



Community Summary Report #11

Location: Northwest Territories

Partner Name: Ecology North

Green Resilience Project Community Summary Report

Community Partner name: Ecology North

Conversation date: Saturday, February 19th, 2022

1. Introduction

A. Summary

100-150 words that highlight the key takeaways from the Community Summary Report. Were there any issues, concerns, solutions or ideas that were talked about in multiple breakout groups and/or were strong themes in discussion of the full group? Did any general points of consensus emerge from the group?

The NWT Green Resiliency Project conversation included a diverse group of participants from the North Slave, South Slave, and Dehcho Regions. Due to the size of the group, we split into two breakout rooms for the majority of the conversation. One room, generally, focused on the connections between capitalism, colonialism, and environmental and climate change, while the other focused more broadly on the challenges climate and environmental changes create for Indigenous knowledges, traditions, cultures, practices, and economies. Moreover, both conversations focused on the importance of decolonizing the state, mind, and economies as a true, impactful, and culturally relevant path forward to ensure income stability for residents in the NWT in the face of climate change.

B. About the Green Resilience Project

This community conversation was part of the Green Resilience Project, a Canada-wide series of conversations exploring and documenting the links between community resilience, income security and the shift to a low-carbon economy. Working with a designated partner organization from each community, the Green Resilience Project aims to create spaces in which a wide range of participants can talk through the links between climate change and income security, and identify possible next steps to build or maintain community resilience in the face of these challenges.

This Community Summary Report reflects what we heard and learned in our community's conversation. Each Project partner organization across Canada will be producing a similar report. In March 2022, the Green Resilience Project will produce a final report summarizing findings across conversations, which will be available to the public and shared with Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Funding for the Green Resilience Project is generously provided by Environment and Climate Change Canada's Climate Action and Awareness Fund. The Project is managed and delivered

by Energy Mix Productions, Basic Income Canada Network, Coalition Canada Basic Income - Revenu de base, Basic Income Canada Youth Network, national experts and local partners

C. About the Community Partner Organization

This section should talk about what the organization does and its connection to the community in which the conversation took place. It could also discuss how the organization came to participate in the Green Resilience Project and why it was interested in participating. If you used the Green Resilience Project conversation script as the basis of your conversation, you may be able to pull this content from your script.

Ecology North, a charitable non-profit organization based in Yellowknife, was founded in 1971 by a group of dedicated volunteers in response to arsenic pollution in Yellowknife. Since then, the mandate has expanded considerably with projects tackling issues like climate change, waste reduction, water quality and food sovereignty through an environmental lens. Ecology North maintains collaborative partnerships with several other local community and educational organizations to promote public education, sustainable living, and climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts on environmental initiatives.

Climate change is forcing unprecedented impacts and challenges on an array of different social, political, cultural, economic, and traditional institutions in the North. Our priority is to ensure the wellbeing and sustainability of the North, forever. We see it as our duty to engage in projects, like the GRP, that bring the community together to discuss and explore the multiple and nuanced experiences of climate change in the North. Moreover, this project also equips us, Ecology North, with more knowledge surrounding environmental challenges in the NWT and people's perceptions of these challenges. As a result, we are offered a chance to add more depth and impact to our work.

D. Why this community was selected to have a conversation

This section should answer the following questions, and can be pulled from your conversation script:

- *What issues does this community face, and how are they related to income security and/or climate change?*
- *How is the local environment changing, and what actions has the community taken on climate change, the energy transition, income security or community resilience?*
- *What are the community's strengths and/or assets?*

The scientific community has agreed that the scope at which climate and environmental changes are occurring are exacerbated and intensified in the North. As a territory, the NWT is facing an incredibly diverse range of impacts (including flooding, wildfires, permafrost thaw, coastal erosion, sea level rise...), all of which have substantial connections and implications on various social factors, especially financial and income security. The diversity of climate related impacts and experiences across the NWT, at the

scope to which they are connected, makes it more challenging to identify, isolate, and explore a particular environmental and climate challenge.

