

Communicating Climate Change and Energy with Different Audiences in Alberta

ALBERTA NARRATIVES PROJECT: REPORT II



ALBERTA
NARRATIVES
PROJECT

This report complements the Alberta Narratives Project report “Communicating Climate Change and Energy in Alberta”, released in September 2018.

Alberta Narratives Project

The Alberta Narratives Project is a community-based initiative convened by the Alberta Ecotrust Foundation and Pembina Institute to seek ways of talking about climate and energy that reflect the shared values and identities of Albertans and to provide a more open and constructive basis for conversation.

Seventy-five organisations hosted 55 Narrative Workshops around Alberta, making this one of the largest public engagements of its kind. They spoke with a broad spectrum of people including farmers, oil sands workers, energy leaders, business leaders, youth, environmentalists, New Canadians and many more.

Global Narratives Project

The Alberta Narratives Project is part of Climate Outreach’s Global Narratives Project, a collaborative initiative to train national partners to test and develop climate change communications that speak to the shared values and cultural identity of their community. The project methodology, developed by Climate Outreach over 10 years, was piloted in India, and will be applied in Lebanon in 2019.

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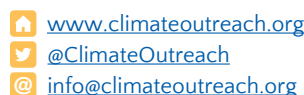
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Climate Outreach

Climate Outreach is a team of social scientists and communication specialists working to widen and deepen public engagement with climate change.

Through our research, practical guides and consultancy services, our charity helps organizations communicate about climate change in ways that resonate with the values of their audiences.

We have 15 years experience working with a wide range of international partners including central, regional and local governments, international bodies, charities, businesses, faith organizations and youth groups.



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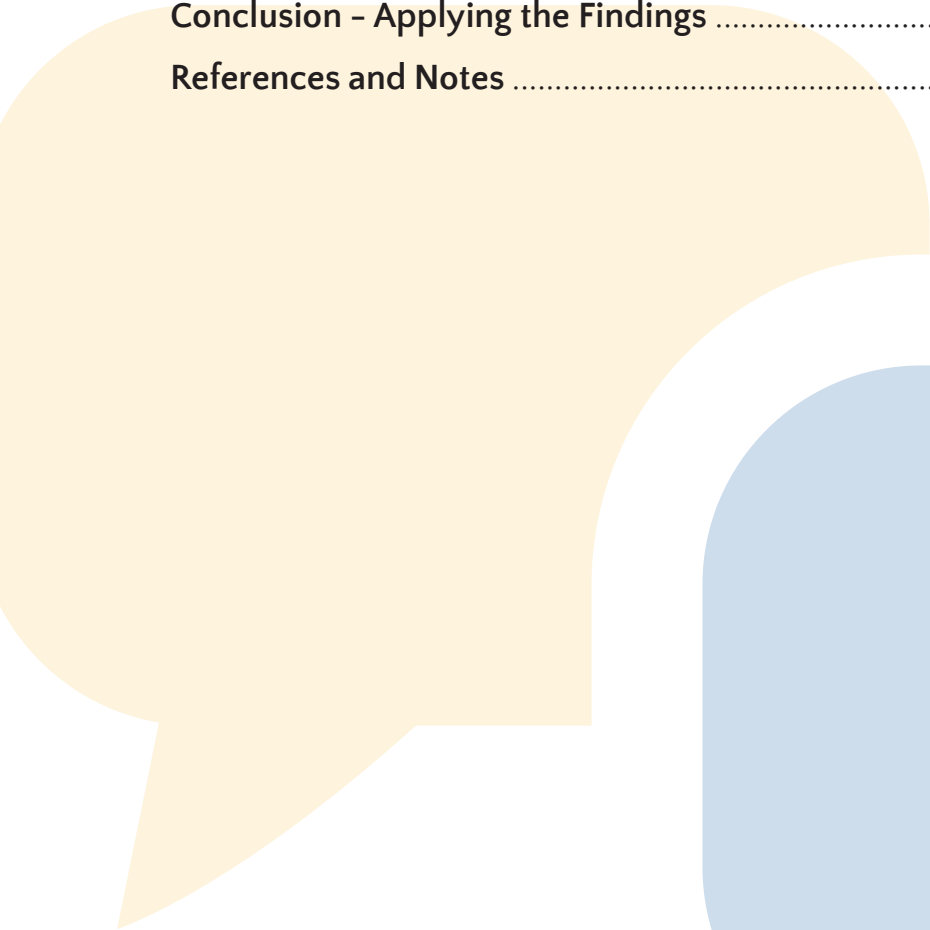
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INTRODUCTION

The Alberta Narratives Project (ANP)

The Alberta Narratives Project is a community-based initiative convened by the Alberta EcoTrust Foundation and Pembina Institute to seek ways of talking about climate and energy that reflect the shared values and identities of Albertans and to provide a more open and constructive basis for conversation.

