

Is it time for a Climate Justice Union for Aotearoa?

Frances Mountier

Loxley Award recipient 2024

"For Wellington, the increase in the occurrence of coastal inundation events has been estimated as a factor of five for every 10 centimetres of sea-level rise. That means that, with 50 centimetres of sea-level rise around Wellington, a 1-in-100-year coastal flood would be occurring every couple of weeks. With 80 centimetres of sea-level rise, it would be happening on every tide."

- James Renwick, *Under the Weather: A Future Forecast for New Zealand*, HarperCollins Publishers, Auckland, 2023

"After over 30 years of deliberate focus on reducing emissions – we are now emitting more than ever. 2018 was an all time emissions high. The world's government are struggling to meet their COP commitments, which were already too weak to begin with. We are way off-track for reaching the planet's Sustainable Development Goals. The global south and Indigenous Peoples all around the world are paying the price of this failure..."

"For Indigenous Peoples, we understand this issue only too well – when you talk about a system that extracts from our lands to profit another, when you talk about a system that spells the end of our way of being, that forces us to worry about our very survival that impacts our food systems, our bodies, our human rights – we know this experience very well."

We call it colonisation."

- Tina Ngata, *Kia Mau: Resisting Colonial Fictions*, Rebel Press, Wellington, 2019, p. 80

"Today, as Theda Skocpol documents in Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life, attempts to generate movements are directed by professional, highly educated staff who rely on an elite, top-down theory of power that treats the masses as audiences of, rather than active participants in, their own liberation."

- Jane F. McAlevey, *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2016, p. 9

Summary

Across 2024, Frances Mountier held 50 kōrero with unionists, climate justice activists, community organisers, and researchers, asking is it time for a Climate Justice Union for Aotearoa? Yes, there is a need for a Climate Justice Union for Aotearoa; not a trade union but a union in both form and method. A membership based, mass, democratic, participatory organisation. That fights for tangible wins, with the fights undertaken by those who need the wins, and in doing so, pulls more people in. It builds the organisation - builds power - through those wins. That is situated here in Aotearoa, that stands in solidarity with tino rangatiratanga and stands for peace and justice, with a clear set of political pou.

It is also the case that there is a lot going on in Aotearoa right now (summer of 2024-25) - including resistance to attacks on Te Tiriti, on Māori, on te taiao, on the public sector, on the disabled community, on education, on funding for social sciences, on our so-called 'independent foreign policy.' A project to establish an organising-model, Climate Justice Union, will need organisational backing, more people on board, and financial resources to be realised. Meanwhile, climate justice organising continues.

Introduction

"A Climate Justice Union for Aotearoa will provide such a valuable framework for inclusive action on climate nationwide, supporting the many communities who want to be active but will benefit from a Union which can develop skills and leverage cross sector engagement."

- Public Health Specialist, November 2023

"The trade union, at its heart, is about creating a structure that enables collective strength. While in modern Aotearoa, this is generally limited to (important) industrial relations issues, there is a long history of trade union involvement in other causes - whether through blacklisting and preventing construction at Takaparawhā Bastion Point to support Ngāti Whatua Ōrākei, or instigating 'Green Bans' which were a method through which NSW Builders Labourers union supported local community requests to protect scarce green space."

- Asher Wilson-Goldman, November 2023

Ko Ranginui ki runga. Ko Papatuanuku ki raro. Ko nga tāngata kei waenganui. Tihei mauri ora!

This year, I have been the grateful recipient of the Quaker Peace and Service Aotearoa New Zealand Loxley Award. This annual award is for research on peace, justice or environmental issues. My research question was "is it time for a Climate Justice Union for Aotearoa?" I have held more than 50 kōrero about this pātai across the year, with unionists, climate justice activists, community organisers, city council staff and researchers. I have attended numerous public meetings and workshops. I held an ideas hui in Ōtautahi in July, attended the Building Organisations workshop at Kōtare in October, and held a couple of discussion meetings with Oil Free Wellington (one of my earlier political homes, and the organisational sponsor of the project). Aotearoa Climate Justice Network held a wānanga on these questions in spring. My very deep thanks to all those who shared whakaaro with me. And to Conor Twyford for regular meetings, and to Valerie Morse and Grace Millar for mentoring the project throughout. Across the year, broadly, I looked at the concept, the political pou, the form, and what would be needed to bring such a union into reality.

I'm not asking questions about policy, I'm asking - and now writing - questions about organising. Organising that you and I could work on together today and build on tomorrow. It's not about telling the powerful how something should be done, it's imagining what our communities could do, and who we could link up with to build our own power.

