

Earth Leadership Cohort VI

Fall 2025

The Earth Leadership Cohort (ELC) is designed to support adults in their twenties and early thirties in their leadership in this time of great social and ecological challenge, complexity and crisis. The world needs each of our gifts and strengths and these times call for some important leadership capacities including being able to face the truth of what is happening, the willingness to feel, the ability to support others in their emotions, and the capacity to act boldly for justice and healing on many scales.

Five Earth Leadership Cohorts took place between 2014 and 2019. The ELC facilitation team did not offer any cohorts during the height of the Covid 19 pandemic and then took several years off for parental leave. We are delighted to now be gathering a sixth Earth Leadership Cohort in fall 2025!



The first Earth Leadership Cohort, 2014
At Rowe Conference Center



ELC II with Joanna Macy, 2015
At Rowe Conference Center



ELC III at Starseed Sanctuary, 2016
Savoy, MA



ELC IV at Starseed Sanctuary, 2017
Savoy, MA

ELC VI is a cumulative experience that grows over time and combines a series of two in-person long weekends and a third and final session online. ELC aims to provide restoration, rejuvenation and resourcing through connection with caring humans and the outdoors. Introducing a variety of theories and experiential practices from the Work That Reconnects and beyond, ELC supports cohort members to bring and adapt this work in the communities they are part of.

Program Elements

~ Immersive experience in The Work That Reconnects and complementary modalities

While the Earth Leadership Cohort draws on a number of bodies of work, the principal modality is the [Work That Reconnects](#) (WTR). It is known worldwide for helping to renew and empower activists and changemakers in social and ecological justice. Developed by Joanna Macy and colleagues, this dynamic, interactive body of work has inspired many thousands of people worldwide to engage wholeheartedly in a transition, a “Great Turning” as Joanna calls it, to a life-sustaining society. One of the main reasons Joanna says she created this work was so that as things fall apart, people would turn *towards* each other, rather than *on* one another.

The WTR offers explicit support for building strength and resilience for these times we are living in. Originally called Despair and Empowerment Work, the WTR invites us to reconnect with a broad range of feelings in response to what is happening in our world—grief, anger, outrage, fear, numbness, overwhelm, gratitude, inspiration—in the supportive company of others.

The Work That Reconnects has historically drawn on three main wells—deep ecology, systems thinking, and engaged Buddhism. Its approaches invite a way of seeing the world as our larger living body, freeing us from the assumptions and attitudes that now threaten all life on Earth.

This Work always follows a spiral, beginning with grounding ourselves in gratitude for the gifts and miracles of life itself. From this resourced place, we turn together to face and acknowledge the pains of this world. There are so few places in dominant society where we can honestly bring the depths of our grief, our outrage, and our terror at what is happening on and to this beloved planet and to each other as humans including ourselves. Being honest and authentic with our heartache for this world often opens us to our interconnectedness, to fresh insights, and to ways of seeing and being in the world that help us discover our unique contributions.

In addition to providing a foundational introduction to the Work That Reconnects, the ELC facilitation team weaves in other complementary disciplines and modalities including: ecopsychology, trauma theory, neuroscience, transformative justice, contemplative and council practices, music, structured and unstructured time in nature, and the importance of play!

~ Commitment to collective liberation and undoing oppression:

The 2025 Earth Leadership Cohort facilitation team is committed to further developing and integrating more robust trauma-informed and anti-oppression approaches to group work. One of the ELC facilitators (Aravinda) is an author/editor of the forthcoming book, *Coming Together in the Great Turning: Collective Liberation and Work That Reconnects*, which offers guidance on collective liberation approaches to facilitation.

We will invite all cohort members to lean into the work of undoing oppression in our time together, recognizing that *how* we are together is an important part of *what* we do.

~ Intentional community:

The experience of community among cohort members has been a deeply important element for previous cohort members and the connections cohort members form among themselves, with the facilitation team, and with over 50 ELC alumni from previous cohorts have been an enduring support for many participants.

Program dates and details

It is essential for group cohesion that cohort members attend all meetings in their entirety. Program dates and times include:

1. **October 17-19** The cohort first convenes in-person on October 17th from 2-9pm for an orientation to the ELC program. On Saturday and Sunday, the cohort will join a larger intergenerational Work That Reconnects workshop facilitated by Lydia Violet Harutoonian of [School for the Great Turning](#). During this time the group will be guided through a full spiral of the Work That Reconnects. This in-person workshop will take place in the greater Boston area. *Please note: in an effort to keep program costs down, this workshop does not include lodging. If you need lodging for this time, it can be added as a program add-on.*
2. **October 31-November 3** The next convening of the cohort will be for an in-person retreat just for ELC VI, taking place at Woolman Hill in rural western Massachusetts. This capstone retreat will cover main elements of the ELC core curriculum and provide an important opportunity to continue cultivating some of the capacities needed in today's leaders and integrate ELC perspectives and approaches into personal and professional dreams.
3. **November 16** 3-5pm ET (Virtual on Zoom) The cohort will convene for a third time online for further integration and application of cohort learnings in our "going forth" into the world.