Seventy-five organisations hosted 55 Narrative Workshops around Alberta, making this one of the largest public engagements of its kind. They spoke with a broad spectrum of people including farmers, oil sands workers, energy leaders, business leaders, youth, environmentalists, New Canadians and many more.

The Project has produced two major reports:

1 *Communicating Climate Change and Energy in Alberta: Report I*

The first report identifies language that works best across a wide range of groups in Alberta and helps to find common ground between very different positions. This language generates a core narrative—what communicators call a “meta-narrative”—that can be employed to achieve general public engagement.

2 *Communicating Climate Change and Energy with Different Audiences in Alberta: Report II*

In this report we explore additional language that speaks to the values and identities of different audiences within Alberta. The report includes narratives tailored to each audience – what communicators call “sub-narratives”. The sub-narratives are intended to sit within the larger meta-narrative from Report I, giving the latter greater nuance and specific meaning.

The Narrative Workshops

The Narrative Workshop Methodology is similar to that of focus groups. It typically involves eight to twelve people in a structured discussion guided by a facilitator following a standard script and set of questions. A Workshop is different from a standard focus group because of the attention it pays to understanding people’s core values and identity. Within the Alberta Narratives Project, discussions were often hosted by peers, who helped to provide a safe, respectful space in which an honest diversity of views could emerge. To further ensure the comfort of participants, the topics of climate change and energy were not introduced until the second half of the discussion. Please see the description of the methodology in Appendix two of Report I.

In the final phase of the Workshop, all participants were presented with the same five pages of test narratives designed by Alberta Narratives Project (ANP) collaborators. Participants were invited to mark the text they liked in green, and the text they disliked in red. The method allowed us to identify and compare the specific language that worked best for each group. The test narratives are provided in Appendix 4 of Report I.

The Structure of this Report

In this report we explore different audiences within Alberta. The sections below follow the same structure as the Narrative Workshops, moving from audience values and identity, through to general concerns, and, finally, to audiences' attitudes towards oil and gas. This structure allows a deeper analysis of people's core motivations, and provides the specific language and values that can become the basis of effective communications.

The final component of each section provides detailed narratives that may be effective with this audience, and highlights language that may be ineffective or counterproductive. These narratives are constructed from three sources, colour-coded as follows:

- **Tested text.** This is text from the test narratives that was consistently marked green by this audience in the Workshops.
- **Quotations from participants.** These are direct quotations considered representative of the values, attitudes and vocabulary found among the wider audience. This audience is therefore likely to find the language of the quotations authentic.
- **New composition.** This is untested language constructed by Climate Outreach based on the values expressed and frames used by participants in the workshops.

The Selection of Audiences

We chose eight main groups for this report based on several criteria: First, the priorities and constituencies of the project partners; secondly, the demographics of Alberta; thirdly, identification by earlier communications research of the key constituencies that support or oppose action on climate change.

Concerning Indigenous and First Nations Audiences

The one major audience that has not been included at this time is people with a shared Indigenous experience. Initially we considered making adjustments to the proposed ANP program, but it became clear that moving forward required a new approach developed in collaboration with a broader group of Indigenous community partners. This work is forthcoming.

How to Use this Report

The key to an effective communication is that people can “see themselves” in it. They should feel validated and respected. To achieve this, communicators need to recognize, respect and reflect people's values, hopes and concerns. In terms of climate change and energy, people will engage with narratives that reflect their own worldview and offer them a valuable role. If these conditions are met, they should see that taking action on these issues is inherently compatible with who they are, and that the issues are not the sole concern of another group with which they do not identify.

This report is therefore most valuable as a primer in the core values and concerns of each audience, helping communicators to construct effective communications using language that resonates.

The proposed narratives attempt to distill this language. Language from test narratives can be used with the confidence that it has been tested and found to work. The quotations and new compositions, being untested, should be applied with more caution.

It is important to stress that communicators must never just “cut and paste” language from a report. Throughout the ANP, participants expressed suspicion of over-designed language that “sounds like a politician.” They demanded that communicators be honest, authentic and respectful, and ideally similar to themselves. We therefore urge communicators to read this report, absorb its key findings and insights into the values and concerns of people living in Alberta, then put it to one side and explore fresh language drawn from your own experience and the values you share with your audiences. More information on applying these findings is contained in the conclusions.

