

Climate Action Office & The Consensus Building Institute

Community Feedback on Climate Change

A Summary of Diverse Perspectives

April 2024





Goals of Engagement

1. **Provide community members with information** about climate change in Vermont.
2. **Elevate views and experiences** that can influence climate action planning and implementation.
3. **Begin to build relationships** with communities that have been largely disconnected from conversations around climate action.

Six Focus Groups

1/31 Chittenden County Regional
Planning Commission's Equity
Advisory Committee & guests

2/17 Arabic

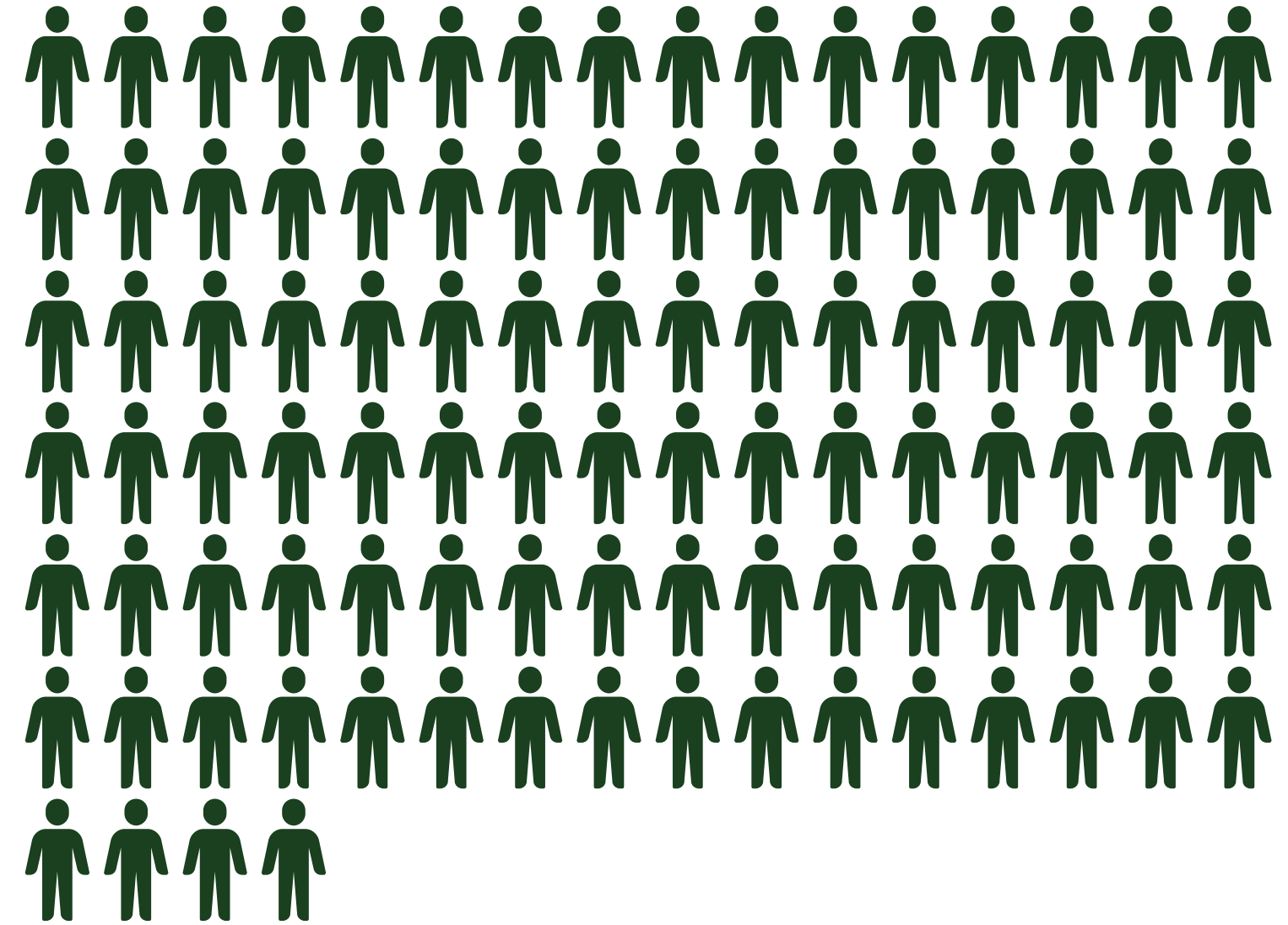
2/22 Spanish

2/24 Nepali

2/24 French

3/16 Somali-Bantu

125 Participants



Information Provided

What is the Climate Action Office?

