

A photograph of a man sitting in a boat on a river, seen from behind. He is shirtless and wearing a white dhoti. The boat has a red canopy made of fabric and wooden poles. In the background, other boats are visible on the water under a clear sky.

ELEMENTAL

Three Stories, Three Continents,
One Commitment to Change

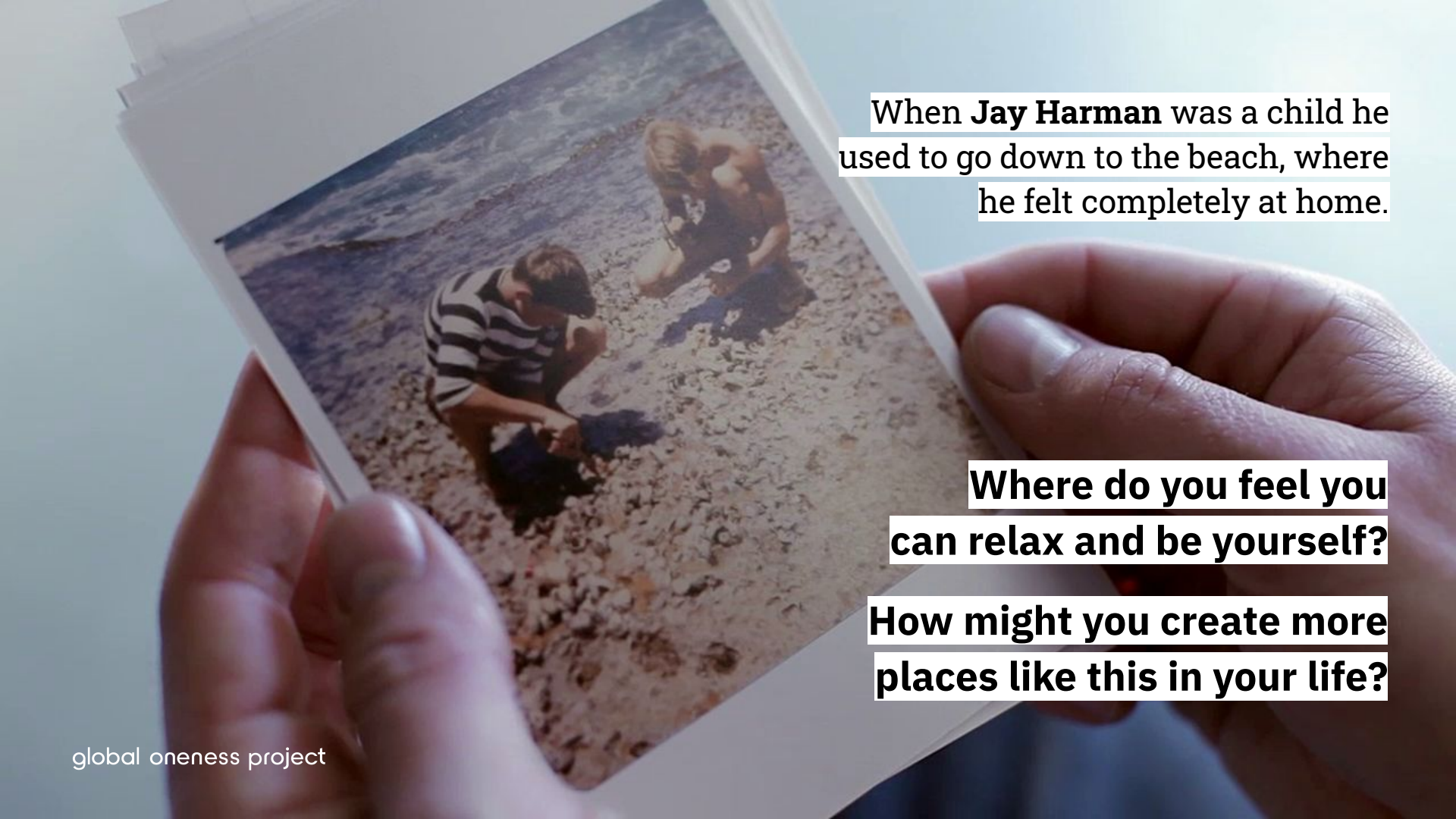
by Emmanuel Vaughan-Lee

Conversation Cards

The *Elemental* conversation cards are organized around the following themes—connection to place, perseverance, and nature as teacher. These themes provide ways for students to engage with the film's content.

How To Use

- As pre-film warm-ups to introduce the topics and themes
- As catalysts for post-film discussions
- As writing prompts for personal reflections or essays
- To spark ideas for action or class projects



When **Jay Harman** was a child he used to go down to the beach, where he felt completely at home.

Where do you feel you can relax and be yourself?

How might you create more places like this in your life?



Eriel Deranger makes clear that she is an Indigenous rights activist, not an environmentalist.

Rajendra Singh says he is a social worker, not a politician.

What job title would you imagine for yourself?

How might our self-chosen titles reflect our connection to the world?

