. (9)



(4) [Right to healthy environment | OHCHR](#)

(5) [Environmental racism KAIROS Canada](#)

(6) [July 2021 | La Presse](#)

(7) [Broadbent Institute](#)

(8) [KAIROS Canada](#)

(9) [Canadian Climate Institute](#)

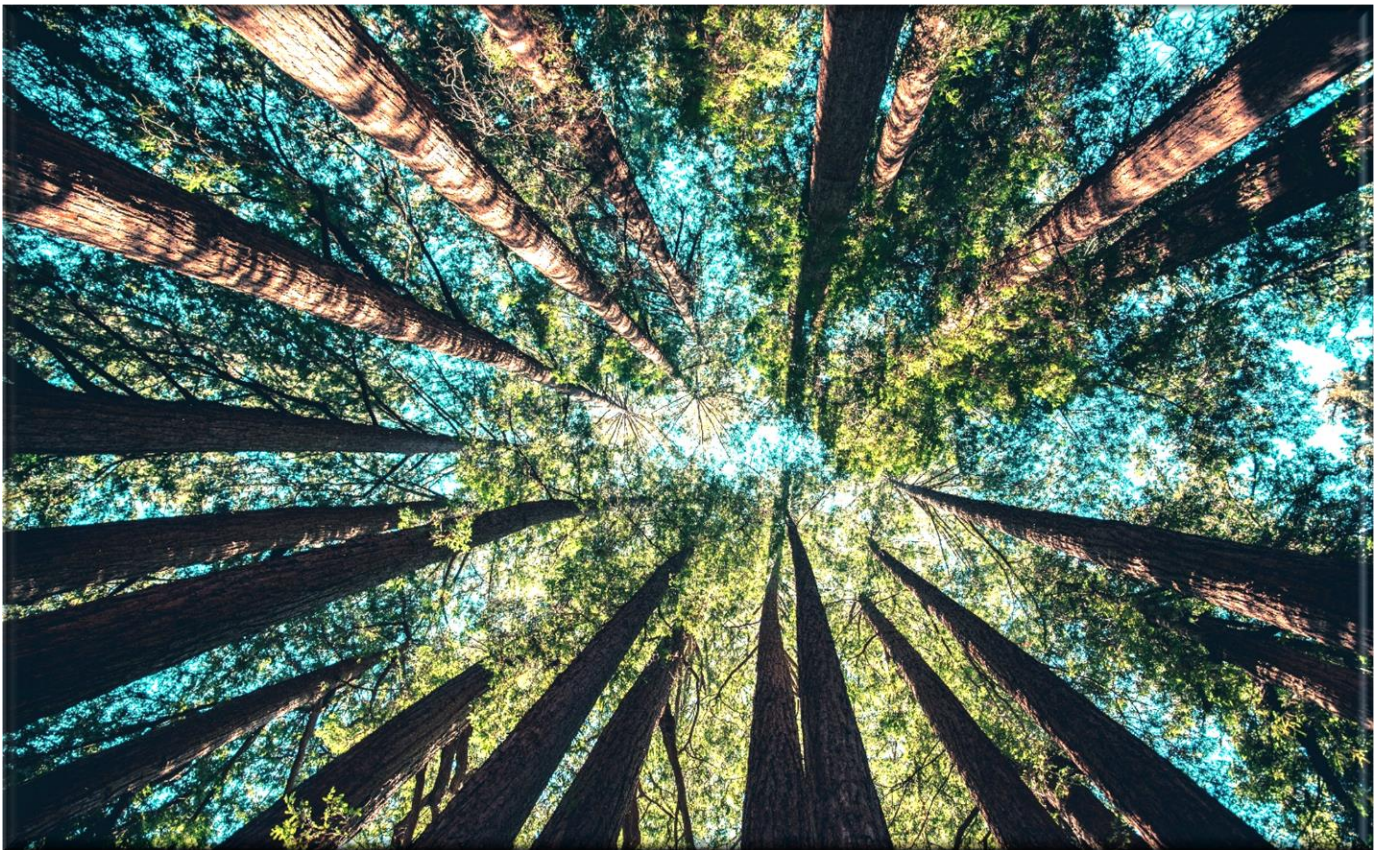
Listen

Watch videos on the Green Churches Network YouTube channel: [Églises Vertes - YouTube](#)