As a community, cohort members decide how they would like to keep in touch and support one another in realizing their short-term goals and long-term visions. Alumni from the first five cohorts have organized several reunions and co-facilitated a number of Work That Reconnects workshops for the public. They have also formed an "Earth Leadership Community" and welcome future ELC alumni to join.

What some alumni are saying about the program

"The Earth Leadership Cohort was a totally transformational experience for me. On the first weekend, I arrived burnt out from climate change organizing, barely able to hold myself together emotionally. After the first weekend, I already felt a little bit lighter, a little bit more able to deal with the deep pain I had been feeling for myself and the state of the world. By the end of the third weekend, I was fully recovered and newly excited and refreshed to not only continue my work, but to incorporate the Work that Reconnects into the future of whatever I do. If you are an activist, organizer, or anyone who feels pain for being in the world that we live in, I cannot recommend this program enough. You will leave not only feeling more able to emotionally and practically step into a place of peace while creating change, but you will also have an incredible new community of fellow change makers." – Sophie, ELC I

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"After 6 years of work as an environmental educator, the Work That Reconnects gave me a transformative and deeply needed shift. It helped me understand myself not as a single individual fighting a win/lose battle, but as an aspect of Life's natural inclination to heal itself."

The ELC facilitators are wise, skillful, loving, and humble. The fellow participants are inspirational. What happens when we connect with others over our shared love of life on this planet is nothing short of magical. We've created a space where we can breathe, dance, cry, give thanks, rage, sing, and gaze in wonder. The community we formed in ELC is still going strong, and growing, long after the program itself ended. We are in this for the long haul, and the Work That Reconnects is a key piece of what can sustain us along the way.” – Daniel, ELC II

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"Earth Leadership Cohort gave me a spiritual, communal, and practical foundation for weaving profound transformation into my organizing work. There is great empowerment in naming and claiming the full range of emotions we feel around the state of the world. Start here." – Adin, ELC III

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“Through ELC 4, I gained the most supportive community and friends, and a better understanding of how I can show up with intention and presence. I also learned how to facilitate that when building community, as well as a more nuanced approach to change. This has had a profound impact both in my everyday life and the activist movements I’ve been part of.” – Annabelle, ELC IV

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“During our cohort sessions we learned, lost, hurt, and healed. Not one of us left the ELC V space the same as we entered it... Throughout our time with the Work That Reconnects and the Spiral, there was acknowledgment that there was a lot of work to be done. We confronted questions about the world, ourselves, and ourselves as part of this world. There were thanks given for the community we created and the ability of that community’s container to hold so much... We felt connection and community, and we also felt a lot of pain... Transformation and growth are encouraged and nurtured by learning in safe spaces, with communities that accept us and ask us to grow our understanding.” – Excerpts from [Reflections from ELC V](#) compiled by Erin, Rachel, Emma and Mary

About the ELC VI facilitation team

The ELC core co-facilitation team has been working together since the development of the first Earth Leadership Cohort in 2014, the brainchild of former ELC facilitator, Kirstin Edelglass. Each facilitator brings a rich background of related experience and abundant ideas for keeping the work fresh for each unique group.



Aravinda Ananda (she or they) is a social ecologist whose life’s work is to support a *Living rEvolution* - a global movement of healing and transforming human relationships with life on Earth to be mutually enhancing. She has been facilitating the Work That Reconnects for 14 years and is one of the principal author/editors of the forthcoming book *Coming Together in the Great Turning: Collective Liberation and Work That Reconnects* which offers guidance on collective liberation approaches to Work That Reconnects facilitation. Aravinda has been a part of many WTR co-facilitation teams and has been a lead convenor of the Anti-Oppression Resource Group, a peer support space for WTR facilitators to deepen their collective liberation practice. She lives on Massachusetts land just outside of present day Boston with her partner and two-year-old child, and feels honored to support transformational group work and each day increasingly live the rEvolution in her own life and support others to be the medicine needed in this planet time.

