

TeachingEnglish

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# Teaching English Through Indigenous Climate Knowledge

**Christopher Liberty**

Saturday 5 July 2025



# Pre-webinar polls in Telegram group: A new teacher of English in your school wants to integrate African indigenous climate wisdom into their lessons.

What benefits could that approach have on the learners?

- Learners develop a deeper cultural understanding. 56%
- Learners gain unique perspectives on climate issues. 33%
- Learners improve critical thinking and problem-solving skills. 33%
- Learners feel more connected to their local community and environment. 33%
- Learners enhance their English language skills through relevant content. 33%

## What could go wrong in their class?



# About the speaker

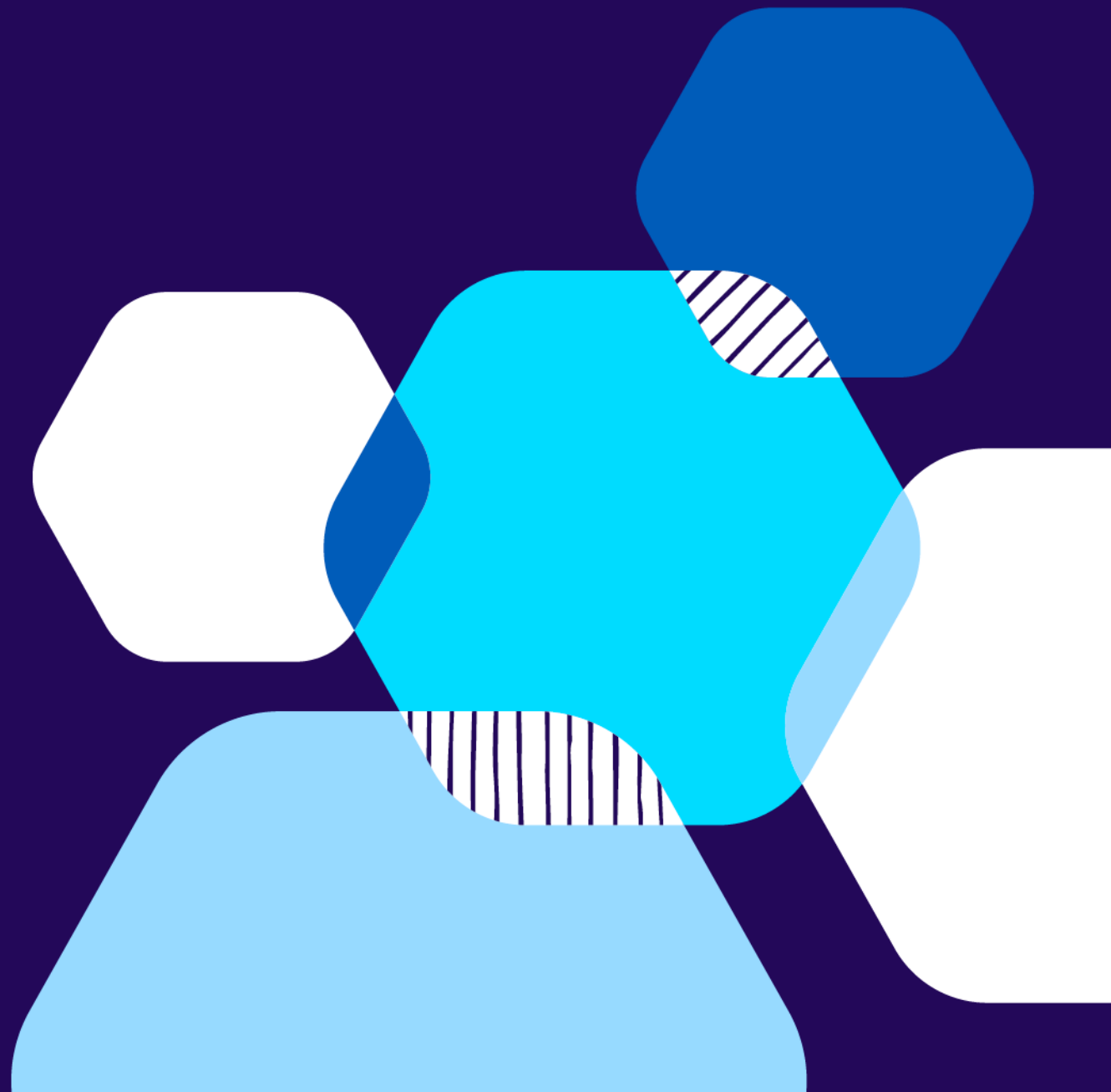
## Christopher Liberty

- MSc in Development Management from LSE
- Master of PPM- Kabale University
- Strong belief that Education more so ELT is a fantastic tool against CC
- Dedicated to promoting sustainability and environmental stewardship.
- Currently serving as a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer at UNELTA
- Core team for the British Council funded project that aims to ensure gender-just climate action through blogging



# Objectives

- To explore how indigenous climate knowledge from African communities can serve as authentic and relevant content for English language teaching.
- To equip teachers with practical strategies for using indigenous themes to develop learners' reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in culturally responsive ways.



# What is Indigenous Knowledge?

- Wisdom, skills, and practices developed by communities through generations of close interaction with their environment
