

An Educator's Guide to eCards



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Waves of Change



Created by

With support from

In partnership with

To Begin,

We would like to acknowledge the lands that learners, educators, and GreenLearning staff are on, across Turtle Island and around the world.

eCards is currently monitored by staff in Moh'kinsstis, and the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta. This is the traditional Treaty 7 territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy; Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, as well as the Tsuut'ina and the Îyâxe Nakoda Nations. This territory is home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3 within the historical Northwest Métis homeland. With gratitude, we acknowledge the land and the Indigenous people that have taken care of it since time immemorial, and continue to honour and celebrate this territory.

We acknowledge the land to improve our understanding of local Indigenous peoples and their cultures, and to reaffirm our commitment to reconciliation. We encourage you to become familiar with the land that you are accessing eCards from.

[Native Land app](#) (a great starting place to learn more about where you are)

[The Land You Live On](#) (a Teacher's Guide to the Native Land app)



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An Introduction to eCards

eCards is an environmental education and advocacy tool that aims to empower youth to act for the climate by learning about environmental issues, creating informed opinions, and acting on them. By sending an eCard to a decision maker, eCards allows learners to express what they have learned through their research and what matters most to them through art and writing in order to generate awareness and to take meaningful, collective action.

eCards provides learning opportunities for learners in all grades with some adaptations, but were originally designed for grades 7-12. It is an opportunity to do much more than meet curriculum expectations. eCards is an outlet for facilitating learners in changing the world by having their voice be heard and shaping their futures- one eCard at a time.

The Topic Resource Center that supports the research phase of the project was written specifically for grade 7-12 learners. With educator support to guide the process and learning of younger grades, elementary school students can also use eCards with success.

Looking for examples?

Check out the latest published eCards [here!](#)

[connect.greenlearning.ca/
ecards-gallery](https://connect.greenlearning.ca/ecards-gallery)

Why eCards?

As an educator, you can expect:

- A structured eLearning approach to topical issues
- Comprehensive Educator Materials - from activities that introduce eCards to your class right through to assessment rubrics and wrap-up activities
- A website that is secure and moderated. GreenLearning Administrators moderate learner eCards and provide feedback each step of the process.
- Ample opportunity to provide online feedback to your learners as they research and create their eCards
- Access to the eCards Showcase— GreenLearning's gallery of learner eCards exemplars
- Everything you need to give your learners an experience in research and advocacy.

Connections & Outcomes

Curriculum Connections

While developing learners' knowledge and critical thinking, eCards both relies on and advances their writing, reading, media literacy, visual art and information technology skills.

With its emphasis on research, and written and visual communication, eCards provides an opportunity for cross-curricular and integrated learning.

Curriculum connections and rubrics are available on the educator resources page (<https://programs.greenlearning.ca/ecards-educator-resources>).



Learning Outcomes

eCards gives learners an opportunity to:

- think critically about current environmental issues
- develop their research skills
- identify communication strategies needed for advocacy
- understand how to build informed opinions about a subject
- develop their knowledge of Canada and its natural resources
- enhance their language arts skills, especially their reading comprehension, research and media literacy skills
- advance their visual arts skills
- learn in an interdisciplinary environment as they choose and create visual and textual messages geared to a specific audience.

Quick Look: General eCards Pathway

START
HERE

Your Class will...

... create eCards! We recommend the steps below, but understand you may already have some great learning and creation happening in your classroom that is ready to share! This is a flexible tool - use the steps that work for you, as you see fit.

When learners access the eCards webpage, they will be taken directly to "Step 4: Send" to begin uploading their work.



Step 1: Learn
(up to 1 hour)

Classroom Tech
Needed 



Step 2: Write
(1-2 hours)



Step 3: Design
(1-2 hours)



Step 4: Send
(5-10 min)

Classroom Tech
Needed 

Looking for more educator involvement in the approval process?

Let us know at ecards@greenlearning.ca and we will make sure your email address is included throughout the process.



GreenLearning will...

... review, send, and publish the eCards. We'll reach out if there are any concerns or required edits for your class' eCards.



Review
(general content, student privacy)



Send and/or Publish
(per learner consent, and we'll be sure to CC you on any outgoing mail!)