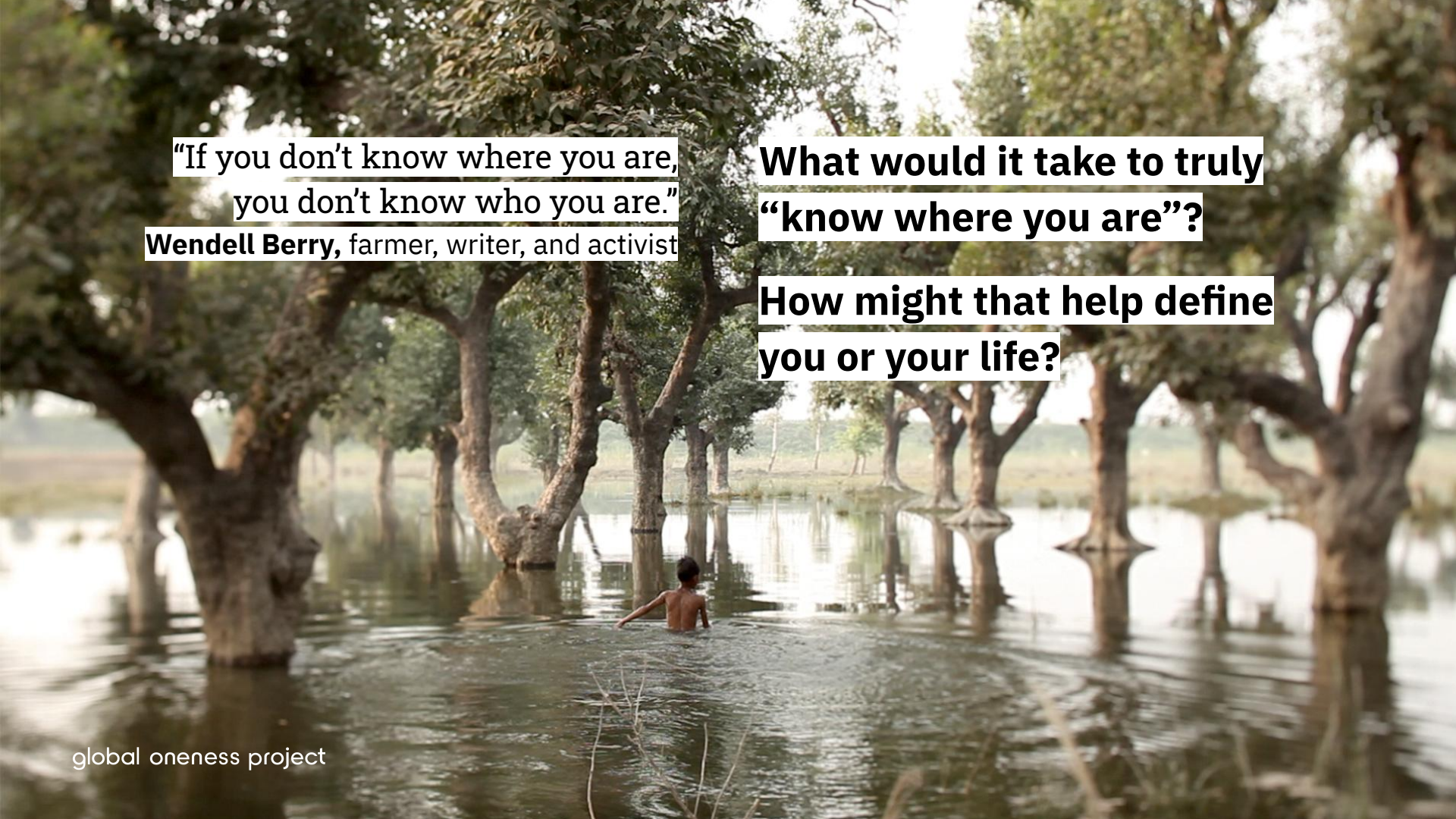


In the film, **Rajendra Singh** uses religious terms such as pilgrimage, sacred, faith, and devotion to motivate people.

Think about the place where you live.

What types of language promote environmental awareness?

What role does language and culture play in shaping our relationship with a place?

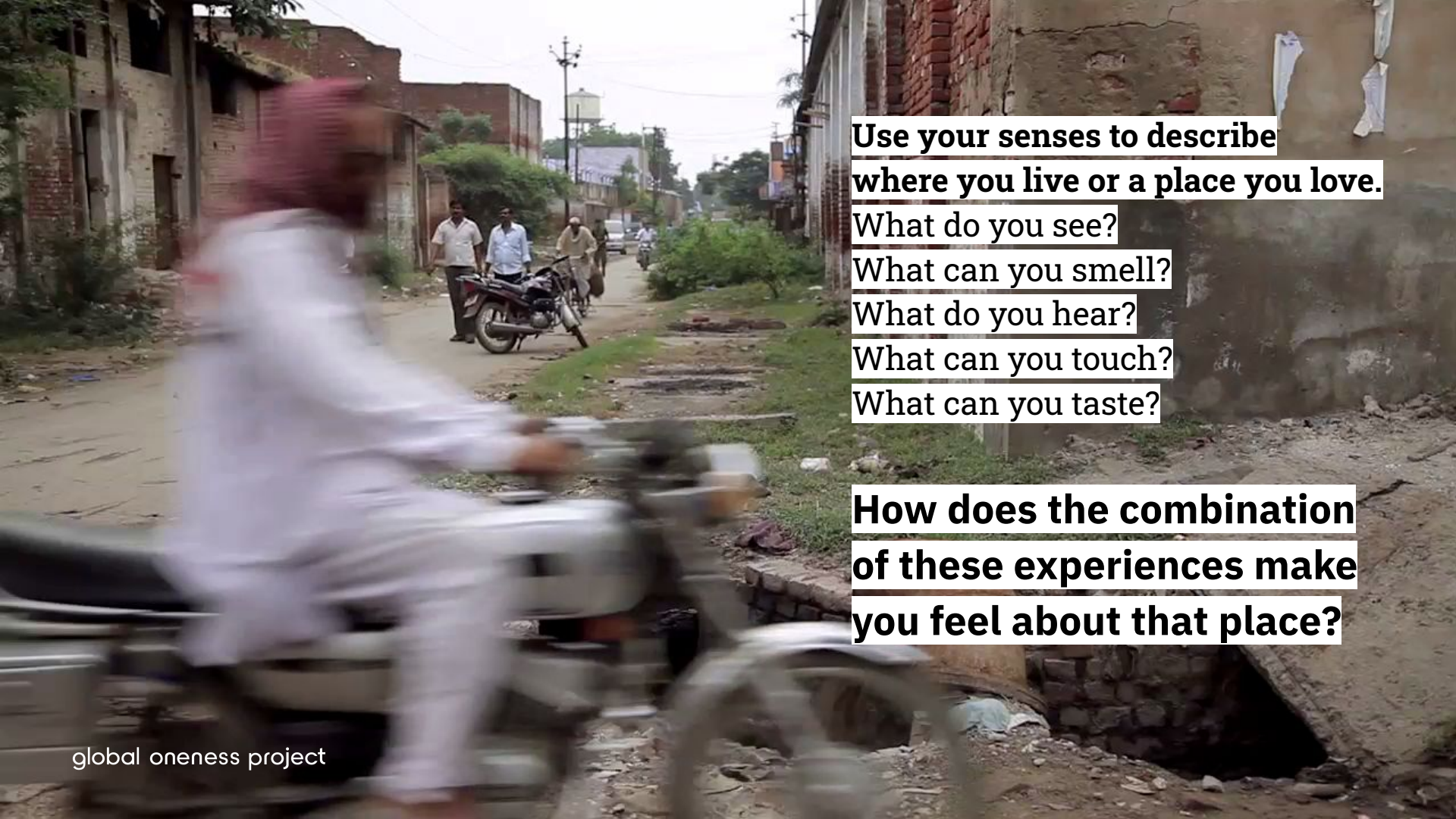
A photograph of a person swimming in a flooded forest. The water is calm, reflecting the surrounding trees and sky. The person is in the center of the frame, facing away from the camera. The trees are tall and have thick trunks, some of which are partially submerged in the water. The overall atmosphere is serene and contemplative.

