



Community Summary Report #22

Location: Montréal, Quebec

Partner Name: Y4Y Quebec (1 of 2)

## Green Resilience Project Community Summary Report (1 of 2)

Community Partner name: Y4Y Québec - info@y4yquebec.org

Conversation date: January 21st, 2022

### **1. Introduction**

#### **A. Summary**

For question 1, both breakout groups addressed what appears to be increasingly cold and unpredictable winters in Montreal. This symptom of climate change adversely affects the homeless, and those who work in the service sector where cancellations are likelier to occur. For question 2, both mentioned that lower income earners cannot use AC in the summer or heating in the winter because they cannot afford to. It is the rich, instead, who can afford to pay for climate solutions, such as electric cars. For question 3, both discussed integrating more education on climate change and income inequality in schools so that more is learned early on. Finally, both groups responded to question 4 by agreeing that while everyone is responsible for addressing climate change, those with lower incomes ought to focus first on their material needs. Governments should provide financial support to businesses that opt for climate friendly solutions.

#### **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 Y4Y Québec**

Y4Y Québec is a provincial non-profit youth network committed to addressing the issues facing English-speaking youth (between the ages of 16 to 30). We aspire to create a strong sense of belonging to the community so that all youth will feel part of Québec society.

While we are a provincial group, Y4Y is based in Montreal, and that is where the majority of our staff and volunteers live, therefore we are especially connected to the English-speaking youth of this community.

Mitchell Beer from The Energy Mix reached out to Y4Y to participate in the Green Resilience Project based on a referral from Lorraine O'Donnell. Lorraine is a Research Associate at QUESCREN with whom Y4Y has frequently collaborated. We were immediately interested in the offer, as we know how much climate change and income insecurity are important topics for our English-speaking youth demographics. Furthermore, I have written my Masters thesis on a climate change topic, so therefore I was personally interested in the project.

#### **D. Why this community was selected to have a conversation**

- In terms of climate change, this Montreal community faces flooding, heat waves and smog in the summer, and hot and cold snaps in the winter. In terms of income security, the community faces issues like the lack of affordable housing, a rising cost of living, underfunded social programs, etc.
- The local environment is changing by warming by 1.2 degrees Celsius from 1979 to 2016, and that trend is likely to continue. To address flooding and community resilience, the city of Montreal has had the army build dikes and stuff big balloons inside municipal drain pipes. To address heat waves, the city is setting aside land for public green spaces, and planting trees to cut down on the heat island effect. To combat smog, the city is banning oil and wood heating. Addressing the energy transition, while including some of the previously mentioned initiatives, also includes installing electric car charging stations. To address income security, the city is buying empty properties and investing in social and affordable housing, and supporting various nonprofit initiatives that combat homelessness.
- Montreal's strength in terms of climate change is geographic. The island is not near an ocean, nor do its nearby forests get as hot and dry as those in British Columbia, which lead to forest fires. Montreal's strength in terms of income security is that, globally speaking, it remains a relatively affordable city, unlike, for example, Toronto or Vancouver.

#### **E. About the conversation participants**

**# of conversation participants: 14**

I chose to invite the Filipino Youth Group of the Evangelical Mission Community Church in Montreal (on Décarie boulevard) for three reasons. First, it is a relatively young group (ranging from age 13 to mid-late 20s), and I wanted to hear from a youth demographic. Second, I thought that a Christian perspective on these topics could provide an interesting analytical lens. Thirdly, I do not believe that input from the Filipino community is often collected in these contexts.

While we had hoped to have these conversations in person, COVID forced them to be held over Zoom during their weekly meetings. The Filipino Youth Group was invited because I am friends with one of its community leaders, and thereby allowed for easier access.

14 members of the Filipino Youth Group attended, out of a total of roughly 20. They ranged from age 13 to mid-late 20s. This reflected a range of lived experiences, from someone who owns a hairdressing salon, one who works as an auto mechanic, to some who were still unemployed and living with their parents. Since I was invited to the Youth Group's weekly meeting to present, I did not make any particular accommodations, as I was more the guest than they were.

Every member of the Youth Group self-identifies as Filipino, to my understanding. Therefore there was no intra-group ethnic diversity to the conversation; however, choosing this community was meant to elevate a particular ethnic minority. As previously mentioned, there was age diversity present, and a degree of viewpoint diversity exhibited as well.

I quickly chose Montreal as the spatial community which I intended to explore, since, as a lifelong resident, it is that which I am most familiar with. However, I wanted to find a segment of the Montreal community with different life experiences than my own. This made approaching the Filipino Youth Group an easy decision to take, as it is one of the few ethnic communities I have a connection to.

## **F. The Community Conversation**

- This conversation took place over Zoom, during a weekly evening meeting of the Filipino Youth Group of the Evangelical Mission Community Church in Montreal.
- For the first hour, I listened to the group say prayers and deliver a sermon. When it was my turn to host, I followed the script offered by the Green Resilience Project quite closely. Certain elements of the introduction were cut, such as getting everyone to present themselves, since this had already been done without a prompt. The event ran just shy of two hours, clocking in at one hour and forty minutes. While keeping all of the questions, I chose to shorten certain pre and post-breakout conversation segments since I had young members in the audience and it was nearing 10 pm.
- All breakout group questions remained the same. I chose to only have two breakout groups since the overall size of the group was not immense.
- Yes, I believe the conversation was a successful community event. I heard perspectives I had not previously considered, and many attendees, especially the younger ones, expressed gratitude for having been given the chance to participate. In my breakout group, there were some who spoke more than others, but by the end of the conversation, most participants had spoken at least twice.

