

# The time for ecological justice is now

**D**uring our 2011-16 program, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE will focus on ecological justice, which includes both climate justice and environmental justice. While we have long worked on social justice issues, ecological justice is a relatively new concept, and we are looking forward to learning about it over the course of the program. This new focus on ecological justice continues our recent work on mining, water and land issues. Ecological justice is necessary for integral human development – the economic, political, social and spiritual well-being of every person.

To the right is the best description of ecological justice we have today. We expect that in 2016, at the end of this campaign, we will have an even better description. This will be based on the reflection and feedback of partners in the Global South, our members and our allies here in the North.

## 2011 – 2016 Education program theme

*Inspired by the alternative models of development being created by our partners in the Global South, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE is committed to the promotion of integral human development, consistent with ecological justice.*

## What is ecological justice?

*Ecological justice* celebrates the interconnection and interdependence of all beings, and recognizes our human responsibility to co-exist in harmony for the well-being of the Earth community. Ecological justice promotes human dignity, the self-determination of all persons, and the development of sustainable economies with justice for all within a finite world.

- From a Christian perspective, ecological justice is based on the belief that the Earth is sacred, and that the dignity of the human person requires particular attention to the needs of the marginalized and the poor – a preferential option for the poor.
- From a scientific perspective, ecological justice is based on the knowledge that the Earth and its resources are finite, that ecosystems are complex and fragile, and that the natural world, of which humans are a part, exists as an interconnected and interdependent system. In this web of existence, human ingenuity and activity must be founded on prudence and care.
- From a historical perspective, ecological justice is based on the fact that the Earth's dominant economic, social and political systems have favoured – and continue to primarily benefit – people in the Global North. This has led to the depletion of Earth's ecological diversity, ecosystem destruction, pollution of soil, sea and sky, species extinction and climate change. This damage has been felt most deeply by populations in the Global South who are least responsible for it.

Working for ecological justice calls for inspiration, prayer, resourcefulness and imagination. Responding to the urgency of the present global inequities and ecological degradation – particularly from the effects of climate change – will require determination, restraint, solidarity and love from each of us.

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# Love your neighbour as yourself

Mark 12:31

## Alternatives

### From globalization to re-localization

Around the world, committed groups of people are already articulating ways of living in community with one another and in harmony with the Earth. They may be drawing on traditional, long-undervalued wisdom, or their own practices, to create road maps for an ecologically sound future.

Some have named the necessary next step *re-localization*, an alternative to the economic *globalization* we are familiar with. The stories on this page both illustrate an element of re-localization. These are stories of people reclaiming what has worked in the past and making it their own, for the betterment of themselves, their communities and the greater Earth community.

## Latin America

### Living well rather than better

For the Aymara people of Bolivia it is known as *suma qamana*, while the Quechua people of Ecuador call it *sumak kawsay*. Europeans have translated it into the Spanish *buen vivir*, known in English as “living well.” Whatever the language, the term describes a vision of life that puts ecological health, human dignity and social justice before economic objectives. Based on Andean indigenous ideas of what it is to live well, the term is inspiring the world to think differently about the relationship between humans and their environment.

The Aymara people see it as a way of living in harmony, with equilibrium between men and women, among different communities, and above all, between human beings and the natural world of which they are a part. “Living better” has, in developed countries such as our own, long been associated with consuming more or better products or technologies, inevitably at the expense of others and the environment. “Living well” puts collective well-being first: having one’s basic needs met while existing in harmony with the natural world.

In 2008, Ecuador became the first country to incorporate the concept of *buen vivir* in its new constitution. In 2009, Bolivia followed suit.

## North America

### The hundred-mile diet

In 2007, two young Canadian writers made headlines when their bestselling book, *The Hundred Mile Diet*, illustrated the challenges of living on a diet with all its components produced within 100 miles (160 km). Sources of food became a common topic of conversation.

Many Canadians started to question the carbon footprint produced by eating a diet of increasingly imported food. A significant number made more food purchasing decisions based on where their food was produced. In some regions of Canada, farmers’ markets featuring locally produced food have proliferated. There now appears to be a heightened interest in eating locally, and a growing acknowledgement that food tastes best and is most nutritious when it’s grown close to home.



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