Much of the energy transition (and climate change adaptation and impact mitigation) requires costly infrastructural changes (such as the shipping and installation and maintenance of solar panels and windmills) in spaces that often lack the existing supporting infrastructure. As such, the heightened costs of the green transition often lie beyond the scope of many NWT communities. Moreover, there is a high rate of property renters in the NWT. The decisions to invest and transition to more green housing/living alternatives often lie beyond the desires of landowners, making lessees relatively powerless when it comes to the infrastructural design of their homes. This alludes to the need for a widespread culture shift (and financially supporting programs and agencies) to help make sustainability more accessible for all NWT residents.

In the North, many have taken to traditional Indigenous economies and have found ways to integrate it into the capitalist structure and system much of Canada operates within. In the North, fur crafts and beadwork have helped to supplement household incomes lost due to environmental and climate changes, providing more opportunity and security to individuals. However, as the climate changes, species migration patterns alter, and the ability for individuals to read their surroundings is lessened, similarly, the ability for crafters to rely on traditional methods and crafts is lessened. This is one way that individuals have attempted to overcome financial insecurities but have been threatened by environmental change.

Another change we are seeing across the North is the rise of community gardens and local food production systems. The costs of foods in the North are substantially higher than in other spaces in Canada due to the heightened costs of production and shipping. As such, individuals are increasingly adopting new methods of food production, namely community gardening and urban farming, to ensure their access to affordable foods. However, these processes are vulnerable to climatic and environmental changes. Climate and environmental changes have caused less stable growing conditions and a shorter growing season, thereby threatening individual and community abilities to overcome the financial barriers to food production and consumption.

An incredible strength of the unique communities in the NWT are their abilities to come together and adapt/overcome some of many environmental and climate change problems. Much of this relates back to the strong presence of traditional Indigenous cultures and customs that bring communities and people together, opposed to dividing them. The North is slowly transitioning from a production/traditional economy to a knowledge economy, a transition that much of Canada has already made. This transition, while surely helping to grow the economy and GDP of the territory, has consequently contributed to the emotional, physical, and cultural separation of people from their communities. Although this shift is not totalizing, it is reducing the reliance that individuals have on their communities, each other, and the circular economy. As such, reverting to production economies and traditional Indigenous values (resulting in increased levels of sharing resources, foods, and services) is one way that individuals and communities have overcome income insecurities associated with climate changes.

E. About the conversation participants

of conversation participants: 14

Based on the criteria provided to you by the Green Resilience Project, who did you choose to invite to your conversation and why? How were participants engaged or invited?

Who attended the conversation? Did your participant group reflect a range of lived experiences? Were any key community groups absent? Did you have high numbers of participants belonging to a certain community group? Did you make any specific considerations or accommodations to enable accessibility?

We recognize that “diversity” is a measure that can vary by community—some communities may have wide diversity in age or occupation but not in race or gender, or vice versa—so here we are asking for your qualitative evaluation based on your familiarity with the community and conversation participants.

To complete this section, please summarize the preparatory work you did to determine who should be invited to the conversation. You can also draw on the identification forms filled out by participants during your conversation (which Project staff will send to you). You are welcome to include numeric data at your discretion and/or based on what you’d like to do with this report.

To recruit participants, Ecology North called each of the 33 communities to directly invite them to the conversation. We explained the purposes and goals of the conversation and the importance of a strong representation across the territory to each community representative. In addition, our conversation included a diverse range of participants and groups from across the territory, although we were missing a strong presence from the Sahtu and Inuvik regions. To accommodate those who face barriers to internet connection, we invited participants to join our conversation through a phone call, making it more accessible and welcoming to those in the territory.

However, the incredibly broad scope and range of climate change experiences in the NWT made this conversation more challenging. For example, while one community faces flooding, others face watershed pollution from oil development, others face coastal erosion and sea-level rise, and so on... The sheer diversity of climate-related challenges in the NWT meant that our conversations focused more on breadth than they did depth.

