



Community Summary Report #17

Location: Churchill / Wabowden / Thompson, Manitoba

Partner Name: Community Futures North Central Development



Functional Strategic Planning | Board Governance | Business Planning & Development | Process Facilitation



Green Resilience Project Report

February 2022

Background

In December 2021 Community Futures North Central Development engaged Frank Growth Solutions Inc. to facilitate community conversations based on The Green Resilience Project guidelines and create this report.

Frank Growth Solutions Inc. would like to acknowledge Michelle Pruder and her team at Community Futures North Central Development as well as Hannah Muhajarine and Mitchell Beer from The Green Resilience Project for support and engagement through this entire process.

And more importantly, all of the participants from the three communities for their honest, open and informative conversations during this session.

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Summary

On January 26, 2002, from 6:00pm to 8:30pm Central time, community conversations via Zoom were held with a number of residents of Churchill (7), Waboden (3) Thompson (2) and Flin Flon (2 - they were also observing the process as they too are hosting these conversations in their area) Manitoba about the effects of climate change, community resilience and income security. These conversations were based on the four questions provided by the Green Resilience Project, but facilitated in such a way as to allow for related discussions.

The key takeaways were:

- There is obvious and relevant evidence (negative) of the effects of climate change in all communities represented
- Costs of living are increasing, due both to local as well as outside influences
- Livelihoods are at risk
- Wildlife and local habitat is being negatively impacted
- The need for remunerated lead positions is essential to bring the community together in a concerted and impactful way to achieve scale in local efforts

The appetite for the conversation amongst those present was significant and many were outspoken about their own experiences and those of their communities; and appreciative of the opportunity to come together for a more fulsome conversation.

The conversations ended with a clear desire for action and the will to reconvene.

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.

Community Futures North Central Development

Community Futures North Central Development (CFNCD) is a community economic development corporation that serves the north central region of Manitoba. Core funding is provided by the federal government through Western Economic Diversification Canada.

At present there is a staff of 7 that work in the CFNCD office, located at 3 Station Road, Thompson, MB. CFNCD receives direction from a volunteer board of directors. For each community in the region, one board member is appointed by local government.

There are currently 17 communities including First Nation (7), Northern Affairs (7), and Urban Industrial (3).

CFNCD Communities: Town of Churchill Cross Lake Community Council Cross Lake First Nation Fox Lake First Nation Gillam Ilford Community Council Nelson House Community Council Nelson House First Nation Norway House Community Council Norway House Cree Nation Pikwitonei Community Council Split Lake Cree Nation Thicket Portage Community Council City of Thompson Wabowden Community Council War Lake First Nation York Landing First Nation

The structure of CFNCD consists of:

- The Board of Directors,
- An Executive Committee (Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and Past Chair),
- Business Development Committee,
- Community Development Committee and

- Other advisory committees as required from time to time.

CFNCD plays an active role on a regional level by participating in various organizations such as: Aboriginal Accord, Mining Association of Canada – Community of Interest Panel, Thompson Regional Airport Authority, Community Futures Manitoba, Thompson Newcomer Settlement Services, Tourism Advisory Committee and Vision Quest.

Communities Engaged in The Conversations

As the communities we engaged with are all located in northern Manitoba and are affected by changing climate in various ways, they present specific, but not unique challenges. In the conversations we held, the communities shared their own hurdles including:

- job loss
- reduced tourism and related revenue
- Increased food costs
- increased utility needs and related costs
- various necessity shortages
- depletion of natural assets
- environmental impacts negatively affecting wildlife

Changes to the winds, temperatures, and related local climate all contribute to the above challenges, growing seasons and wildlife's natural habitat.