This is Albertan, but also part of a global process. For more on the Global Narratives Project and the other countries Climate Outreach is working in, visit: climateoutreach.org/resources/global-narratives/

OIL SANDS WORKERS & ENERGY PROFESSIONALS

Introduction

Oil and gas is the single largest sector in the Alberta economy, directly contributing 17 percent of the provincial gross domestic product. However, its economic importance is far greater because of the demand it creates in the manufacturing, service and construction sectors, and the revenues from royalties that it generates, which enable strong government services with low tax. Almost all participants in the Alberta Narratives Project (ANP) reported being connected with the industry in some way: either they, their friends or their family members were employed or otherwise dependent on the industry.

Connection with the industry has a major influence on people's attitudes to climate change and energy. Contrary to the view of most climate change activists, this influence is less about self-interest than it is about a sense of shared identity. The value, widely noted in this study, that Albertans place on supporting each other and pulling together leads them to defend the industry (and often to dismiss climate change) out of a sense of loyalty to their wider community. As described in Report I, climate campaign messaging that blames the fossil fuel industry closes down the conversation. Many of those who might share concerns about climate change feel that they, too, are being attacked.

Of the total 55 Narrative Workshops held as part of the Alberta Narratives Project, seven were held for people working in the oil and gas industry. Participants were selected from across a wide spectrum of political values, educational attainment, and social position, and included senior management, engineers, and workers, including a group staying in a camp. The analysis below identifies themes that appear to be consistent for people across the industry.

Values

People expressed values that were similar to those found across Alberta. The most commonly mentioned values were integrity and hard work followed by compassion, respect, authenticity, and kindness. The top three values were:

1. Balance and reason

At all levels, people working in oil and gas talked about balancing pros and cons (for example, balancing the local environmental impacts of production against the wider benefits). Oil professionals noted that *"if you're going to bring something forward to your boss you better have a fact-based approach and have figured out all the things that could go wrong"*.

2. Ingenuity

The engineers and geologists were proud of their skills, their education, and especially their training as problem solvers: *"We have a fair degree of intellectual integrity. We're fact-based and very analytical."* *"We're trained to look beyond today and connect dots to the future."* Building on this, they felt a responsibility to share their skills.

3. Contributing

In regard to their work, they were most proud of the contribution that they had made to people's daily lives. *"Not only do we send transfer payments to other provinces, but we have a pretty good healthcare system and school system for kids and we know that a bunch of that is from tax revenues from companies and ourselves."*

Many professionals and workers had moved to Alberta and raised a family here. Others, often separated from their families who still reside in other provinces, were proud of how, despite the separation, their work was providing for their families back home.

Attitudes to Alberta

People appreciated Alberta's high quality of life and the natural outdoors: *"Alberta is one of the greatest places in the world to live. We have mountains, lakes, rivers; we have a whole lot going for us. There's a lot of opportunity for jobs. We all live a real good life."*

In regard to Alberta's oil and gas industry specifically, they were proud of its pioneering origins, and of how it had overcome major geological and technical issues. They saw this as a mark of an entrepreneurial culture in Alberta culture of innovation, problem solving, and can-do attitude.

Many of the people in the oil and gas industry have migrated to Alberta from other provinces, and the identification with Alberta was weaker for them. Some said they identified as Canadians first, and that they were proud of the contribution that they made to Canada as a whole. One worker said: *"We are not Albertan. We're not Ontarians. We are just Canadians"*. Another said, *"We are just freaking Canadians that live in a different temperate zone of Canada!"*

Although a number of senior industry professionals came to Alberta from Ontario and Atlantic Canada, they nonetheless see themselves as "Western Canadians." They expressed frustration that some Canadians have little to no understanding of the regulatory and environmental controls currently on industry or the financial benefits provided by the industry through tax revenues and transfer payments. They attributed this lack of understanding in part to a lack of direct job contact, but also to political differences between East and West.

Their Concerns

The concerns of each group related to their different life experiences. Most concerns related to Alberta and Canada, and very few concerns were global. Among the latter concerns, overpopulation and pollution were identified by one group as an example of a "real global problem" that governments should focus on rather than climate change.

The strongest concern, which emerged across all groups, was that the oil and gas industry—and, by extension, their own lives—were undervalued or under attack. They felt that the rest of Canada either wanted to shut them down or saw them as a "cash purse." They often used the simile of being treated like criminals, put on trial and expected to "admit that I'm guilty."