F. The Community Conversation

A brief description of what the conversation looked liked:

- *Where did it take place?*
 - Our conversation occurred over Zoom with participants given the option to voice call in.
- *How was it structured?*

- We had one large conversation with all participants during the introduction, and then we broke into two different break out rooms to facilitate a more intimate and personal conversation, giving each participant more opportunities to engage in the conversation. Finally, we returned to one room for the conclusion and debrief section of the conversation.
- *Did you make any changes to the list of breakout group questions provided by the Green Resilience Project?*
 - Based on the conversation and the expertise that each respondent brought forward, we altered the conversation from the provided script. We used the provided question as the basis for conversation and asked participants to elaborate and explore where they saw fit. This introduced new ideas, concepts, and connections to our conversation, all of which drove our conversation further from the script.
 - We found the questions provided by the GRP to be inadequate for the experiences in the NWT. Our conversations needed to focus on other factors that were left out of the GRP script (such as food, culture, colonialism, and the transfer of Traditional Knowledge) to adequately discuss the relationships between income security, climate change, and community resilience.
- *In your view, was the conversation a successful community event? Did you encounter any challenges while organizing it?*
 - This project allowed us to connect different people from different communities to discuss and explore some of the most pressing issues the NWT faces. In that measure, it was a success. However, the reality is that the experiences of climate change are incredibly nuanced throughout the territory. This project would benefit from multiple, community-centric in-depth conversations that explore one particular community's experience at a time.
 - This project contributed to advancing discourse on the climate crisis opposed to providing a pathway for action and solutions. We found that our conversation, by nature of the purpose and structure of the GRP and provided conversation topics, exposed more of the realities of climate change without offering tangible solutions for individuals and communities to take. It was for this reason that we struggled to find a facilitator to the conversation and struggled to end our conversation on a hopeful, positive note.

2. What We Heard

This section summarizes participant responses to the questions asked during the conversation breakout sessions. For each question, please give a brief summary of the key points and ideas discussed across your breakout groups. Please include a selection of 5-10 anonymous quotes (total) to help illustrate key ideas.

A. How are the changes to our community’s environment and economy discussed in the introduction affecting you, your family or the community as a whole? B. How are these environmental and economic changes related to each other?

Environmental change, and the dramatic rate at which it occurs, is extremely noticeable in the North. Due to the remoteness and particularly sensitive Northern landscapes, the NWT is particularly vulnerable to the widespread impacts of environmental challenges and pressures. Moreover, the interconnectedness of climate, food, social, political, cultural, and traditional structures all intersect and are impacted by one another. A change to one of these structures is felt among them all. As such, we chose to address questions A and B together, to better explore the observed environmental and climate changes in the North and the widespread impacts they have on life.

Participants shared how changes to the environment, including the animals, plants, weather, and climate, are impacting their lived experiences. One participant shared the vast range of concerns they have as it relates to the wide-spread multi-fronts of environmental change.

In Yellowknife, we see more tornado funnels. Growing up in Yellowknife, I’ve never been concerned about tornado funnels...I think about the permafrost and carbon methane, which is so much more potent than carbon monoxide. Thinking about the large Mackenzie bridge. Food security. Flooding in smaller communities. Different regions have different soil and exposure to the sun

In addition, multiple participants shared their observed changes to plant and animal species. Participants have accredited these changes to various phenomena, including land and resource development and environmental and climate change.

We have to get our animals more further out. We cannot hunt, trap, or fish, within 20km radius of giant mine. Now we have to go all the way out to hunt Moose. The Elders noticed contamination in fish and other animals since the opening of the Giant Mine and are now passing on the knowledge of staying 20km away from the mines. Elders are affected by not getting their daily intake of wild meat. We want to think about and focus on food security this summer. We have to test our soils as there is arsenic around us. We want to garden good vegetables. Gas prices are affecting us as we have to go 30km out to get wild meat due to contamination in our area. We can no longer get any muskrat as the formation of the land is changing the water. There’s a hundred different things that we’re dealing with as a result of climate change and food security is the biggest one.