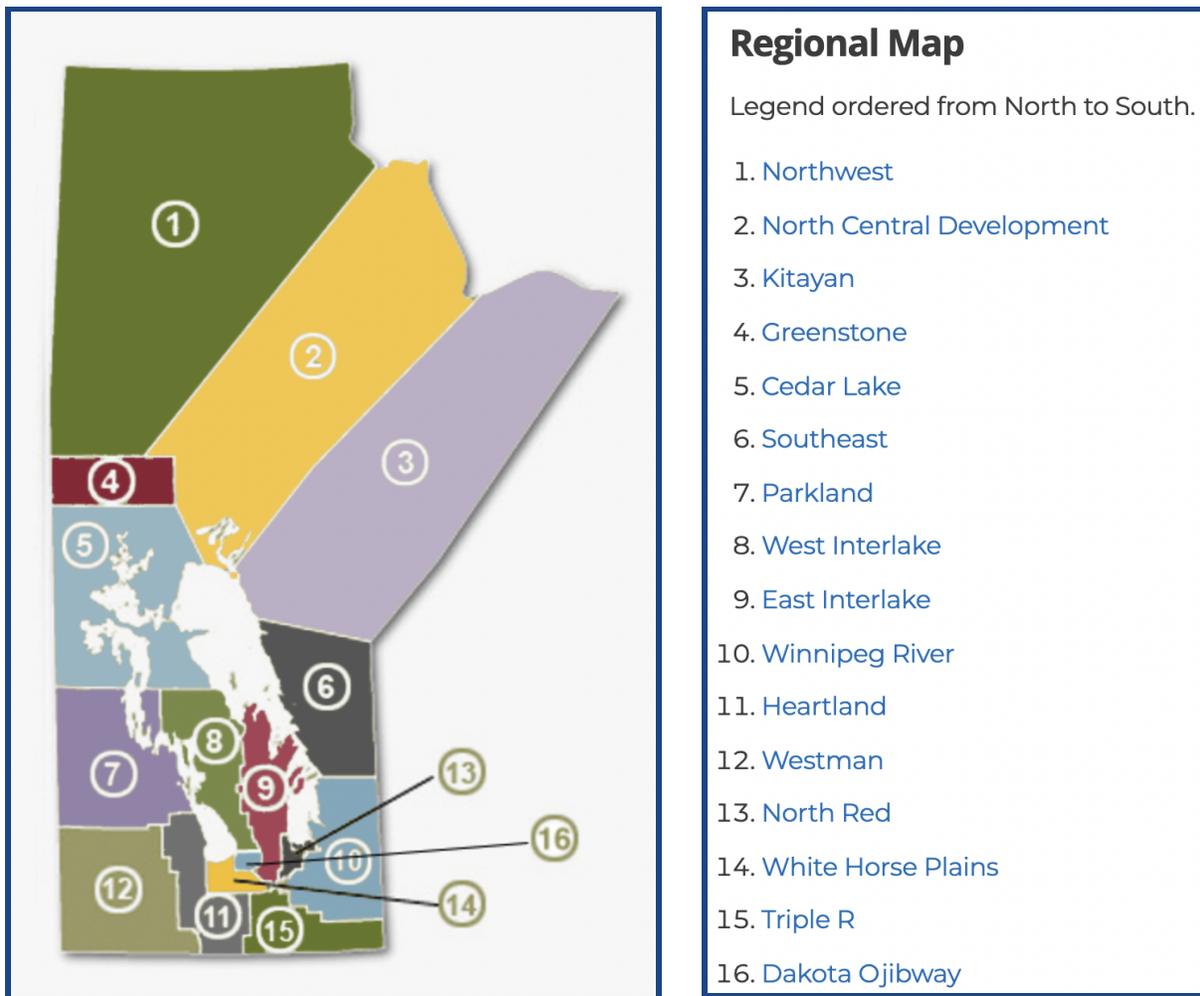
Although some community members are seeking adaptive ways to co-exist with climate change and doing their part to reduce it, we see the community at the beginning of this cycle in acknowledging its realities, and sense the struggle to come together in a meaningful and productive way to create the impact of scope needed. Individuals are self-focused, and rightly so, but there is a lack of needed centralized community leadership to manage needed changes.

Community Participants

Our 'community' involves 17 communities including First Nation (7), Northern Affairs (7), and Urban Industrial (3) including:

Town of Churchill, Cross Lake Community Council, Cross Lake First Nation, Fox Lake First Nation, Gillam Ilford Community Council, Nelson House Community Council, Nelson House First Nation, Norway House Community Council, Norway House Cree Nation, Pikwitonei Community Council, Split Lake Cree Nation, Thicket Portage Community Council, City of Thompson, Wabowden Community Council, War Lake First Nation, and York Landing First Nation

Our geographic reach is vast as indicated by number 2 below:



To reach out to these communities in such a vast geographic area we did radio ads, radio interviews, newspaper ads for the actual printed paper plus ads on their digital site, Facebook posts to all 17 communities in the region, emails to all CFNCD board members asking them to share, emails to other contacts in the communities.

