



# OUR CLIMATE OUR STORIES

*A Collection of Stories and Poems by  
Canadian Youth*



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by Canadian Youth*

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'Our Climate, Our Stories' is a collection of stories and poems from Canadian BIPOC Youth of ages 14 to 29 from the creative writing competition launched by People Planet Pages Book Club, run by Books Art Music Collective, EnviroMuslims and The Community Climate Council.

# Contents

**FOREWORD » 6**

**PREFACE » 8**

## CLIMATE IMPACTS

This House is Burning » Tamjeed Nawaz » 14

A Tanka on the Lament of Seasons » Qianshu Wang » 19

The Screaming Barks » Angeni Fraser » 20

It's our Blood » Bea » 22

Bloom to Doom » Manjot Kaur Grewal » 26

I Dreamt a Dream » Shafaq Batool » 30

## CLIMATE EMOTIONS

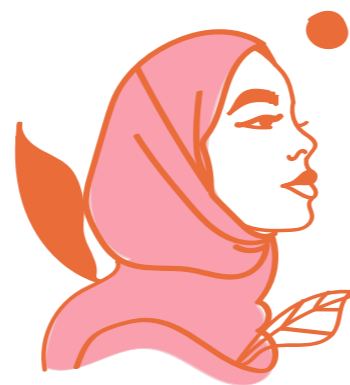
Another Chance » Anzar Khalid » 36

Mountainside » Faith Edem » 38

A Sad Farewell » Ayesha Talreja » 42

Our Turn » Julia Kim » 49

What You See, I See » Natasha Gebreselassie » 52



## CLIMATE JOURNEYS

The First Part of My Climate Journey » Daniel Jeong » 58

The Impact of Environmentalism on my Islam

» Jana Jandal Alrifai » 64

Somewhere the Sky » Adeola Egbeyemi » 68

Food Waste in the West » Lajanthan (LJ) Prabakaran » 70

## CLIMATE ACTIONS

Ocean in a Bottle » Summer Solmes » 78

Privilege and Prevention » Angelina Nayyar » 80

Undying Hope » Jacob Da Silva » 83

Mother Earth » Bahar Mojab » 92

Global Warming – Our Planet's Biggest Problem »

Yusriyah Rahman » 97

**ABOUT US » 102**



# Foreword

Across Canada and around the world, young people from all backgrounds are organizing to stop climate change and ensure healthy, thriving communities on a healthy, thriving planet. The ingenuity, passion and creativity of their actions is an irrepressible force and energy that gives hope and inspiration to people of all ages. I count myself among them.

But not all voices are seen and heard equally. Inequalities of power and resources profoundly shape who experiences the brunt of climate change impacts. These inequalities also shape whose experiences are known, whose emotions are supported, whose solutions are heard, whose voices build our pathway to a carbon neutral, nature positive, and equitable world.

This is the shining brilliance of the *Our Climate, Our Stories* project—to hold up and amplify the voices of young people, and especially those from Black, Indigenous and other peoples of colour (BIPOC). To honour and support their creativity and perspectives is to help us towards a more equitable, inclusive, and therefore informed environmental justice movement. This is the way we build a future where nature and humanity can live in harmony—where species collapse is reversed, where this planet’s great ecosystems and carbon stores, from forests and waterways, to oceans and wetlands are thriving, and where wildlife and all biodiversity is returned to abundance.

6

Nature Canada is thrilled to support and introduce this impressive collection of young storytellers. In our work, we strive to encourage all Canadians to *discover* the wonders of nature through direct experience and emotional connection, to help *restore* damaged ecosystems and contribute to species recovery, and to take action as citizens to *defend* the nature and wildlife on which our climate and all life depends.

In this way we affirm that the work to protect nature and our climate is an all of body, heart, and mind undertaking. The twenty entries of poetry, spoken word, stories and essays you will encounter in this collection showcase BIPOC youths’ perspectives along a similarly full continuum—from climate impacts and experience, to emotions through to needed climate responses.

Nature Canada salutes EnviroMuslims, the Community Climate Council, the Books Art Music Collective and all the partners for their leadership in this project. What a wonderful way to mark Earth Day and our shared hope for a brighter future for all.



Graham Saul  
*Executive Director, Nature Canada*

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7

# Preface

Racially diverse communities face disproportionate impacts from the changing climate and are more likely to not have representation on the topic. Stories, particularly by young writers representing these communities, provide an avenue for self-expression, stimulate intellectual conversations, and instill a sense of community on climate action.

This is how *Our Climate, Our Stories* was born. The People Planet Pages Book Club, run by the Books Art Music Collective (BAM Collective), EnviroMuslims and The Community Climate Council launched a creative writing competition for Canadian Black, Indigenous, and youth of color of ages 14 to 29, to share stories and narratives about their lived experiences and personal, cultural, and communal responses to climate change.

Our aim was to provide youth with an opportunity to share their experiences and journeys on climate change, empower young people from BIPOC communities in Canada to engage in dialogues about their collective experiences, and inspire and enhance the capabilities of writers to share their compelling stories on climate change.

This book is the culmination of the competition entries. The top twenty stories and poems are compiled across four sections: *climate impacts* that instigate *climate emotions* which

8

in turn encourage individuals to experience *climate journeys*, so they take *climate action*.

9

It is our hope that while you read the stories and poems in this book that you, like us, are inspired by the engagement and wisdom that underpin these works of writing. We have worked with a wonderful group of talented and dedicated artists to illustrate the climate stories. The artwork is colorful, imaginative, outspoken, and hopeful, and the stories are authentic, artistic and inspirational. We hope that they not only brighten your day, but also fill your hearts with joy, hope and inspiration.

*Our Climate Our Stories* would not have been possible without the support and invaluable input of each one of the writers. We appreciate your contributions to this book and are so very glad to have shared this unique experience with you. This work was supported by TakingITGlobal's Rising Youth grant, for the editing and illustration of this book.

We appreciate and recognize Abiha Sajid (BAM Collective), Marte Skaara and Michaela Koke (Climate Illustrated), Liz Folarin and Aron Williams (The BIPOC Bookcase), Brian Ford (The Community Climate Council), Nadia Mohammed, Khadija Amir, Saba Khan and Areej Riaz (EnviroMuslims) for their editorial help, keen insight as well as Samantha Casey (The Community Climate Council) and Hanen Nanna (BAM Collective) for their ongoing support in bringing these stories to life.

**We are forever indebted to the illustrious designers and illustrators who were open to any ideas and visualized the stories with brilliance and candor. We would like to express our sincere thanks to Luise Hesse (Illustrator and Lead Designer) from Germany, Carolina Altavilla (Illustrator and Designer) from Argentina, and the team of illustrators: Jenny Schneider (USA), Audrey Suau (France), Satyasree Rajeeth (India), Zelo Safi (USA), Orvokki a.k.a. Kaisa Leppäkoski (Finland), Jenny Caldwell (USA) and Nina Clausonet (Germany).**

**A special thanks to the wonderful staff at Climate Strike Canada, The David Suzuki Foundation, The Jane Goodall Institute of Canada, Nature Canada, and World Wildlife Fund Canada (WWF-Canada) for recognizing the need to showcase young Canadian voices on issues related to climate change and for sharing their encouraging messages for the future leaders of Canada.**

“The climate crisis can feel overwhelming. After all, it’s a planetary emergency that humans fueled for more than a century before we even understood the damage we were doing. And we continue to accelerate that emergency today. We know this is a global issue, but it’s also a local issue. Because we experience the impacts on the ground in our communities.

Climate change is already melting sea ice and permafrost in the Arctic. It’s powering superstorms and floods in coastal and riverside communities. And it’s causing worsening droughts and forest fires across Canadian landscapes. And it’s threatening the homes and food sources of wildlife and people alike.

In the face of these issues, we cannot hide, we must act! We created this problem, and we can solve it too. If human beings are creative enough to cause climate change, I believe that we are creative enough—and passionate enough—to reverse it.”

Megan Leslie  
*President and CEO, WWF-Canada*



# Climate Impacts

# The House is Burning

By Tamjeed Nawaz, 17 years old  
Windsor, Ontario  
Illustration by Jenny Caldwell

“BEEP BEEP BEEP,” the smoke detector blares, signaling fumes spreading throughout the air. Mother ignores it. She plunges another chicken leg into the oil, without a worry or a care.