While most of this piece calls for more community decision making, I of course also want more mana whenua decision making. And so much of that is happening; Māori are in a tonne of discussions on marae and elsewhere across the motu, about tino rangatiratanga, Te Tiriti, te taiao. The attacks right now on Te Tiriti - if successful - open the pathway for yet more capitalist extraction from people and te taiao. There must be - and is - a strong fight to protect Te Tiriti, and for tino rangatiratanga, and it's crucial that any mahi for climate justice includes mahi to support tino rangatiratanga, and that such mahi is cognisant of the work mana whenua are doing.

About the writer

I am Pākehā / Tauīwi / Tangata Tiriti. I grew up in Christchurch, in a family of progressive people. I was lucky to go to multiple Kōtare - Research and Education for Social Change workshops as a teenager, and have been active since in climate justice and social justice movements. These have included the New Brighton Pier occupation against the Foreshore and Seabed Bill, Save Happy Valley Coalition, October 15th Solidarity, Coal Action Network Aotearoa, TPPA Action Group, the What If? Campaign, Stop the Spies, and Oil Free Wellington. I am the longstanding chairperson of Radical Action Grants Inc Soc, and have been on the national organising team for Free Fares for the past two years.

I am the māmā of 2 tamariki who are at kura tuatahi. Together with my partner, we live in Te Whanganui-a-Tara. We are lucky now to have bought a 2-bedroom apartment and so - emerging from the housing crisis and those years of early parenthood - find ourselves with some time in the family week to contribute again to climate justice movement.

I find myself torn between the urgent necessity of climate justice work and the daily necessity of earning a living for one's family; this, of course, being a fairly common conundrum and the material reality out of which this project was born!

The need for a union

There are multiple reasons I believe we need a Climate Justice Union. Three looming ones are the climate reality, the risk of reactionary politics, and the absence of many *organising* groups in the environmental justice space in Aotearoa.

We are all living through and will continue to live through the climate crisis. Many - including Indigenous people, and those in the Pacific - have already experienced existential threat through colonisation and through rising seas. Many - including those unemployed and many in the disabled community - already face desperate circumstances and poverty and live under attack.

It seems there is a possibility gap - what if people saw that worse is coming and felt some of that anger now and acted in our collective interest now? (Others may critique this framing!) For example, in Petone:

"The data shows that as "early" as 2045, the western end of Petone (Korokoro) will be subjected to coastal flooding and for Days Bay, 2042 is D-Day.

Those two factors, however, are not the only ones in play for Petone. It is also low lying, making drainage a problem, and facing south it experiences the full power of the big storms that frequently smash the beach.

With the planet heating up, storms like Cyclone Gabrielle would become more frequent and powered by the rise in temperature, more deadly. Storm surges would cause damaging floods, which would potentially see large area of Petone under water."

- Nicholas Boyack, "How Long Will Insurers Stick With Petone?," *The Post*, 14 October 2023, <https://www.thepost.co.nz/nz-news/350082200/how-long-will-insurers-stick-petone>

Councils already struggle for funding for normal expenses and day-to-day infrastructure. They will not be able to fund expensive temporary geotechnical fixes.

And emissions continue to grow globally.

Countries like NZ continue to chop and change on their climate commitments. NZ was considered 'highly insufficient' in a review before Cyclone Gabrielle (<https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/new-zealand/>); before Former PM Hipkin's climate policy bonfire (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/mediawatch/audio/2018882198/climate-policies-burn-on-the-bread-and-butter-bonfire>). We have seen the Coalition government scrap many climate policies since then.

Even 1.5 degrees of climate change is considered dangerous and this is why the Paris Agreement's goal is to keep warming ""well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels" and pursue efforts "to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels."" (<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement>) We're seeing severe weather impacts - here and globally - at less than 1.5 degrees of warming.

I am trying to say something bleak but honest; until things radically change, Petone is on track for an impactful level of sea level rise this century, by the 2040s. Many, many other communities across Aotearoa face impacts too, let alone across the Pacific and the global community.

Insurance costs will impact households and community well before then; they already are. (For example, see https://www.reddit.com/r/Wellington/comments/z87j25/petone_house_insurance/ And https://www.reddit.com/r/newzealand/comments/1bw9jdf/home_insurance_now_a_risky_business_in_wellington/). Before people cannot get insurance, there is the stage where people just cannot afford it, so opt not to have it, and then are very exposed to the coming storm surges and floods.