Although the invitation to join was open to all community members in our region (17 communities), we focused on 3 main communities (Churchill, Wabowden and Thompson). Wabowden had heard about the project and approached CFNCD about hosting it. Churchill was especially included because of their location and reliance on ecotourism. Thompson is the northern hub for the surrounding communities so was also seen as a key community to highlight.

Community Conversations

Our community conversations were accomplished via Zoom with 'team' leads for each of the three communities.

The structure we used was to introduce the project, and then present each question separately with time for individual reflection and then small group discussion. We followed that with returning to the main room for a fulsome group discussion. This structure followed a typical 1-2-4-All pattern with allowances for the group sizes.

We did not change any of the breakout group questions provided, but did find much overlap in the answers as we worked through the four questions.

We found the conversations **very** successful and the community building opportunity excellent. We, and many participants, want to know if there will be resources available to build upon this solid start. So often community events create interest only to fade away for lack of resources. Being able to seek out and compensate someone in the community to keep this moving forward would be incredibly valuable.

What We Heard

The four questions posed to each group (community) resulted in common themes that fell into these ten categories:

1. Changes with animals
2. Permafrost melting and change in water levels
3. Extreme heat
4. People feel helpless and not always trying to help things

5. Transportation systems affected
6. Jobs, businesses and livelihoods affected
7. Mental health affected
8. Community Health, conflicting stances on the problem
9. Increased costs
10. Miscellaneous infrastructure challenges

The following is a synthesis of the conversations:

Question One:

1. 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?
 - a. Increase in pests moving north. – wood-ticks have never been seen before. As well as Cougars—thought they weren't much more north than the Pas. Also skunks. Arctic Fox being displaced by Red foxes.
 - b. Less groundwater means more fires. Permafrost is melting and when that goes away there won't be the run-off. Lower water levels increase risk of fire.
 - c. Heat affecting seniors.
 - d. "People here want to care about the environment, but are forced into an extractive approach to earning a living."
 - e. Last winter, winter roads had a shorter time to be open, Will need more all weather roads.
 - f. Ecotourism impacts. Climate affects day to day business decisions, like when the bay is going to freeze. Makes scheduling harder. Affects so many levels of the polar bear business—day-to-day decisions but also planning for seasons, and longer term. And Churchill's identity is so tied into the current environmental regime that may not last too much longer.
 - g. And how it affects mental health: connection to land changes. Land changes, seasons change, people can't do the things they usually do. Add that to a higher unemployment rate. It's felt internally when the land changes. Thompson- more insurance claims- 2 insurance companies have ceased operations in Thompson due to the risk- insurance goes up. In Thompson, our insurance company says they aren't going to insure you- last winter had 8.5 feet of snow- sheds, garages, homes had roofs collapsing. Lots of repairs on homes
 - h. If it gets warmer, possibly more farming further north-used to have an experimental farm in Wabowden

Question Two:

2. How are these environmental and economic changes related to each other?
 - a. Need for dehumidifiers due to higher water table levels and basement flooding, had to be emptied frequently, back yards were wet all year, long winters.
 - b. Ecotourism plus kids disconnected to the land means they grow up less likely to go into those jobs.
 - c. Four major types of jobs (fishing, logging, mining and trapping). Main ones affected by warmer weather are fishing and logging when there isn't enough ice.
 - d. Tourism will be affected by weather changes, smoke, rainy, fire bans, wild rice growing easily affected by water levels.
 - e. "Every person says they don't experience anxiety and depression when they're out on the land. It's a coping mechanism. But things like snow machines and being able to fuel them when fuel prices are incredibly high, next to impossible to find a snow machine if you can afford one, and maintaining dog teams is also very difficult. So everyone knows what they need but they don't have the resources to get those things."
 - f. So many things go into stable communities. Resources for families, stable business environment but all of that—the land physically underneath it all, underneath the families, is changing as we watch. Each little crack reduces the resilience of the community until eventually it's death by 10,000 papercuts. You've shredded all the things this whole community is built on. It comes from the land up.
 - g. A beekeeper in Thompson - disagreed with many points and felt there were lots of advantages and opportunities to climate change

Question Three:

3. 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?
 - a. As well as large solutions, also encouraging small solutions—e.g. Recycling, composting. Recycling is a very hot topic in Churchill—if it's possible, who's fault is it that it's not possible.
 - b. We should normalize eating foods that are in season and more local. 'International trade is important, sure, but do we really need access to strawberries 12 months out of the year?' Bananas that are so beat-up by the time they get here.