Climate action work is happening across Vermont.

- The Climate Action Office **leads, coordinates, and tracks** climate action across state government.
- This supports the goals and requirements of the Global Warming Solutions Act.



What does the Climate Action Office do?

Provide expertise and capacity on state-led climate initiatives.

Track and assess climate actions and communicate those findings.

Provide transparent, reliable information to Vermonters.

Host meaningful conversations between Vermonters and government.

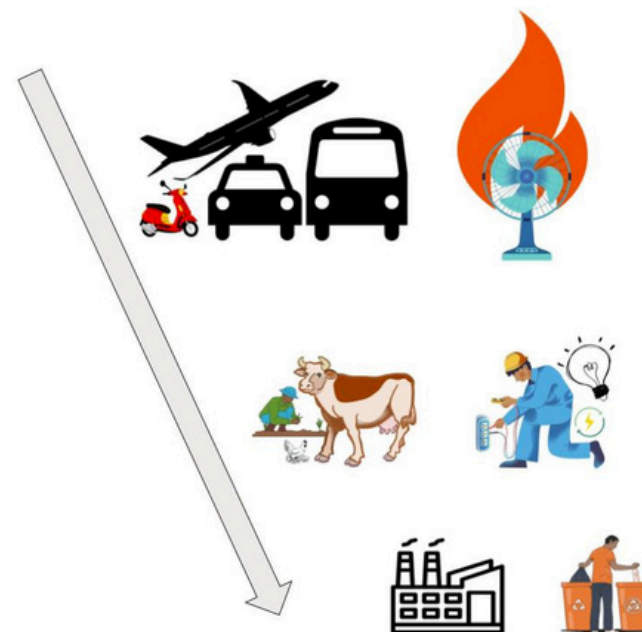


Climate change is affecting Vermont...

- More rainfall
- More droughts
- More flooding
- Wildfire smoke
- Warmer winters, hotter summers
- More ticks and tick-borne illnesses

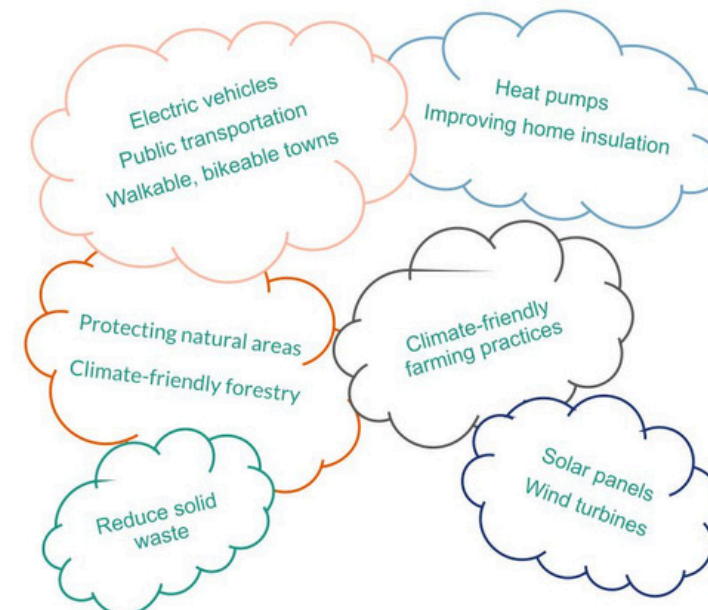


What contributes to climate change in Vermont?



SOLUTIONS

Reduce climate pollution



SOLUTIONS

Preparing for the harmful effects of climate change

- Improve stormwater management
- Improve drainage and irrigation on farms
- Property buy-outs in floodplains; build new housing outside of floodplains
- Protect and restore wetlands
- Make public health information accessible
- Electricity systems that can rebound quickly after storms
- Building community!