Educator Instructions

This Educator's Guide is designed to help you make the most of eCards with your class. If you have any questions at any time please use the live chat function on our website or email ecards@greenlearning.ca . We're here to help!

Say Hello!

We're always happy to support and connect you with free resources and tools for your classroom. Let us know if you're planning an eCards activity with your class!

Learners create eCards in four steps:



1. Learn (up to 1 hour)
2. Write (1-2 hours)
3. Design (1-2 hours)
4. Send (5-10 min)

Depending on your approach and class, you can expect it to take 4 - 5 classroom hours for learners to create an eCard. ***The next few pages will give you an overview of what to expect and share helpful resources to use along the way.***



Once learners submit their eCards, we'll check over the learners' work to confirm their privacy, run a quick fact check, and confirm that the content is kind. If we feel like it's important for the student to make an edit, we'll email them and copy the identified educator on the email as well. Then, GreenLearning will email the decision-maker and/or post the final work to our website on behalf of your learner. The identified educator will also be notified when we've sent out the email and if the eCard has been published.

Any replies that we receive about your learners' eCards will be shared with you promptly! In the meantime, consider adding to your class' momentum by taking action with Commit2Act (commit2act.org), taking on a GreenLearning Challenge, or diving deeper on a topic by exploring our resources at greenlearning.ca .



Step 1: Learn Selecting a Topic

Classroom Tech
Needed



Some educators have a topic in mind when using this activity, or are interested in leaving the choice up to the learners. If this is the case for you, you can jump ahead to Step 2: Write!

If you're looking for a topic to modify or adapt for younger learners, or would like to assign research topics to your secondary learners, we have a collection of Backgrounders that give in-depth information about environmental topics through a Canadian lens.

Choose a research topic by visiting our [eCard Research Topics](#) page. Wind energy, solar energy, nuclear power or climate change are examples of topics you or learners can choose from. Learners can also use GreenLearning's Spiral Inquiry process for inspiration. Find the Spiral Inquiry model [here](#).

To keep things streamlined, the learner's side of the eCards landing page takes them directly to the eCard submission page. If you choose to share the eCard Research Topics with your learners, they are located [here](#).

Researching a Topic

Classroom Tech
Needed



The eCards website includes all of the information that independent secondary learners need. Each topic also has some prompting questions to help learners guide their research and think critically about what they're reading.



You may also want to encourage learners to consult other sources online, especially if their chosen topic isn't one of our developed research topics yet. Before diving in, we have [a blog post about combatting climate disinformation](#) you may be interested in reviewing with learners first!



Step 2: Write Choosing an Audience

Alone or in small groups, learners consider what they want to communicate and to whom.



The [Advocating Change Handout](#) and the Educator's Guide both suggest ways to lead the class in working through questions of audience, tone and online communication. However, this writing step of eCards can be as unique and tailored to your group as you want to make it. We've developed a worksheet that you can use as a resource to help learners develop their message.

What decision maker do they want to email?

A [decision maker mind map](#) can be helpful when learners are deciding whom they'd like to send their eCard to. Also, to help decide, encourage learners to answer questions about specific recipients; for example:

1. How much does this person know about this topic (for example, energy)?
2. What responsibilities does this person have that can influence this topic?
3. Who makes decisions about the topic?

Check out these example eCards created by learners in Ontario:

April/3/2023

Dear Mr. Trudeau,

My name is Humzah.k. I am writing to you addressing the rise of climate change and greenhouse gas emissions in Canada. Now I know that you and the government are aware of this problem and trying to solve it but if we want to make a real change and impact then we need to start trying harder so that we can resolve this problem or at the minimum reduce it.

I think that seeing how us Canadians are contributing to the enhanced greenhouse effect and climate change, we should make it mandatory to stop relying on fossil fuels and to rely on more renewable resources like solar panels and electric cars. Now I understand that this will be very very costly but we should forget about the money for a minute and focus on saving our planet because if we don't start taking more action then the future of Canada and the whole world will not be guaranteed.



I also think that this would help with some of the problems the indigenous communities are facing like lack of clean water and food. For example, in the northwest territories higher temperatures are negatively affecting the people in the area by the global temperatures rising fewer animals are migrating and it is becoming really hard to grow traditional plants in their lands.



