

**REPORT ONE**

# **REVIVING INDIGENOUS TECHNIQUES**



**FUTURE HORIZON: 2028-2030**

**AUDIENCE:**

**CULTURAL PRACTITIONERS & FUTURE-FACING FASHION SYSTEMS**

# 02 - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Fashion's sustainability conversation has reached a point of exhaustion. Despite decades of innovation, certifications, and material substitutions, the industry remains locked into extractive logics that treat land, labour, and culture as endlessly available. What is increasingly clear is that the problem is not simply what fashion is made from, but how it understands its relationship to the world.**

Across Indigenous and diasporic knowledge systems, clothing has never existed in isolation from land, cosmology, or community. Techniques, materials, and rituals of making become ethical practices, shaped by relationships with plants, seasons, ancestors, and more-than-human life. As ecological crises deepen and cultural memory becomes increasingly fragmented, these ways of knowing are re-emerging as future frameworks.

This report proposes a near-future in which Indigenous and diasporic techniques are recognised as living knowledge systems capable of reshaping the foundations of fashion. Rather than treating craft as aesthetics, this future positions relational making, cyclical time, and community-led governance as structural principles of design.

Grounded in participatory workshops, material artefacts, and interviews with diasporic practitioners, this research identifies a growing desire for reconnection in continuity.

**The findings suggest that fashion's next phase will be its willingness to relearn practices rooted in care for the land.**

By 2028–2030, forward-facing fashion systems will begin to:

- Treat materials as relational entities rather than neutral resources
- Align production with ecological rhythms and seasonal changes
- Shift knowledge exchange toward collaborative and consent-based models
- Understand garments as carriers of responsibility

The question is not whether Indigenous techniques can fit within fashion's existing structures, but whether fashion is prepared to transform in response to them.

This report is intended for designers, cultural practitioners, educators, and system-builders seeking to embed relational governance and land-based knowledge into future-facing fashion infrastructures.

# 03 - CULTURAL CONTEXT

**When asked to imagine future fashion systems, most participants prioritised land, repair, and shared responsibility over innovation or speed.**

For diasporic communities that have been shaped by forced migration and colonial rupture, the loss of land-based knowledge is evident in material and cosmic connections. The Caribbean diaspora in Britain carries a complex identity, one that remains culturally visible through music, language, and style. However, ecological disconnections from ancestral landscapes remain rooted in plantation economies and governance systems.

Workshops and interviews conducted as part of this research revealed that while fashion remains present in diasporic life, it is rarely understood as a site of deep cultural continuity. Connection is more often articulated through sound, spirituality, and collective memory. Clothing tends to function as an expression rather than a relation to land. This distinction is significant. It reflects how displacement has affected the ecological knowledge and connection to consumer practice, where garments become symbolic markers rather than lived practices.

At the same time, participants consistently expressed a desire for reconnection. Within the workshop, futures were reimagined and organised around land, cyclical time, and shared governance. These visions suggest that reviving Indigenous techniques is a structural reorientation in restoring pathways between identity and ecology and merging them into everyday life.

As ecological instability intensifies globally, this desire for relational continuity extends beyond diasporic communities into wider fashion systems searching for more than material reform.



The Orbis spike artwork by Chartene Lynch, based on the work of Maslin and Lewis (2015), depicts the effects colonial extractions had on the Earth. Causing an instant rise in CO<sub>2</sub> and the Earth's temperature.



Diasporic Workshop (2025): Discuss the loss of connection to the earth

# 04 - RESEARCH GROUNDING

**This report draws on a collaborative workshop with 12 members of the UK Caribbean diaspora, alongside survey responses and subsequent interviews. Participants were invited to explore themes of nature, fashion, culture, and speculative futures through storytelling and collective worldbuilding.**

## **Emerging Patterns:**

- The majority of participants associated sound with connection and spiritual continuity.
- Clothing was rarely described as ceremonial or ecological.
- Across workshops, participants consistently framed land stewardship as central to imagined futures.
- "Connection" was defined more through rhythm and memory than through dress.



Discussions of nature revealed a complex tension. While some participants expressed disconnection from land-based practice, nature was consistently described as a spiritual presence. Ecological care was linked to self-respect and ancestral continuity. Prayer, meditation, and gratitude toward the earth appeared as relational gestures rather than environmental policy.