Questions Asked

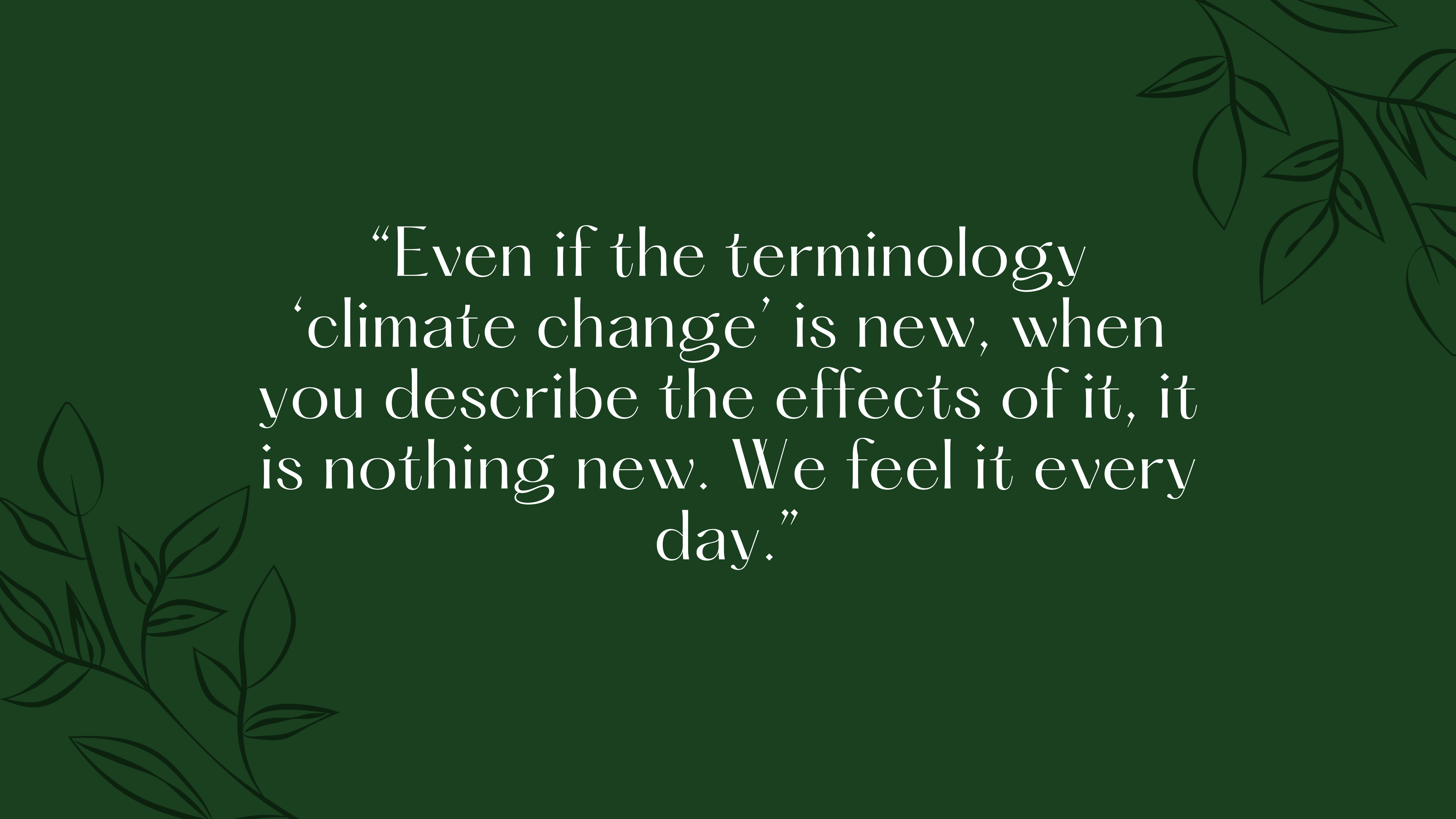
1. What's on your mind when it comes to climate change?
 2. How are you experiencing the impacts of climate change?
 3. What do you perceive as the major causes of climate change that should be addressed?
 4. What solutions are most important to you?
 5. What should the State be thinking about when it implements solutions?
 6. What kind of engagement and communications from the State do you want to see going forward?
- Initial feedback on specific issues
 - **Resilience and Adaptation**
 - **Transportation**
 - **Heating & Weatherization**
 - **Renewable Energy**



01. Perceptions of Climate Change

- Recognition of climate change as a **human-caused** phenomenon (awareness of link between gas emissions and climate change)
- **Some confusion and uncertainty** around causes despite noticing the changes.
- **Variations in weather patterns**, more extreme conditions.
- Concerns over **hotter summers, colder winters, and increased precipitation**.
- **Financial burdens** due to climate-related changes (higher costs of living).
- **Fear and anxiety** about future impacts on community (especially youth) and environment.