A Student Wants You To Protect Our Greenbelt

Dear Premier Ford,

My name is Abby L. and I am a grade 9 student. I heard about your plan to build highway 413 through the Greenbelt. Although this would provide more routes for transportation, it would benefit our Earth if the environment was kept in mind during this project.

Every year, humans release 37.12 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Luckily, in Ontario, we have protected farmland and forests to take in this CO2 and give us oxygen to breathe. If the super highway is built, a lot of this valuable nature will be destroyed, leaving more carbon dioxide in the air. Along with this, there will be additional greenhouse gases that will be emitted from the machines used to build and the new vehicles on the road. We are also taking away habitats for many creatures like birds, and fish.

Keep in mind, according to The Greenbelt Foundation, the Greenbelt generates \$9.1 billion annually in economic activity through recreation, agriculture and tourism, and creates 161,000 local full time jobs that support rural economic activity.

In the end, I and many others in my community believe that the last thing we need is more damage to our environment, especially in such a thriving and protected area like the Greenbelt. Please rethink your idea to build this highway in order to represent Ontario as a province that doesn't contribute to global warming and greenhouse gas emissions.

Thank you ! - Abby

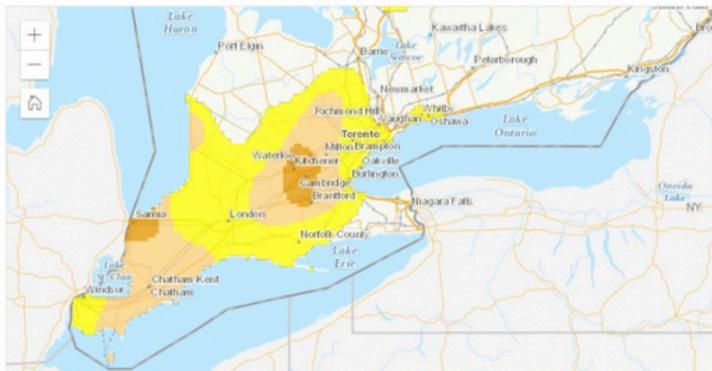


Below are some example recipients:

- Relatives, friends and classmates: as individuals and as families, we all make choices every day.
- Local councillors: the municipal government has considerable responsibility over local decisions.
- Trustees of the school board
- Leaders of community groups: groups such as Guides and Scouts, 4-H clubs, and faith-based organizations may want to take on a project.
- Members of community organizations
- Owners of local businesses: it can add weight to an argument if they know the author of the eCard, or the author's family, is a regular customer
- Energy and utility companies
- Local or national newspapers: eCards can be sent to the editor or to appropriate reporters who have their contact information listed at the end of articles.
- Local Member of Parliament: they want and need to know what their constituents think and what issues they care about.

Published eCard:

Drought conditions as of February 28, 2023



Climate Change

I'm concerned about two issues caused by climate change. Glaciers are melting and this impacts people living in low-lying areas because as sea levels rise, there are more storm surges. So I am asking you what you're doing for that issue? Also, droughts will impact farmed crops and lead to loss of income for farmers, increased food costs for consumers, and increased stress levels for everyone.

In conclusion, I want to know what you're doing for climate change and if you are helping, how will it help?

Created by: Darrien L.

School: Elsie MacGill Secondary School

Map sourced from the Canadian Drought Monitor (Agriculture.Canada.ca)

Learners will have the **option to consent to sending their eCards or allowing them to be posted to our website**. If they do not consent to either, you will still receive the final copy of their work for assessment purposes, but the eCard will not be posted or shared beyond that.

To protect learner privacy, **we limit student information on eCards to their first name and City/Province**.

It's a quick edit for us to remove any additional identifying information from student messages, but please help us support student safety and privacy by looking out for photos or other identifying information.



Writing a Message

Learners write a message and also generate a title for their eCard, keeping in mind their intended audience. Please note that the eCard title will also be in the Subject Line of the final email to the decision maker. For more information, see the [Advocating Change Handout](#).