**"If you don't know where you are,
you don't know who you are."**

Wendell Berry, farmer, writer, and activist

**What would it take to truly
"know where you are"?**

**How might that help define
you or your life?**



**Use your senses to describe
where you live or a place you love.**

What do you see?

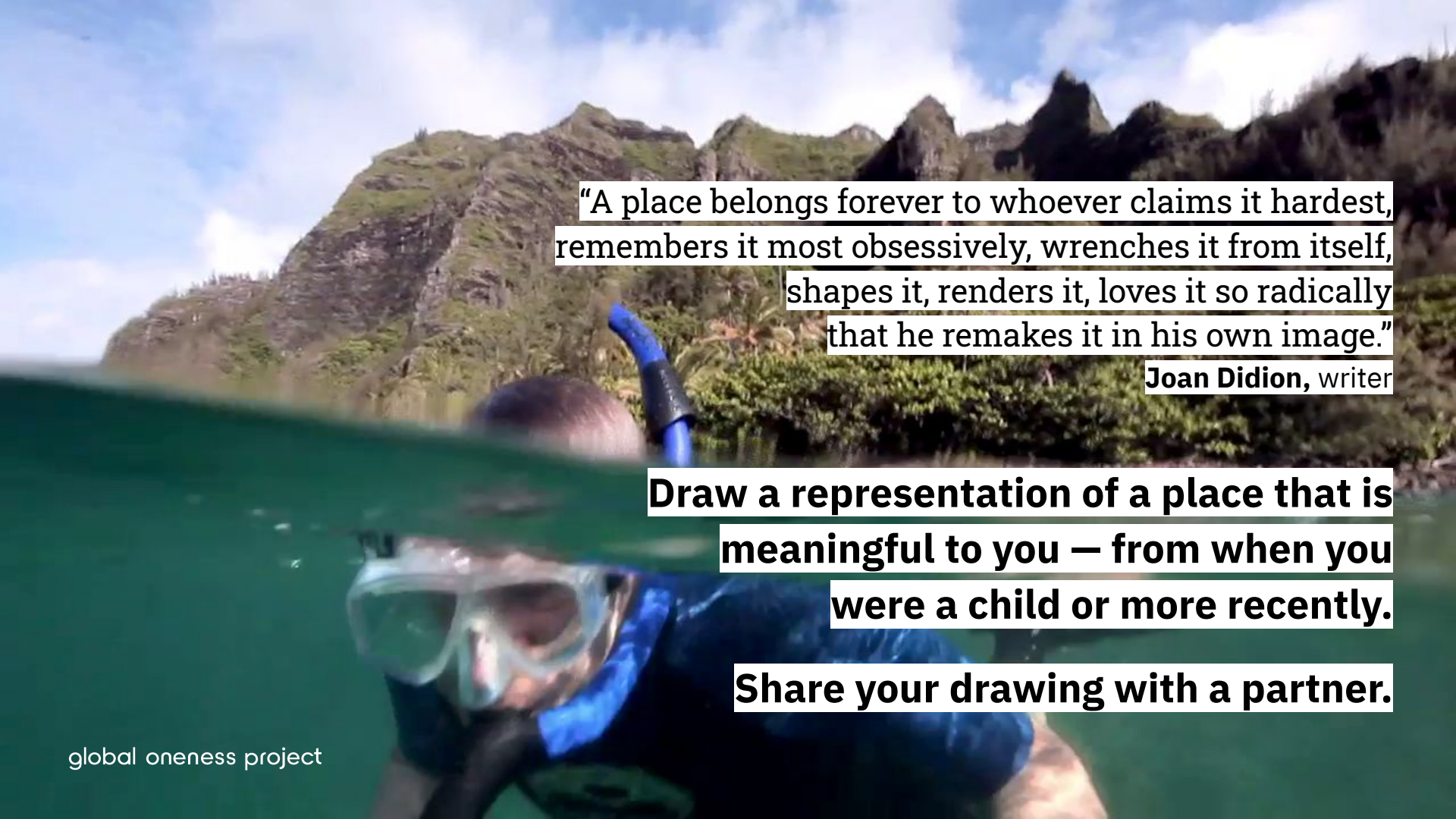
What can you smell?