“Even if the terminology
‘climate change’ is new, when
you describe the effects of it, it
is nothing new. We feel it every
day.”

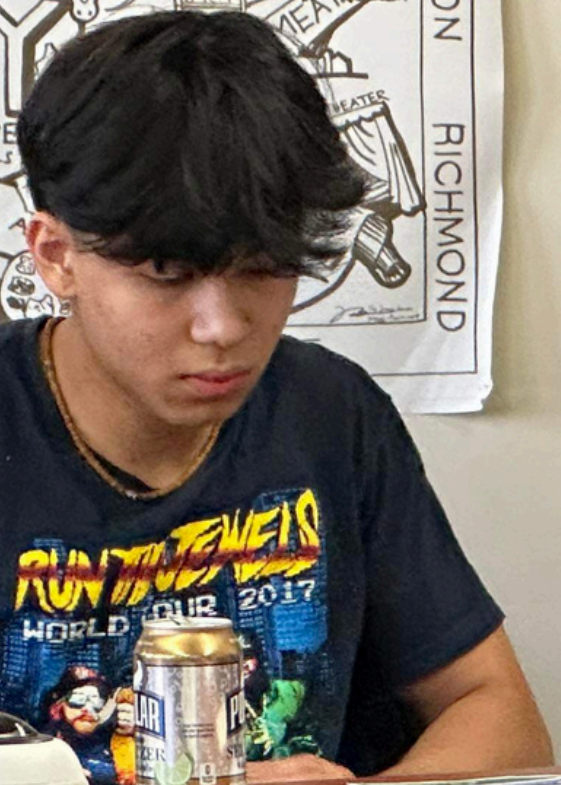
02. Impacts of Climate Change

- **Environmental degradation:** Loss of biodiversity, air and water pollution, soil erosion, food insecurity.
- **Increased frequency of natural disasters** (floods, droughts, wildfires): Causing death, habitat damage, increased expenses.
- **Shifts in seasons:** Impacting farming practices
- **Health challenges:** Rise in sickness, mental health challenges, insect-borne diseases.
- **Economic and social impacts:** Inflation in food and heating costs, housing affordability crisis, limited outdoor recreation, stress over future livelihoods (“a sense of worry and fear”)
- **Unjust impacts:** The impacts are not felt evenly across society.



The image features a dark green background with decorative white line-art illustrations of leaves and branches in the corners. The top-right corner shows a branch with several leaves extending towards the center. The bottom-left corner shows a similar branch with leaves extending towards the center. The main text is centered in the upper half of the image.

“Low income people are the ones suffering from the effects of climate change and **we need more support!**”