We need democratic decision making, otherwise insurance retreat will force and fracture our communal landscape. Already various houses in Petone are not guaranteed insurance cover - please see: <https://www.thepost.co.nz/nz-news/350216471/capital-crisis-insurance-now-risky-business-wellington>

Back in March 2024, the Treasury wrote to the Minister of Finance saying:

"Our own monitoring work has found the biggest recent price increases have been in areas that have both high flood and seismic risk (e.g. some areas in Christchurch and the Hutt Valley), and that these areas are also starting to see reductions in the availability of online quotes for residential insurance (though people may still be able to secure insurance through other channels)."

- Released in the *Residential Flood Insurance Issues Information Release*, August 2024, <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2024-08/tr-t2023-1934-residential-insurance-issues.pdf>

In the past, to some extent, a less-at-risk house subsidised the more-at-risk house, because everyone in an area was charged insurance premiums at the same rate. But, as insurance companies increasingly move to "letter-box" or risk-based pricing, those places at higher risk might be identified letterbox by letterbox. They may find their own premium rising much faster, and to higher levels, than for others around the country. (It's also worth thinking about how to respond to this, see <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/532798/napier-man-challenges-insurer-over-flood-hazard-maps-gets-premium-discount>)

If I was in Petone, I would be asking, what are the Principles we want to proceed on - in our neighbourhood and across the motu? Do we want to make sure everyone is okay - renters, pensioners, mana whenua, home owners, those inadequately housed? (My friend says we are all in solidarity with each other, other than those who own multiple houses. A home owner or a renter or someone underhoused would all have their life course impacted by a severe weather event hitting their home. True wealth means that it would not impact your life course).

Who do we especially need to reach out to as a community, and ensure are included in kōrero and community events? The elderly and the disabled will be heavily impacted by these issues (the insurance retreat, the severe weather, and the sea level rise). This study from the University of Sydney found:

"People with disability and their carers experienced profound impact and systemic neglect during and after the 2017 Northern Rivers floods, with many still unable to access stable housing, and at relatively high risk of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) six months later, finds a University of Sydney study..." "A lack of affordable accommodation for displaced people with disability and carers, which resulted in them living in unsafe accommodation which often had mould or structural damage."

- <https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2022/08/09/people-with-disability-and-carers-at-more-risk-of-homelessness--.html>

Those with adapted housing may lose it and there is no clear funding to access accessible temporary housing, or to replace house modifications. The loss of place also means the loss of support and care networks.

If we do not organise from a class based, collective based, anticolonial, antiauthoritarian perspective, then into the void of this very real worry comes conspiracy theories. Reactionary community organising that makes things worse for others.

This project came from many places, many conversations, many strands. It was ignited by a kōrero with Valerie Morse on the way home from Riseup ki Parihaka in November 2023. I wonder if we need a climate justice union, she said. Something class-based, something that asks who pays, that names capitalism and colonialism and then organises against them and in our collective interests.

Unions manage to work in a way that their wins improve members' lives immediately this week *and* call for massive transformation of society. (Those calls were very radical in the 1800s, but unions still have staunch visions e.g. "Our mission is to advocate for a strong, vibrant and well-resourced public education system where all tamariki can reach their full potential." NZEI. And "We work together to improve everyone's lives and create fair and just workplaces and communities." - E Tū). They run campaigns too, visible ones and others behind the scenes, e.g. NZEI's campaign for essential school staff, or E Tū's long support for the Living Wage campaign).

I also wanted to imagine a broad tent. Many people have caregiving responsibilities, inadequate housing, inadequate incomes, inadequate healthcare, inadequate community supports. As Paul Maunder asks - citing some Canadian activists, "Given unstable incomes, unstable housing and an unknown future how do we organise?" - Paul Maunder, "Facing the Crisis," *PO Box 2 Blackball*, 4 March 2024, <https://paulmaunder.com/2024/03/04/facing-the-crisis/>, (accessed 18 March 2024)

I dream of a union where you can be involved, your membership valued and valuable, even if you cannot commit to the weekly meetings of your average climate justice group.

