



Children of the Earth
INSPIRES AND UNITES YOUNG PEOPLE

Starting a COE Chapter

A Resource Kit for Chapters and Hubs

REFLECT · CONNECT · ACT

Children of the Earth inspires and unites young people, through personal and social transformation, to create a peaceful and sustainable world.

Compiled from Children of the Earth chapter materials
This edition refreshed 2026

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ABOUT THIS KIT

Children of the Earth inspires and unites young people, through personal and social transformation, to create a peaceful and sustainable world.

This kit is for the moment a group of young people decides to become a chapter. It gathers COE's founding texts and working agreements in one place: the Manifesto 2000 pledge, the guiding principles, the credo, the Children's Declaration of 1989, the six areas a chapter explores, the youth contract, and the council circle.

Nothing here needs to be adopted wholesale. Read it together, keep what serves your group, and make the rest your own — then tell us your ideas, and get ideas from Nina, at **childrenofthe.earth**.

CREDITS

Compiled by Children of the Earth from its chapter and youth-program materials. The Manifesto 2000 is the work of UNESCO, initiated by Nobel Peace Laureates. The council circle tradition was taught to COE by Rainbow Hawk and Wind Eagle.

This edition refreshed 2026: presentation, typography and structure updated; language lightly edited for clarity and the council diagram redrawn. Copying is permitted with appropriate credit.

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PART ONE — ESTABLISH A COE CHAPTER

Tell us your ideas — and get ideas from Nina — about how to start a group, how to orient it, and what specific projects might serve your local community. It is in the sharing of the consciousness of “WE ARE ONE” that Children of the Earth can be most helpful: by uniting the world-wide passion and activism for peace, and uniting the human urge to care for others and help those in need, especially young children — while emphasizing that for peace to be actualized and sustained, personal inner peace must be maintained individually.

A chapter is a group of young people who take this on together. This kit gathers the founding texts, agreements and practices that COE chapters around the world have used to form themselves: the pledge, the principles, the credo, the declaration, the areas of learning, the youth contract, and the council.

PART TWO — HELP ESTABLISH A CULTURE OF PEACE

Chapters begin by joining a larger movement. The pledge below is the UNESCO **Manifesto 2000** for a culture of peace and non-violence, initiated by a group of Nobel Peace Laureates and signed by millions of people worldwide. Its language belongs to its moment — the turn of the millennium — and its commitments belong to every moment since.

Because the Year 2000 must be a new beginning, an opportunity to transform — all together — the culture of war and violence into a culture of peace and non-violence;

Because this transformation demands the participation of each and every one of us, and must offer young people and future generations the values that can inspire them to shape a world based on justice, solidarity, liberty, dignity, harmony and prosperity for all;

Because the culture of peace can underpin sustainable development, environmental protection and the well-being of each person;

Because I am aware of my share of responsibility for the future of humanity, in particular to the children of today and tomorrow —

I pledge, in my daily life, in my family, my work, my community, my region, my country, to:

Respect all life. Respect the life and dignity of each human being without discrimination or prejudice.

Reject violence. Practice active non-violence, rejecting violence in all its forms — physical, sexual, psychological, economical and social — in particular towards the most deprived and vulnerable, such as children and adolescents.

Share with others. Share my time and material resources in a spirit of generosity, to put an end to exclusion, injustice, and political and economic oppression.

Listen to understand. Defend freedom of expression and cultural diversity, giving preference always to dialogue and listening, without engaging in fanaticism, defamation and the rejection of others.

Preserve the planet. Promote consumer behavior that is responsible, and development practices that respect all forms of life and preserve the balance of nature on the planet.

Rediscover solidarity. Contribute to the development of my community, with the full participation of women and respect for democratic principles, in order to create together new forms of solidarity.

THE SHIFT A CHAPTER WORKS FOR

Culture of war and violence

Belief in power that is based on force

Having an enemy

Authoritarian governance

Secrecy and propaganda

Armament

Exploitation of people

Exploitation of nature

Male domination

Culture of peace and non-violence

Education for a culture of peace

Tolerance, solidarity and international understanding

Democratic participation

Free flow of information

Disarmament

Human rights

Sustainable development

Equality of women and men

PART THREE — GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF A CHAPTER

A chapter chooses, together, to live from a different set of values. The movement is always in the same direction:

Competition → Collaboration

Materialism → Non-attachment and Nature

Violence → Compassion

Separation → Wholeness

Dualism → Unity

Conflict → Peace

Nationalism → Global Understanding

Reason or Logic → Imagination

Knowledge → Wisdom from Within

Domination → Empowerment

Cultural → Multicultural

HOW WE ARE WITH EACH OTHER

- Demonstrate gentleness, dignity and respect
- Communicate with frankness, honesty and clarity; avoid blame and pettiness
- Keep agreements
- Assume good intentions
- Listen and be receptive regardless of age, sex or cultural differences
- Avoid taking things personally
- Take risks; learn from what doesn't work
- Take ownership for outcomes
- Attack problems, not people; seek solutions
- Use discernment rather than judgment
- Trust the process, even if you don't always agree with the decisions

HOW WE ACT IN THE WORLD

- Come from love versus fear
- Seek unity versus separation in action
- Use harmlessness in words
- Use intuition rather than mind alone
- Understand the whole is greater than the parts
- Act in a spirit of cooperative integration
- Discover leaderless leadership

- Seek lateral empowerment versus linear hierarchy
- Go to selflessness, not ego
- Accept that diversity weaves the tapestry of beauty

PART FOUR — OUR CREDO: LIVING SPIRITUALITY

Love — for the form, voice, thoughts and spirit of each person.

Respect — for differences, and understanding of alternate positions.

Honesty — of our feelings, thoughts and behaviors; to be transparent, without a hidden agenda of ego or control.

Courage — to take a stand for the highest order of values and spirit.

Humility — to reflect inner peace, and to know who guides us and where the real power comes from.

Wisdom — to see it in all traditions, and to be a seeker.

Truth — to walk knowing we are heard by the Spirits, the ancestors and the Great Mystery in all we do.

PART FIVE — THE CHILDREN'S DECLARATION, 1989

The year before Children of the Earth was founded, young people gathered and set down the declaration below. It remains the seed of everything a chapter does.

In the name of love, unity and harmony, we, the children of the world, declare that now is the time for peace. As creators of a better tomorrow, we envision social and environmental equilibrium, individual and international co-operation and the fulfillment of human potential as global goals.

To achieve equilibrium, education must be available to all. This education should not only include academic, but also personal, moral and spiritual development. With this education, we can increase our awareness of global problems and develop our ability to solve them. The freedom accorded to all people through education shall be accompanied by the responsibility that will serve to bridge the gaps between economic, religious, material, political and cultural extremes. As part of the earth's living system, our harmonious co-existence with nature is essential for the sustainability of humanity.

We pledge our support to the United Nations. However, we also stress the need for a more equitable distribution of power to all countries to encourage the evolution of peace. We desire self-determination for all people and hope that the emerging leaders guide rather than govern.

We, the children, as one of the world's greatest untapped resources, accept the responsibility to further the love, unity and harmony which exist in peace.

PART SIX — WHAT A CHAPTER EXPLORES

Chapter life weaves together six areas of learning. They come from the curriculum of COE's youth leadership programs, and every chapter can take them at its own depth and pace.

WORLD ISSUES

The rights and needs of children, as reflected through documents such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and indexes formulated by the UNDP. The role of women in society, the inequalities that still exist, and potential solutions such as micro-enterprise projects, studied from the Beijing Conference on Women and other sources. The environmental crisis — locally specific issues as well as eco-system issues such as sustaining bio-diversity, combating deforestation, protecting the atmosphere and managing hazardous waste. And the study of poverty and hunger within developing countries and their implications for work and for social and democratic processes.

CULTURE

The study of cultures moves young people from a uni-cultured, self-oriented perspective to a multi-cultural appreciation of diversity. Chapter members address historical and present-day customs, dress and religious beliefs, and share information about their own communities and issues.

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Opportunities and skill-building in oration, lobbying, press work, development of projects, self-esteem, community building, conflict resolution, personal empowerment, and the evolution of ethics for acceptance of cultural diversity and global harmony.

FINANCIAL SKILLS

In recognition of the relevance of finance within the world community: the structure of economies, the socially responsible use of money, and strategies for obtaining funds for community projects — together with character development for self-responsibility and self-sustainability.

ETHICS

An examination of moral development and ethics helps young people make their own clear decisions on social and political issues. The new science and spirituality, which puts forward a vision of the interconnectedness of all life, is a focus of this examination.

SERVICE

A focus on service — to self, to community and to universal values — underlies everything a chapter does. Each member initiates or continues a project that embodies the values of new leadership in their home community, and stays linked to other young leaders around the world through COE's network, sharing progress, problems and solutions.

PART SEVEN — THE YOUTH CONTRACT

At COE gatherings, young people have written their own contract for how to be together. A chapter can adopt it, adapt it, or write its own — the point is that the group's agreements belong to the group.