What do you hear?

What can you touch?

What can you taste?

**How does the combination
of these experiences make
you feel about that place?**



"A place belongs forever to whoever claims it hardest,
remembers it most obsessively, wrenches it from itself,
shapes it, renders it, loves it so radically
that he remakes it in his own image."

Joan Didion, writer

**Draw a representation of a place that is
meaningful to you – from when you
were a child or more recently.**

Share your drawing with a partner.



“Find your place on the planet.

Dig in, and take responsibility from there.”

Gary Snyder, poet

Where is your “place on the planet”?

Find organizations working to protect or restore that place.


Learn what they are doing, and how you can join in.



**See how well you know
the place where you live.**

**1. From where you are standing or sitting,
point to north, south, east, and west.**

2. Identify the current phase of the moon.



**See how well you know
the place where you live.**

3. Name the nearest bodies of freshwater and saltwater.

4. Estimate the times of today's sunrise and sunset.

5. Describe typical weather patterns in your area.



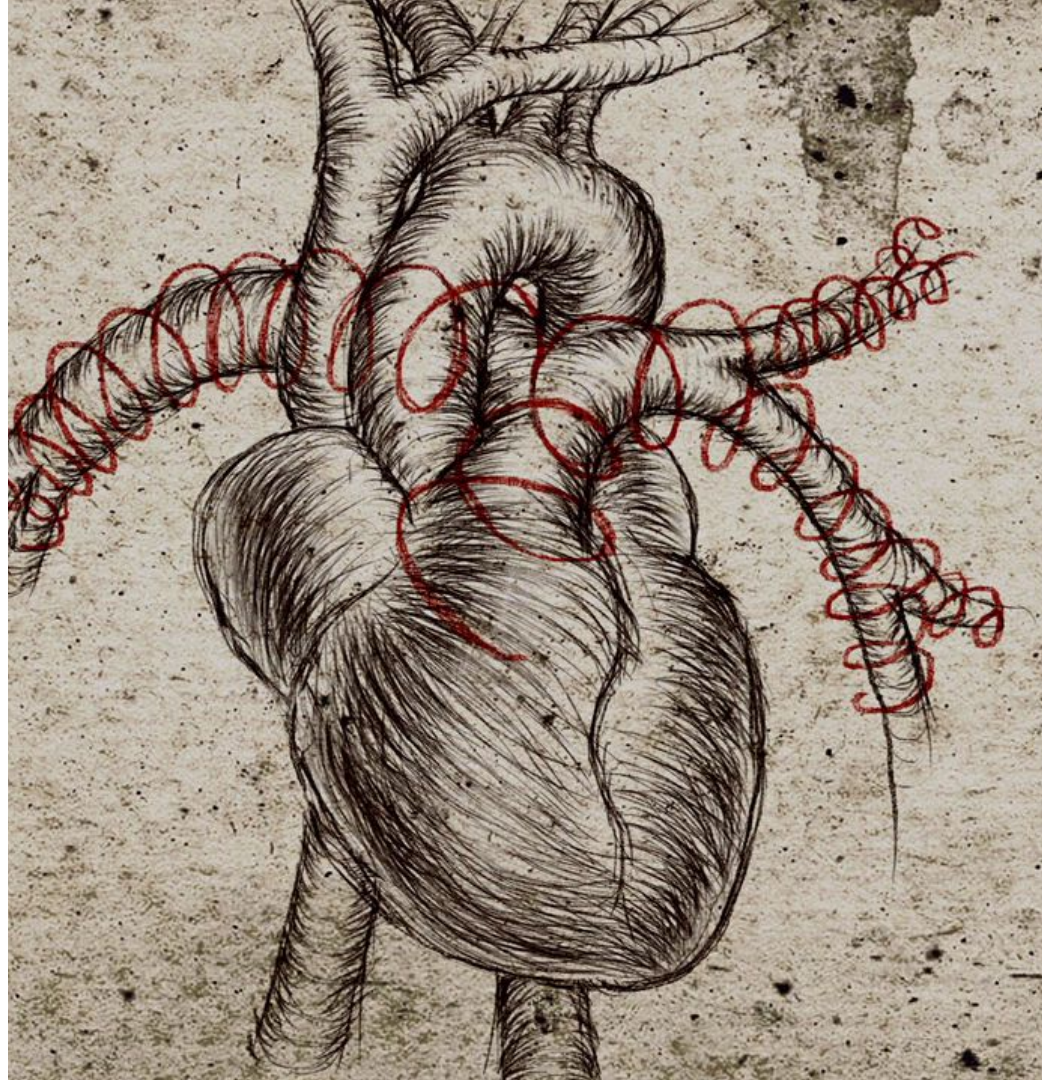
Elemental opens with this quote by poet **T.S. Eliot**:
“Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.”

Why might the filmmaker have chosen this quote to open the film?

In his book *Outliers*, **Malcolm Gladwell** proposes that it takes 10,000 hours of practice to truly master a skill such as playing the guitar.... with time and enough drive, he describes that even those without innate talent can become an expert in a particular area.

Do you find Gladwell's view encouraging or discouraging?

global oneness project





Jay Harman describes that life for him is about possibilities. When someone says, "It can't be done," he sees a failure of imagination.