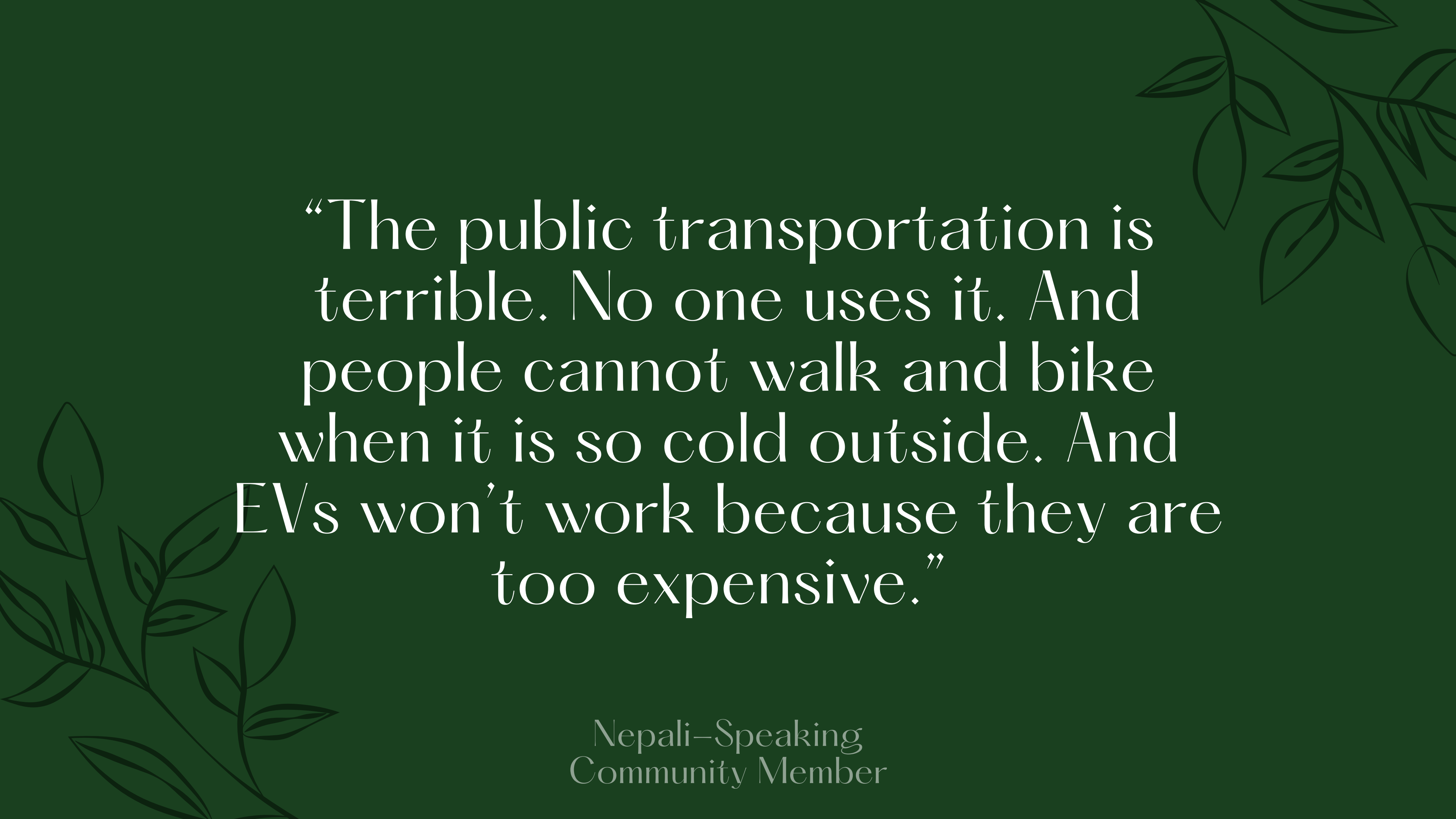
03. Causes of Climate Change

- **Human activities** such as industry, transportation (reliance on cars), and agriculture (chemical fertilizers), military industrial complex.
- **Reliance on fossil fuels** and chemicals.
- **Deforestation** and loss of natural habitats affecting carbon sequestration.
- **Economic system** that relies on consumption and drives for profit.
- **Consumer lifestyles**, lavish consumption, frequent air travel by the wealthy.
- **Waste management**: excessive litter, pollution, and waste.
- **Imbalance with nature**: disconnect between policy makers and effective climate action.