## **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?**

Both breakout groups addressed what appears to be increasingly cold and unpredictable winters in Montreal. This symptom of climate change adversely affects the homeless ("Homeless people sleep under the roof outside in the snow [in Kent Parc], [so] many deaths happen outside for this reason"), and those who work in the service sector where cancellations are likelier to occur, affecting their income. "I work in services, so when it's

extremely cold, you get a lot of cancellations, so production goes down. So it's hard for those who work on commission, they don't make as much".

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

Both groups mentioned that lower income earners cannot use AC in the summer (“[lower income households] won't want to use their A/C because they can't afford it or they need their money to use for food and basic needs”) or heating in the winter (“[lower income households] might not want to use their heating so they will use firewood, which contributes to climate change”) because they cannot afford to. It is the rich, instead, who can afford to pay for climate solutions like electric cars. “[Hybrid]/electric [cars] are still so expensive, and are not affordable for the average earner”.

### **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?**

Both discussed integrating more education on climate change and income inequality in schools so that more is learned from a younger age. “One thing that would help the community and environment would be to put it into the classroom. Ie you should buy electric [cars], or you should be taught recycling practices [...]” However, one breakout group pushed even further, stating we ought to “[educate] not only young people/youth but adults, industries and companies, since they are the ones in power right now.” The educator should ideally be an individual “in [one's] community that [is] [known], [who] would have more influence, more credibility.”

### **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?**

Both groups agreed that while everyone is responsible in some part to address climate change, those with lower incomes need to be allowed to first focus on their material needs. “Commuting [is] so expensive, [and] food has gotten more expensive too [...]” As a solution, the first group endorsed a guaranteed income security program for “lower income [folks], for students [...] [who] can't work all the time when they're studying [...] to be able to afford the essentials [...]”

Both agreed that governments ought to provide financial support to businesses that opt for climate friendly solutions. “[As] a hairdresser, we use lots of hair products - these colors get rinsed into the sink, that [then] goes into the ocean and causes pollution. There's a solution, but not government funded. You'd put colors in a box and a company would come and dispose of it for you. Not every salon has it, very few, nearly none, it's very expensive. Not affordable, so not a priority, but if it was [government] funded, [we'd] love to do it”.

## **3. What We Learned**

- These aforementioned key points are important because they did not emerge from industry specialists. The Filipino Youth Group members are simply expressing their perspectives and observations. While every point may not revolutionize the conversation, they may allow a surer footing for policy decisions. The high price of electric cars was frequently mentioned when discussing climate solutions. This somewhat surprised me because I have gotten used to reading about how much cheaper they have become, but hearing this from middle to low income participants shifted my perspective on this topic. Overall, participants demonstrated a neutral to pessimistic view on whether solutions will be achieved to combat climate change and income insecurity. This general consensus is saddening, but galvanizing in equal parts.
- To what extent do you think your conversation built a wider and deeper understanding of the links and synergies between community resilience, livelihoods, income security and the low-carbon transition?
  - 4. Attendees were in large part thankful to have had the opportunity to participate in this conversation. One breakout group stated that “[more] talks like this Green Resilience conversation [ought to be organized] because it allowed [them] to actually think about climate change, income, and brainstorm on ideas, issues and more.” I did not attribute a 5 to this conversation because, while not in all cases, I remarked that it often veered towards discussing the low-carbon transition and income security in isolation from one another.
- To what extent did participants demonstrate increased awareness of climate change and their own capacity for climate action?
  - 4. The climate change example of heat waves, which impacts those with lower income differently, was eye opening to certain participants who did not initially see the correlation. I did not attribute a 5 because there were varying degrees of optimism in terms of capacity for climate action. While there was a general consensus stating that it is everyone’s responsibility to get involved, many, as previously mentioned, were not convinced of their ability to change things. “Government may not hear us [young people],” said one participant. “But the rich control everything, and they don’t care!” Said another.
- To what extent were new relationships between community partners and conversation participants created and fostered?
  - 5. Conversation participants were truly grateful for having the experience of being heard. I have been repeatedly thanked by church leaders at the Evangelical Mission Community Church for choosing them, and for having attended their weekly meeting. I will be attending again in the near future, simply as a friend of the group’s. Church leaders have made it clear to me by

email that they would love to participate in events with myself or Y4Y Québec in the future.

- To what extent did your conversation create opportunities to foster ongoing discussion of solutions related to climate change, income insecurity and community resilience?
  - 3. It is unclear to what extent this conversation created such opportunities, since none have since individually reached out to me, nor to the Green Resilience Project organizers, to my knowledge. However, my gentle optimism stems from their genuine pleasure from having been approached to participate in this initiative. I believe they are now far more ready to participate in future talks on similar topics, as they were less and less shy, and more willing to think out loud, by the end of the event.
- 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?

I think that the Youth Group should persuade their Evangelical Mission Community Church to discuss community resilience. One participant stated, during the conversation, that “most Christians are open-minded, are willing to learn and listen, and want to make a change.” I believe that such a course of action would allow for new and interesting venues for possible community action.

#### **4. Next steps**

There were no next steps identified as such. However, as mentioned above, the Youth Group is open to having their Evangelical Mission Community Church participate in the broader conversation. This comment emerged in a breakout room when someone said that guest speakers should go to church groups to discuss climate change and community resilience more broadly. I am attending the next weekly meeting of the Youth Group, and I intend on following up with this idea, suggesting a list of possible guest speakers.

Y4Y Québec is hosting its 5th Annual Youth Forum on March 19th. I am tasked with hosting the Green Policy event, entitled “Saving the Planet: What’s Quebec Doing?” As the moderator, I intend to incorporate elements of the topics explored in these community conversations. This event is still in the works, however I am happy to share the complete plan to the Green Resilience Project Coordinator in the coming weeks.