



Community Summary Report #30

Location: The Tantramar Region, New Brunswick

Partner Name: Aster Group / Margaret Tusz-King

Green Resilience Project Community Summary Report

Community Partner name: Aster Group Environmental Services Co-operative

Conversation dates: December 9, 2021 and January 17, 2022

Contact: Margaret Tusz-King - margaret.tusz-king@astergroup.ca

1. Introduction

A. Summary

Thirty-eight people from the Tantramar region of New Brunswick, who came together for conversations about climate change and livelihoods, were quite knowledgeable and concerned about climate change risks, but less aware of how low incomes would make people especially vulnerable as our climate changes. The comments, “food bank usage decreased when the CERB was provided” and “everything is harder when you are poor” left profound impressions.

When looking at building community resilience, those with lived-experience of low incomes generally noted transportation, affordable/safe housing, and the increasing cost of living as the most important issues. Others prioritized the risks of flooding (affecting homes; impeding roadways/railways) and extreme weather, and also expressed the most frustration at society’s lack of progress on climate issues.

There was consensus that both climate change and income security need to be prioritized, and that our region has lots of social capital to build upon. Two groups of participants committed to taking actions once their conversations were completed.

B. About the Green Resilience Project

This community conversation is 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

Aster Group Environmental Services Co-operative is a worker-owned business located in the Tantramar region of southeast New Brunswick, that brings together a variety of skilled consultants in projects that address environmental, social and economic sustainability, and help prepare communities for climate change. A portion of Aster profits supports the Aster Foundation, that provides much-needed funding to environmental organizations seeking to do projects not supported through the usual funders' priorities.

Aster member, Margaret Tusz-King, discovered and took the local lead on the Green Resilience project because of her role as a community leader, her interest in sustainability and resilience, social and economic inclusion, justice, and disability supports and services. A former municipal Councillor, and the founding Executive Director of Open Sky Co-operative (a charitable social enterprise located on an organic farm, where disabled adults who experience barriers to independent living and employment receive the educational and concrete supports they need to move forward in their lives), Margaret is well-connected with many local 'communities' whose voices are often excluded from conversations leading to progressive policy development and constructive social change. Currently, Margaret co-chairs the Memramcook-Tantramar Community Task Force that is coordinating community-based responses to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, through networking, project development and leadership activities by more than 200 local volunteers.

D. Why this community was selected to have a conversation

Climate Risks:

The Tantramar region of southeast New Brunswick is located in a coastal part of Canada at high risk of catastrophic impacts of climate change, mostly in relation to rising sea levels, inland flooding and extreme weather. Thanks to dykes built by the Acadian settlers 400 years ago, many Tantramar communities have been protected and built at sea level. If/when the dykes are overtopped (they have been poorly-maintained – an issue being addressed slowly by cross-provincial and federal governments) millions of dollars in infrastructure and homes will be affected, not to mention thousands of lives. The dykes protect railway infrastructure and the Trans-Canada Highway joining New Brunswick with Nova Scotia, so a main transportation corridor is at risk (impacting economic activities, access to healthcare, ability to travel to work, etc). The dykes also protect many farms and pastures upon which the local agriculture community depends.

New provincial flood maps are being released to the public, so people can now see what the risk to their personal property is, should the predicted 1-in-4- or 1-in-50- or 1-in-100-year storms occur. This risk of flooding will affect housing: people may find that their properties now have no re-sale value; landlords may cease to invest maintenance in their buildings due to their risky locations.

With the oceans warming, the risk of severe hurricanes reaching further north is increasing. This will mean more uncertainty and risk to infrastructure and public safety. The concomitant flooding of roadways could also mean that some people will be un-reachable by first responders. Farm livelihoods and infrastructure could also be washed out.

The 3 levels of government have been apprised, but seem to be slow to act upon the risks of climate change. Local non-profits groups like EOS Eco-Energy Inc., and Mount Allison University, are doing excellent work providing public education and research in support of the just transition. Municipalities are also transforming how they provide services via the Partners for Climate Protection program of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Given the rate of change with the climate, though, there are real questions regarding whether we all can keep up.