04. Suggested Solutions

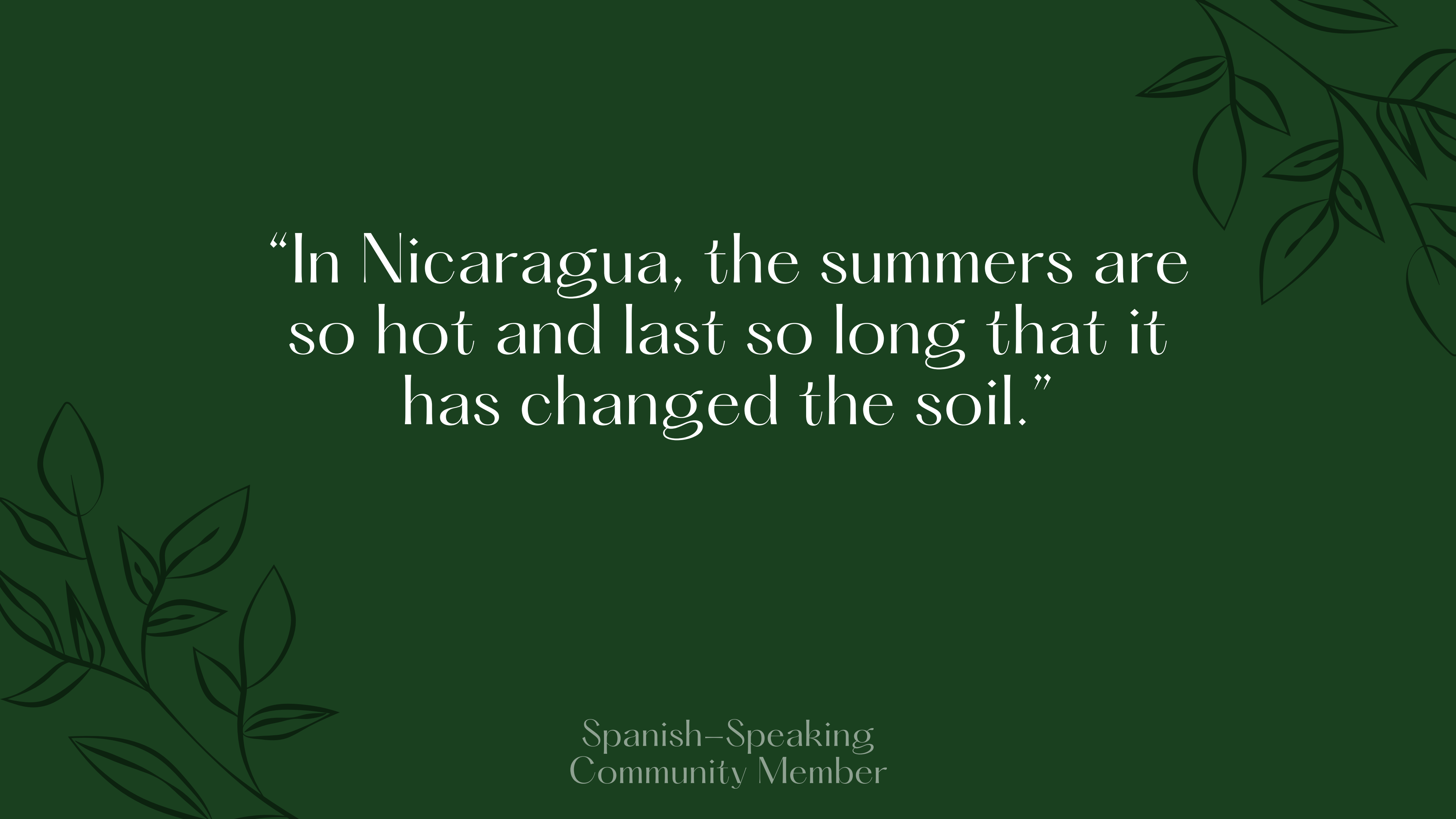
- **Transportation Improvements:** Carpooling; bike/walk paths; more robust public transit; reducing individual car use; focus on public transportation instead of EVs.
- **Energy Transition:** Shift from gas to electricity; install solar panels on buildings; government support for solar and heat pumps.
- **Agriculture and Food Practices:** Community gardening; mandating the use of organic materials/regulating chemical fertilizers; make eating locally more accessible.
- **Waste Reduction:** Better recycling services; free composting services; reduce plastic packaging.
- **Reforestation:** Plant more trees and protect existing forests.
- **Technology and Innovation:** Develop machines to remove pollution from the air.
- **Community and Government Initiatives:** Weatherize homes; incentivize energy efficiency; enhance public transit and infrastructure for walking and biking.
- **More flexible funding** to support community organizations in meeting people's basic needs.



The image features a dark green background with decorative leaf patterns in the corners. The main text is a quote in white serif font, centered on the page. The quote reads: "The public transportation is terrible. No one uses it. And people cannot walk and bike when it is so cold outside. And EVs won't work because they are too expensive."

“The public transportation is terrible. No one uses it. And people cannot walk and bike when it is so cold outside. And EVs won't work because they are too expensive.”