Markie Babbott (she/her) is a psychologist in Northampton, MA whose theory and practice continue to evolve; she integrates psychodynamic, feminist, and queer theory as well as neuroscience and trauma-informed approaches. Following her interests in mindfulness, creativity, Buddhism, and nature-based ritual, she pursued a master's degree in Ecopsychology from Naropa University through the Transpersonal Psychology Department (2011). She has been fortunate to study with Joanna Macy many times since 2007 and is grateful to have been a part of the ELC I, II, III, IV and V. A published poet, she has volunteered with the Connecticut Watershed branch of River of Words, a place-based educational approach that integrates poetry and visual art for K-12 students. With Aravinda, she wrote a chapter about ELC that is included in: *Climate Change & Youth Mental Health: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, (Eds. Haase & Hudson, 2024, Cambridge University Press). In addition to spending time with her two adult children and fabulous canines, she loves tending her plot in the local community garden and hiking up mountains.



Photo credit: Idellolio



Joseph Rotella is a musician, small business owner, activist, and lover of life. As a small business owner he has used this position in society to advocate for a better world. He has been vocal on various social justice and environmental issues and has had letters to the editor published, spoken on the radio, and testified at the MA state house. He has studied with Joanna Macy numerous times, is a member of the Interhelp Council and has been facilitating the Work that Reconnects since 2011. In recent years, he has delved into the study of how power, privilege and oppression show up in many systems of society, even well-intentioned progressive ones. He lives in Watertown, MA with his partner and child. When not parenting or running a business, he enjoys being in nature and listening to the world around him.

ELC Assistants are members of a previous cohort who join the facilitation team in a special bridging and support role. We are beyond delighted and honored to have Emma Schoenberg as our ELC VI assistant facilitator! Emma was a member of ELC V and brings considerable experience with climate activism and sacred activism.



Emma Schoenberg is an organizer and artist with The Magpie Project, a lived experiment in “meaning-making,” an experimental art and organizing initiative rooted in meeting needs, building movements, and cultivating cultural resilience through mutual aid, artistic experimentation, and campaigns of resistance and social change. In practice, the Magpie Project offers trainings, coaching, workshops, and material support.

Previously, her work has touched on anti-oppression education, food and housing justice, community organizing, electoral campaigning and policy making as well as direct action and

civil disobedience When not organizing, she can most likely be found in the woods, or making art from foraged items.

Becoming a Member of the Earth Leadership Cohort

Application process:

People ages 21 to 34, interested in participating in this three-part program are encouraged to **complete and submit an application by June 30, 2025**. (Applications received after June 30th will be considered if there are still spaces available in the fifteen-member cohort.) Click [here](#) to apply.

After reviewing your application, we may request a phone interview as an opportunity for us to get to know you better and for you to learn more about the program.



If you apply by June 30th, you can expect to receive an email from us by July 31st letting you know if we are able to welcome you into this cohort and if requested, the amount of financial assistance we are able to offer.

Program dates, times and locations:

The learning community grows stronger and more effective over the course of the meetings. For this reason, **participants are asked to commit to attending the entirety of all three meetings:**

- October 17-19: In-person in the greater Boston area - 2pm start time on Friday October 17, 6pm end time on Sunday October 19
- October 31 - November 3: In-person in Deerfield, MA - 3:30 arrival time on Friday October 31, and 2pm departure time on Monday November 3
- November 16 - On-line 3-5pm ET

If there is an interest in further peer support, the cohort may choose to continue meeting after the formal program has ended and also join the alumni network of the Earth Leadership Community.

Financial contribution:

The program cost for ELC VI is \$1200. This includes meals *but not lodging* for the October 17-19 in-person program in the greater Boston area; lodging and meals for the October 31-November 2 in-person retreat in Deerfield; and all program instruction and materials. A \$200 deposit is due by August 15, and the remainder of the program fee is due September 15.

Financial assistance:

A central commitment of the program is that finances are not a barrier to participation for anyone whose application is accepted. All participants are asked to pay a minimum of \$300 towards their cohort program fee, and a fundraising effort is underway to provide financial assistance for any portion of the remaining program fee for which assistance is needed.

Financial assistance fund:

Please share the [ELC VI Financial Assistance Fund](#) with anyone who may like to make a contribution to it. Donations are tax deductible through our fiscal sponsor, Interhelp Network.

Transportation:

Participants are responsible for arranging their own transportation to the locations where the in-person components of the program are held. Opportunities to self-organize ride sharing among cohort members will be available.

Accommodations and meals:

Accommodations for October 17-19 are not included in the base program cost (but there will be an opportunity to let us know if you need assistance with lodging). Accommodations for the capstone retreat (October 31-November 3) are included and are shared dorm rooms.

Vegetarian meals are provided during in-person program times and an effort is made to accommodate special dietary needs.

Accessibility: The indoor facilities used for this program are wheelchair accessible. Please email us at interhelpnetwork@gmail.com with any other questions about accessibility.

Questions: Please send questions via email to interhelpnetwork@gmail.com