“Mother do you not hear that noise?! There’s too much smoke! Stop the cooking!”  
“Silly girl, do you not know that we must eat? Food is what you are overlooking!”

A tempura shrimp drops from Mother’s meaty fingers into the fryer, creating a splash. It is at that moment that the girl runs to Father with nothing short of a dash.





“Father, Father! Do you not hear that noise? Tell Mother to stop the cooking, before our house, it destroys!”

“Silly girl,” Father echoed. “Don’t you understand? Smoke alarms are meant to blare, have some poise!”

Father looked expectantly to Mother, and she gifted him a plate filled with juicy, succulent meat.

“The noise isn’t bad, it’s only natural!” Father said with gluttonous satisfaction as he began to eat.

“Cough Tamed,” barked the small infant, as dark smoke invaded his lungs.

“Do you not see him struggle?” cried the girl, “It’s only natural,” Father sung.

“He cannot breathe Father! Please, there’s far too much smoke!” pleaded the girl.

“If there was smoke why can I breathe? Have some sense.” replied Father with a snarl.

Mother heads back to the kitchen and dumps 1 chicken, 2 chicken, 3 chicken down the fryer.

The detector screams, the fryer erupts, the oil pops with anger. It sparks a fire.

The girl pleads again, “Father! Father! Use the extinguisher lest the flames engulf us.”

“Oh, but imagine the cost that entails, it’s too high for me. And of this matter I shall no longer discuss.”

The infant coughed one last time, before the black smoke overpowered him, and till he succumbed.

The house cat followed suit, the black smoke permeated around him, and into the ground he was entombed.

“Father I beg you please stop the fire,” cries the girl with tears flowing from her eyes.

Father traded a bucket of oil for another plate of food. “Silly girl we haven’t the funds for that!” He lies.

The girl screams “Father the inferno enlarges, how will we ever escape a scene so dire?”

“Child it is under control,” says Father with a mouthful of grub, “do not frenzy due to a pyre”.

“Father we need to stop the cooking and extinguish the blaze, lest we end up as ashes.”

“Come up with a real plan that will fix this,” said the Father dismissively, as the conflagration flashes.

Mother exited the kitchen, her body engulfed in ember and blaze.

With each of her steps, the fire spread. Yet still she was oblivious, as if in a daze.

Her melting hand delivers a flaming platter of burning food straight to Father.

He devours it whole, ignoring the flames. He lights up from within, akin to an altar.

The girl screams out of despair, weeping as she gives up and  
tries to run away.

Yet the dark smoke hooks her with its arms, traps her and  
forces her to stay.

It violently grabs the air from deep within her chest, pulling it  
out, and hiding it forever more.

The girl desperately grasps in front of her, attempts to take it  
back, the effort is futile. She ultimately falls to the floor.

The blaze engulfs the family. In a matter of minutes, it  
reduces them and the house to ash and dust.

If only they had listened, ceased the cooking and ended the  
fire, then maybe they would not have combusted.



# A Tanka on the Lament of Seasons

By Qianshu Wang, 24 years old  
St. Johns, Newfoundland and Labrador

When I was a child,  
I watched snow fall in autumn.  
Now, I just see rain,  
When did winter come so  
late? Now, it all washes away.



# The Screaming Barks

By Angeni Fraser, 16 years old  
Vancouver, British Columbia  
Illustration by Audrey Suau

It started with a bang  
A gust of wind with a high pitch rang  
There was silence, before the mayhem  
Eerie, comforting, billowing muteness  
Streams ran dark blue, crimson and amber  
They flew everywhere, the fiery embers  
The roots joined, the leaves swirled, the trunks beckoned  
The once tall warriors stood defeated and reckoned  
If they were to die today, they die tall and proud  
They shrieked and yelled to the world aloud  
If only the ground was wet and not warm  
If only the sun and sky were the once hospitable charm  
If only this bark blood had not gone to waste  
Their screams could be a ripple to compel humans to haste





# It's Our Blood

By Bea, 21 years old  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

I sit here, writing this story, in the most beautiful room in our ancestral home. The walls are beige, the decor with tones of yellow, and the room bright, shining, like a beacon of hope. There's a wall behind this couch, with pictures framed of my entire bloodline. There's mom and dad, their siblings, my siblings, grandparents, great grandparents and great, great grandparents too. They're all spread around a large frame, my great, great grandfather's. There is a feather on the frame with his favourite quote written underneath, "We are all connected by Blood." He is standing under a large tree, a raging river in the background, a contented smile on his face, like everything in his life was okay and it sure was.

Everyone was content with what they had. They grew or hunted food, they took care of the forest, the land, the River; "we're all connected by blood."

They healed what was hurt, they helped the broken, they saved the trodden, they were "all connected by blood."

They shared resources with visitors, they learnt from them and they tried to get better education for their own kids, as "we're all connected by blood."

The kids studied, they explored, some left the lands, some stayed, others returned with friends and investors, and they said they wanted the best for the land. Of course, they did. After all, aren't we all connected by blood?

My grandfather took over 'caretaker' duties from his father, and taught all the kids in the town of our connection to Mother Earth. Every summer we spent days swimming, riding bikes, playing with wild rabbits, sowing seeds and fishing at the river. Everyone with enough money owned a canoe or a boat, others would simply borrow. The river was our battleground, it was our playground and it was the thread that connected the ends of the town. The river connected us, and we connected it, like blood.

Next summer, people celebrated the new industry that opened up across the river. There would be golden days, make room for cash, they said. We asked, in our kid like naivety, are we also connected to the big factory? They said, we are all but one, you, me, us, them, everyone and everything else. We celebrated, we were overjoyed, and we were content. We never lived a happy summer again.

The wallets were getting thinner, more stones but few fish, the soil sickening, the animals dying, the crops failing, the smiles drooping. The boats were rotting, the smell thickening, the water was getting darker; the river was no longer welcoming.

The cracks in the drying ground reflected on my grandfather's face. Wrinkles bloomed within months from the worries that the land, water, plants, animals and the humans felt. Surely, he was connected to them by blood.

These yellow, shining, bright walls cannot illuminate the darkness inside our hearts, our home, our town. From the window I can see the graveyard that is flowing through the town: polluted, sick and dead; like the land, plants, the animals and the humans. The stench is everywhere, like a stitch in a blanket, undulating at each weave. The birds are befuddled and cry over and over again, "if we are all connected by blood, why aren't they sick across the river?"

Because it's our blood.



**“The river was our battleground, it was our playground and it was the thread that connected the ends of the town. The river connected us, and we connected it, like blood.”**

# Bloom to Doom

By Manjot Kaur Grewal, 21 years old  
Brampton, Ontario  
Illustration by Jenny Schneider

I am a stem which sprouted one day,  
was full of hope and proud to say that  
I am the beholder, the giver, the mother,  
who gave life and provided and cared for others.  
The sweet, gentle, loving winds blew freely about me,  
the water sparkling like an ocean of diamonds surrounded me,  
my seeds spread out all about me,  
bringing upon more life around me.

Vibrant creatures soared high in the bright blue,  
spreading bundles of joy as they flew,  
bringing on a new life from every corner of me,  
from deep inside my heart to the top of the sky and farthest sea,  
as new life grew, I provided for it with tons of love and care,  
for they are my own children with whom I would always share.  
From a stem to a garland I had grown,



much more stunning than anyone had ever known.  
As my sweet fresh fragrance blew in the gentle air, all  
those around me became aware.  
I gave them fresh air, food, and a home,  
but everyone wanted more! more! more!  
I thought that I would be able to provide it,  
but with so many mouths to feed,  
all growing up and turning into greed;  
even though I was very tough,  
for them it was just never enough!  
I started to struggle...

I had started off as a blooming stem, to a flower who gave  
    life to everything,  
I thought I had taught my children the lessons of life,  
    from the storms to the sun shines,  
but now my own seedlings have turned on me for other things.

I, who was once a flower, stronger than any sort of power,  
am now beginning to wilt...  
due to the actions of my children who should feel an immense  
    amount of guilt.  
The air which once blew around me and the water which gave  
    me life,  
have been poisoned and polluted, leaving me depressed,  
    torn, filthy, broken and destroyed.  
For now, I am just a struggling asphalt flower, whose life is in  
    danger,

28

I fear my own death is approaching and will be carried out  
    by my own children.