Income Security and Livelihoods Risks:

This, too is a significant concern for New Brunswick, and especially for the Tantramar region. Compared to all other provinces, New Brunswick has the highest percentage of citizens in the lowest quartile for income (17.1% for NB; 14.2% for Canada). The median income of families in the Tantramar region is 91% of the median income for the province as a whole, making this region one of the poorest in the province.

The more urban centres of New Brunswick have much higher median incomes than rural areas (for example, in Tantramar there is a 100% difference in median income between the Town of Sackville and more rural Port Elgin); experts identify literacy rates so low that 50% of New Brunswickers are unable to participate fully in society (and so have fewer

employment and training opportunities); and food security and diets are generally poor (only half the population regularly eats fruits and vegetables).

Additionally in Tantramar, there are proportionately more people living with disabilities than across New Brunswick (28% vs 22%); more people living alone (17% vs 13%); more children and adults in low-income households; higher incidence of cancers in women; higher proportion of adults living with 3 chronic medical conditions; and more premature deaths among youth (cancers, injuries, suicide). All of these factors may be correlated with income insecurity, with better outcomes among those with higher income levels.

The Quickly-Changing Local Context:

The Covid-19 pandemic was an invitation for our region to mobilize its commitment to people, and inspired the creation of the Memramcook-Tantramar Community Task Force that has fostered excellent volunteering, and woven together a dozen community groups, 4 municipalities, 1 First Nation and more than 200 volunteers. Task Force members are carrying out coordinated actions to respond to pre-existing and emerging challenges associated with the pandemic – food security and local foods, mental and physical health, risks to seniors, risks to youth, education, local business supports, government aid programs, and access to resources. This context of 'manifested hope' provides some sense of solace and connections, however it is not enough to mask the real long term concerns of poverty and climate risks.

There is currently little interpretation being offered along with the new updated flood maps and climate change information that are now accessible to the general public. Anxiety and ignorance are unhelpful companions; the pandemic has limited the region's ability to plan and carry out helpful public information campaigns. Most community leaders are too busy managing pandemic concerns to prioritize putting out this 'fire' right now. Also, the provincial government has chosen this moment to carry out municipal government reform, so most leadership of local governments is being diverted toward their own issues of survival.

Due to the combination of subsidence of the land, rising sea levels and expected catastrophic storms, new predictions for impacts resulting in flooding appear to be more dire than ever. Recovery from the current and anticipated losses due to the pandemic regarding livelihoods and income resilience, may be slow due to limited local resources. We will need to focus all of our strengths and assets, to do what we can to:

- identify and break down unhelpful systems that are preventing livelihoods and environmental safety and health
- re-build ourselves and our communities into systems using live-giving models that are inclusive, just and sustainable, while also
- care for people, the land and properties during this 'perfect storm' of climate change, transitioning away from fossil-fueled economy, and real and anticipated poverty.

Local Strengths and Assets:

Always strong (in terms of being human-scale, committed to people, and rooted to the local

land and environment), Tantramar's communities, its groups and the local Mount Allison University are becoming better coordinated, and are developing more intersectoral work together. The capacity of the university to attract knowledgeable teaching staff for leadership and original research means that many citizens are very well-informed about things like climate change. The enthusiasm of university students for experiential learning opportunities means that we don't have to look far for willing volunteers.

A leading figure in climate change research and community education lives in Tantramar, and is an elected municipal Councillor for the Town of Sackville. Her ability to interpret and inspire will hopefully bring a positive and knowledgeable approach to emerging issues. It is fortunate that she is a member of Aster Group, and also participated in one of the community conversations.

Integrating the concerns and effects of climate change into all community-based work will be a growing edge for Tantramar. Like many parts of the world, these issues have been researched and addressed as if they exist in silos. Their interconnections are becoming more known, and the pandemic seems to have amplified them.

It is unfortunate that, beyond charitable entities such as food banks, Christmas Cheer programs and dwindling churches, there are no organizations in the region with a focus on economic inclusion and advocacy. The acute disparity of wealth in the region and the harsh realities of what it is like to be poor, are not widely-known and would shock many caring local people. The Memramcook-Tantramar Community Task Force, in its emerging intersectoral work, is well-positioned to become the entity that champions this issue.

