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K03 - Visualising the Horizon: Toward an Ecological Theory of Science Communication

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The United Nations has set a global benchmark for tertiary education enrollment by 2030. While the situation has improved over the years, progress is slowing in many nations. The share of women (particularly those with intersectional identities) graduating from these programmes falls below this benchmark, and those from non-Western countries (e.g., Africa and Latin America) also lag behind.

STEM outcomes show a similar trend, though effects from the so-called Leaky Pipeline lead to the exclusion of women and other historically underrepresented groups. For example, Indigenous, Aboriginal, and First Nations groups make up a vanishingly small percentage of the STEM workforce, even accounting for their relative population size. These statistics indicate there is a staggering lack of opportunities, support, and representation for these groups in STEM fields.

Studies show that focusing on community, culture, and building trust stimulates STEM identity, particularly among groups historically left out of STEM opportunities. In this talk, we will present a pathway toward improved engagement and uptake of STEM in future generations by utilising an ecological model for science communication based on mutuality and reciprocity.

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