Soon I won't be anything but a flower which once existed,  
ripped from my stem to be forgotten.

It was already a struggle to continue to thrive,  
and once I am gone, nothing will survive...



29



# I Dreamt a Dream

By Shafaq Batool, 16 years old  
Calgary, Alberta

I have this dream often,  
It always starts with a scene of infinite complexity:  
The crevices of the mountains towering over the valleys that  
are carved below,  
The colours of the morning sun which are printed in hues  
of fiery reds and pale pinks,  
Even the breeze that breaks the overwhelming heat  
occasionally brings the image to life.  
Whenever I wake, I think that perhaps I should paint it for  
the visual, but I would never know where to start.  
Would I start with the fall of the sturdy trees, the sky even  
cowers under their whispering mysteries?  
The mountains?  
That are covered with thick forests scattered with colours of  
the homes that lay among them, the evidence of other life  
forms.  
Even the hardly tangible sky that softens against the edge of

the million shades of green that are present, is a great place  
to start.  
But the paintings wouldn't discover the specks of golden  
moments that can be captured,  
They could never tie down every detail with enough emotion  
that makes up that heaven.  
The euphonious singing of the birds in the bright awakening  
of the early morning,  
The chattering of the grasses that held life so willfully that the  
sound still finds me in cold nights.  
No, perhaps I should not paint a painting.  
But I cannot rid myself of that dream,  
The warmth of the sun that encompassed me,  
Holding me separate from the constant buzz of the outside  
world.  
Amongst it all,  
There are the traces of colours that make up the flowers,  
laying ominously among the fields.  
The breeze that spills a chill to expose you to the cold,  
Oh, how it wakes you from the stupor.  
The memories of eating away at the crisp apples that taste of  
ambrosia  
Whilst taking in the warmth as if it would never pour into me  
again,  
Walking over the dusty trails towards the rock, where the  
view is impeccable,  
Witnessing the mountains when I seek the comfort of great-  
ness that coexists with the simplicity of life's little pleasures.  
The curve of the lights shifting the trees and the small little



seat up in the walnut tree.  
In the dream, I spent all day in a sort of golden warmth that is  
surely no less than a trance,  
Protected by the trees amongst the beautiful view.

But from there, it always shifts.  
The dream, now a nightmare and shadows dance in the back  
of my eyelids.  
The sun glowers into my bones and makes the view hazy.  
What was so crisp and clear is plagued with suffocating air  
that you can't breathe out.  
What once smelled of fresh flowers and rain lingered—now  
it's tainted with wet hot smoke.  
I can not bear to sit outside too long, I get up and scurry  
around, restless.  
The trees are scarce and the earth is scorched with inflicted pain.  
The birds cry against the hollow world.  
I reach out to touch the flower petals, willing to feel the soft,  
but the remnants of the earth wither under my touch.  
I move through the grass that wilts as I walk.  
The cacophonous unrest builds as I seek refuge in the bushes,  
The sky is no longer blue and bright, but black and closing in  
from above me.

I wake up having dreamt this dream so often,  
But always shuddering in cold sweat to the bitter realization.  
That I witnessed no feeble dystopia in the callous thought  
of a world that withers  
But that I live it as reality.

32

Is this not the truth that we make ourselves oblivious to?  
We, who take from the world and give nothing.  
We, who step over it and leave damage where we please.  
Are we not souls combined, the earth and its people?  
Yet we walk around in busy demeanour and keep our noses  
glued to our phones  
The world around us is crippled in pain, begging for us to not  
do to it, as we do to ourselves.  
And still, why don't we change?  
Watching as the earth withers away.  
As our winters and summers bleed into each other, becoming  
indistinguishable.  
The animals lose their homes to our greedy hands,  
And we cage them in the name of pleasurable entertainment.  
Will we one day put away the hunks of metal that we lay our  
lives on and perhaps notice:  
How the world once so bright and alive now lays on its  
deathbed.  
The inalienable beauty is scattered,  
Slipping like a breeze always a few inches too far from our  
fingertips.

I dreamt this dream that was no dream, but a nightmare of  
reality.

33

“As we look around the world today—at the conflicts, the destruction of the environment, the human and animal suffering—it almost seems absurd to say that my wish is for a more peaceful, healthier and happier world. Yet this is the world we all yearn for. And I find that with the image of such a world in my mind and in my heart, it is easier to take action, every day, to move things in the right direction. Of course, the road is long and full of disappointments but still it gives me energy to keep going with that goal in sight. Without hope there is no hope. And so, I dare to wish for a world in which people live in harmony with each other and with the natural world and all the wondrous animals with whom we share the planet.”

Dr. Jane Goodall, DBE  
*Founder, Jane Goodall Institute  
& UN Messenger of Peace*



# Climate Emotions

# Another Chance

By Anzar Khalid, 15 years old  
Edmonton, Alberta  
Illustration by Orvokki

I could count them all on a single hand,  
the years they spent pointing, ignoring, wasting.

Flags waving, chests heaving, spittle foaming,  
“Each to their own,” they said.

You watch, you pray, you dismay,  
Earth keeps shuddering from the mockery they make.

All I ask: is this fate, destiny or ill omen?  
Perhaps we need to start by fighting our own demons?

The hourglass on The Street ticks and tocks,  
it’s too late now to sit about!

Dreams are free, so I dream on.  
Perhaps we will give Mother’s life another chance, to live on.



EARTH KEEPS SHUDDERING FROM  
THE MOCKERY THEY MAKE



# Mountainside

By Faith Edem, 26 years old  
Brampton, Ontario

Breath In. Breath Out. Breath In. Breath Out.

I sway and dig my heel deeper into the belly of earth grasping for roots to hold me anchor to this mountainside. I stand on the pillar of broken pieces, like an orchestra stringed together, they remain incessant with deep vibrant percussions.

The searing sea of fractured opal, turquoise and eggshell coloured pieces of once hollow husks, disposable carriers, and stained ceramic enclaves now consume what was once the mountain, our mountain, my mountainside.

All marred with jagged edges, rough lines and shattered crevices how did they find their way here? These pieces all became one on this mountainside. A vague memory of once a haze of lush greenery, was it? On this mountainside. These pieces had no place to go, no destination but here. A distinct

38

insignia laid bare on numerous fractured pieces, three bold emerald arrows following each others' path, a continuous triangular motion not knowing the truth of it all, a fickle road to nowhere but here, on this mountainside.

I wonder what they thought, those who glanced at the triangular path etched into these pieces, why did they not follow suit? What was misplaced in the visual telegram? Follow the path, follow the arrows, the gleaming arrows anguished to lead and guide, not to resolve to this mountainside.

How could they not know that we were already spilling over the brim, unable to prevent the ashen somber our skies have become, the unceasing prickling in our throats as we inhale. How could they not see our mountainside? To briefly glance and see how this mountainside is no longer a place to connect the fresh water embanks, provide shade to the pastoral farmers, and shed contrast to the fortified homes that surround it. How could they not see that our mountainside is no longer a refuge, no longer a sanctuary for nurturing our souls? What has become of our mountainside?

The mountainside, now reduced to memories, recycled rhymes of the past. The mountainside now rendered too fickle to garner any hope of reusable land. It was once arable now destitute, divorced from its past. Now all that persists is synthetic compounds continuing to masquerade as organic properties as they bleed into what lies beneath, our terra, the mountainside. I tremble at what has become of it all.

39

Breath In. Breath Out. Breath In. Breath Out.

40

On this mountainside, centered atop these broken pieces a tidal of assurances washes over my senses. I know the mountain was once here before the broken pieces. It will remain tomorrow, it cannot shrink, I know it must heal.

Allowing the brush of the wind to move through my soul I realize, I am a catalyst for growth. I am the change maker, the lauded champion, and the steward of the past, present and future. I will renew my mountainside, our mountainside, the mountainside.