- c. Having more income security so that people aren't pushed to big business.
- d. It starts in the schools, building that local employment. We're talking to our youth about options and still telling them they need to go away to college to be successful rather than creating spaces in the community to stay, create an ecotourism business or learn a trade. So with that cultural piece, they lose the opportunity to learn their language, take care of their family and their Elders. It's significant. So that they stay in the community and there's no employment for them.
- e. Educational component to help people learn about alternatives, community gardening, composting, and group composting for those that live in apartments etc, gardening classes.
- f. big companies need policy changes on them, yes we all need to do our part, but big companies/industry are huge polluters.
- g. Lobby the government for a project manager around increasing the local food chain and local supply. Needs to be a coordinated effort.

Question Four:

4. 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?
 - a. Without having someone that is hired to work with the community and government organization, you are doing it all on your own. If a person like Steven was hired, he would lobby the city of Thompson, get crown land, and start developing the area to grow vegetables. Without doing that it falls to the ground. We need government money to be able to hire people
 - b. Have a committed group of people who can have a directory that captures how people can collaborate- share knowledge and list of people so that we can share between communities.
 - c. People are intimidated by the size of this problem. It doesn't take us doing it perfectly. Long term stuff in point 3, but in the short term we're getting our opinions out, but on a grass roots level if we can talk about this in our communities, it can be a start. Doing a bit of vocational training or self empowerment or aggressive self rescue can help solve problems.
 - d. We've seen how a government can pivot in covid. We have the money and resources- we bought a pipeline, putting money into fossil fuels, and then we act like we can't do anything about it. People at the top aren't even paying taxes. The science is there but we are missing the political will to shift the system. Money needs to go into communities. The middle class and the poor know how to do a lot with a little.

- e. Avoid falling into a bandaid scenario. Inefficiency of the housing stock in churchill- mostly heated by propane- there should be new buildings at current efficiency standards. There are small changes but when we do make incremental improvements it shouldn't just be a bandaid.
- f. I think one thing I've noticed, it's the luck of the draw in getting champions in a community. To do the connecting between each other. Even when I'm here tonight- need more round tables and building connections.

What We Learned

The points in the conversations were brought up frequently and had much in common, even though they came from the different perspectives and experiences of the participants. There was little contention and I do not think the facilitators were surprised as they also have lived experiences.

There is a unified and significant appetite for some form of leadership within the communities to work towards solution, and this takes funding as community members are already at capacity. The need for education, both on the ground in dealing with current challenges and with youth to change the course of the problem also was strongly presented.

It would be redundant to repeat the findings expressed in the previous section, but a reiteration of the key themes might be helpful:

1. Changes with animals
2. Permafrost melting and change in water levels
3. Extreme heat
4. People feel helpless and not always trying to help things
5. Transportation systems affected
6. Jobs, businesses and livelihoods affected
7. Mental health affected
8. Community Health, conflicting stances on the problem
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- 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 think the participants were mostly aware of the relatedness of climate change to their daily lives.

● 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

There may have been some eyes opened to small but doable possibilities around growing local food, recycling etc. - things that are more locally solution focused. The general consensus is although the local communities can have some impact, big business and government need to be more proactive. As well, community led initiatives need financial resources for community leadership positions.

● 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

As in the previous answer, there needs to be financial resources for community leadership positions.

● 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

o 4

x 5 - Very much so

This was a great outcome from this project but needs to be strongly supported immediately before the 'just another go-nowhere meeting' mentality takes over. Financial resources for community leadership and activities need to be allocated.

- 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? Create financial resources to have a community liaison/lead to maintain momentum with community residents; create educational opportunities; better and consistently engage the community and keep them informed of any steps or opportunities as a result of this initiative.

Next Steps

There is an appetite for ongoing conversation and advocacy, but specific 'next steps' were not identified.

As the community partner, we would be interested in taking a role in helping to move this initiative forward, but would need the capacity to do so. We would like to have conversations with you about what that might look like and then create an implementation plan. We would want the conversation participants to be viewed as the major stakeholders and be engaged in creating a task force.