- Passed down orally, embedded in cultural rituals
- Adapted for survival, conservation, and sustainability
- Not folklore

In the chat, put one example of folklore  
and of indigenous knowledge



Hunter gatherers in Nakuru; source -Hunter Gatherers Forum



## Warmer: Local knowledge exchange

What is one traditional practice from your community that helps people deal with changes in weather or the environment?



Hydro plant in Rwanda; source- Getty Images/iStockphoto/Robert\_Ford



**Flock of birds flying in silhouette;  
source-Freepik/Xzokzathai**

# Yoruba bird migration (Nigeria)



## Observing Birds

Bird movements predict seasonal shifts.



## Agricultural Planning

Used for farming and climate adaptation.



## Oral Tradition

Knowledge passed through stories and proverbs.





# Sacred forest preservation by the Ashanti (Ghana)

## Protected Sites

Forests serve as spiritual sites and biodiversity reserves.

## Community Rules

Folklore and rules preserve species and climate stability.

## Teachable Moments

Lessons can be taught through storytelling and role-plays.



# Batwa Biocultural Practices (Uganda)

## Integrated Conservation

Indigenous Batwa integrate conservation into daily life.

## Ecosystem Resilience

Traditional plant and animal use strengthens local ecosystems.

## Language & Stories

Indigenous language and narratives are central to sharing practices.



**Batwa pygmies in Uganda – source; Eco Adventures Safaris**





**The rain dance – CC: Seun,  
Lalasticala, Mynd44**

# Rainmaking Rituals in South Africa



## Weather Prediction

Rainmakers monitor signs for weather forecasts.