**“I am the change maker,  
the lauded champion,  
and the steward of the  
past, present and future.”**

# A Sad Farewell

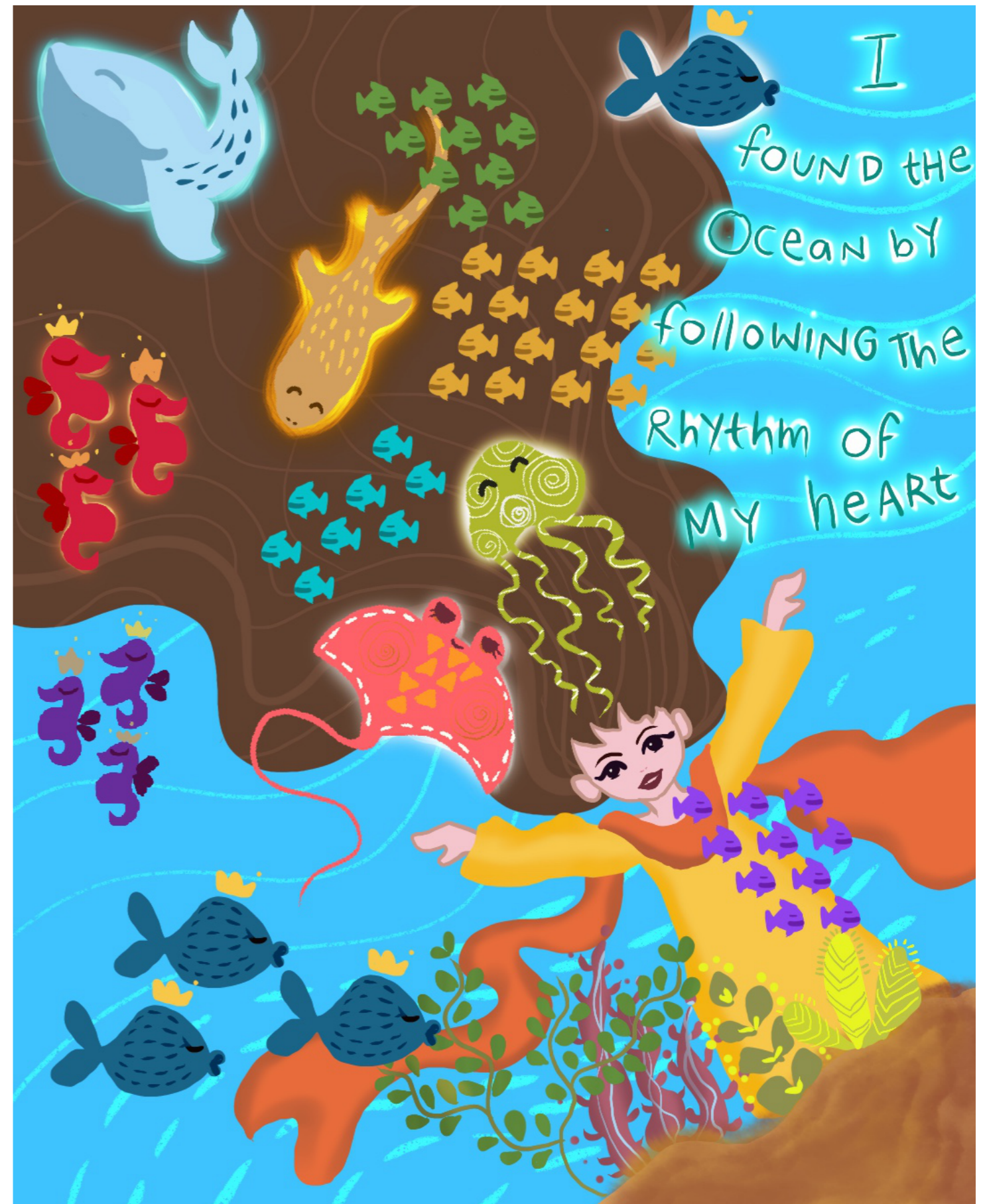
By Ayesha Talreja, 25 years old

Toronto, Ontario

Illustration by Satyasree Rajeeth

The beach was calm, quiet. The distant sounds of soft lapping of the ocean waves, the seagulls chirping somewhere far away, filled her with an internal peace she had not felt since leaving. The peace she used to feel while looking out at the fields she and her community shared.

Nothing like the panic that reared itself inside her stomach each and every second she faced the roaring noise of the city, the whirlwind of noise and heat that awaited her every day on her walk to the factory. She had almost learned to tune it out now—the noise, the smells—but on occasion, if she really stopped and paid attention, it would rattle her to her core. Pacing quickly through the city's main plaza, she noticed each day the city's banner: a larger-than-life white seashell painted against a rich navy blue, fluttering in the wind. The plaza was the one clean and quiet place inside the city, she remarked,



given the people who came from different corners of their region to note the success story, the shiny veneer that had developed over the reality that lurked behind. The seashell, she was told by her co-worker who had worked at the factory for a little more than a year, was selected as an emblem given the city's proximity to the ocean. It harkened back to a past where she could only imagine the sea creatures had free reign, when people used to spend time on the ocean shore. That was back when both the sky and the water were blue, she had heard, not the ink-like red-black with specks of blue as it was now. That was back when you could find the ocean easily.

She would have never been in this city had it not been for the creatures they found worming their way through the soils, the creatures so disgusting they clung onto the root of each crop and did not stop ravaging until they sucked all the life out of the plants, as they were left withered and hanging loose. She remembered the first time that she saw the creature while harvesting the few plants they were permitted to grow these days. The creature was larger than a worm, almost the size of a lizard, with two beady eyes, a pale spineless body that filled with a venomous green as it greedily sucked the life out of her beloved plants, attaching one part of its body to the plant's delicate roots. She ran and ran for her father, her erstwhile guide and teacher, thinking he would have some kind of an answer, but he was equally as alarmed, left staring wordlessly at the creatures.

44

She watched as his face fell, dealt yet another blow by the difficulties that had plagued their family, again; stories that she had heard since she was a child, stories from her ancestors.

They made the move to the city almost instantly, as a group; the need to earn a living for themselves surpassed their deep want to remain in their homes. The city itself had been wrecked by a flood many years ago, destroying large swathes of land as it barreled its way down the streets, wiping out homes and livelihoods, seemingly unaware of the force of its magnitude. The city had been forced to reconsider many things, none of which they had seemed to do well. The city felt at once restrictive and small; nothing like the freedom that she had felt on her land, allowing her to walk in the quiet stillness.

Stillness was the opposite of her new reality. Each day she found it increasingly difficult to stomach the sight of people who had to tend to the huge fires in the factories with a pair of leather gloves so flimsy and well-worn she wondered how deeply their skin would be scathed if they were allowed to reveal. As for her task, it involved designating which pieces of old trash would go in which fire, again with a pair of hide gloves. She found objects so strange she was unable to even imagine what they may have been used for. What were all these oddities, unnatural to the touch, and how did they find them inside the ocean? She realized that a lot of these objects seemed to be boxes. Boxes of various shapes and sizes stumped her almost daily. A cold, sleek object that opened up,

45

with a set of letters on one side and a black reflective surface looking back at her. One large, thin black box that was so heavy that she and her mother had to move it together. One box that didn't open at all and was merely the size of her palm, looking up at her almost questioningly. She found almost two hundred of those small boxes each day, figuring that this was something important, since there were so many of them. Other regular pieces of rubbish that she would often dig out from the heap included a white spongy material as well as transparent bags, procuring so many that they seemed to be uncountable. Each day, these would have to be sorted and added to the correct fire, which would chew up and spit out the trash, a whiny humming sound coming from underneath it. It would, at random, make large scary noises, which at first frightened her, perhaps when it had satiated its limit of garbage to burn up, and needed more to run properly. Overtime, these noises—the whirring of the fires, the sounds of combustion and consumption, the noises walking to and from the factory, the mechanical drone of the machines—became the rhythm of her days.

That's how she had found the ocean. By tuning out that track, and by following the rhythm of her feet, the rhythm of her heart, propelling her further along the path that led far away from the city, spiraling this way and that. Once she found it, she was floored. The ancestors' reminders of working with the lands, of treating it as a friend to share with, returned with a rush. The power of the waves and the intensity of their red tones took her back to both her plants and her fields,

**“From the gentle sound of the waves moving, she could hear her ancestors calling, and it sounded like a sad farewell.”**



memories that had been progressively pushed to the back of her mind, striking her with a deep sadness for the past that was lost, the living beings that used to call this place their home, and the future of further destruction that surely awaited them all.

