

# We Come From People Who Listen to the Land



Growing up in a Latino household, I didn't learn about conservation from textbooks or environmental campaigns. I learned it in the kitchen, in the backyard, and in the quiet, everyday habits that shaped our family life. Long before I ever heard the word "sustainability," I watched the people around me practice it without calling it anything at all.

For many Latino families, nature isn't something separate from us — it's woven into our routines, our celebrations, and our sense of home. We gather outside, we cook outside, we rest outside. Even in cities or small apartments, there's always a little corner of green: a chile plant in a reused coffee can, a nopal patch growing against a fence, a row of herbs thriving on a sunny windowsill. These small acts are more than decoration; they're a way of staying connected to the land, even when life pulls us far from it.

Resourcefulness is another form of conservation that runs deep in our culture. Many of us grew up with a natural instinct to reuse, repair, and make things last. Containers were never single-use. Clothes were patched. Food was stretched. Nothing was wasted because nothing could be wasted — and that mindset, born from both culture and necessity, is one of the most powerful environmental values we carry.



I grew up watching my abuela turn what others might throw away into something useful. When apples were bruised or worm-bitten, she didn't toss them. She peeled the good parts, laid the slices in a cardboard box, and set them out in the sun for days until they became dried apples. Nothing was wasted. Nothing was taken for granted. That quiet instinct to honor what the earth gives us is one of the first lessons I ever learned about caring for the natural world. It wasn't a trend or a sustainability practice—it was simply how she had always lived. That kind of resourcefulness is woven into our culture, a quiet form of conservation passed down through generations.

What I didn't realize until I was older is that these everyday practices are also acts of environmental stewardship. They reflect a relationship with nature that is humble, practical, and deeply respectful. It's a kind of conservation that doesn't always show up in reports or campaigns, but it lives in our families and our communities.

As organizations work to bring more Latino voices into conservation conversations, I think it's important to recognize that many of us already come with a strong foundation. We may not all be bird experts or scientists, but we understand what it means to care for what we have, to protect our surroundings, and to think about the generations that come after us. Those values are conservation, too.

And when Latino communities see themselves reflected in environmental storytelling — not as newcomers, but as people who have always had a relationship with the land — it opens the door for even deeper engagement. It reminds us that our experiences matter, our stories matter, and our cultural wisdom has a place in the future of conservation.



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