Coupled together, the risks related to climate change and income security in Tantramar mean that many local citizens should be concerned about local resilience and livelihoods as society embarks upon a just transition toward a fossil-fuel-free future. The 2 conversations held via the Green Resilience Project invited the sharing of these concerns, as well as some ideas for how to best respond.

E. About the conversation participants

The Tantramar region, by Canadian standards, is not very diverse, yet there can be 'great divides' between 'town' people, 'the university', and 'rural' people, with differences based upon family/neighbour relationships, income and education. Many families have ancestors dating back to the 1700's while others are just arriving (indeed, New Brunswick experienced the highest proportion of new residents moving here of any province during the pandemic). Sackville is seen as a great retirement community, where middle class seniors experience a good quality of life. Like anywhere, community stressors can foster more division rather than bring people together.

In order to generate the most diverse and interesting conversations,

it was priority to invite a variety of people who met some of the following criteria: lived experience of disability and/or mental illness; lived experience of low income or homelessness; balance of people from the rural area as well as from towns; people who live in flood plains or other at-risk locations; those knowledgeable or engaged with climate change and/or income security issues; those engaged in local government; those knowledgeable about climate change and/or poverty issues; a range of ages; balance of genders; First Nations participants; People of Colour; newcomers; and, those with long experience living in the region.

Participants were invited by personal invitation or referral, either in-person or by email, and via community networks and organizations (e.g. the Memramcook-Tantramar Community Task Force), and social media posts. Many were connected with organizations known for engagement in economic/social inclusion or climate change, or with local governments. Not all invitations and promotions were successful. Three who registered did not show up.

The pandemic had created excessive demands upon those who work at the community level on issues of income security, and this group of invitees sent the most regrets. Also, those who were not comfortable with or who did not have access to computers for a Zoom meeting did not tend to sign on (e.g. low income people; some with mental health challenges). This is why one in-person conversation was held with Open Sky Co-operative, so that this organization, that serves adults who face barriers due to disability or mental illness, could include their participants and staff.

Generally, attendees did represent a range of lived experiences to inform their participation, and came from many parts of the region.

The following demographic data describe the 38 people who participated in the two different conversations:

20-40 years of age - 55%; 41-60 years of age - 26%; over 60 - 19%

People of Colour - 1; recent immigrant - 1; English-speakers - all

women - 58%; men - 32%; agender - 10%

Low income - 42%; middle income - 53%; preferred not to say - 5%

Living with a disability - 21%

Ratings of involvement in the community, on a scale of 1-5, averaged 3/5, with 9 reporting 4 or 5/5, and 8 reporting 1 or 2/2.

The following sectors were represented, by % of individuals:

Agriculture and natural resources - 18%

Arts, culture, recreation and sport - 21%

Business, finance and administration - 24%

Community and government services - 21%

Education - 21%

Non-profit, charitable or grassroots organizing - 42%

Essential and/or service work - 18%

Management - 8%

Media and publishing - 8%

Renewable energy sector - 5%

Construction, trades, transport and equipment operation - 8%

Retired - 8%

Tech - 3%

Belonged to a union - 8%

The following experiences were reported, by % of individuals:

Livelihood has been seriously affected by the pandemic - 34%

Livelihood endangered or seriously impacted by climate change - 21%

Livelihood endangered or seriously impacted by the transition of fossil fuels - 5%

Had a lived experience of poverty - 29%

Had a lived experience with homelessness - 3%

Advocate in the area of climate change - 42%

Advocate in the area of income security - 21%

Livelihood not yet directly impacted by Covid-19, climate change or the just transition - 45%

Not familiar with the possible links between climate change, income security and community

resilience - 16%

F. The Community Conversation

It was fortunate that pandemic restrictions allowed us to plan and carry out one in-person conversation, appropriately distanced and yet inclusive. This took place at Open Sky Co-operative, in their Program Room that overlooks the Tantramar Marsh where the flood-waters will gather when the dykes could be overtopped in an anticipated 1-in-10 year storm.

Sixteen of the 38 Tantramar participants attended the Open Sky conversation. For this session, the process was modified to meet the needs of autistic individuals. This included more time, more visuals (videos, maps, photos) and more engagement during the 'presentation' phase to ensure common understandings. Three skilled facilitators from within the Open Sky organization led the small-group conversations in separate meeting rooms, to ensure inclusivity and involvement. The original breakout group questions were used, however there was not enough time for conversations to cover all the questions desired. Results will show that answers dwindle for the final questions.