From the gentle sound of the waves moving, she could hear her ancestors calling, and it sounded like a sad farewell.



## Our Turn

By Julia Kim, 15 years old  
Mississauga, Ontario

I'm in a bright hall. The walls are made of yellow light and warmth. When I look closer, I can see hearts rising from photos. I see images of people around the world, sitting on their phones and tapping them, twice in a row. I reach to touch them, but when I do, they vanish. Behind them are images of trucks mass cutting trees. Then I hear a scream. I look around in confusion and then I look ahead. In front of me is a door. It's dark, burnt and smells of soot and ash. I go to open it but its handle is hot to touch, I grab it, my skin instantly blisters and I shriek in pain. I'm about to walk away when I hear more screaming coming from the other side. I can hear it more clearly this time. A woman's scream, it's full of fear, anger and helplessness. It cuts through the warm light and everything goes dark. I grab a piece of my shirt and painfully open the door. Inside is a room engulfed in roaring flames. The amount of heat is indescribable, it feels as though my clothes are about to melt off my body. A wave of heat crashes onto me and I fall

backwards. In the middle of the room is a woman, lying on her side, crying in pain. She couldn't be older than thirty, her skin was the colour of freshly cut grass during spring, and her hair was a rich, sapphire blue. Her hair looked so smooth as if made of ocean waves. She is wearing an ethereal satin dress, the same colour as her hair that go off her shoulders and flow down her body. I gasp and clasp my hands over my mouth when I see her, so close to the fire around her, so close to burning but not able to control the raging, seven feet tall flames. She must have heard me gasp because when I did, she looks towards me. That is when I see her face. It is as if the faces of millions of different people of different races are stacked onto each other and I can't focus on just one. The only thing that I could focus on are her eyes. They are a dark blue, almost black. They are full of sorrow, despair and rage. Her screaming makes my stomach sink and dread floods through my body as if I am going down a roller coaster that is broken but no one tries to help. That is when she gasps for air, and through her tears and anguish, says these words in disgust and fury with her delicate yet husky voice that sends a chill down my spine.

*I lay here, yowling and howling in pain.*

*Can you hear me? I'm calling your names.*

*You lay me here, are you hoping I burn?*

*When my suffering is done soon it is going to be your turn.*

**“Her skin was the colour of freshly cut grass during spring, and her hair was a rich, sapphire blue. Her hair looked so smooth as if made of ocean waves.”**



# What You See, I See

By Natasha Gebreselassie, 20 years old  
Brampton, Ontario

What you see, I see  
A field canopied with buckwheat which draws the bees,  
A pool glistening beneath the honey rays of the sun with glee,  
Beneath the lopsided tree of a weeping willow, you bite into  
the cloying fruit absent-mindedly,  
Lost in deception, your lips curl in a smile as clouds  
invade the clear blue sky  
Freshwater falls, you close your eyes  
How refreshing it feels to see  
The worms wiggle out to bathe, chirps tucked within the trees  
yell with glee,  
The bath is here, ready to drizzle, its last tears of sanity  
Its last tears of purity, because  
What you see, I see

**“The river glistens  
in pain, the willow hears  
it and weeps for the  
twinkling sea burns,  
silently annihilating its  
family beneath.”**

There's an absence in this field, the swarm of yellow which  
comes so often, die as days pass  
Stolen by death, taken by humans  
The source of their grief is coincidentally their admirers  
disguised as enemies  
Enemies, I say as a visage, because they too love these bees,  
For the product they produce, they're the sweet enemy  
As sweet as the fruit you eat beneath the weeping willow, who  
cries in silence as yet another fellow withers,  
The river glistens in pain, the willow hears it and weeps  
For the twinkling sea burns, silently annihilating its family  
beneath  
You don't see, but I see  
The plastic bag you left behind as weaponry  
Winds from the storm takes it away, unknowing to its  
dangers, and its tendencies  
The victim is a young fellow, with a soft shell and a young back  
Violently the Prussian blue waters shake, spume at the edges  
of its wave as one last pleas  
It rattles the Earth and the disadvantaged hear it seethe  
Wet cold water, hot brown liquid, rise in matters of urgency  
Screaming for action, forecasting the disaster yet to come  
What you see, I see  
A chance to be charitable and donate to those in need,  
A 'Third World' country hit by tragedy,  
The fault is the skies, the 'mother' of nature who orders these,  
But none of the fault is on the creator who encourages these  
A transaction later and you're back to your activities,  
Your blouse is snipped off and replaced with sleeves

54

The fault is the forecaster, the country for its inconsistency  
But never the ones who amplify the dark grey clouds which  
hang so effortlessly

55



**“I’m passionate about healing our human relationship with Earth, but how we relate to each other as a human family is as important. We will not find a sustainable way of being without respect for Indigenous rights and title, or without diversity, inclusion, collaboration and distributed power. We can only be successful if we learn from each other and help each other do the necessary work to advance the aims of justice on its many fronts, toward intergenerational justice.”**

**Severn Cullis-Suzuki**

*Executive Director, David Suzuki Foundation*



# Climate Journeys



# The First Part of My Climate Journey

By Daniel Jeong, 18 years old  
Windsor, Ontario

Do you care about your leftovers or food waste disposal issues around the world? I knew from my childhood that general food waste disposal produces a huge amount of methane and affects climate change, but I didn't care much about the issue because it wasn't inspiring to me. However, I noticed the severity of the food waste problem when I moved to Canada. In Canada, I realized that there was no disposal system for food waste in the region I live in. Food remains were just dumped as regular garbage with other slow-decomposing materials like vinyl. I knew this would create methane and harm the climate, so this system was quite shocking. At the same time, I became whole heartedly motivated to contribute to a healthy environment. I searched for ways to discard food debris while generating a lower amount of methane. Eventually, I found that decomposing organic waste with earth-

58

worms produces lesser methane gas than normal landfill processes, so I decided to put the idea into action.

I put soil inside a big steel tank and poured water on it to provide ample moisture, but I realized that it wasn't a good idea. When I started to decompose food debris, due to inadequate drainage and ventilation the soil began to rot, resulting in an awful stink that reminded me of sewer water. I had to try a new method to deal with the problem. In the next attempt, I corrected the errors. This time, I built a disposing site by digging a square pit in my backyard and placing a wooden box inside with enough holes to let the water drain well. Then, I filled the box with soil and a number of vibrant earthworms that I got from the same backyard. After that, the rest of the processes were pretty simple but demanded consistency. From spring to autumn, once every week, I periodically buried leftovers, which were mostly from vegetables and fruits. I also wanted to put leftover protein and fatty foods, but I couldn't because it could harm the earthworms. Instead, I buried these types of leftovers near the dump to allow them to be decomposed by bacteria in the soil.

In addition, a pragmatic idea came to my mind: Since earthworm compost is one of the most nutritious organic fertilizers, wouldn't it be great to utilize it? Without hesitation, I bought a handful of fresh, young vegetables such as pumpkins and lettuce and planted them in the yard. Every month, I dug the nourishing soil out of the pit and spread the organic compost around the field. Over time, as I kept prac-

59

## “Do you care about your leftovers or food waste disposal issues around the world?”

ticing this procedure, the backyard flourished. The area was filled with dense green leaves and massive pumpkins. Groups of birds, bugs, and squirrels started to come over and feed on the land. It was now a new small ecosystem.

I gradually noticed another significant change; the trash can was getting lighter as I put it outside every week. The number of garbage bags collected every week reduced from approximately 8–9 bags to 6–7 bags. I felt successful, because this change implied that all my effort lowered my personal and my family’s contribution to greenhouse gas emissions including methane gas.

I wanted to inspire more people; so I shared my experience with my aunt, cousin, and some friends, and suggested for them to try other climate friendly actions as well. Luckily, my cousin was already interested in a bunch of climate issues, so she was intrigued by my story and made a similar organic waste decomposer. She told me that she added leftovers more often than I did because her family is bigger. Her weekly garbage amount significantly decreased by about four bags. But what touched me the most, was that she liked my climate act and learned the importance of properly disposing food waste.

While reflecting on what I had done so far, I started to take more responsibility for the climate. I’m proud of myself and my efforts. Still, my actions may seem small compared to others’ remarkable contributions. Nonetheless, I think this is a small but important step for me to help our global climate. I

will keep extending my climate journey by participating in various climate actions and sharing my ideas with the crowds. One day, I hope to contribute greatly to preserving our Planet as a proud Earth-dweller.