An overview of the landscape

To my delight, I realised early in the year that there are numerous projects / organisations / crews across the motu who work on climate and climate justice; more than I would be able to get my head around or map in one year of part-time mahi (given my parenthood and other commitments). These include:

- * Iwi planning for a just transition and for adaptation e.g. Waikato-Tainui's high-level submission on the country's energy transition: <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/29297-waikato-tainui-gas-transition-plan-issues-paper-submission-pdf>, Kai Tahu's *Our Climate Change Action Plan*, Te Kōunga Paparangi <https://ngaitahu.iwi.nz/te-runanga-o-ngai-tahu/our-work-pou/strategy-and-environment/climate-change/>
- * many marae-based and hapū projects, e.g. plans for a 'Tiny Forest' at Wainuiomata Marae <https://www.pledgeme.co.nz/projects/8010-grow-a-tiny-forest-with-a-wetland-on-a-marae-and-show-others-how>, Parihaka's call for their land to be excluded from oil and gas exploration <https://www.stuff.co.nz/taranaki-daily-news/news/300937676/parihaka-seeks-45000-acre-exclusion-zone-in-new-oil-and-gas-block-offer>
- * Matike Mai based projects, e.g. Me Tū-a-Uru <https://www.metuauru.co.nz>, Te Reo o Ngā Tangata <https://www.thepeoplespeak.nz/team-3>
- * Māori and Pacific-led campaigns e.g. Te Ara Whatu, <https://www.facebook.com/tearawhatu/>, Pacific Climate Warriors <https://www.facebook.com/PCWWLG>
- * Long-running community adaptation planning e.g. South Dunedin Future <https://www.dunedin.govt.nz/council/council-projects/south-dunedin-future>
- * Ad hoc community adaptation planning e.g. Waihi Beach Lifeguard Services <https://www.boprc.govt.nz/environment/climate-change/community-led-adaptation-funding-initiative/>
- * ParaKore <http://parakore.maori.nz>, Zero Waste Network <https://zerowaste.co.nz>, Timebanks, and Repair Cafe Aotearoa <https://www.repaircafeaotearoa.co.nz>
- * Community Energy - "collective and citizen-based initiatives in the energy and healthy homes sectors" <https://www.communityenergy.org.nz>
- * Environment Hubs Aotearoa <https://www.communityenergy.org.nz>
- * Kai sovereignty e.g. <https://www.regionalkainetwork.org.nz>
- * Climate action networks of unions e.g. PSA's ECO Network, NZEI's Mātauranga Māui
- * Climate action networks of other organisations e.g. National Council of Women https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/action_hubs
- * Education-based projects e.g. Enviroschools <https://enviroschools.org.nz>, Te Aho Tū Roa <https://www.teahoturoa.org.nz>, Climate Action Campus Ōtautahi <https://climateaction.school.nz>
- * Student-led groups e.g. School Strike for Climate <https://www.instagram.com/schoolstrike4climatenz/?hl=en>, Climate Action and Resistance VUW <https://www.instagram.com/climateaction.vuw/>, Next Generation Conversations (Ōtautahi)
- * Coalition-based advocacy e.g. Free Fares <https://freefares.nz>, Don't Subsidise Pollution <https://www.endfreecredits.nz>, All Aboard Action Alliance <https://allaboard.nz/all-aboard-action-alliance>
- * Community-based climate and climate justice groups e.g. Nelson-Tasman Climate Forum <https://www.nelsontasmanclimateforum.nz>, Climate Action Ōtautahi/Christchurch <https://www.facebook.com/ClimateActionChristchurch/>, Climate Justice Taranaki <https://climatejusticetaranaki.info/2024/12/13/the-cloak-choke-and-destroy-bill/>
- * Council-led climate action plans e.g. <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/about-auckland-council/how-auckland-council-works/local-boards/all-local-boards/albert-edan-local-board/Documents/albert-edan-climate-action-plan.pdf>
- * Nationwide climate and climate justice groups e.g. Our Climate Declaration, Climate Liberation Aotearoa, Parents for Climate Aotearoa, Extinction Rebellion Aotearoa
- * Climate Club NZ
- * Communities Against Fast Track
- * Economic justice e.g. Wellbeing Economy Alliance Aotearoa (WEAll)
- * Fights against fossil fuels e.g. Coal Action Network Aotearoa
- * Fights for divestment