Fashion, by contrast, was rarely positioned as central to cultural continuity.

Speculative worldbuilding exercises revealed a strong desire for ecological belonging. Across all three imagined futures, themes of land stewardship, cyclical governance, and communal healing emerged. These visions indicate that the appetite for relational material practice exists, but has yet to find form within contemporary fashion systems.

Participants described clothing as functional, expressive, or non-prescriptive. Only isolated responses framed dress as representative of origin or belonging. The workshop revealed a subtle but significant absence: while music functioned as embodied memory, material practice did not carry the same weight.

# 05- CORE INSIGHTS

## Relational knowledge, not material substitution, will define the next phase of sustainable fashion.

Primary research revealed that while fashion operates as expression, ecological belonging remains unresolved. Across workshops and artefacts, the desire for reconnection surfaced repeatedly, yet contemporary systems offer limited structures for relational practice. This indicates that the next evolution of sustainability must move beyond fibre innovation toward repair and restoring material techniques as pathways between identity, ecology, and everyday life.

### Implications

- Indigenous techniques function as governance models rather than aesthetic reference.
- Craft revival becomes a structural reorientation rather than a nostalgic return.
- Designers engage land-based knowledge as a living relation, grounded in care.



1. The Denim Tree reconfigures denim through a more-than-human lens. Returning the fabric to a tree form reverses its industrial trajectory, tracing cotton and indigo back toward ecological origin. The repetitive act of cutting each leaf created space for reflection. Through this process, denim shifted from commodity to relation, deepening awareness of its agricultural and colonial histories.

2. The Plate of Gold recontextualises fashion waste as latent value. By presenting discarded material as precious, it questions the resource depletion model as the only economic logic available to fashion systems.

3. The Huis Boom film explores return through sound. It foregrounds the diasporic rupture from land-based knowledge while acknowledging rhythm as a surviving thread of continuity. Sound becomes a bridge between displacement and ecological belonging.

4. The oxygen masks function as a speculative warning. They position air often treated as invisible and infinite, as contingent. By imagining nature withholding oxygen, the work reframes ecological as life-sustaining and capable of limits.

Together, these works do not romanticise return. They acknowledge harm while proposing relational repair.

# 06 - FUTURE INSIGHTS

## How Revived Indigenous Techniques Reshape Fashion Systems (2028–2030)

By 2028–2030, relational practice begins to manifest across fashion infrastructures. Early expressions may include:

- Community-led material cultivation integrated into design education
- Consent-based knowledge exchange replacing extractive “craft inspiration”
- Localised production aligned with ecological cycles rather than seasonal drops
- Governance structures that centre stewardship over shareholder return
- Garments designed for repair, ritual, and generational continuity

These developments do not signal aesthetic regression, but systemic recalibration. Indigenous techniques operate not as stylistic reference, but as frameworks for accountability and temporal responsibility.



# 1 2 - CLOSING REFLECTIONS

This project articulates two speculative horizons:

one grounded in the revival of Indigenous techniques, the other expanding fashion into embodied frequency.

While presented separately, they are not different futures. They operate on different sensory registers of the same structural reorientation.

The near horizon (2028–2030) addresses material repair. It responds to ecological rupture by repositioning land-based knowledge as governance, restoring relational accountability between garment, maker, and environment. Its urgency lies in continuity. Instead, it encourages the relearning of practices that already understand limit, reciprocity, and care.

The post-2030 horizon extends this logic into the sensory field. Where the first future reimagines material relation, the second reimagines perception. By recognising sound and vibration as cultural infrastructure, fashion expands beyond visual dominance into embodied resonance. Here, garments operate not only as objects, but as mediators of collective attunement.

Together, these trajectories propose a shift from linear production logic to relation, from image to infrastructure, from isolated production to shared systems of meaning. They suggest that fashion's transformation will not emerge through innovation alone, but through realignment and acknowledging knowledge systems that have long sustained community beyond visibility and beyond industry.

The split format reflects the layered nature of change. Repair and expansion occur simultaneously. Land and frequency operate in dialogue. Material and resonance inform one another.

Rather than predicting a singular future, this project offers frameworks for reorientation, grounded in diasporic knowledge, participatory research, and speculative articulation.

The question is not what fashion will look like.

It is how fashion will listen, relate, and sustain.