I harvest medicine and make teas and such. Think about the plants, and the examples that we have to set precedence to take action for ourselves, to be accountable. What

are the methodologies that we can utilise to improve our quality of life. Traditional practices and overall wellness is affected. It's important that these conversations are had so that we can share traditional knowledge.

The weather has changed. When I first came up north YK got quite a few extreme cold days and now they are a week or two at a span at most. Many of the spring activities were cancelled last year because it was too mild to be out on the ice. There are things that have to deal with climate change. The weather is getting stranger and stranger. Caribou used to be a half-hour drive away. Water levels are also different. The government docks were flooded last year. There could be more problems down the road if we don't address it. The socio-economic impacts of the climate crisis we're in, not that people didn't have the financial struggles when I was younger, but those financial barriers seem greater these days.

Participants also expressed concern over the impacts of environmental and climate change on the traditional economy. Specifically, they are concerned because the traditional economy operates under the support of the settler-colonial governmental system. In other words, allotted territorial and federal budgets support traditional economies, and when governments transitions and priorities alter, there is fear that the traditional economy will be left behind. The impacts of this are substantial. As it currently stands, the participants shared their reliance on the traditional economy to ensure income stability in the face of environmental and climate changes.

The financial incentives to drive the traditional economy might drive up. The services are going to be rendered and changed overtime. The fur economy is paid for and it's all embedded within the governance economy and isn't a part of the production industry. So if someone decides that it's not worth it then it might dry up.

It's interesting that now as a government, or a society, we are seeing how Indigenous ways of life are important and are part of natural cycles of life. With the natural economy, there's a lot of boom for people to take a part of that but it's so different from what it once was. There are also time, financial, burdens, and skills that impact it.

Participants also explored the emotional impacts of the climate crisis. One person shared:

We don't talk about the emotional and mental health impacts of the climate crisis. Last summer, when it was really hot, everyone loved it, but I was having trouble sleeping and had anxieties. And no one is talking about it. We saw in the southern counterparts how hot it got and the huge impacts it had on the communities. As the climate and the environment is changing around us in the winter too. People are all over and it gets extreme snaps and the lines freeze and the pipes burst – I think it should be a state of emergency, but it's not happening. Essentially, all that can happen now is thawing pipes out to get the water running again, but for some people, their house was frozen for weeks. Because it's a community impact at the moment, the community is paying for it. The community ran out of water in the well, and it is severely and negatively impacting the waters. It's going to cost a lot of money.

In addition, another participant spoke about the impacts of climate change in Tuktoyaktuk, a community that is literally sinking into the sea due to coastal erosion and Arctic Ocean water levels rising. While our conversation didn't have anyone from Tuktoyaktuk, one participant questioned the resources and aid being offered to the community.

We also have communities like Tuk that are eroding into the sea. [Are any] supports being offered to the community?

These testimonials speak to the widespread impacts of climate and environmental change in the territory, and help us explore how interconnected life, including food, culture, and knowledge systems, in the North is to the environment.

C. What are some possible solutions to the challenges we've discussed that will help the community respond to climate change and create income security for all community members? D. How do you think these solutions can be achieved to build, maintain or strengthen community resilience? Who is responsible for these changes—individuals, community groups, governments, or a mix?

The solutions that arose in our conversation centre a few main ideas: the revitalization of Indigenous communities, knowledge, traditions, and ways of life, and coinciding bottom-up political action designed to address the unique needs that each community in the NWT faces.

We need to fully recognize inherent rights to [Indigenous] self determination, instead of delegated powers and wasting time on negotiations.

We have to decolonize the knowledges in our brain so that we can divide and conquer. That's the goal, divide and conquer. Everybody here in the North, we have to all work together, regardless of your race or anything like that. Or there will be no future. We have to work together as a human race. How do we create precedence to fix this? We have to approach this with structure. We're going to have to approach this with structure and collective effort.