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They perceived a loss of social standing, saying that working in oil and gas *“used to be considered a good job but not anymore.”* *“Over the last five years, if you tell people what you do, their response is ‘it’s dirty and it’s bad.’”* They feared that *“the college students are growing up believing that the oil industry is evil, with man camps where all the women are raped. It’s really sad.”*

People in all groups expressed concern about the environment. One rig worker said, *“I get frustrated when people assume that because I work at oil and gas I don’t care about the environment. We do, and I’ve seen that.”* *“People need to come up and see what we do, and they need to see when we clean up the site, that this is what it looks like.”*

Most participants agreed that Alberta’s oil and gas environmental regulations are the *“best and most stringent in the world”*. They felt embattled by their sense that new, excessive environmental regulations were *“introduced without thought of its impact on jobs, us, or our children.”* They described new government regulation as *“way overkill,”* driven by emotions not by facts, and by *“whatever people are saying on the news or whatever they are picketing about.”* The root of many of these concerns related to security of their own jobs and opportunities for their children.

A wider sense related to these specific concerns was a fear about the increasing polarisation in politics that could *“just tear people apart. Your neighbours all of a sudden become enemies just because of where they stand on the political spectrum.”* These groups felt they had become scapegoats in elections whenever climate change and environment had become major issues.

Like every group in the ANP, they said that they wanted a more “balanced” conversation because at *“its core, we are all human and we all have the same things in common.”* As one worker said, *“I want to be able to have a conversation with people from different backgrounds. Everyone has their own different personal experience, but we all have experience in growing up in Alberta, having a job and being able to provide for our families.”*

However, despite such equanimity, the concept of rejecting oil and gas development in Canada while continuing to consume fossil fuels was a source of frustration for many participants. For some professionals, the primary interest in starting an “honest” conversation was so that people could *“appreciate everything that we do.”* They believed that the opposition to fossil fuels was mostly naive and misinformed, remarking that some people are *“bright-eyed and bushy tailed and don’t understand the full scope of reality.”*

Attitudes to Climate Change

Participants were divided over climate change. A third identified themselves as concerned, a third were unconcerned, and a third said they were not engaged with the issue. The engineers were most willing to discuss climate change, largely because the group contained confident and well-informed people on both sides of the issue. Generally, though, participants wanted to avoid the subject, and one group of oil workers in a work camp said they *“didn’t buy it,”* and tried to close the conversation down.

There was some acceptance among participants that the weather was changing: *“I remember always going out on Halloween and I was wearing a snowsuit. But last year it was 16 degrees the day before Halloween.”* There was, in addition, some willingness to discuss extreme weather events, though less so in the case of the Fort McMurray wildfires. Moreover, opinion was split across all groups on whether such extreme events could be ascribed to climate change.

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The engineers and geologists were most sceptical of the claim that human activities are changing the climate: *“the climate is always changing, and it’s changing for a whole bunch of reasons, most of which we don’t have any control over”*. *“Without climate change, Canada would still be a glacier.”* They felt that after many years of experience in developing complex models similar to climate change models, they were able to critically evaluate greenhouse gas reduction forecasts and other climate-change research.

They contrasted their “rational” approach with the emotional and irrational positions of climate change advocates, whom they viewed as *“very sanctimonious. They speak on emotion, and they have no tolerance for any dissension.”* It also became clear in discussions with this group that the label “climate change denier” tended to shut down debate.

Many people in the oil and gas industry spoke about climate change not as a scientific issue but as a political issue, *“because it’s something that you can point to and rally people around but [that you] can never be proven right or wrong on”*. *“Sure, I’m concerned about climate change—my concern is the people that are using climate change to disrupt my livelihood.”* From presidents to managers to field workers, job disruption was clearly a pressing issue. If they had to worry about how to pay their mortgage and put food on the table, how could they worry about climate change?



Oil sands work. Photo: Ian Wilson

Across the groups, climate change was represented as a key battleground within a wider culture war. Participants singled out environmentalists in particular as opponents, and made unflattering generalizations about their lifestyle, pointing to such alleged inconsistencies as *“their hypocrisy wanting superfood avocados but no pipeline.”* Some felt that activists had hidden agendas to *“overthrow the current power structures”* or that they were *“puppets for someone else’s benefit.”* David Suzuki in particular was mentioned in most conversations as an environmental archetype.