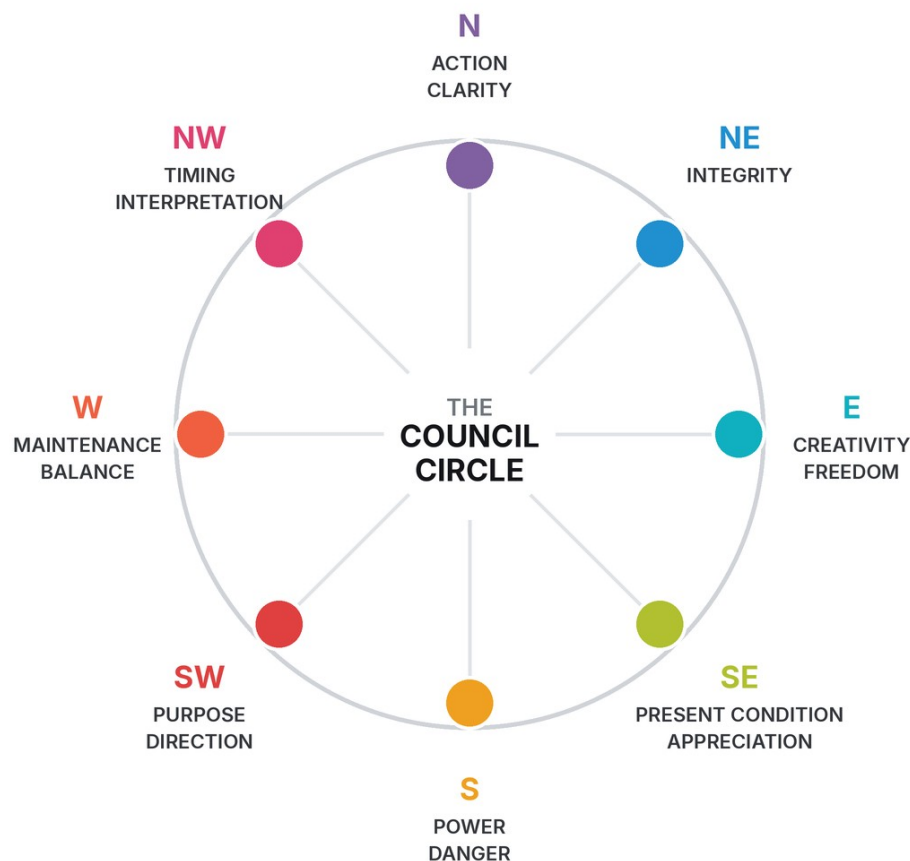
Be constructive	Be willing	Step outside your comfort zone
Be focused and precise	Stay grounded	Be passionate
Be flexible	Be kind — have manners	Be concise
Respect who holds the floor	Leave ego and personal agenda	Be punctual
Listen	No side talk	Clean up after use
Take care of yourself	Be loving	Keep daily rituals
Walk the talk	Solidarity	Be culturally sensitive
Make an effort	Don't leave things hanging	Stay conscious of the group
Be present 100%	Energize yourself	Call on spirit
No judging	Be participatory	Commune with nature
Create the space	Keep it safe, harmonious, inclusive	Respect linguistic barriers
Be inclusive	Respect confidentiality	

PART EIGHT — COUNCIL AND THE WISDOM COUNCIL

For its deepest decisions, a chapter can meet in **council**, following the North American indigenous tradition as taught to Children of the Earth by Rainbow Hawk and Wind Eagle. In council, each member holds a seat and a perspective; the circle listens its way to a solution rather than arguing its way there.

THE EIGHT SEATS

Each seat of the council circle carries a direction and a way of seeing:



The eight positions of the council circle and the perspective each one holds.

THE WISDOM COUNCIL

A wisdom council is called when it is important to gather all the voices to seek a wisdom solution to an issue the group is facing. Each member holds a position on the council and represents a perspective — east, southeast, south, southwest, and so on around the circle. When the wisdom council is in session, each person represents the best solution for the whole, rather than a personal perspective. The recommendations made by the representatives are given to the council for consideration and possible action; they may call for more study or deeper investigation before agreement can be reached.

Note that the wisdom council is not a decision-making body: it gathers wisdom and offers recommendations, and decisions follow from what it surfaces.

THE VALUE OF THE WISDOM COUNCIL

- It calls for a higher consciousness in finding solutions that benefit the whole village.
- It allows time and space for personal perspectives to be heard prior to the council.
- It allows time and space for deep consideration and deep listening, for the purpose of sourcing wisdom.
- It gives the opportunity for all perspectives to be heard.

For the everyday running of a chapter — agendas, budgets, roles, projects — see the companion volume *Governing Together: A Sociocracy Primer for COE Chapters and Hubs*. Council and consent are not rivals: council is how a chapter listens at depth; consent is how it decides at pace.