- * Nationwide NGOs e.g. Oxfam, ECO, Greenpeace, Amnesty International
- * ActionStation
- * Legal fights e.g. Mike Smith's case, the Waitangi Tribunal urgent hearing on climate change; Lawyers for Climate Action, the global campaign for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty
- * Common Grace
- * Other faith based work e.g. Quakers' climate correspondent
- * Aotearoa Climate Justice Network
- * A plethora of online Facebook groups (e.g. Network for Climate Action Aotearoa) and WhatAapp chats (e.g. Kiwis for Climate) for individual climate activists
- * Aotearoa Climate Action Network and their members - see <http://www.nzcan.org/members>
- * International solidarity organising e.g. Oxfam
- * Anti-militarism organising e.g. Peace Movement Aotearoa, Peace Action Wellington
- * Social justice schools e.g. Kōtare, Kōtuku
- * Grants and funders e.g. Radical Action Grants <https://radicalactiongrants.wordpress.com>, Jeanette Jeanette Fitzsimons Climate Action Grants https://www.ourclimatedeclaration.org.nz/jeanette_fitzsimons_climate_action_grants; Clare Foundation <https://clare.nz>, and the Funders Commitment on Climate Action <https://www.climateactionaotearoa.co.nz>
- * Professional bodies e.g. Electricity Engineers Association <https://eea.co.nz>
- * Socialist groups e.g. System Change Aotearoa, International Socialist Organisation
- * Researchers e.g. Tina Ngata, Áine Kelly-Costello, Raven Cretney, Amanda Thomas Matthews, Kyle, Jonathan Oosterman
- * Commentators e.g. No Right Turn, Bernard Hickey, Tina Ngata
- * This list could go on and on if we were to see the links between climate and the colonial genocide in Gaza, or climate and inequality, and so forth (and I believe we should) e.g. Justice 4 Palestine, Fairer Futures
- * The Kotahitanga movement

[Climate Club maintains a list here; <https://www.canva.com/design/DAF6B0meHEY/Lj2yCdJMxpsVoPnpZUo-ag/edit>]. There is an old list of Climate Movement Aotearoa's website: https://sites.google.com/view/climate-movement-aoteaora-nz/home?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email And I hope the membership of Aotearoa Climate Action Network will continue to grow: <http://www.nzcan.org/members>]

A Climate Justice Union would need to engage with all of these (over time), from iwi down.

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Yet also, somehow, we do not have the power together that I imagine we could have. We do not wield the power that might be available to us. So while there is so much more conscience about climate change, and so many organisations - big and small - working on it now than when I was in the Save Happy Valley Coalition (2004 - 2007), we also live at a moment where corporate interests - and the Parliamentarians who enable them - can run roughshod across Māori and other communities, can lift the oil and gas ban and plan to fast-track extractive destruction.

We could talk more about who caused this problem, in whose interests extraction continues, about the whakapapa of colonisation and capitalism, and the whakapapa of struggle against both. And we could organise on these grounds - together, for our collective interests, for collective solutions, using our power together.

There was excitement right from the start of the year at a climate justice organisation that could fight for material needs and for overall transformations. There are massive questions of who pays for adaptation, which are wildly inadequately grappled with at a state level and so will need to be grappled with - and shaped - at a community level. Tino rangatiratanga is under threat and yet more clearly articulated and practiced than ever before in my life time. And there is such disquiet with the times, with the inequality, with the daily struggle to survive, with visible genocide, with attacks on Te Tiriti and with the impending sense of climate catastrophe - a good time to highlight the importance of class.

The political pou

It felt important to identify some political pou, some bottom lines that such a Climate Justice Union would not cross. These coalesced into:

- anti capitalist
- pro tino rangatiratanga
- built on a foundation of peace and justice
- no fossil capital, no false solutions
- for democratic decision making and mana whenua decision making, not insurance

company decision making

- building our collective power
- everyone has everything they need for a dignified life
- no one is illegal (e.g. No one who crosses the border, no one who is born here not to a citizen or permanent resident, no one who stays on their whenua or in their home despite government order)
- organising on day-to-day issues as well as on structural (political, economic) issues; recognising that climate change already impacts on our day to day lives and for some communities, has been doing so for a long time
- anti-authoritarian

Also so it is explicit, this is not an industrial trade union, nor a political party. So, for example, it would be possible to be in the CJU and your trade union and a political party.

Possible forms

"Organizing: Mass, inclusive, and collective. Organizing groups transform the power structure to favor constituents and diminish the power of their opposition. Specific campaigns fit into a larger power-building strategy. They prioritize power analysis, involve ordinary people in it, and decipher the often hidden relationship between economic, social, and political power. Settlement typically comes from mass negotiations with large numbers involved."

- Jane F. McAlevey, *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2016, p. 11

I spent many months grappling with what is an ethical way to form an organisation in 2025 in a colonised land. Should it be co-governed? Should it only proceed if it is of use immediately to Māori? (But some Māori have *more* organised climate transition and adaptation plans, grounded in more social structure, with extensive inter-hapū and inter-iwi organising; a Climate Justice Union is not needed at that level. It is not needed to facilitate inter-iwi conversations, but it could still be useful in communities that are not organised together).