62



**“Groups of birds, bugs, and squirrels started to come over and feed on the land. It was now a new small ecosystem.”**



# The Impact of Environmentalism on my Islam

By Jana Jandal Alrifai, 17 years old

Windsor, Ontario

Illustration by Zelo Safi

I have always been interested in politics. The strategy, the game, and the morals behind it. Because of this, I've enjoyed advocating and speaking on behalf of what's right.

I have also always been a Muslim, Alhumdulillah for that. I grew up memorising the Quran, learning about the Sahaba and how to be a good person. In my mind, these were always separate. I'm a good person because that is the logical thing to be, and I am a Muslim because that is the logical thing for me.

Last year, as I was getting more involved with Climate Strike Canada and activism in general, I was often asked "Why?"



Why are you spending your days on calls and staying up late typing documents when there is a high chance nothing will ever change?”

I used to say that this was my chance to do something of value with my time, that I had nothing else to do. I spent a lot of time understanding my beliefs and shaping my religious practices and ethics around it. Over time, I recognized that both sets of my beliefs were in alignment. It pushed me to further my readings and understanding of Islamic policies and spirituality.

I thought a lot about my role in society, even asking why was I even here on earth? Especially, when governments around the world announce disappointing environmental policies, I question “why?”, Islam was able to give me that answer.

I recognize it is my job to preserve the beautiful earth that Allah (SWT) created, and that as people we were put on this earth to build it. So, when He asks me if I did what I am supposed to do, that I helped build the earth, I want to be able to say yes. Even if it didn't make a lot of change, we at least tried.

Fighting for the Earth made me want to take a better and closer look at it and see what I'm truly fighting for. Marvelling at the beauty that was created by Allah (SWT) made me realize how much more worthy He is of worship, and how worthy nature is of protection.

66

Though Islam was a subconscious motivator for my activism, my activism was a strong and present motivator to my Islam.

For the sake of our livelihood, others, the future, and for the sake of Allah (SWT), we will fight this injustice.



67



# Somewhere the Sky

By Adeola Egbeyemi, 20 years old  
Ottawa, Ontario

We march on pavement, spare no looks to the ground.  
 We mine around to make it to protests—  
 But wait, the wind whispers we should look down,  
 there is a crowning bud between the clefts.  
 But once we reach the squares and raise our signs,  
 the state digs so deep down into our chests,  
 In that pit some truths lay in unrest.  
 And blooming buds in sidewalks leave a sightline.  
 We err to think we fight for a mute rock.  
 When we cry out, somewhere the sky does rain—I consider  
     this love.  
 We shake in righteous fury, as do coal veins—I consider this love.  
 And when we fight, leaves grow from the sidewalk.  
 What we protest, the earth, too, takes part of,  
 In breaking form: I consider this love.

“And when we fight,  
 leaves grow from the  
 sidewalk. What we  
 protest, the earth, too,  
 takes part of.”

# Food Waste in the West

By Lajanthan (LJ) Prabaharan, 25 years old  
Brampton, Ontario  
Illustration by Luise Hesse

I came to Canada when I was five years old.

I still remember the look and feel of the Montréal–Trudeau International Airport in January of 2001. I remember being bundled up in a thick black winter coat my mother bought for me in Colombo, Sri Lanka just weeks before our flight. She had warned me that Canada was freezing cold, and if I didn't wear warm enough clothes I would literally freeze and fall over like some oversized icicle.

As I waddled alongside my mother, struggling to keep up through the crowded airport lobby I wondered why she had exaggerated so much, it really wasn't that cold—at least not indoors. It wasn't until we stepped outside the airport and I



came face to face with the harsh Montreal winter winds, that I understood the full weight of my mother's words. I looked back over my shoulder and peered into the airport, wondering if it was too late to turn around and head home.

It took me a little while to finally acclimatize to Canada's cold climate, but at least that was purely physical—I just had to bear the cold and get used to it. The cultural and social practices of Canadians were the most difficult aspects to adjust to. I still remember the first time I shared a meal with my cousin in Montreal. I was dumbfounded when I saw her discarding a third of her untouched plate into the trash. There was still so much food left on her plate, and her mother didn't even bat an eye. I thought back to all the times my mother slapped me on the back of my head for trying to leave my platter uncleaned. The meal wasn't over when I was full—the meal was over when there was nothing left on my plate.

Wasting food was never okay in my household. I was raised Hindu; my mother is extremely religious. For her, food waste is less of an environmental issue and more of a religious one. She doesn't fully understand the environmental impacts of food waste, she doesn't know that rotting food in landfills releases methane into the atmosphere and accelerates global warming. My mother hates food waste because she thinks it will upset Lord Shiva to see us wasting the Earth's harvest. She also doesn't understand why we would willingly throw away something that's finite and perfectly edible. Food, to my mother, and most other immigrants, is something remarkable

**“My climate journey  
is a marathon,  
not a sprint.”**

—it's a commodity, not a right. In Sri Lanka, food is not always readily available, nor is it mass produced like it is in the western world.

The farming methods available to the advanced western nations is what allows them to produce an overabundance of food. In fact, we've become so good at producing food that we now take the aesthetic qualities of the produce into account when we buy them. We just have so much available to us that we can afford to be nit-picky. This of course means we can mindlessly discard food that is not physically perfect. Tomatoes that are not the perfect shade of red and cucumbers that are too long won't even make it past the farm.

Another issue with the western food production system is just how disconnected consumers are from the farming process; we rarely get to see how it's all made. This is why we don't appreciate food as much as we should. If we knew how much water, time, and labour it cost to grow these crops, we would think twice before we toss them away.

Most Sri Lankans are closely involved in the harvesting process of their own foods; a good majority of them grow their own vegetables in personal gardens, so they have come to understand just how precious their food really is.

Globalization and free trade also provide citizens of the western world with the opportunity to eat anything they want all year round. Canada has trade deals with the U.S which allows us to

import produce from California during the winter seasons when our own crop production slows down significantly. Once again, the constant availability of fresh produce diminishes the appreciation we should have for our food.

In short, the western world's mastery of mass food production has led to its depreciation of food; apparently you really can have too much of a good thing. Countries with less robust crop harvesting systems tend to view food as more of a commodity due to their inability to mass produce it. This also explains the glutinous spending habits and overconsumption that is so rampant in western culture.

It took me a while, but I eventually acclimatized to these western practices—I became a glutton.

For years I over consumed, buying and wasting excess food without so much as an afterthought to the damage I was doing. I'm learning now, or rather, unlearning, the awful habits I've picked up over the past 20 years. I'm trying to be more conscious of what I consume and how I treat the earth. I'm eating less red meat, I'm reaching for produce that is locally grown, and I'm not buying everything that's on sale.

It may all sound small scale, but a lot of little things can go a long way; my climate journey is a marathon, not a sprint.

“Climate Strike Canada is a grassroots network of youth-led climate groups and activists from across so-called Canada. We have seen the challenges and victories in the climate movement. As youth, we face challenges when it comes to creating change. We are often seen as young, naive, and impulsive. This can make it almost impossible to be heard in a crowd focusing on the short-term rather than the long-term impacts of their actions.

However, as we have witnessed in our years of organizing it is becoming increasingly possible for youth to make effective change. The fact that we are young is not our weakness, but our strength. We continue to find inspiration and community in the growing climate movement. Our hope is resistance, and it will continue to give us the motivation to fight for our future. Together, we the youth, are willing to do what is necessary to make the changes needed to achieve climate justice. Our only question is: will you join us?”

Climate Strike Canada



# Climate Action



# Ocean in a Bottle

By Summer Solmes, 19 years old  
Toronto, Ontario

Ocean in a bottle sloshing side to side,  
a free surface liquid with the devil trapped inside.

Diminutive objects glitter all throughout,  
as the serpent serves the apple to the marine life's mouth.

She now lays bound with fetters of plastic rings and bags,  
of bric-a-brac and baubles, and other ghastly gags.  
Imprisoned by the current, a dioxin-laden soup.  
Sloshing in the bottle, the scientist's test tube.

Your research is profound.  
You will not believe your eyes.  
The sounds of the ocean crying,  
echoes in your mind.