Attitudes to Energy

Participants felt that the future for oil and gas commodities was generally positive: *“worldwide demand is going to be increasing until around 2040 to 2050. Therefore, the demand in the world is there.”* They were less confident, however, about the future of Alberta oil. *“Alberta [could] be there ... If we were not politically constrained.”* All participants were keenly aware of the downturn over the past five years and could not predict when another boom might come. Some doubted that it would come at all, saying that *“the clouds are hanging over us.”*

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Nonetheless, when asked when the market for Alberta oil would dry up, people consistently placed the date far in the future: *“My first gut reaction is, not in my lifetime.”* A typical response was, *“If you’re going to throw out a number, [I’d] say 50 years,”* though answers varied depending on both age and position.

The older group of senior energy professionals, while disheartened by the current downturn, tended to put it in the context of previous downturns, confident that the industry would improve again. Having experience with long-term forecasts, they trusted predictions of rising global demand for fossil fuels.

For the workers, the main concern was whether the oil industry could sustain their livelihoods. As one worker said, *“I don’t know if I’m necessarily on the side that says ‘down with oil’, but I’m absolutely on the side that asks, ‘Can we do this in a way that has longevity and sustainability to come?’”* They were especially concerned about the long-term career prospects for their children, noting that those of working age were either not seeking or not finding jobs in the industry.

Attitudes to Transition

People tend to define the word ‘transition’ in terms of positive change. Those in the energy sector interpret it as a move to a lower carbon economy but not necessarily as a switch from oil and gas to renewables. All groups were prepared to engage in a constructive debate about the pros and cons of transition. A worker in one group noted that *“sometimes transition means something good and sometimes it doesn’t—you’ve got to roll the dice and take your chances.”*

However, while recognizing their vulnerability to market forces, they were wary of a government-planned transition, saying that it *“sounded like socialism”* or *“sounds like it is centrally planned by some government that thinks they know better than everybody else.”* Two participants suggested the alternative phrase *“energy evolution.”*

There was no strong support for a “just transition.” The ANP tested the following language with all groups: *“We owe it to [workers in the oil, gas and coal sectors] to make sure that their livelihoods are secured during this transition.”* Management and skilled professionals rejected this formulation outright, but the language elicited a mixed response even from oil workers who would stand to benefit from such an approach to transition. We did not find the reasons for this ambivalence, but suggest it may reflect workers’ pride in their resilience and independence from government.

Most accepted the need for diversification. *“I don’t think [the oil industry] is going to end tomorrow or anytime real soon, but there [are] also better alternatives coming out, and Alberta doesn’t recognize that. It keeps hanging on to the oil train and it’s going to take us all the way down with it. But you can’t put all your eggs in one basket.”*

In conclusion, oil and gas workers and professionals favoured the development of renewable energy in parallel with, and as an extension of, the energy economy, and welcomed the new opportunities it offered. They also saw the value of energy diversification in creating a more stable and secure industry. But they saw renewables as viable for the domestic market alone, not as a replacement for fossil fuel exports: *“it would be great if we could completely power ourselves renewably in Alberta and sell high-priced hydrocarbons to somebody else.”*

Narratives for Oil and Gas



Oil and gas workers feel under attack, and will strongly defend themselves against perceived criticism, especially from outsiders. Effective engagement should therefore begin with respect for and recognition of their contribution and skills. Working in the oil and gas industry has instilled in this group a deep knowledge of, and trust in, its environmental regulations—a trust that is generally not shared by other Albertans or Canadians. The industry has tried to narrow this trust gap through information sharing, with marginal success. A personal connection to workers in the industry could bridge this gap more effectively. The need for diversification and transition is already recognized, and is best presented as a conversation around opportunities and benefits. Climate change is harder to communicate given that many in the industry have embedded rejection, so conversation on this topic is best led by peer communicators who can share their views and knowledge.

Keywords: diversify, balance, respect, reasonable

Respect

Oil and gas have provided many benefits for Alberta. We are grateful for the hard work of the people in the oil and gas industry who have built the prosperity of our province and nation. [There is a very large diversity of occupations within the oil and gas industry, each with their own identity and pride. Recognize those differences in communications]. For example, oil workers often do hard and dirty work to provide for their families; engineers and geologists use a rational and information-based approach to solving problems; management have responsibility and are proud of building the business.

We need a “balanced” and “respectful” conversation

While environmentalists should feel free to raise their concerns about oil and gas developments, there must be informed and intelligent discussion of the energy future and what the transition will look like. [Starting from the widely-shared position that we need to have a more respectful conversation and hear different points of view, engagement should enable a forum and format within which different views can be heard. Conventional climate change communication—depending either on scientific data or campaign slogans—will fail with this audience. The Narrative Workshops generated a strong discussion within which climate advocates could share their view.]