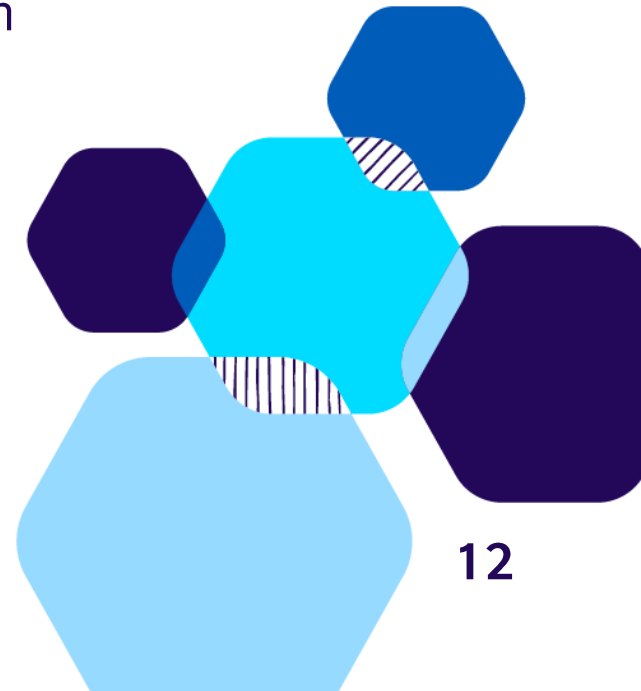
## Community Coordination

Rainmaking events strengthen group unity.



## English Practice

Oral poetry and ceremonial language offer context-based English practice.





# Why Indigenous climate knowledge matters

## Effective solutions

It's crucial for sustainable climate responses.

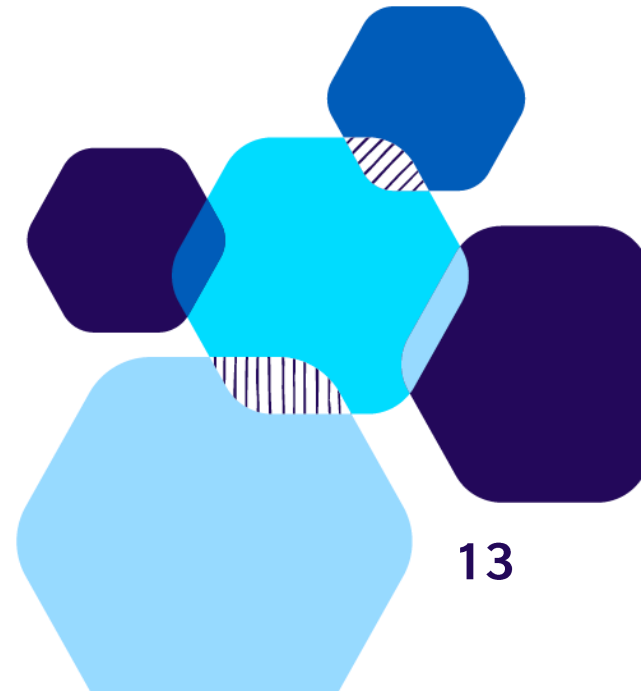
## Conservation & Adaptation

This knowledge informs environmental strategies.

## Cultural Pride

It nurtures pride in local identity and wisdom.

**Makeshift bridge in South Africa  
source; Mogomotsi Magome**







A young girl from Uganda – source; Chris Liberty

## Interactive Strategies for English Skills

- **Listening:** Learner created digital storytelling projects (videos/blogs) in English from local-language interviews.
- **Speaking:** Role-play forecasting and community meetings.
- **Reading:** Analyze folk tales, climate proverbs, and environmental news.
- **Writing:** Summarize indigenous weather practices & script eco-dialogues.

Any more ideas?

# Grammar Activities with Indigenous Knowledge

**Storytelling and Tense Practice**  
traditional stories - past, present, and future tenses

**Descriptive Writing**  
Describe a traditional ceremony, craft or indigenous meal preparation process

**Role-Play and Dialogue Practice**  
Simulate a market day or a traditional meeting in English language



**A Basotho wedding – source Eunice Aber**

**Any more ideas?**





***Students posing with bags made out of plastic waste – source: Chris Liberty***

# Building Culturally Rooted, Climate-Aware English Lessons

## Integrate Local Knowledge

Curricula become relevant and foster pride.

## Encourage Resources

Promote bilingual materials and partnerships.

## Support Stewardship

Empower students as environmental guardians.