Do you believe our ancestors intended for us to be beggars in our own land? We sent an 18 carat diamond to London when toilets [at home] aren't flushing. There's a disproportion of the return from what is being extracted from the land. This generation will be heard. We're annoyed that we're still having the same conversations from decades earlier when we know what the solutions are. It's not devolution, it's sovereignty.

I want to indigenize my city and build more sustainable practices in my city. I want to prioritize local food security and work with organizations to fund these projects.

What is our emergency plan? What is the Traditional Knowledge on an emergency plan? ... Sometimes we can't get the help that we need. What should be the first thing that we do? We need to look at an emergency plan with first nations knowledge.

These ideas and concepts are not new to the North, but often lie beyond the current realm and scope of the Canadian society and political system. Participants shared some of the ways that traditional and more community based social structures and methods of governance could operate in the North.

So, obviously communism isn't going to work, but maybe we can mandate compassion and social values in more government processes. They already built in tools like GBA (Gender-based assessment) for environmental assessments, so maybe something similar for economic impacts on policy making.

I feel like welfare is one of those things that's about treating a symptom and not a disease. Welfare treats the symptom and not the actual issue. That's just adjusting one of the symptoms and not the cause. There is value in treating the symptom, but there needs to be long term solutions to address the issues. It's possible, more complex, but possible.

The conversation grew sceptical of the role of governments in helping communities to achieve green resiliency. Participants began to explore the role that NGOs and ENGOs can play in helping to build resiliency and adaptive capacities among individuals and communities in the North.

Fort Smith is my home, all I've known. My only connection and this is where I love the land and life. I've worked for the feds, GNWT, and the municipal govt, throughout my time in those, especially with the feds, I've been frustrated by the lack of actions, the lack of things getting done (mostly with parks), there could be so much more getting done if we had people who cared – people who had passion and are invested. And when there is a lot of people from the south coming in, there lacks a connection to place and desire to fight for the positive changes. I don't want to work for the govt and feel like nothing is getting done. In local governments I don't need to communicate and wait for people in the south to approve things. Until we get to a place where we can navigate these systems with more compassions, nothing much will get done.

I believe in the work of non-profits. They are valuable, they are important. They change our communities... If we are talking about the inclusion of LGBTQ+ and gender equity and trying to actively work about Sex and Gender Based Violence, non-profits need to be funded all across the country. There is often only one organization in the North that is working to make things better, so the GNWT needs to financially back those organizations. The GNWT is not writing the feds about the colonial impacts on the social structures

Moreover, ENGOs, in particular, are greatly positioned to increase community capacities as they pertain to climate and environmental changes. Specifically, they are positioned well to take both Western and Traditional knowledges and sciences and merge them to help share and instil more complex, dynamic understandings and approaches to environmental and climate change.

In the protected areas, were seeing the growth of STEM in how to understand, engage, and interact with the land. STEM offers the ability to use two ways of being to monitor the land – beyond observations and into methods to measure. The economies are becoming more knowledge based and less production based.

These ideas, while can guide much of what NGOs and ENGOs can produce, need the political capacity to sustain themselves. Participants felt that the political decisions, including the social, emotional, and financial support that coincides with just climate action, often lacked input from the North and the communities directly involved and impacted by the political decisions.

The idea of feeling listened to. The extreme weather events we've had (flooding for example, storms destroying cabins...) don't feel like the government or societies have been listened to. COVID has created separation moreso, so the disconnect seems to be greater.

In terms of climate solutions, should they be top down or bottom up? Does it come from the community or governments? Should they meet in the middle to make it more effective? Can the territorial government solve it? Have they been effective?

There is a lot of support that is needed to make the world better and more accessible to the world. The impacts are multi-faceted, and when we toss in intersectionality's, it gets more complex too.

3. What We Learned

Please give a brief analysis of your conversation, drawing on your conversation data as well as the evaluation forms participants filled out at the end of the conversation (which Project staff will send to you). Your response should answer these questions.