- You may want to give your learners some time in small discussion groups to think aloud about what they want to say in their eCard and to get peer feedback on their ideas.
- If you intend to use eCards to assess learning, consider sharing a rubric with the learners before they begin their message about how you plan to grade their work.
- You may want to encourage learners to focus their eCards around an upcoming event, by sending eCards to the Prime Minister prior to International Conferences on Climate Change, for example.
- Motivated learners are always welcome to create additional eCards if they are interested. Additionally, eCards can be a fun way for learners that may be less engaged in the classroom to complete work and show their learning in a novel way.

We believe in the importance of empowering youth to engage with topics they feel strongly about, with critical thought and evidence-based information. Your various learners may have unique and diverse perspectives, and we welcome their work. We also remind learners that:

Words hold power, and we hope your eCard can make a positive difference. We will not email or publish any eCards containing a message with discriminatory content, obscenity, or profanity.





Step 3: Design

It's time to create their Digital or Physical Media!

What type of art will depict their message?

Learners can explore our published eCards as inspiration on our [eCard website](#). Artwork can be created digitally, by hand, or by third party (just ensure it's copyright free). Students can also choose to submit a video, podcast or any other media type.

We also have [tools](#) the learners may want to use to create their graphics. These tools are just suggestions - they can create their artwork by hand or however they choose! There are also tips and tools in the Artwork Creation section to help learners with graphics.

Learner-created graphics are essential to the eCards, and they can take many forms:

- a digital photo
- a scanned drawing or painting made by hand
- artwork created by online tools such as Canva
- a Meme
- a Video (YouTube and TikTok URLs are welcome!)

Whatever approach learners take, ensure they end up with a saved .jpg, .png, .gif or .mp4 file that they can upload into their eCard submission.

Published eCard:

Ice Melts
Drake, Young Thug

3:41 / 4:10

drake wasn't lying, ice melts

use your platform to share information and spread awareness, you can make a difference

Glaciers are slow-moving sheets of ice and snow. Glaciers melting are displaying the clear impact of global warming. For example, Greenland's huge ice sheet is melting faster than anticipated. If it ever melts completely, sea levels globally could rise about 20 feet or 6 meters. Coastal cities and small island nations would be under water. Millions of people would be forced from their homes.

The natural greenhouse effect is the process by which the Earth's atmosphere traps some of the Sun's energy, keeping the planet warm enough for life. The issue is that burning fossil fuels and deforestation release extra greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, the extra gases trap more of the Sun's energy, increasing global temperatures.

This increase affects every part, including humans, plants, and animals. Coral bleaching, changing habitats, losing their parents and animals can adapt. We lose many species, ecosystems will suffer as we slowly cut back forests and landscapes. On a more personal note, global warming definitely affects human health. There are many diseases carrying vectors and insects that love the heat. These species can bring and infect humans with diseases like malaria, yellow fever, Lyme disease, and many more.

Ways you can help
Reduce your waste. Reuse and repair items. Recycle waste. Try to walk, bike, or use public transportation. Whenever you're able to in order to reduce your use and burning of fossil fuels. Protect ecosystems. Plant trees and other plants. Unplug and turn off appliances when not in use to avoid using unnecessary energy. Saving energy. Reduce greenhouse gases released.

Help learners build an effective eCard by asking them to describe their plans by answering these three questions:

- Who are you choosing to send your eCard to and why?
- Explain your choice of image. What are you trying to convey?
- Is your message consistent with your image and your chosen recipient?



Step 4: Send Submitting an eCard



The learners will need to fill out the eCard [submission form](#) with all their eCard details. This includes their school contact information, along with their artwork (uploaded as .jpg or .png, .gif or .mp4), their message, and the decision-maker's email address.

On this form **there is a section for learners to consent** to have their eCard posted to our website, and emailed out. Learners may consent to either of these options, or opt out entirely. Once the learner has submitted their eCard submitted, an email will be sent to GreenLearning Admin.



Review GreenLearning Admin
(general content, student privacy)

Once the learner has submitted their eCard, an email will be sent to GreenLearning Admin to post and send the eCard, if consent has been given. They will contact you if they see anything that requires editing.

Learners who agree to publish their eCard on GreenLearning's website will be covered under [Creative Commons / Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0](#) licensing as per [GreenLearning's Privacy Policy](#).