# Any more ideas?



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**Take-away tips:**

**Before our discussion in the Telegram English Connects group, please try out:**

**Incorporating an Indigenous  
climate practice in an ELT Class.**

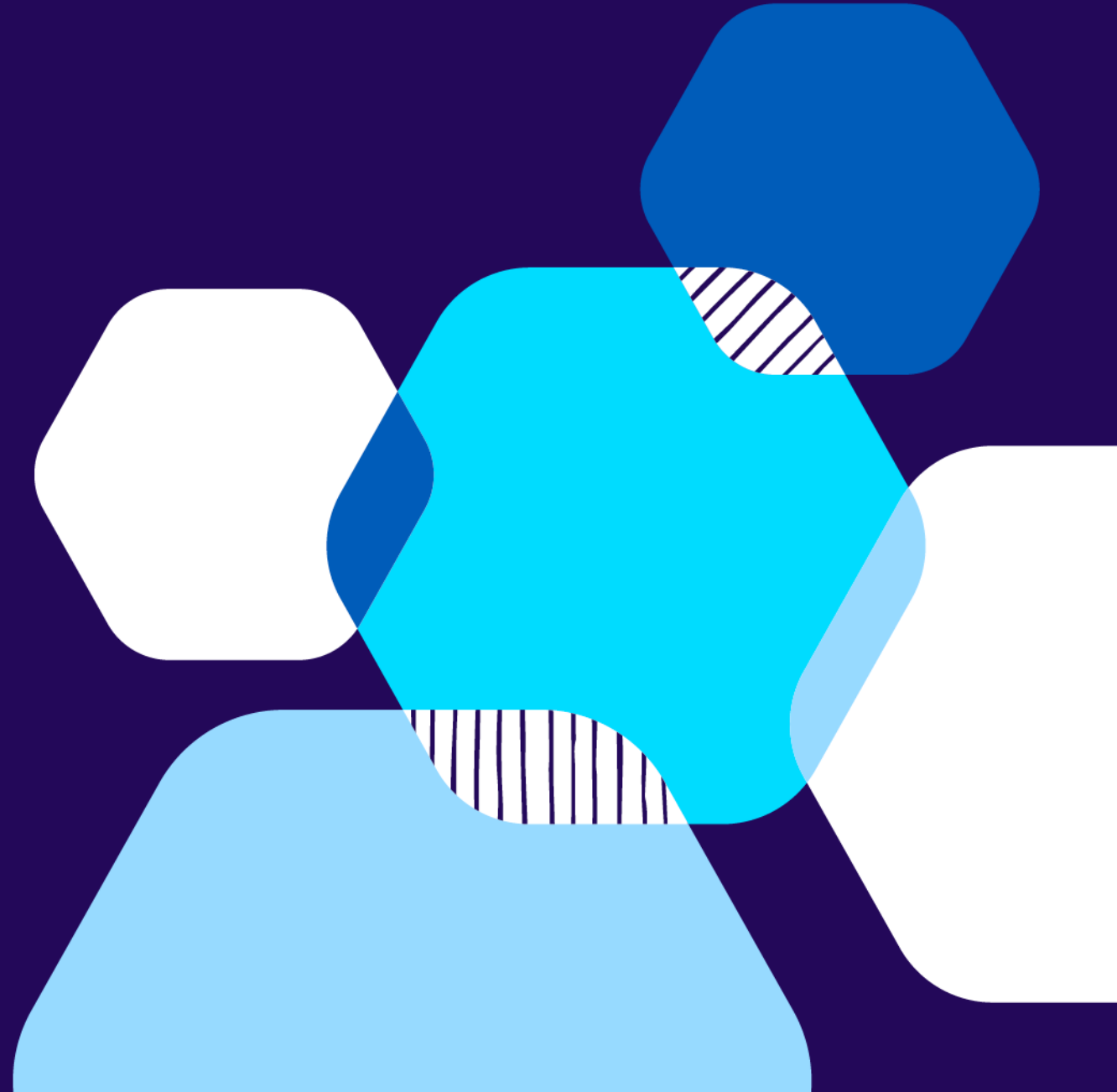
# Resources

## Why Education Matters for a Climate-Resilient Africa

[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-84081-4\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-84081-4_2)



