



Community Summary Report #33

Location: Labrador

Partner Name: Dan Meades (Provincial Coordinator, The Transition House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador)

Green Resilience Project Community Summary Report

Community Partner name: Dan Meades - danmeades@gmail.com

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1. Introduction

A. Summary

All participants expressed the unique situation that communities in northern Canada face as it relates to climate change, both in the impacts as well as in communities impacts to make choices that would address the climate crisis.

Changing sea ice conditions and the impact of unpredictable sea ice conditions on tradition livelihoods was a very strong theme. The realities of climate change already being a factor in day-to-day life in Labrador is not about extreme weather events, it is about the changes in predictable weather patterns that communities rely on for hunting and fishing.

There was also concern about a hydroelectric project known as Muskrat Falls. While hydro projects can be seen as environmentally progressive there are concerns about the impact on the project on the communities down river from the dam that has been constructed. Specific concerns about the documented levels of methylmercury in fish in the river were articulated.

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

Dan Meades is the provincial coordinator of the Transition House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador and a long-time advocate for eliminating poverty. Dan is the former co-chair of the Basic Income Canada Network.

D. Why this community was selected to have a conversation

Labrador is often left out of conversations about the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, in part because of the lack of dense population and in part because of institutional racism that exist within political structures in NL.

The region of Labrador West relies heavily on the mining industry and there is strong tension between what is seen as economically sustainable and environmentally sustainable. The negative impacts that these communities have seen when the mine has been temporarily shut down have been catastrophic to families and there is a real fear of it happening again.

It was noted that Labrador has a much higher poverty rate than the national average and as inflation and other negative financial impacts of fossil fuel reliance take place the population has less ability to handle those bumps in the road.

E. About the conversation participants

of conversation participants: 9

Participants were invited based on their geographical diversity, lived experience, expertise, and community leadership. Specific effort was made in ensuring that Labrador Land Protectors were included in the conversation.

I was disappointed with the number of people who participated in the conversation. There had been a significant news story the day before our conversation that was about deaths of homeless individuals in Labrador and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's role in those deaths and it had a very shilling impact on people's willingness to speak out about public issues. I would have preferred to have greater participation from the Provincial Government but overall, I was happy with the representation. We offered stipends to anyone who would need one in order to attend and offered community groups the ability to have their program participants be involved in the conversation.

I had a series of brainstorm sessions with community leaders to ensure we had invited people with diverse perspectives to ensure a fruitful and representative conversation.

I would note that there was very prominent representation from the private sector on this call.

F. The Community Conversation

I used the conversation guide provided and did a virtual conversation with a number of one-on-one conversations to supplement those who attended. I tried to keep the conversation very open ended and did ask a lot of follow up questions to ensure people had the chance to speak openly and freely. I framed the conversation by saying that people did not need to be experts in any field to fully participate, and that their feelings were a valid part of the conversation.

The conversation was a success, and the only challenge was the timing for the news story the day before. I also wondered in retrospect if the strong private sector presence deterred some part of the conversation so I followed up with all participants individually to give them a chance to voice anything they had not during our initial conversation.

2. What We Heard

- 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?
- There is a lot of fear about what comes next. People in Labrador feel as though they have seen the impacts of climate change already and also the negative impacts of environmentally friendly projects.
 - Sea ice changes have meant that travel routes are interrupted. Goods, and people are no longer able to get to the north coast all year round because the ice that was once used is not consistent and air travel is difficult to rely on at many times of the year.
 - A lack of affordable housing is causing chronic homelessness and the shelter system is maxed out. As the economic impacts of climate change or the closing of the mine happen, there is nothing to catch those people as they fall.
 - There is no public transit at all in Labrador. It makes individual decisions very difficult to make.
- B. How are these environmental and economic changes related to each other?
- "I know some people who have bought houses at high cost and then mama shut down and then they have a poor \$100,000 home that they can't sell for 20. Now they're back up again to higher cost and there's no housing availability"
 - "I think because of climate change, the poor get poorer"
 - "In the urban centres, they say, get an electric car? Well, in Labrador, what? An electric snowmobile, or an electric outboard motor. We can't"
 - The realities of life in the north were seen as very much opposed to taking action on climate change in any individualized way.
 - Non-profit organizations are having to spend a lot of money prepping for extreme weather events and power outages, these things are not funded properly.
 - There is a lot of change happening in many aspects of our lives and it is difficult to imagine how we are supposed to keep up with all of those changes.
- 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?
- This question felt difficult for people participating in this call. With a livelihood so close to the land for a lot of people in Labrador
 - Extending CERB indefinitely was noted as a viable option, but even that was not enough for the cost of living in northern communities.

- Governments making decisions closer to where people live, in Labrador there are not even sidewalks in most communities, it is an indication of how little is invested in peoples everyday lives by some levels of government.

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?

- Communities in Labrador think of themselves as being resilient, but they do not think that they are supported by their elected officials.
- Some participants felt as though government was a thing that happened to the, not for them, and as a result there was not a lot of faith in governments ability to address problems like climate change and income security.
- Participants felt as though

3. What We Learned

In this conversation it seemed as though participants felt as though they were a very small part of the problem and had very little opportunity to participate as part of the solution at all. There are real and meaningful changes being caused by climate change as it relates to traditional livelihoods, critical transportation routes, and culturally meaningful practices. There is a sense of hopelessness, as though nothing the participants could do would make a meaningful difference and they did not have faith in governments to make decisions that would positively impact their communities.

- 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

I there was a strong consensus at the start of this conversation but I think people were able to see alternative points of view that they may not have considered previously.

- 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

This group did not seem to feel that they had much capacity for climate action. The realities if life in Labrador were referenced as impediments.

- 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

This is a conversation with diverse stakeholders, some of whom live in the same community but had never met previously. I think some solid connections were formed.

- 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

this community is certainly resilient, the extent to which they are currently motivated and feel empowered to take action on the climate crisis is unclear from this conversation.

- 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?

The community needs to feel empowered to make individual changes as well as to engage politically to cause climate action. There was a real historical sense that Labrador was not well represented by politicians and as a result the issues they face are not often addressed. In fact, issues like the hydro megaproject seem to show that climate action happens at their expense, not to their benefit.

4. Next steps

A basic income forum is planned for March 31st in Newfoundland and Labrador, and I think the participants of these conversations are more likely to attend that forum after this conversation.

The Labrador Land protectors will continue to advocate for action on the issues that they care about and to be better represented by elected officials.