Think of a problem affecting your family, school, or community.

How might a shift in perception — toward seeing possibilities — affect how you and others view the problem?

A woman with dark hair, wearing a red and black jacket, is shown in a close-up, looking down with a determined expression. She is holding a wooden pole with a red fabric attached. In the background, another person wearing a blue cap and sunglasses is visible. The scene appears to be outdoors during a public gathering or protest.

“It always seems impossible until it’s done.”

Nelson Mandela, civil rights leader

**Might we ever know whether
our aim is possible *before*
embarking on a certain path?**

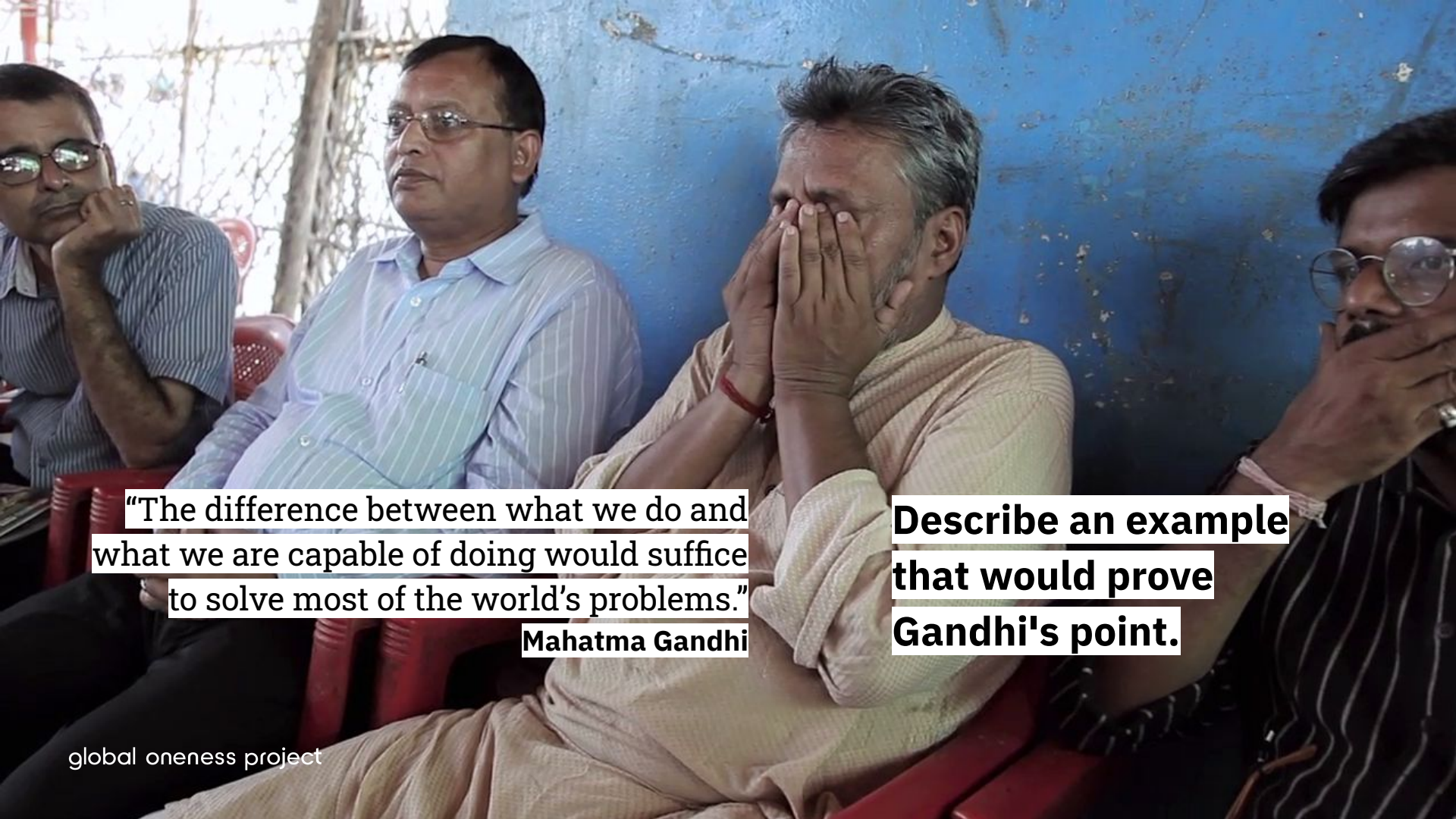
Do you think it matters?



“The difference between perseverance and obstinacy is that one comes from a strong will and the other from a strong won’t.”
Henry Ward Beecher, social reformer

Is perseverance always a good thing?

In what circumstances might knowing when to stand down be the more effective path?



"The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problems."

Mahatma Gandhi

Describe an example that would prove Gandhi's point.



Jay Harman



Eriel Deranger



Rajendra Singh

Make a list of the different strategies the three protagonists employ to promote change.

**How does each role promote change?
What special challenges does each face?
What role are you most drawn to?**



**Identify a skill or ability
that you would like to master.**

**Outline a plan for the next month
to work toward your goal.**

Jay Harman says that the world's most serious problem is global warming.

What changes need to happen to address global warming?



Eriel Deranger describes our relationship with Mother Earth as similar to the relationship between an unborn baby and mother. She says, "...just like an umbilical cord gives [a baby] everything he needs; the water, and the plants, and the air give us everything we need here."

In what ways does Mother Earth provide for your needs?

How has human civilization both extended and compromised these provisions?