Nepali-Speaking
Community Member

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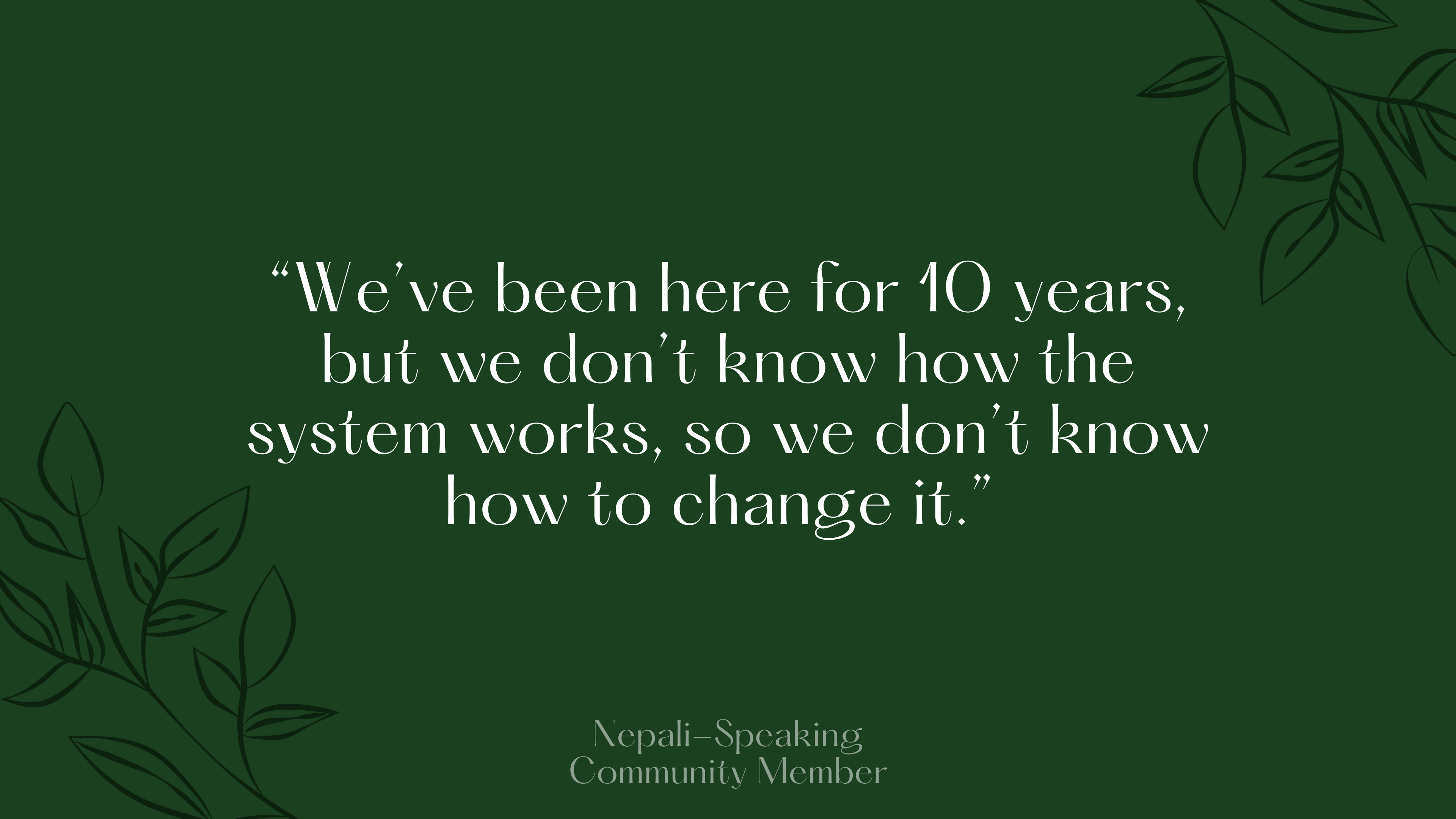
“In Nicaragua, the summers are so hot and last so long that it has changed the soil.”

Spanish–Speaking
Community Member

05. Concerns & Considerations

- **Affordability and Accessibility:** Must ensure solutions are affordable and accessible for ALL income levels, with a focus on renters who do not benefit from homeowner-focused initiatives.
- **Practicality and Inclusivity:** Skepticism around EVs as a solution, concerns over practicality in the winter.
- **Economic and Social Impact:** Balancing the need for jobs with environmental impacts of industry; addressing disproportionate impact on over-burdened communities.
- **Cultural and Behavioral Changes:** Need for cultural shift towards sustainability, reducing consumption and changing daily routines.
- **Policy and Systemic Changes:** Need strong leadership at all levels to legally mandate change.
- **Education and Engagement:** Enhance public awareness and education, targeting youth and communities with limited access to information.