For the second, online session, 7 Mount Allison University students, (knowledgeable about environmental issues, and known through their past engagement with community/leadership projects) were contracted and oriented to the Project in early December. However, registration for the December conversation was poor (many of the social agencies were very busy with their food security issues; generally, it felt like everyone was just holding on until they could take their Christmas holiday, with no personal reserve for anything more), so the Zoom conversation was postponed until after Christmas.

The second invitations and promotions for a Zoom-based conversation in January went better, with 25 people registered. Half of registrants signed up 5 or more days ahead; the rest registered as late as the same day. Last-minute registration is, unfortunately, not uncommon in our region. With the low numbers (we thought) at the close of registration, the students were re-oriented to work in teams (instead of alone, as had been originally planned, to accommodate up to 6 small groups). When the participant numbers increased, the students clearly stated preferences to still work in teams, and so the small groups eventually had up to 7 participants in each.

We chose to follow the framework provided for online conversations, and used the original list of small-group questions. Again the groups did not have enough time to complete them all. So, following the Zoom conversation, participants were emailed the questions, with the hope that several would submit further thoughts. Only a few responded. Outside of the original design of the Project, the Mount Allison University student facilitators were invited to respond to the questions themselves (in writing, following the conversation time), and their data are included in the results as well.

The conversations were successful community events in that they:

- were a good opportunity to get people together for good conversation during the

isolation of a pandemic

- were fearless and bold, and invited fearless and bold participation
- were timely and importantly related to pressing issues of this region
- brought together two seemingly separate issues of concerns, along with each's proponents, so they could hear each other and problem-solve together
- attracted local media whose interview and online publication were shared across the region, and amplified nationally
- fostered some useful next steps

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?

Changing weather means that extremes of winter temperatures are bringing more instances of freezing rain, creating dangerous driving and walking conditions, and closing schools; high winds and blizzards cause more frequent highway closures and power outages; summer excessive heat and drought affect gardens, agriculture, health and safety; air conditioning is now needed (but many can't afford it).

Spring and fall inland flooding (due to changing weather patterns as well as deforestation) threatens homes and roadways; frightening weather-related language like the term 'weather bomb' is now common; insurance rates are increasing; we worry about the safety and security of our homes. Minor coastal and inland flooding affects us regularly. We worry about a future washout of the Trans-Canada Highway, other roadways, and of the railway system, interfering with supply chains, food/goods deliveries, access to hospitals, and possibly spilling dangerous goods, causing further risks to people and the environment.

Agriculture is especially affected. The growing season is uncertain as to start and finish, and whether it will be wet or dry or 'normal'. Farmers spend money on both irrigation equipment and drainage, but you can't predict and plan - it's a surprise every year. The hotter, drier summers harm or kill livestock. Many farms and pastures located closer to sea level are most at risk to flooding.

Only 3-8% of food eaten in New Brunswick is grown locally. So, although food security has been affected in the short-term when local crops fail, concerns about long term access to food due to the effects of climate change (inaccessible roads, expensive transportation etc) were also identified. People are becoming more interested in backyard and community gardens, and would like to see more public encouragement for these.

Climate anxiety is a reality. Hopelessness and helplessness regarding our human willingness to change and survive is pervasive. Additional stressors include income insecurity (especially for farmers and those who already have low incomes), out-of-reach housing prices, and locations of housing built on floodplains. Physical health is affected by slip-and-fall accidents on ice, blue-green algae in drinking water, and salt-water intrusion into wells. Poorer air quality and excessive heat cause heart and breathing illnesses. Everything costs more. Heating our homes (oil, electricity), driving our cars (gasoline, maintenance), insurance, food costs, rent, property taxes, etc. are all higher. People have less money to prepare for emergencies. With fewer personal savings, people can't invest in their lives (e.g. by purchasing a home, owning a car), and so have limited options for where and how to live, where and how to get to work, and how to save. All local people are less financially resilient.

While many people reported feeling generally supported and connected with others in the community, there was acknowledgement that the pandemic has challenged this. Some noted

feeling connected in new ways with emerging issues, such as Black Lives Matter and the LGBTQ++ community, thanks to technology and social media. However the lack of rural internet and the expense of computers/iPads means that many people are still left out due to personal wealth or location.