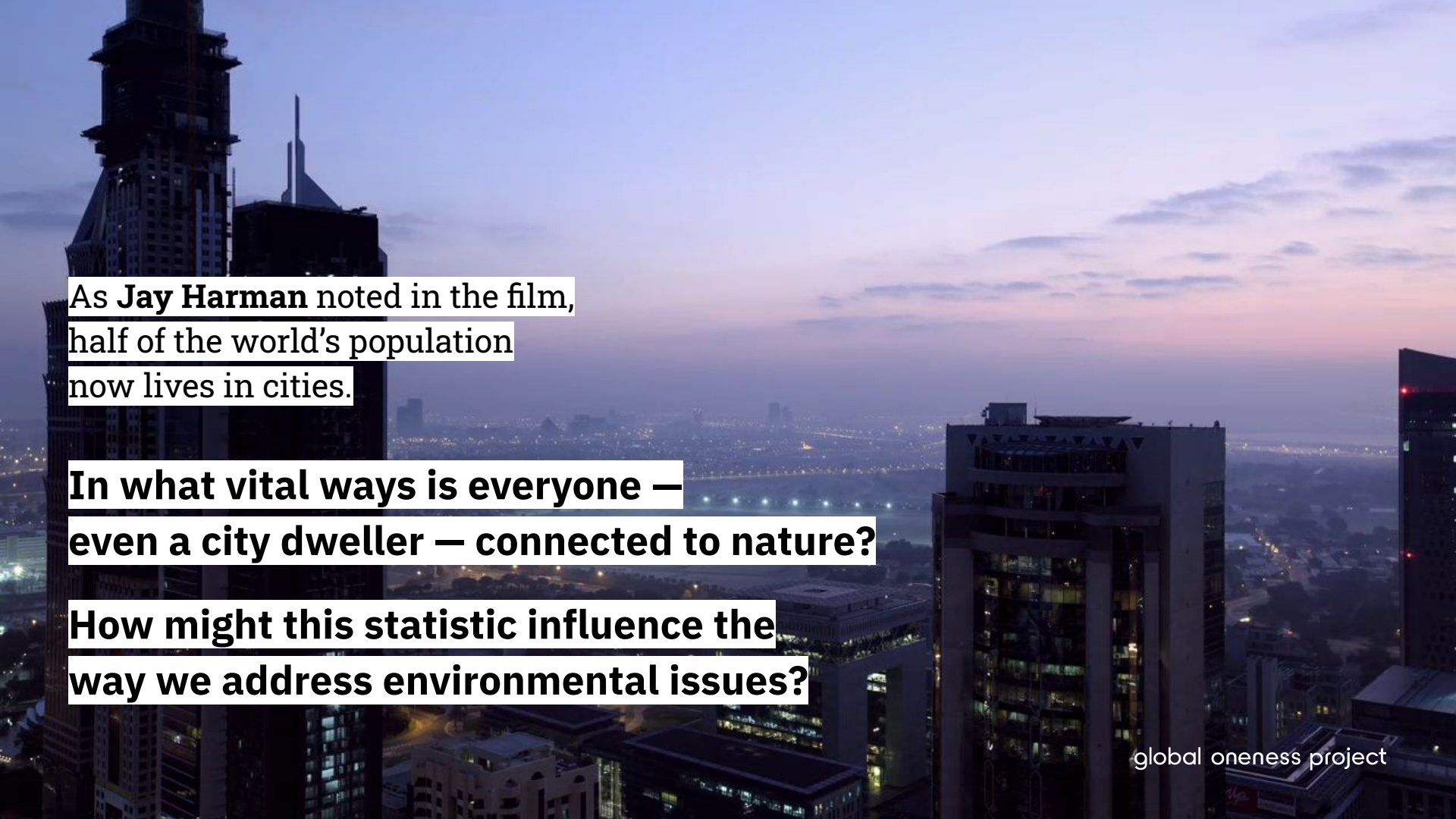


Think about a plant, animal, or other natural object or phenomenon that you resonate with.

Take on its persona.