“This world is indeed our home. Yet it is also the home of everyone, just as it is the home of every animal creature and of every form of life created by God.” [Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew](#)

“The air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, indeed, our health, wellbeing and survival all depend on a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.” [healthy environment | OHCHR](#)

“The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. At the global level, it is a complex system linked to many of the essential conditions for human life. (...)Exposure to atmospheric pollutants produces a broad spectrum of health hazards, especially for the poor.(...)Industrial waste and chemical products can lead to bioaccumulation in the organisms of the local population.” Pope Francis, Laudato Si’,para 23/20/21 [enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf](#)



Get Inspired

Here are some inspiring biblical texts:



The afflicted and the needy seek water in vain,
their tongues are parched with thirst.
I, the LORD, will answer them;
I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.

I will open up rivers on the bare heights,
and fountains in the broad valleys;
I will turn the wilderness into a marshland,
and the dry ground into springs of water.

In the wilderness I will plant the cedar,
acacia, myrtle, and olive;
In the wasteland I will set the cypress,
together with the plane tree and the pine,

Isaiah 41:17-19

So stand fast with your loins girded in truth, clothed
with righteousness as a breastplate, and your feet
shod in readiness for the gospel of peace.

Ephesians 6:14-15





Africville, Halifax

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Africville_with_the_Bedford_Basin_in_the_background_\(32862740864\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Africville_with_the_Bedford_Basin_in_the_background_(32862740864).jpg)

Take Action

- Recognize the call of Laudato Si' to protect Creation and promote a healthy environment.
- Organize a study group and research communities who have experienced environmental racism, one place to start is the “ENRICH” Project [The ENRICH Project - Environmental Noxiousness, Racial Inequities & Community Health Project](#).
- Raise awareness in your faith community by watching documentaries about communities who are victims of environmental racism. Here are some examples: [There's Something In The Water](#) | [Netflix Documentary and Remember Africville - NFB](#)

■ Read and share with your faith community the Canadian Commission for UNESCO July 2020 publication titled ‘Environmental Racism in Canada’, this 21 page pdf file is available to download with this link: ccunesco.ca/EnvironmentalRacismCanada.pdf.

■ Join one of the many organizations in Canada that work to address environmental rights. Invite a guest speaker who has valuable experience addressing the issues of environmental rights and environmental racism.

■ Brainstorm actions your community can take to help preserve a healthy environment as well as actions your community can take to support those who are victims of environmental racism.



The Kurgan, CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aajimwnaang_Resource_Centre_right_next_to_Dow_Chemical_in_Chemical_Valley.jpg

Initiatives

[KAIROS Canada](#) works with people of faith for ecological justice and human rights. They have formed a national faith-based initiative ‘[For the Love of Creation](#)’ that invites faith communities to come together to mobilize for climate justice.

[Green Faith](#) is building an international multi-faith movement working for climate and environmental justice. Local communities are encouraged to form [Green Faith Circles](#), which receive support and guidance, while connecting to a larger global network.



The Anglican Communion Environmental Network released a statement in June 2020, titled ‘Environmental Racism- when #BlackLives Don’t Matter’. This document calls attention to environmental racism and its impacts on black and indigenous communities, many global examples are cited. [environmental-racism-statement .pdf \(anglicancommunion.org\)](#)



Communicate

Here are some ideas you can use to help communicate your concerns about rights to a healthy environment to your faith community:

- Set up a kiosk at the entrance to the hall or church where your community gathers.
- Display information about what the right to a healthy environment means and the consequences of living in an unhealthy environment. This can educate your community about the effects of degraded environments, and the impact on the most vulnerable populations.
- Use social media and your church bulletin to communicate your concerns about healthy environments and their importance on racialized communities.
- Use the poster included in this Season of Creation toolkit in your newsletter, on social media, and throughout your church where your community gathers, like the kitchen, the hall, the bathroom etc.
- Voice your concern to your elected officials at all levels of government about the importance of the right to a healthy environment. September 15th is International Democracy Day, a timely reminder to communicate with decision makers either through written letters, emails, or phone calls.