Affordable and accessible housing is a big concern. The least expensive housing, to purchase or rent, is located on floodplains. Landlords won't invest in these structures. Homeowners experience losses due to lower resale values. Gentrification of the housing located above flood plains puts good quality options out of reach for poorer people. The cost of building materials makes repairs and new construction expensive. There is a zero vacancy rate for affordable housing, and many report that paying rent means they don't buy groceries.

Transportation is a big issue for rural areas like Tantramar, where there are no subsidized public transportation alternatives, disproportionately affecting those with a low income. Transportation is a big issue for rural areas like Tantramar, where there are no subsidized public transportation alternatives, disproportionately affecting those with a low income.

People are worried about an increase in conflicts in the world due to climate change. They worry that the politicians don't have their priorities straight, making too little investment in safe and healthy communities, providing inadequate income support to keep families going, and postponing the transition away from fossil fuels. Corporations should be more fairly taxed to pay for this. A level of frustration and anger, due to unfulfilled promises by governments, underpins the thinking of many.

Some positives are noted. People are changing their relationships with 'things'. A sharing economy, wherein people trade used goods rather than purchase new, is growing, thanks to social media conduits. The pandemic has fostered more intentional commitment to community and relationships. Most people feel that their neighbours will be there for them, should calamity strike. Many note the fine leadership coming forth from Gen Z individuals (born between 1997 and 2012), bold and confident with fresh perspectives. The agricultural growing season is lengthening.

The experience of the pandemic has both amplified and clouded impressions of climate change, income security and community resilience. It was noted that Covid impacted vulnerable communities more, and what happened to these folks regarding health, lower incomes and food insecurity, could be what we would see with climate change, just not within a 2-year blip like the pandemic.

The following statements caught our attention:

"Is it worth bringing children into this world?"

"Everything is harder when you are poor"

"Capitalism and the rule of the rich is discouraging"

"It's human stupidity - we know what we need to do - why aren't we doing it? We are our own biggest obstacles" [to addressing climate change]

"The lowest waged people are always expected to pick up the slack"

“I wonder if it is enough just to make small changes”

“Too often, I hear that Canadians (especially Maritimers) are not that worried about climate change because the absolute worst they’ll have to deal with is flooding. I think this is a dangerous perspective to have because climate change can have so many ripple effects, on the economy, human migration, and human security. Addressing climate change’s scary possibilities can be a lot to hear but is nonetheless worth talking about.”

B. How are these environmental and economic changes related to each other?

If you have money, you will be more resilient as the climate changes (e.g. install air conditioning for heat waves; travel or move away if needed; re-train for new jobs).

The extreme weather is directly affecting our food bills as healthy local agriculture suffers. Having more limited options for living outside of floodplains means that safe housing is more expensive. There are concerns about increased risks of homelessness.

For our rural region, affordability of transportation, maintenance of less-used water-logged roads, increasing social isolation, uncertainties or harm to rural income-generation opportunities like agriculture, the sense that in an emergency they will be the last rescued due to low population density, and the reality that there are fewer government services for rural areas, are all worse due to risks and effects of climate change.

Many farms are in the areas of most risk to effects of climate change, i.e. flooding, drought, high winds. Farmland may become permanently non-aerable due to saltwater coastal flooding or persistent drought. Temporary foreign workers are often skilled people who can't farm in their home countries due to effects of climate change and poverty there.

It is important to act upon both climate change and income security. But there is a sense of frustration at the lack of political will to spend on things that don't bring immediate results. We need the government to invest in raising and maintaining the dykes, to maintain the transportation corridor. We also need investment in living wages and guaranteed livable incomes.

Those we rely upon most to respond to impacts of climate change crises, e.g. snow removal, first responders, can't afford to stay home in safety (they have to go to work).

The poor are most vulnerable. They don't have food stores on-hand for emergencies, they often live in sub-standard housing at most risk (floods, fire), and don't have the income to carry out resilient responses (e.g. buy or grow more food, move to higher ground). Having a disability compounds this.

Climate refugees are a concern too, as people need to move north into Canada because of lack of livelihood opportunities in their home countries, and climate change effects there.