**What do you think
it is experiencing
and witnessing?**





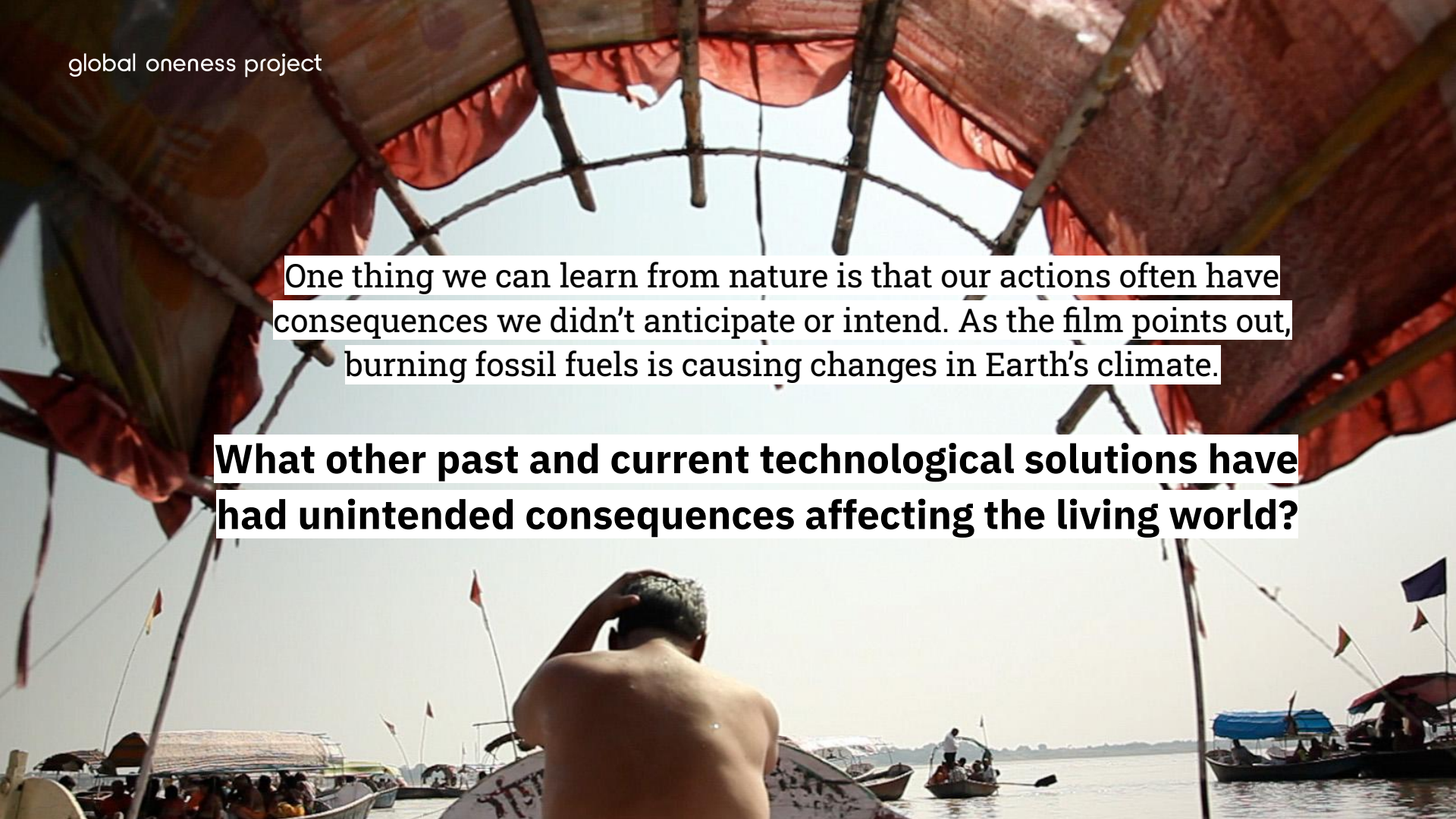
As **Jay Harman** noted in the film,
half of the world's population
now lives in cities.

**In what vital ways is everyone –
even a city dweller – connected to nature?**

**How might this statistic influence the
way we address environmental issues?**

One thing we can learn from nature is that our actions often have consequences we didn't anticipate or intend. As the film points out, burning fossil fuels is causing changes in Earth's climate.

What other past and current technological solutions have had unintended consequences affecting the living world?





“Look deep into nature,
and then you will understand
everything better.”