This narration was but an image of pixels on a screen.  
Far from a revelation of a dystopian dream.

The reality is a truth spoken onto deaf ears.  
Choose to listen, and face your darkest fears.

You may not understand or wish to comprehend,  
though the snow globe you admire is sitting in your hands.

The glycerin and glycol, the twinkling snow descent.  
Is the ocean in the bottle of treachery sentiment?

I hold it in my hands,  
as I take my final breath.  
One last agitation,  
churns untimely death.

The time is now.  
The choice is yours to see a brighter day,  
to write a new narrative,  
for the ocean in a bottle.







# Privilege and Prevention

By Angelina Nayyar, 18 years old  
Toronto, Ontario  
Illustration by Carolina Altavilla

Screaming. Everybody is screaming.

It is the third school strike for the climate that I am attending during my time in high school. Our demonstration is to scream for the Earth—as if it is its own dying scream for salvation.

We laugh as we look around at the humorous handmade signs, hearing this collective of youth try and scream for one minute straight, watching as some people are too shy to participate but smile or clap in an otherwise encouraging manner.

When I protest alongside other students, we use humour to cope with the suffocating reality of our being ignored by those with the power to save us. When I protest alongside Indigenous



land defenders, we discuss the fact that inaction and negligence on the part of the Canadian government have always been historically prevalent when it comes to acting in the best interests of people of the land rather than the economy.

When I come home from these strikes, usually with the wrapper of a snack I shared with friends in hand, I share my thoughts with my grandmother.

Following the last strike I attended, she showed me a video she received over WhatsApp of the results of a cyclone affecting her home country of India.

Screaming. Everybody is screaming.



## Undying Hope

By Jacob Da Silva, 21 years old

Toronto, Ontario

Mason was already awake when the morning alarm rang within the prison walls. He lay on his back in the bottom bunk, motionless, with his eyes glued to the wooden boards above. Today he would not be ripped away from a pleasant dream by the excruciating ringing, which had lately proven to be too painful of a return to reality. Above him he heard his cell mate wince with pain, as if he had just suffered what Mason had avoided. Survival instincts were the only thing left to pull these men out of bed. Like lifeless marionettes, they were pulled to their feet seemingly by someone else's will. Ivan stepped down onto the cement floor and quickly began washing up for today's shift. The shouting of drill sergeants echoed throughout the cell block along with hundreds of bare feet slapping against the concrete floor. Mason remained where he lay, as Ivan unzipped his pants to take a quick leak. "What the fuck are you doing," Ivan said once he turned around to see Mason still on his back. "You clock in late again

and you won't be back here tonight.” Mason was aware of how disposable he was. The slums of Toronto had an infinite number of recruits that were living in worse conditions than he was. But at least they would perish with their freedom.

The world had become too reliant on fossil fuels, and they began to deplete at an unruly pace. Each country soon realized this and severed ties between one another to hoard their remainder. Scientists frantically began research to improve the efficiency of renewable energy sources, but their advancements were not enough to support the systems that relied so heavily on fossil fuels. Excavation sites across the globe had hit bedrock and unsafe mining practices were forced upon the workers by the fossil fuel monopolies. By the year 2150, massive sinkholes were scattered across the earth's surface, representing the thousands of poor souls buried beneath them. In this new age of chaos, the prisoners were the first to fuel the fire. The corporations had invented incinerators that could harvest the energy of human corpses. The prisons were then turned into concentration camps, where desperate civilians were brought to be put to work. Mason had survived the streets of Toronto for 6 months before he was picked up by government agents. Once the power had been cut, the poor districts were left to rot, while the rich communities received upgraded security. People began to raid the stores and hoard all that they could. They began to take desperate measures in order to survive and were willingly being taken to the institutions. Mason held out as long as he could, but eventually his will to survive resulted in him being taken in to captivity.

**“By the year 2150, massive sinkholes were scattered across the earth’s surface, representing the thousands of poor souls buried beneath them.”**

Human life had become an expendable commodity, Mason thought to himself as he sat up. There was no time to wash up if he did not wish to be incinerated. He rubbed the scarred tissue on his right shoulder where he had been branded. Prisoners with this mark had shown repeated acts of disobedience and would be fed to the incinerator on their next fault. That painful moment was engraved in his mind much like the mark he now bore. He remembered the way he had struggled when the guards dragged him into the furnace room. He could still feel the leather straps tightening around his wrists as he was bound to the chair. "Tell me Mason, is my memory beginning to leave me in my old age," spoke Sergeant Valhalla. His sinister tone hardened Mason's expression to that of a stone while perspiration dripped down his cheeks. "Because I was fairly certain I had made you aware of this particular consequence". He rotated the red-hot branding iron in the fire as he spoke. The symbol to be applied was a capital "I" within a circle that could have been mistaken for a wide "H" turned on its side. "Two lates within one week? Now that's just unacceptable," he said, removing the brand from the embers. Mason's muscles tensed up as he approached him with the brand in hand. He raised it to Mason's face so that the glowing metal was inches away from his cheek. "Maybe today we try a different spot," said the Sergeant, as Mason winced and strained his neck in recoil. Mason dug his nails into the wood to hold on for dear life. Valhalla smiled as he retracted the smouldering steel. "Maybe next time," he said as he aligned the brand with Mason's shoulder. Mason let out a screech as he felt the metal press firmly against

his skin, the searing pain pulsing from his shoulder. He could still clearly remember the dreadful smell of burning flesh and sizzling skin.

Mason burst through the doorway of his cell, energized yet again by his unbeaten will to continue. He flew down the upper passageway, glancing over the railing on his right to see the other stragglers. He clambered down the straight staircase and made a beeline for the doors of cell block E. Once in the central cafeteria, he sprinted towards the distant entrance of his assigned station, where the arc above read "Power Row" in bold font. His feet clapped furiously against the cement floor while other untimely prisoners darted back and forth within his field of vision. Some guards shouted at the top of their lungs while others laughed, observing the frantic and desperate nature of the scrambling inmates. Now Mason was nearing the entrance and could see the vast array of workers buckled into their devices. The clock next to the overhead script read 5:59, and Mason's plugin was luckily near the start of the grid. He broke left as he passed the threshold and ran to the station that awaited him. Out of the corner of his eye he caught Sergeant Valhalla's gaze as he leaned against the entry wall. Mason reached his destination with his heartbeat racing, and quickly placed his finger on the scanner. He had made it, with only 8 seconds to spare. "You live to see another day brother," Ivan said from beside him. Mason buckled himself into the seat and waited for the bell that would commence today's shift. He gripped the oar handles protruding from the rotator cuffs on either side of him and prepared to row in

unison with his peers. The bell sounded and each inmate forcefully pulled their handles inwards, creating a massive “Vrooom” as the machines whirred to life. “HEAVE,” yelled the drill sergeants at each passing interval, “HEAVE!” The green light on top of each system illuminated, indicating that the amount of input was sufficient.

At lunchtime, Mason wondered why he had gotten out of bed. What he had then thought was perseverance and strength, he now saw ultimately as cowardice. His muscles ached as he sliced through his meatloaf. “I’m happy you’re still with us Mason,” said Ivan, “Especially at a time like this where hope has come alive.” Mason looked questioningly at Ivan, eagerly waiting for an explanation. “The resistance is set to raid the place any day now.” Mason looked into his eyes and saw that he was still holding on to this dream that he himself had deemed fruitless long ago. Ivan, recognizing his doubt, quickly added, “They are more than just rumours Mason. Gregory was a part of them before he was captured, and they’ve been communicating with signals through the window of his cell.” Mason remained unfazed with his eyes fixated on his lunch tray. “I may not be able to convince you, but I believe Greg can,” Ivan said as he got up with his tray. “I’ll tell him to come and have a talk with you.” Mason’s eyes filled with envy and bore into Ivan’s back. He wished he could be as naive as his cellmate at a time like this when his practical mind could do nothing but spiral deeper into despair. Suicides were regular occurrences in this jail, and Mason had contemplated taking his life more times than any sane person should.