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?

Rural transportation could be improved with publicly-funded shuttle bus routes, at affordable prices. Carpooling should be encouraged, along with more cycling and walking. More affordable, accessible and/or energy-efficient housing would respond to both climate change and income insecurity. Rent control is especially important.

Build more social capital. Sharing of unused spaces (e.g. empty churches) in the community could resource exciting new initiatives. More public spaces for community gatherings and community gardens would build social resilience. Encouraging personal gardening would build resilience and health. More secure rural healthcare would improve overall health and resilience, and respond to climate-related emerging illnesses.

More and better job opportunities, especially around green jobs with better minimum wages so that one could work part-time, would improve quality of life, income resilience and overall wellbeing. Encouraging more buying locally would support small businesses and new job development, foster new entries into local food production, support the local Farmer's Market, and counter big-agriculture (seen as a corporate problem, not pulling its weight). More government supports for small businesses would be helpful. Co-operative businesses are especially identified as problem-solvers, with their principles and values connected with fairness and community.

More acceptance and support for artistic endeavours is identified as valuable to build resilience for everyone. Less time working and more time for leisure and social time, especially in green spaces should be encouraged and normalized.

Building the sharing economy, with trading or sharing of goods/tools rather than purchasing new, would have both economic and environmental positive impacts. Encouraging clotheslines, food preservation and other 'homestead' skills will improve the environment and also save living costs.

Subsidizing costs for higher education would unburden those with related debt, so they can start to get ahead in life.

Supporting more living in rural areas would open up more arable land for food production, provide healthier outdoor jobs especially for youth, and perhaps lower stress levels in daily life. Looking at different ways to produce food - hydroponics, all-season greenhouses, community gardens, food forests, CSA's, microfarms - would shake up the power of corporations, and empower and strengthen rural resilience.

Ensuring everyone has a guaranteed income would build dignity into lives, rather than fostering charities like food banks. Addressing the lack of wifi in rural areas would open up employment, learning and communication improvements for people living lifestyles that are less costly to the environment. More affordable green electricity would benefit too.

Government incentives for behavioural changes (e.g. we fly and drive too much; train service sucks; rural public transportation) would be helpful. Public education on climate change and poverty would build political will.

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?

Government needs to take a leading role, providing financing through fair taxation of the rich and of corporations. Things that need financing include:

- higher education, skills training, job training for a just transition
- better information-sharing, so citizens can make better choices
- public rural accessible transportation development and support
- affordable housing starts, in partnership with communities
- higher minimum wage
- Guaranteed Annual Income/Guaranteed Livable Income
- rural wifi
- supporting cultural initiatives and community organizations
- subsidizing beginner farmers

Governments need to also take a longer view, and invest in initiatives with longer term payoffs, e.g. changing the forestry model toward biodiversity; providing livable incomes so the next generation does better.

The business sector needs to look toward the co-operative business model (principles and values support the environment, social and economic justice). This sector needs to engage more and better, because the community can't do this alone. The local Farmer's Market should be recognized as a key part of our business community.

Society needs to start thinking differently about work, e.g. lower stress and increase leisure time by working fewer hours at higher pay (we are in survival mode right now).

Communities need to build positive movements to bring people together and address issues of poverty and climate change. Community organizations need to share resources better and collaborate more. We all should tap into the experiences and connections of others, e.g. Acadians, First Nations, to build new alliances and share resources.

Mount Allison University should use its assets better in support of the community.

The Tantramar region should build upon its existing strengths (e.g. it is the most active community in Atlantic Canada when it comes to climate research and initiatives), and do more.

The forestry sector needs to work differently, doing selective cutting rather than clear-cutting. This will improve biodiversity, sink carbon and prevent some inland flooding.

3. What We Learned

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.

This project attracted many good people, including some who would be considered community leaders. People seemed to be more aware of, and more concerned about, impacts of climate change than impacts of income insecurity in our region. Local experiences of spring and fall flooding, summer droughts, later and shorter winters, more severe storms, and more fears of all of these underpinned the prevalence of fears/anxieties for the future. No one disputed this.