This project is about building power together, rather than power over. Built by members for members of members. Māori and Tangata Moana and tauiwi members, who are then encouraged to bring more people in as members. It seems to me this is different than many pre-existing institutions - who hold power over communities, and where there has therefore been a necessary fight to make them share power.

So, if there are four people having a conversation, some might suggest that 2 must be Māori. While obviously this would be wonderful, I do not think that works as a *requirement* - there are way more urgent fights that many Māori are engaged in. Conversely, if no one is available, then the whole project stops in 2024, when - as I hope is clear from other sections of this report - there is strong potential in an organisation of ordinary people organising for climate justice.

At 4 people, it is possible to have conversations. At 40 people, there are conversations and more explicit decisions. At 400 people, there need to be groups for conversations, and how feed in to decisions, and much more need for structure (e.g. Is it an organisation with a national goal and focus but some regional autonomy? Or where a national organisation directs local activity? Or where local groups have great autonomy but take national decisions together?) So as the organisation grows, there is a need to make sure that Māori and Tangata Moana voices are a very clear part of it, and to form structures and ensure resourcing to make that possible. The larger a CJU grows, the more formal structure is needed, and this must always be cognisant of making sure Māori and Tangata Moana voices are heard.

There is massive and utterly necessary struggle for Te Tiriti - and if Māori were not so under attack then towards tino rangatiratanga. Unions should not be seen as a Pākehā thing, and some of the strongest union leadership has been from radical Māori (and, some of the most radical Māori leaders have also been unionists). Because we fight from the ground up - we oppose fare hikes, we want cheaper fares - this can be built hand in hand by Māori, Tangata Moana and Tauīwi members. It is not setting up a new NGO of highly paid advocates, though many people have recommended having paid organisers because it is hard to do enough organising work in what folks can scratch out of the week unpaid.

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In many of the kōrero, people had their own imaginings of what a 'Climate Justice Union' could be, or we co-created an idea together. So many options; there is a lot of energy for the idea, but they are very different ideas. This can make the next step hard. Also, of course, these could be put together in all sorts of combinations.

Here is a summary of the main ideas that came up across 2024:

1. A federation of many, many groups working in this space. Environment Hubs Aotearoa is a federation of enviro hubs, and in turn federates with community energy and zero waste federations. However, this would be on a national scale, and a much broader range of organisations (from Timebanks through to climate justice struggles). Each group could pay a levy to the CJU.
2. An intra-union or trade union-adjacent project to strengthen climate justice organising between unions (including rank and file members, and the eco-networks and climate networks and environmental education networks within unions, as well as paid staffers). Ideally, this would be funded by a tiny portion of the dues from each member of the member unions, but could also be funded by donations / philanthropy / some seed funding from some unions / a membership fee from those who wished to pay. Similar to UnionAID, but for Climate Justice.
3. Organising site by site so that eventually worksites can transition away from fossil fuels themselves while maintaining their jobs. If a CJU had some money, it could offer a paid organiser to union/s working in these sites, with a particular focus on Just Transition. (Work with local climate justice activists as possible).
4. A union that funds sending organisers and activists and union members from one community to another for a few days to share and learn - with costs and travel and lost wages covered. E.g. A school principal who is very knowledgeable on the ground about adaptation could be funded to go to another school who wanted to learn from their experience. This could be funded by dues or donations; people might feel more that they are supporters of this mahi, but can see the deep significance of it. Sort of like a huge version of Radical Action Grants, but with the express purpose of sharing organising know-how directly between communities.
5. A group in each town that wants one - encouraged to fight a climate justice campaign that makes sense in their place (and build local relationships to mana whenua, to local councils, to unions, to existing groups), to do something restorative together, and to regularly meet and eat in person in order to deepen relationships; with a supporting / tautoko hub nationally that can provide media, membership services, education, website etc. Likely with dues and also local funds.
6. A national organisation with campaign and membership branches around the country, with a more centralised national office, and annual ways to keep in touch with people who cannot come to regular events. Work on two or three campaigns that have been agreed on nationally. Based on some issues that impact people's day to day material realities as well as longer term transformation. Needs to be additive to the existing organisations. Structured like a union. In some ways similar to Common Grace, but organising in communities at large, not in the church. Members asked to pay dues. The lead

committee on each campaign *could* be all situated in one town to enable face-to-face organising, but can also be done online.