**“At lunchtime, Mason wondered why he had gotten out of bed. What he had then thought was perseverance and strength, he now saw ultimately as cowardice.”**

Unfortunately, he thought to himself, he was not insane. He still regarded these rumours of a resistance as pathetic, and his fellow inmates as delusional. After returning his tray, Mason made his way to the washroom on the verge of a violent outbreak. This rage within him was oddly extinguished when he walked in on a gathering led by none other than Gregory. He looked at Mason with a smirk and a glint in his eyes that suggested a great revelation. "The time has come at last Mason, tonight we will be released by my brothers in arms," spoke Gregory. Mason paid him little mind and continued about his business. "I know of your skepticism, but I assure you that what I speak is true." Mason could not help but be captivated by the earnest tone his words carried. "The raid is bound to happen sometime before shift's end, so be prepared," were his last words as he left with his group of followers. Gregory was nothing more than a curator of hope, Mason thought to himself. But something about his demeanour provoked a second thought. His calmness and rationality had struck a chord within Mason's mind that held long after.

As Mason sat rowing in repetition, he recalled the expression on Gregory's face as he had entered the washroom. Staring into his vividly reimagined face, he realized that he did feel somewhat of a genuine hope. Maybe Ivan was not such a fool after all for believing in this man's prophecies. A new sort of excited impatience sprouted within him as he pulled the oars towards his chest. He looked behind him to see Sergeant Valhalla conversing with a group of guards. Had they heard word of the impending attack, he wondered? Just then Val-

halla's eyes shot at Mason and he quickly turned back around. Mason was now in the rhythm of a focused row, trying to be as inconspicuous as possible. His eyes stared straight ahead, and the pain of his aching muscles was no longer there. He wasn't aware of how much time had passed before he was made conscious of a distant commotion. Between the periodic "Vrooom" of the machines he could hear shouting coming from behind him. He looked over his shoulder and saw that there were no guards standing against the entry wall. His thumb clicked the release button of his seatbelt. Then there were gunshots. Mason leaped out of his seat and ran towards the entrance with the wind in his sails. "This is it men!" he yelled as he burst through the threshold. At that moment, the group of guards outside turned their heads toward him. One of them stood pointing his pistol at a large rat, while the others huddled around the dice and money thrown upon the ground.





# Mother Earth

By Bahar Mojab, 27 years old  
 Richmond, Ontario  
 Illustration by Nina Clausonet

We fell from the crevice of Earth's legs,  
 towards a lifestyle determined to destroy her.

Unplugging all the appliances out of sockets,  
 washing my hair once a week to conserve water and  
 dining by candlelight.

All efforts meaningless, when countless corporations  
 rule the fate of our world.

—*Paralysis*

I never knew that when I stepped off the plane  
 that the land I call Mother  
 was fuming beneath black dust and smog.  
 I hoped to God I wasn't the reason,  
 after all, I drove electric.

—*Guilty by association*



How is it that policies in Iran and Canada  
are the only reason I breathe clean air here and  
not in the motherland.

Is it equality if we breathe and our siblings suffocate  
or is it called humanity?

When the world sinks, don't blame me,  
*I recycle.*

You can't silence a woman who was born free.  
The question is, who enslaved her to later liberate her.  
—*Mother Earth*

You can't silence a woman who was born free from  
her blackness, her roots, her soil.  
She will erupt in protest to be heard,  
while you take away her offspring,  
farm them for food,  
choke her with your tobacco fumes  
and work her until there's no cotton left to pick and scald her  
with your crude oil.  
The youth are her underground railroad.  
—*it's still 1864*

Let's turn back to where love lives,  
optimism encourages,  
and hope directs  
—*it's not too late*

I dream of blue skies,  
clear oceans,

**“You can't silence a  
woman who was born free  
from her blackness,  
her roots, her soil. She  
will erupt in protest to be  
heard.”**



starry nights,  
green forests,  
but I am just one person.  
I need an army to fight this battle.  
—*where are you?*



# Global Warming— Our Planet's Biggest Problem

By Yusriyah Rahman, 15 years old  
Windsor, Ontario

Barack Obama said, “But for the sake of our children and our future we must do more to combat climate change,” I strongly agree! Global warming is a real issue and it is time to face it before it gets out of hand. It is an issue that needs to be addressed, or it will destroy our planet and consequently, affect human and animal lives.

Unfortunately, people are not doing enough to help stop this issue, they may not think it is important, may not care or know enough about climate change. The changing climate is creating massive harm to our planet and humans, harm that increases as time goes by! It is our fault as we created the issue, so it has to be us, humans, that should fix it as soon as possible!

To further elaborate, the climate is changing because of us, YOU and ME as well as everyone else in the world! This is because our activities like energy use creates greenhouse gas emissions that trap heat in the atmosphere, which warms the atmosphere, thus, warming the planet, essentially called the greenhouse effect.

Carbon dioxide is one of the most common greenhouse gases that greatly contributes to global warming, but fertilizers emit nitrous oxide which is two hundred and fifty-six times worse than carbon dioxide! To add to the crisis, deforestation is the second-largest man-made source of carbon dioxide and deforestation is happening at a massive scale around the world. Coal-burning power plants are also big polluters and because there are many coal powered plants throughout the world, they contribute a lot of carbon dioxide. Another contributor is the transportation sector; vehicles such as cars and buses emit twenty-seven percent of all greenhouse gas emissions and we both know how MANY of these are used throughout the world.

Because of global warming, Earth is getting warmer, causing longer summers and shorter winters. In fact, the average global temperature has increased by two-degree Fahrenheit since global warming began! Ocean water is twenty-five percent more acidic as more and more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere is absorbed by the ocean! This negatively affects marine animals and plants. As temperatures are rising on land, they are too in the oceans. This results in coral blea-

ching, making the corals' beautiful and distinct color disappear.

Due to climate change, animals are losing their homes too—they are becoming endangered, this includes the polar bears that are losing their habitat because of melting glaciers. Climate change is also making natural disasters strike more frequently and stronger such as droughts, hurricanes, and heatwaves. Sea levels are also increasing because of melting glaciers and ice caps. Some have even risen to two feet! Due to this coastal flooding on the Eastern Seaboard especially in Florida and other areas are happening more frequently. If this continues, most coastal areas will be underwater! These changes and impacts also cause health issues like heat strokes, vector-borne diseases, injuries from natural disasters, and other public health impacts.

Join me in making a pledge today, to help reduce our world's greenhouse gas emissions by following these simple five steps in order to reduce our personal greenhouse gas emissions by:

- 1) Traveling by bike, carpool/bus, or walking to as many locations as possible in order for fewer vehicles to emit greenhouse gases into our atmosphere.
- 2) Using both sides of a piece of paper and trying not to waste space.
- 3) Using less hot water when showering or washing my hands

because a lot of energy and consequently greenhouse gases are emitted to heat water which will not have to occur as often anymore if it is not used as much.

4) Air drying clothing on a line.

5) Trying to limit the amount of animal products I eat, instead eating more alternatives such as vegetables to help reduce the greenhouse gas emissions needed for raising, feeding and processing livestock.

Some other ways to help reduce our world's greenhouse gas emissions are by:

- Informing yourself and others to help curtail climate change.
- Trying to use eco-friendly power sources like solar panels.
- Speaking out and advocating for robust environmental regulations.

It is time for us to take action and to protect our planet before it is too late remember there is no planet B!

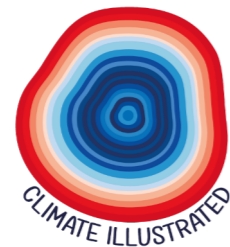
**“Join me in making  
a pledge today, to help  
reduce our world’s green-  
house gas emissions.”**

# About Us

102



**BAM—BOOKS ART MUSIC COLLECTIVE**—is a youth-led collective that aims to empower equity-seeking young individuals through art and community engagement in Ontario and New York.



**CLIMATE ILLUSTRATED** is a climate communication and art project that truly believes in the power of people to create social change. The group illustrates stories of climate change collected worldwide.

103



**ENVIROMUSLIMS** is a community group that aims to engage with, educate and empower the Canadian Muslim community to embed sustainability in their every day lives. Whether it is where they live, work, play or pray, EnviroMuslims' aim is to reconnect Muslims with nature and embed a sense of love and responsibility for caring for the natural environment and the health and well-being of their communities.



**THE COMMUNITY CLIMATE COUNCIL (THE CCC)** is a youth-founded, not-for-profit organization advocating for local climate action through enhancing climate literacy and political advocacy in Peel Region, Ontario.