However I was surprised by the surprise with which information about the realities and impacts of income insecurity was met with. As well, the ‘aha moment’ that occurred when income security was connected with climate impacts, and the inordinate impact on low income people, also surprised me. It seems that, unless it is happening or could happen to you, you may not put 2+2 together.

It was heartening to see people find the connections making sense, though, and acknowledging the value of livable incomes for everyone. The shock of economic realizations may have stimulated the richly-populated “they should do something about it”, and the looking for blame that resulted in the small groups. It tells me that a robust examination of our social and economic systems may be a timely next step, in order to focus on where and how to take constructive action next.

My prevailing sense at this point, though is that the pandemic has already knackered people - the idea that there is more to do when we are all just barely getting by (in a mental health sense) seems like a lot. Outside of actions and leadership carried out through existing organizations, it is unlikely that new responsive initiatives will occur soon, simply because of this exhaustion.

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

In addition to the above, the diversity of participants, coupled with the ability for them to share their own realities and thinking, meant that the information presented was reinforced by First Voices, for added impact. There was not enough time for the small groups to really dig deeply into what a ‘just transition’ could or should look like for our region, but the concept

of that was a take-home, at least. It was good that we could use so many visuals from our region (due to the extent of climate change research and tools easily available for the presentation aspect), because they were very effective and demonstrative. The presence of a member of the Media, and their interview following the January conversation, meant that the information and ideas had a broader reach than anticipated.

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

Most people reported already knowing quite a bit about climate change, and most knew of actions already being taken by community organizations and local government. Indeed, everyone knew of something going on regarding climate change, just because the region has been a leader in research and public education for many years.

Because small group discussions were not long enough, most did not get into discussing next step actions. Evaluations for the conversation that included disabled adults noted commitment to 'continue the conversation' later. Although many voices sounded like "someone should do something about that" rather than "I will do something about that", I am optimistic that with these new perspectives, those participants who made commitments will feel enabled to take action for themselves at some point.

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

Three Food Security Action Group (FSAG) members of the Memramcook-Tantramar Community Task Force were enthused and in touch immediately following the conversation, for support and ideas to take action on Food Security and Climate Change (and, indeed, have copied me into emails and notes on their recent work - they are making progress!). This was a new relationship. No other new relationships can be reported at this time.

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 FSAG is pushing local government and community organizations to work on connecting Food Security with Climate Change. This is a new topic for our region, and will certainly draw more people into further solution-finding. We all like to talk about food, and it is an important community connector that all of us can identify with. So far, EOS Eco-Energy has agreed to incorporate this topic into its community education and new project areas, in response to FSAG communications. Also, the Mayor's Committee on Climate Change for the Town of Sackville is requesting the addition of a representative from the FSAG to its membership, so that a lens of income and food security will be used in the Committee's future work.

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?

It was noted by the FSAG that, although there are organizations, local governments and the university working on issues of climate change, there is no local organization working on issues of income insecurity. This gap bodes poorly for resilience development. I will make sure that elements from the Green Resilience conversations get to key community leaders, with recommendation that they spearhead this, and particularly collaborate with the climate change folks. Through the Memramcook-Tantramar Community Task Force, that takes an intersectoral approach to community development, the FSAG will be supported in continuing to pursue integration of Food Security and Climate Change thinking.

4. Next steps

Open Sky participants are re-forming their MACE (Movement Against the Climate Emergency) group that worked together prior to the pandemic, participating in local climate marches along with students. This group did some excellent work sharing information and learning (e.g. planned and hosted a community dinner with a mental health counsellor as a guest speaker). They plan to get together to reflect upon the Green Resilience conversation, and focus their next steps on something that integrates climate issues with economic justice.

The Food Security Action Group has already begun an advocacy campaign to raise awareness about the risk of Food Insecurity in relation to Climate Change. It is hoped that seeds planted with at least one of their target groups (local government, community organizations, province-wide organizations) will germinate into intentional actions. The Memramcook-Tantramar Community Task Force is hoping to carry out an intersectoral resiliency community plan in 2022-23, and these conversations will inform some of the work.

Aster Group continues to work mostly on issues of environment and climate change, and will especially bring perspectives on economic resilience aspect into ongoing and future work. Having had the experience of this conversation among people who had not talked before (i.e. the solitudes of environmentalists vs social activists), it will be easier to diversify conversations in other circles.