7. A national NGO with less focus on branches - more like a class-based climate justice NGO, but with part of the focus being on narrating ourselves as inside the tent, and on caregivers being welcome, pushing for collective solutions. A little like Living Wage, with a high level of organisation so that people's small amount of time can be put to good use. Also, you are a member of it even if you just pay your dues and come to a social once a year, or similar. Climate Justice Connection? Happy to link to a huge range of people and to make the connection to a huge range of issues, but probably focus on key campaign/s. Ideally like Living Wage, it would also be formed with support from some key institutional backers, and then build connections across communities. As one participant said, there is a lot of conversation happening at high levels (government, local government, iwi) and a lot of community events (including public health supported events), but very little communication between these levels.
8. Work with 'professional bodies' / sectors to push for a change in their sector e.g. Librarians pushing for solar panels on all public libraries, waste water engineers pushing for renewably powered waste water systems. Likely needs some funding for organising / coordinating - or it would be neat to see this come forth from librarians, from waste water engineers etc.
9. Related to the above, a nationwide locality-based push to get a collective resource. For example, solar. Could encourage schools to advocate for renewable energy on their premises, and to apply for local council funding to do so. They probably wish to give back their energy in the weekends to those in energy poverty in the school community. This in turn would provide more pressure for the regulator to allow innovative retailers (as well as all these for-the-community models). Could also be at churches, marae, civic spaces, local government. Push the incoming government to provide significant funding for solar. And once that is won, moving to the next sector e.g. Transport, food, banks. The CJU would hold a clear set of politics, but would work with a broad tent of people to achieve these goals. However, it would not, say, rely on Tindall Foundation funding to achieve this. "We can build a socially driven infrastructure in spite of central government" - Auckland participant.
10. A union of workers in the climate justice sector; many are unpaid; so it's our union for ourselves as workers; a union brings discipline and dues - not just an NGO. Like a more formalised version of Aotearoa Climate Justice Network, but where we pay dues, and have democratic decision-making structures. Trust that there's real value in us sharing all our varied mahi in this space through a union of ourselves. Come together but do not lose our own group's identities.
11. A weekly - educational? - gathering where the coming together is also the purpose; the thing you do while together. With hui-a-rohe and hui-whānui, and some set methodology, and a developing canon. Could be educational or sharing or commiserating or relationship building, with climate justice as it's foundation. Does not require national dues; people donate to their local group.
12. A monthly well-facilitated dinner (replicated in each community) with a monthly zoom for the coordinators on the alternate fortnight). Includes exercises on getting to know each other, and the opportunity to have a problem workshopped (people self-select to come to your table and help you workshop the issue). Strong manaakitanga, facilitated exercises. Not a networking space for climate professionals, not a complaining space for radicals. Start it in one town and encourage other towns to start it too. It would not require much online organising because the details would always be the same e.g. Monthly on the first Sunday of the month, at said venue, potluck. And some food from local food rescue networks if possible. As low a charge as possible to cover venue hire / koha e.g. \$2 each.
13. A new radical left extra-Parliamentary political party. Can work across issues, nationally, regionally and locally. Could start, for example, with branches of System Change Aotearoa (an Auckland based group).
14. *Organising* to strengthen WEAll, the Wellbeing Economy Alliance, which has all sorts of other national components of its organisation, and is connected to many of the groups and networks listed above in the 'ecosystem' section.

15. Organising to strengthen Communities Against FastTrack including 350's mahi to link individuals and communities fighting this. Could be funded by dues, and could provide resourcing and support - and perhaps organisers - to varied communities who are very likely to be taking action against proposed Fast Track projects over the next couple of years.
16. Organising to strengthen CAN Aotearoa; has about 30 members and a strong board now - could be so much larger.
17. Campaign to push for funding for marae, including their mahi in emergency response. Could be dues based, paying to your local marae in acknowledgement of this work past present and future but also pushes for the state to assign funding to marae.
18. A ginger group joining the NZ Labour party to push for Climate Justice and a Just Transition, working together to achieve this (Like Win the Wealth Tax, who are people who have joined Labour to push for a Wealth Tax etc - see <https://systemchange.nz/2024/12/08/should-socialists-join-nz-labour/> and <https://www.thepost.co.nz/politics/360506025/can-labour-win-tax-when-it-has-failed>)
19. An encouraging, membership-based community, a cross between an NZ Society of Authors and an online community. Online course and community; various opportunities. Exists to promote and provide for the collective needs of us as CJ organisers, or as parents in the climate crisis era, or some other commonality. The online nature might work for those who are short on time (but not for those without access to devices and internet, or for whom the internet is not accessible).
20. A group built of advocates, direct activists, and volunteers. Could advocate for people (against insurance companies, fossil fuel companies, bus companies etc), have a rapid response group (for protests) and volunteers to run the glue of the organisation. Sort of like Auckland Action Against Poverty, but with a climate justice focus.
21. A public transport riders' union, who pay dues (which could be symbolic at first), gather members by leafleting on buses etc, call actions like fare strikes. With strong relationships to the national advocacy coalition (Free Fares), the direct action parts of the ecosystem, the bus drivers' unions, key unionised workplaces who want to push for free public transport to work paid for by their employer (i.e. making it an industrial issue), and also include a political push to have emissions to/from work counted as part of employers' emissions, and to win much greater central government funding for public transport. One collective solution to the climate crisis.
22. A national summercamp that is restorative for young climate justice activists. A retreat from the world of organising, nourishing and relationship building.
23. Strengthen the local tauwiwi supporting mana whenua in the Kotahitanga movement (in Wellington, organising occurs in Ohu who sit under a steering group of mana whenua and some tauwiwi leaders, who are accountable to mana whenua), including direct links to the climate justice groups. Be more explicit in talking about climate justice and about the protections to te taiao and to people that Te Tiriti provides; and in talking about the work that tauwiwi need to do to hold the state - the kawanatanga side - to account and ideally to get to a better place, in these steps towards a Matike Mai future.

