

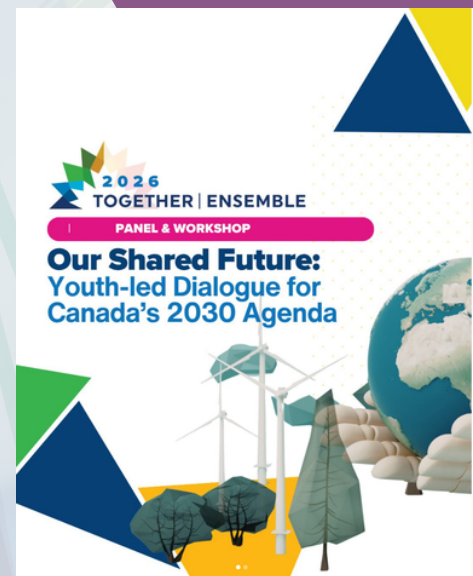
21 May 2026
TIES Centre for Immigrant Research
Conference Report

TOGETHER | ENSEMBLE 2026: KEY INSIGHTS FOR PRACTICE

Overview

The **Together | Ensemble 2026** conference served as Canada's premier national platform for tracking, collaborating on, and accelerating progress toward the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This year's theme, Mobilizing local action for global impact, intentionally shifted the dialogue from high-level, aspirational policy to practical, community-rooted execution. Held in a hybrid format with vibrant in-person programming hosted at the **University of Calgary**, the event convened an intergenerational assembly of Indigenous Peoples, youth, academia, government officials, business leaders, and community changemakers to address Canada's most pressing sustainability challenges. On behalf of the TCIR, **Hamed Kazemzadeh** attended this two-day conference.

Conference Launch & Key Speakers



The event opened with immense energy, bridging institutional leadership with global policy experts.

- **Ceremonial Launch:** To anchor the proceedings in a meaningful way, Elder Dr. John Crier led a grounding Four Directions Ceremony, reminding participants of our interconnected responsibilities to the land and each other.
- **Opening Institutional Remarks:** Perspectives on localized research and civic duty were framed by Christine Daly (SDSN Co-Chair, University of Calgary), Dr. Bill Ghali (Vice-President of Research, University of Calgary), and Parliamentary Secretary Leslie Church, M.P.
- **Global & National Keynotes:** Anacláudia Rossbach (Executive Director of UN-Habitat and UN Under-Secretary-General) provided an international framework via video address. This was followed by powerful, inspiring keynote presentations from The Honourable Bob Rae (Canada's 25th Ambassador to the United Nations) and Brenda Gunn, both of whom emphasized that global frameworks are only as strong as the legislative and community-level accountability supporting them.
- **Plenary Insights:** A dynamic panel moderated by Dr. Kerry Black—featuring Disa Crow Chief, Danny Graham, Joy Ralamboarisoa, and Dr. Corrine Schuster-Wallace—explored the friction points and successes of turning the 2030 Agenda into lived realities across Canadian municipalities.



Deep-Dive Insight: The Relationship Between Indigenous Communities and Immigrants

One of the most profound, intersectional dialogues generated during the panels and breakout discussions centered on the evolving relationship between Indigenous host communities and newcomer/immigrant populations in Canada.

In the context of the SDGs—particularly **SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities)**, **SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)**, and **SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)**—the conference highlighted that true social sustainability cannot occur in silos. For decades, settlement frameworks for immigrants and advocacy frameworks for Indigenous rights have operated on parallel but separate tracks.

Key insights from this dialogue included:

- Shared Vulnerabilities, Unique Truths:** Both newcomers and Indigenous communities often interface with systemic inequities in housing, economic mobility, and institutional representation. However, panelists emphasized that solidarity requires newcomers to deeply understand that they are entering a landscape shaped by treaties and ongoing colonial histories.
- Intercultural Dialogue as Sustainability:** True community resilience is built when cultural pluralism includes deliberate, foundational education for immigrants regarding the histories, languages, and rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Co-Creating Belonging:** For sustainability to have a local meaning, community-based research and policy must foster spaces where immigrant communities and Indigenous nations can build direct, mutual relationships—bypassing standard colonial frameworks to collaborate on environmental stewardship and social justice.



Implications for Our Work

Overall, **Together | Ensemble 2026** was exceptionally well-structured, inspiring, and collaborative. It successfully avoided the common pitfall of academic insularity by centring youth-led programming and local communities alongside senior diplomats and Indigenous elders.

Key Personal Takeaways for Our Ongoing Work:

- Bridging Policy Gaps:** As researchers and practitioners, our data-driven advocacy must actively work to bridge the gap between newcomer integration and Indigenous solidarity. In our own community-based policy projects, we should design research frameworks that capture these intercultural dynamics.
- Actionable Localism:** The SDGs provide an excellent common language, but their success depends entirely on localized institutional adaptation. I intend to bring these insights directly into our current center projects, specifically **TAIGA RISE**, ensuring the Center for Immigrant Research continues to serve as a catalyst for scalable, community-rooted evidence and research.

CULTURAL SYMBOLS for sustainability



FEATHER

Shared by Justice Elders
Tanya Brantford and Sila Brantford
Honoured by Michael Starr, Dr. Reg Crowther



WILDFLOWERS

Shared by Justice Elders, Dr. Reg Crowther
Honoured by Michael Starr, Dr. Reg Crowther



THE RED RIVER CART AND COMING TOGETHER ON THE BUFFALO TRAIL

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