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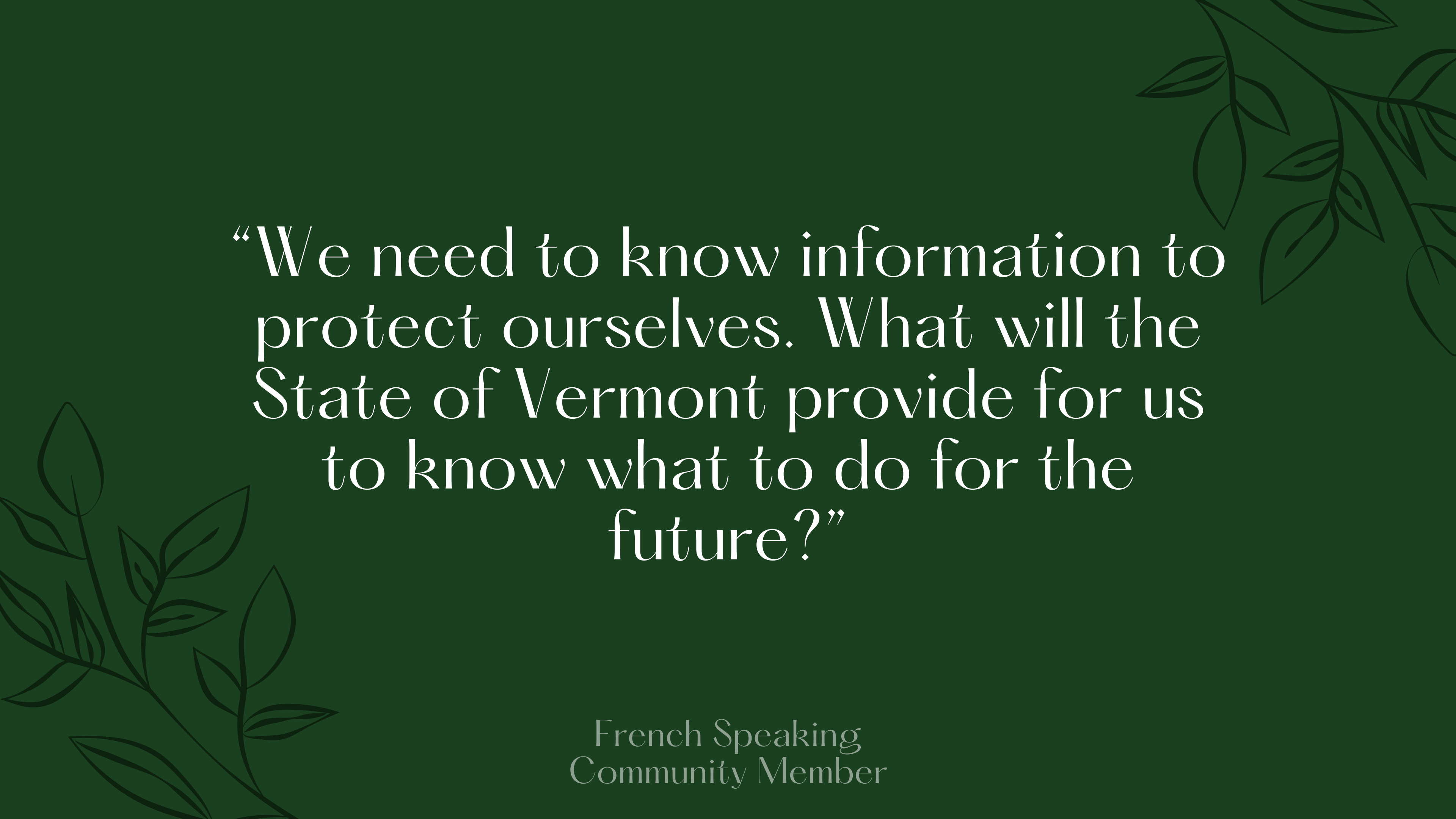
*“We’ve been here for 10 years,
but we don’t know how the
system works, so we don’t know
how to change it.”*

Nepali-Speaking
Community Member

06. Effective Community Engagement

- **Direct involvement** of communities in climate action planning.
- **Concrete follow-ups and visible outcomes.**
- **Diverse methods of communication:** social media, WhatsApp, phone alerts, community networks and leaders, organizations (AALV), word of mouth, door-to-door outreach, flyers in multiple languages, social media, direct outreach, state alert systems.
- **Multilingual information** and resources.
- **Communicate in simple language** that is relatable.
- **Consistent and frequent updates** (maintain regular relationships and communication)



The background is a dark green color with decorative leaf patterns in the corners. The leaves are dark green and have a simple, stylized outline. The main text is centered and reads:

“We need to know information to protect ourselves. What will the State of Vermont provide for us to know what to do for the future?”

French Speaking
Community Member

07. A Call to Action

“Our culture needs to change, and the way we live *now* needs to change.”

“You have lots of feedback. Start acting! We need action now that comes from the top and addresses root causes, not symptoms!”

“No backroom decisions anymore. We all work together!”

- Be accountable
- Help communities prepare, not just address impacts. Preparing should not be cost prohibitive.