- Please summarize your perspective on the key points you listed in section two. Why were they important? Were they brought up frequently, met with contention, surprising to you or your facilitators, etc.? Was there a strong consensus on any of the key points? You are welcome to expand on any key points you find especially interesting.

Through this conversation, our understanding of the role and importance of traditional knowledge, wisdoms, and approaches has been further solidified. Specifically, relying on

traditional approaches can help us reimagine the social, cultural, political, and economic structures that currently dominate the NWT. This would entail a transition from social, cultural, political, and cultural unjust ways of operating while working to ensure an economy and climate that works for all in the NWT.

In addition, there is an important emphasis placed on solutions for the North by the North. Specifically, participants shared the importance of locally created solutions voiced by local actors to address the relations between climate change and economic insecurities in their home communities. Moving forward, we highly recommend that all policy makers working in the North spend time to seek the local voices and experiences in the North before creating and implementing policy.

- To what extent do you think your conversation built wider and deeper understanding of the links and synergies between community resilience, livelihoods, income security and the low-carbon transition? Please explain your response.
 - 1 - Not at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - **4**
 - 5 - Very much so

This conversation created dialogue among residents in the NWT. As such, each member had the opportunity to share their own ideas and experiences and learn from one another. The conversation also allowed participants to share their perspectives on the barriers to sustainability and a just economic transition. Participants shared:

Sometimes, that funding is not helpful as individuals may not have the ability to pay for it initially and wait for reimbursement. Upfront funding will need to be available for lower income individuals [to adopt better, more sustainable economic practices].

Language can also be a big issue. Grant applications are difficult, especially for any potential language barriers.

- To what extent did participants demonstrate increased awareness of climate change and their own capacity for climate action? Please explain your response.
 - 1 - Not at all
 - 2
 - **3**
 - 4
 - 5 - Very much so

While we can't speak to the increases, or potential decreases, in awareness of climate changes and individual capacities, we can speak to some of the solutions participants shared:

We would like to create workshops on local food security. Canning, growing our own vegetables, trapping, etc. important knowledge from our elders the way our ancestors used to do it.

There are small-scale local strategies individuals can adapt to overcome the challenges associated with climate change and economic insecurities. This conversation offered participants an opportunity to share some of their ideas.

- To what extent were new relationships between community partners and conversation participants created and fostered? Please explain your response.
 - 1 - Not at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - **4**
 - 5 - Very much so

Resulting from this project, Ecology North was able to reach out to new communities and individuals across the NWT.

- To what extent did your conversation create opportunities to foster ongoing discussion of solutions related to climate change, income insecurity and community resilience? Please explain your response.
 - **1 - Not at all**
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 - Very much so

The conversation was designed as a one-time project/conversation. As such, this leaves little to no room for long-term action planning and implementation.

- In your opinion, what does the community need to do next in order to build or maintain resilience in the face of climate change and rising income insecurity?

We chose to flip the question and ask what policy makers and governing bodies need to do to build or maintain resilience in the face of climate change and rising income securities. Many individuals and communities are already adapting and altering their ways of life and approaches to interacting with the land and environments. Individuals are doing what they need to do. The political capacity needs to follow-suit in a collaborative, honest, and respectful way, this especially includes listening to the voices and perspectives that are not always easy to reach.

4. Next steps

Did conversation participants identify next steps for continuing the conversation, or continuing advocacy related to the topics covered in the conversation? What were they?

The participants did not express next steps for continuing the conversation. If the structure of the conversation permitted, I anticipate that we would have seen more long term follow up and solution planning among the participants.

As the community partner organization, do you have a plan for continued advocacy on the topics explored in your community conversation? Are you able to share your plan with us at this time, and whether or how conversation participants might contribute to that plan?

At Ecology North, we will continue to maintain collaborative partnerships with several other local community and educational organizations to promote public education, sustainable living, and climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts on environmental initiatives. While we do not have any concrete plans or ideas in place, we will continue to ensure that we approach the wide-spread impacts of climate and environmental change in our work, including that of climate-induced economic securities in the North.