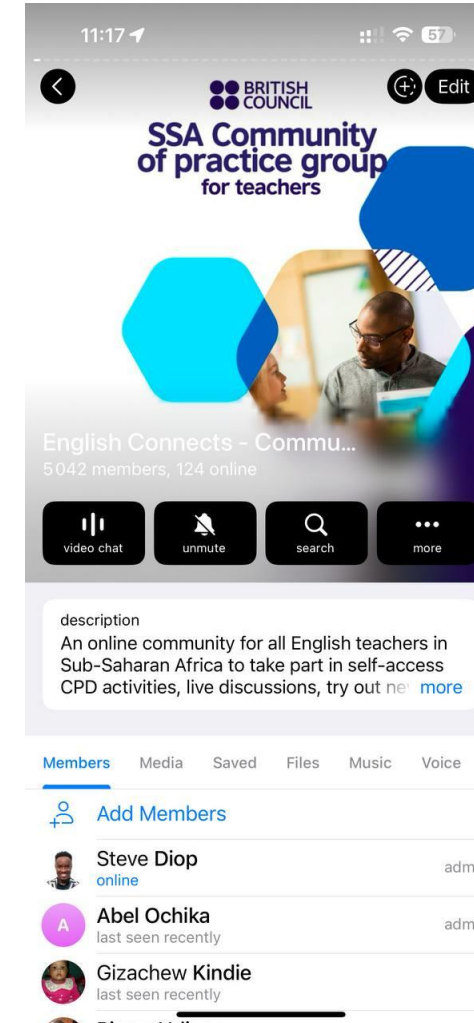
**Thank you**  
**Any questions?**





# Unlock your professional growth with the English Connects Community of Practice

TeachingEnglish supports a vibrant Community of Practice connecting teachers and teacher educators across the region through the **Telegram** app. This group serves as a dynamic hub for sharing innovative teaching practices, exploring educational trends, and collaborating on impactful projects. Join us today: <https://bit.ly/4lgZMm8>



# Register for our next webinar:

## Empowering women in African teacher associations: challenges and pathways

Join **Abigail Ekangouo Awanga** and **Bance Marie Clemence** to uncover the critical role of women in African teacher associations, addressing their challenges and strategies for empowerment.

**Date: Saturday 19 July 2025**

<https://bit.ly/3TjiKeP>

The poster features the British Council logo and 'TeachingEnglish' branding at the top. The title is prominently displayed in a bold, dark font. Below the title, a paragraph describes the webinar's focus on the role of women in African teacher associations. It includes a registration link and a QR code. A central image shows a woman, Abigail Ekangouo Awanga, wearing a headwrap. To the left of the image, a list of times and locations is provided. At the bottom right, there is a QR code with the instruction 'Scan the QR code to register'. The background is decorated with blue and purple geometric shapes.

**BRITISH COUNCIL** TeachingEnglish

### Empowering women in African teacher associations: challenges and pathways

Join Abigail Ekangouo Awanga and Bance Marie Clemence to uncover the critical role of women in African teacher associations, addressing their challenges and strategies for empowerment.

You need to register to attend. Please check your email including junk email after registering for the confirmation email including the Zoom link and password. Participants who fill in the feedback form up to 3 hours after the webinar will receive a certificate.

Click on this link to register:  
<https://bit.ly/3TjiKeP>

**Unable to connect via Zoom?**  
The webinar is also backed up via the Telegram app.  
To join our Regional Community of Practice on Telegram, apply here:  
<https://bit.ly/4lgZMm8>

**Saturday 19 July 2025**

**16:00 GMT**  
**17:00 Yaounde**  
**17:00 Lagos**  
**18:00 Khartoum**  
**18:00 Pretoria**  
**19:00 Addis**

Scan the QR code to register

Copyright: Abigail Ekangouo Awanga