Next steps

I hope some existing organisations consider developing any of each of the above ideas. E.g. Ōtaki Summer Camp already exists and already has heavily discounted tickets for those who need them; perhaps this can - or already does - include explicit invites to each branch of SS4C and other student-led groups.

For me, I will carry on writing, and chairing Radical Action Grants, and my involvement in Free Fares, and co-organising occasional Oil Free Wellington protests against fossil fuels, and taking steps towards option 21 for a Climate Justice Union.

If you want to discuss any of these with me, please email: frances.mountier@gmail.com

If you are keen to get involved in co-organising 21, that would be fantastic, please get in touch! We'll need an organising committee, and organisers in each town, and members in each town too. In the meantime, you can also connect up with Free Fares.

If you have any ideas for seed funding for 21 - for organisers as well as for basic organisational costs - or for support-in-kind (like printing), please let me know. I am very grateful to my local community centre's support for the Free Fares campaign for the first half of 2025. I will be their Activist in Residence for the first half of 2025.

Thanks

My deep gratitude to QPSANZ for awarding me the Loxley Award. It has been very rewarding to be back deeply in a climate justice space, inspiring to see all the work that is happening, and forward-looking to be asking questions of organising and form and strategy, and then to get to write about them too.

My massive gratitude to everyone who held a kōrero with me this year, and so generously shared their time, whakaaro, wisdom, experience and thoughts on strategy.

To James for many a conversation over the dishes, and for saying the times require us to be 'patient, understanding, and honest' in conversation. To Jane and Leigh for their unwavering support, and many conversations about this project. To Michelle for her work year in year out on this mahi and enthusiasm for this project in particular, and for a great "All I want for Christmas is an end to oil and gas" Party.

It has been a year of dreaming. Now we move into a time of practice, however imperfect.

I wrote much of this report at the large table of my local community centre. People arrive and stay for a while - sleeping on the couch, strumming on the guitar, sharing music or conversation or food from the fridge.

There are so many community-weaving projects like this across the motu, that also improve day to day lives (or is it, make day-to-day lives less unbearable?) But how do we organise together to build power, to take power, to look front on at what is happening and to 'build a fightback and build a future?' That remains a key question of our time, and a Climate Justice Union - or organising that resembles it, that draws on our collective agency - is, to quote my beloved, worth a shot!

In solidarity
Ngā mihi mahana

Frances Mountier
Te Whanganui-a-Tara
December 2024

You Are Being Hyperbolic (to the tune of *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas*)

By James Barber, quoting Shane Jones

[From the Oil Free Wellington "All I want for Christmas is an end to oil and gas" party]

You are being hyperbolic

You're hysterical

Christmas tornadoes are totally normal now

In Te Awa Kairangi nowadays

*You are being hyperbolic
You're hysterical
Raging fires are totally normal now
In the Waitaha plains nowadays*

*Here we are the hysterical
The hysterical
Minority
Here we are the hysterical
The hysterical climate minority*

*You are being hyperbolic
You're hysterical
Floating cars are totally normal now
In Tāmaki Makaurau now a days*

*Here we are the hysterical
The hysterical
Minority
Here we are the hysterical
The hysterical climate minority*

*You are being hyperbolic
You're hysterical
Swimming in streets is totally normal now
They call it Ōtepoti for a reason*