Send/Publish GreenLearning Admin
(per learner consent)

We will publish the learners' eCard onto the [eCard website](#), and sent out to their chosen decision maker (if they gave consent for these steps). You and your learner will get an email notification when it has been published and sent! We will also CC you on the email, unless you indicate otherwise.

Helpful Resources

Classroom Infographic

Build your own eCard!

With eCards, you can send a virtual message to people that make important decisions about our environment. You have a voice. You can make a difference!



Step 1: Learn

Learn about an environmental topic through our workshops, challenges, or backgrounders.



Step 2: Write

Use the eCard worksheet to guide your message or write your own.



Step 3: Design

Use the eCard worksheet to guide your design or create your own.



Step 4: Send

Submit your eCard through our submission form. We'll send it to your chosen decision-maker!



How are you going to use your voice?

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Educator Checklist

This checklist can help you keep track of your group's progress on eCards. Please feel free to reach out at ecards@greenlearning.ca for any support or information that will help you and your learners go through the process smoothly!

- Book technology** (laptops/tech carts/etc.), library, or other research sources for your group. *Tech might be needed for Steps 1 & 3 (if learners are designing cards digitally), and Step 4.*
- Step 1: Learn** (1 hour, technology needed if research is online)
- Step 2: Write** (1-2 hours)
- Step 3: Design** (1-2 hours, technology or art supplies needed)
- Step 4: Send** (5-10 min, technology needed to send online)
- Approval Process** begins. *GreenLearning Admin will review your learners' submitted eCards and get back to you if any edits are required. We will then post and send your eCard on your behalf if consent was given.*
- Communication with GreenLearning.** *We'll typically reach out once it looks like your learners have almost all made it through the eCards process to update you about your class status. Feel free to reach out at any point in the process!*

Adaptations

eCards is presented as a fairly tech-dependent activity. If this isn't an option for your group, there are a couple options that might be a good fit:

- **Limited tech for Step 1: Learn:**

- Use the **books** in your school's library, or learner's textbooks to research.
- Reach out to local organizations (or national ones, like GreenLearning!) that offer **workshops, webinars, or guest speakers**. *What did learners take away from the experience? Was there a call-to-action, or moment for support and encouragement?*
- Consider using a **field trip** as your learners' main research opportunity. Field trips to the science centre, local landfill, neighbourhood park or town hall could provide many resources and opportunities to ask questions, make observations, and find connections.

- **Limited tech for Step 3: Design:**

- **Learners are welcome to create physical, hard-copies of their eCards!** In order for us to publish them to our site, we will need a clear photo (.jpeg, .png, or .pdf) of the card, and a few contact details. This is a great option if your learners are still developing the digital skills needed to submit an eCard online, or don't have access to a device during school hours. Please send ecards@greenlearning.ca an email if this is the route you plan to take with your learners, and we'll let you know what info we need to proceed.
- **Group submissions** - a class can work together to create an eCard as an activity, class discussion, or fun game! This is a great opportunity to wrap up a unit, field trip, or celebrate on a themed school day. You can send an eCard on behalf of your whole class.

Next Steps

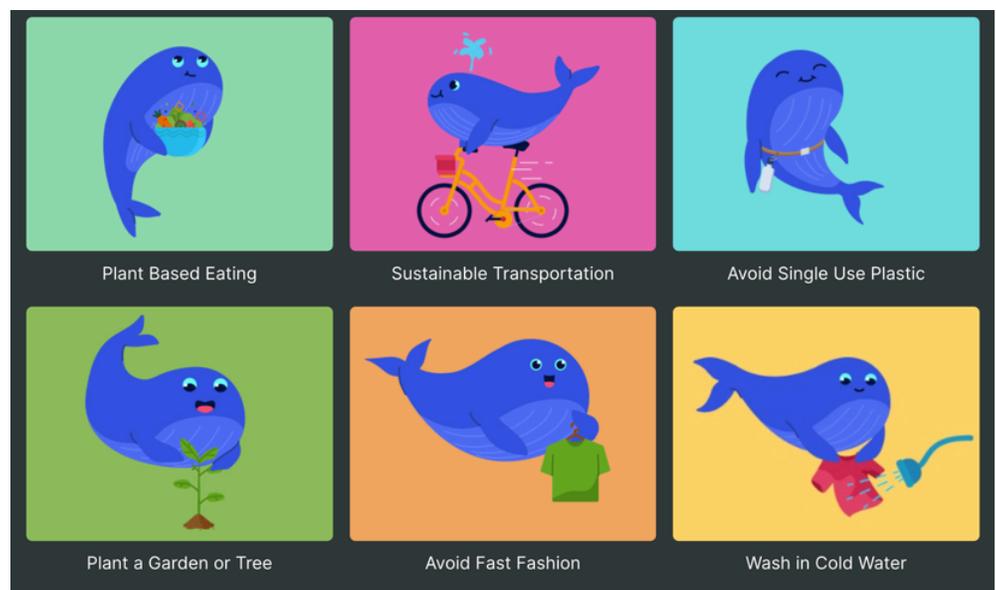
If we receive a reply to the learner's eCard from a decision maker, GreenLearning will send you a notification promptly so you can share the message with your learner. In the meantime, to conclude and evaluate the eCards activity you may want to consider a wrap-up activity:

- involve the whole class in a discussion about what worked and what could be improved upon,
- ask each learner to select another learner's eCard from the Class Gallery to send to a new person (with your approval, of course),
- plan to do subsequent eCards with the class where the wrap-up activity can also serve as a lead-in to the next round of eCards.

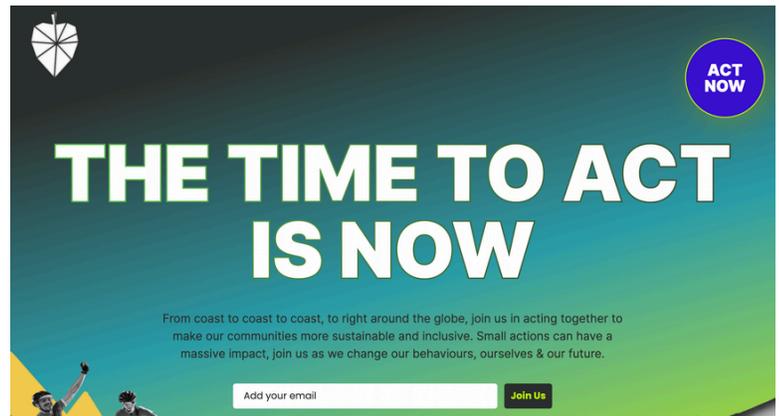
To strengthen the advocacy potential of the eCards platform, you may consider engaging your class in climate action with the [Commit2Act tool](#). This system helps your class understand and measure the climate impacts of their daily actions and encourages them to adopt greener behaviours while expanding their knowledge with environmental trivia.

Pairing the eCards advocacy messages from your students with measurable impacts from the cumulative actions of your class reinforces their calls to action and demonstrates that students are committed to implementing change in their lives.

There are six action categories in the Commit2Act system, representing actions with measurable CO₂ savings which students may be able to implement on their own or with the help of an adult:



If you decide to try Commit2Act, here is some information to get you started. Depending on how you prefer to have devices used in your classroom, you can set up Commit2Act in two different ways:



Classroom Accounts

If you'd prefer to add information cumulatively and have your entire class act as a single entity, you can use this link to join the eCards group

<https://app.commit2act.org/group-profile/Ecards/add/02d89eba-d807-4807-b049-3444b47967f7-729> . Using this method, you can create a single profile for your class,

then ask your students to self report which actions they have implemented and add them to the system in aggregate.

Student Accounts

If students are allowed to use their own devices, (or devices in groups) you can create a private Commit2Act group for your class via <https://app.commit2act.org/create-group/>. After setting this up you will have a link that can be shared with your class to enable them to join. We recommend setting group settings to "Private" and to set up a password that your students must have access to in order to join. We also recommend that your students do not use their actual names for their profiles and that they avoid uploading photos of their faces. After a student has submitted an action, you (as the group leader) will be able to approve it.

With both methods above, you will be able to track the cumulative CO₂ savings of your students actions, either through your class account, or through the groups page. These impact numbers will grow over time, as your students implement more actions and these numbers (and the experience of implementing the actions themselves) can be added to your e-cards text to strengthen your advocacy messages!

If you have any questions or would like additional support, please reach out to:

commit2act@takingitglobal.org