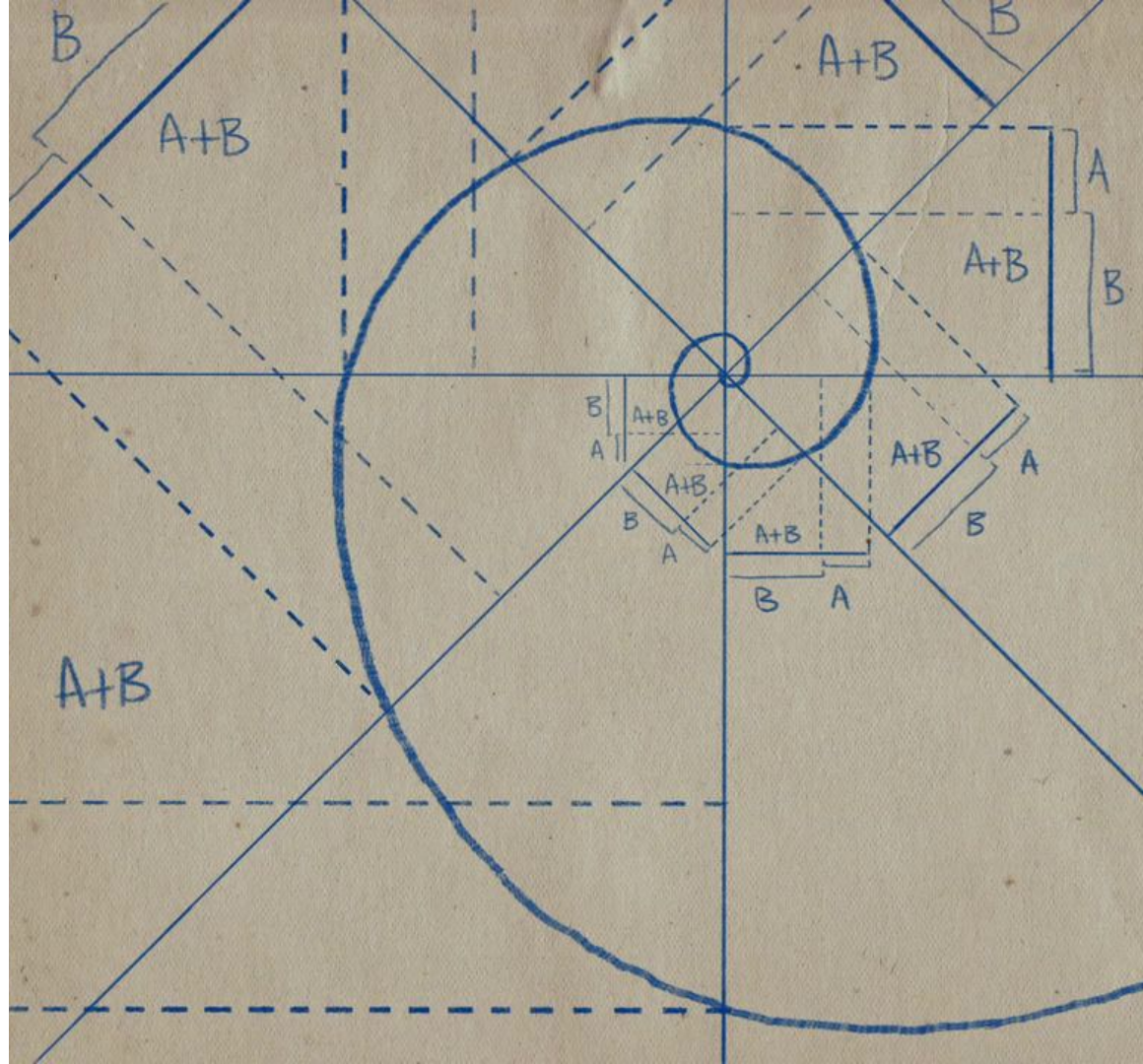
Albert Einstein, scientist

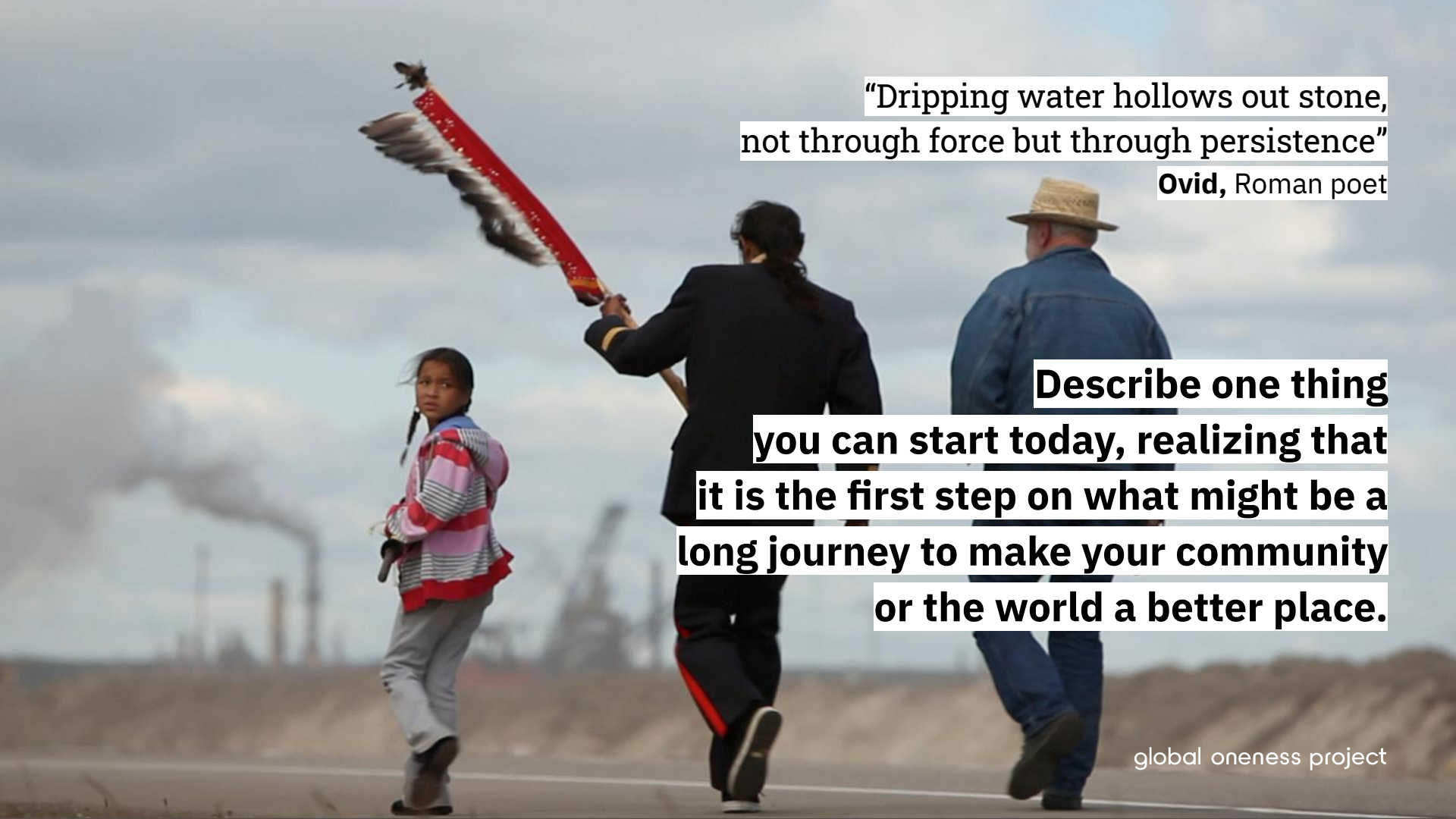
**In what ways can
nature help us
understand ourselves
and our world more
deeply?**

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Jay Harman used natural whirlpools as the model for his innovation. This is an example of biomimicry, which draws on nature for conceiving models, systems, and processes.

Research other inventions or ideas that are inspired by nature's designs.






“Dripping water hollows out stone,
not through force but through persistence”

Ovid, Roman poet

**Describe one thing
you can start today, realizing that
it is the first step on what might be a
long journey to make your community
or the world a better place.**



There are many means by which people from diverse cultures express gratitude for the Earth: through ceremonies, prayers, or rituals, or by creating altars or other structures.

**In what ways
do you honor the Earth?**

We want to hear from you

Share your experiences with us on how you used the conversation cards as well as your thoughts and impressions.

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