Can we do things in a different way?

In the Workshops many participants framed challenges as questions. Posing questions enables a better dialogue. Questions also appeal to the problem-solving orientation of many people in the industry.



Balance of pros and cons and timeline for the future

[Given that people already understand that their industry is subject to both pros (the contribution it makes to the economy and wider welfare) and cons (the impact it has on local and global environments), weighing up pros and cons may be a more fruitful discourse than simply presenting the criticisms. For energy professionals and senior management, who pride themselves on their planning skills, presenting pros and cons in terms of future risk may be effective.] As one manager said, *“we need to adapt and plan for the next one hundred years of change, so somehow we have to make accommodations to ensure our survival.”*

Building on what we have already done

“Albertans are builders, whether it’s the pipelines, or roads, or bridges, or the electric industry... we can build on all of the great stuff that’s gone before”. “In Alberta we have so many capacities for innovation. We can extend those to renewable energy.” [The language of respecting what has gone before and building on it has wide resonance for people with conservative values, and connects to a range of related language and framing such as constructive, foundations, strong and secure.]

Language to Avoid

Alberta identity

Many people expressed a strong Canadian identity.

Transition

Although not rejected outright, the word “transition” was sometimes contentious. There may be more effective ways of expressing the same ideas, for example in terms of diversification or shifting to new energy, or energy evolution.

Industry leaders say...

When asked, oil and gas workers said that they would trust the opinion of other workers but not those of senior leaders in the industry. The best communicators for any group will be people who share a similar experience and perspective.

Sources

The primary sources for this chapter are a Narrative Workshop held in Calgary, Alberta on April 12th, 2018 at the invitation of Papillon Consulting, and workshops held south of Grand Prairie on June 1st and in Edmonton on June 2nd at the invitation of Iron Earth. Additional material has been drawn from a Workshop hosted by Suncor Energy on May 25th, 2018; a group recruited by Young Women in Energy on May 23rd, 2018; and a group composed of communications staff from power utilities at the invitation of Energy Efficiency Alberta.

Introduction

Research has repeatedly confirmed that political worldview is the single most important influence on people's attitudes towards climate change. The term "c'onservatives" is used in this chapter to differentiate people holding conservative values—who might be termed "small-c" conservatives—from people who vote for any Conservative Party – who might be termed "big C" Conservatives. The key point is that this chapter is concerned with people's values, not the political party they support.

This being said, there is a strong association between holding c'onservative values and voting for a political party on the right wing. Voting preference is also a very strong indicator of attitudes on climate change. Across Canada, people who vote for the New Democratic Party or Liberal Party of Canada are 50 percent more likely than those voting for the Progressive Conservative Party to think that climate change is caused by human activity, and are twice as likely to say that climate change is a major threat that will affect Canadians in the next 10 years.¹

In recent elections, climate change and proposed solutions to climate change have become a major dividing line between parties. Building a broad-based political platform for action on climate change therefore requires finding language that resonates with both c'onservatives and Conservatives.

In this chapter we try to isolate the language specific to c'onservatives. The data is drawn primarily from two groups recruited by the Canada West Foundation composed entirely of people who self-identified as c'onservatives. We also draw in this chapter on the contribution of c'onservative participants in other groups, and build on the wider research conducted by Climate Outreach on communicating climate change to people with conservative values.²

Values

The values of conservative groups were similar to those found in many other groups: hard work, honesty, integrity, sincerity, accountability and gratitude. When asked specifically what distinguished their own point of view from that of other groups, c'onservatives most frequently mentioned three values:

1. Responsibility

Both personal responsibility as well as fiscal responsibility at the level of (small) government were seen as distinguishing criteria. Special emphasis, however, was placed on personal accountability.

2. Continuity

Conservatives see themselves as respecting and conserving the best of the past as a legacy to be built upon and passed on to future generations.

3. Gratitude

Respondents were especially concerned about a perceived decline in gratitude, which they regarded as the polar opposite of entitlement: *“it just feels like progressively we’re moving from a society of gratitude to a society of entitlement.”*

Attitudes to Alberta

They all spoke highly of Alberta and highlighted aspects of the provincial culture that most closely echoed their own values: *“I think we’ve attracted the most creative, innovative, competitive, entrepreneurial—in some cases, arrogant and overly cocky—but we’ve attracted the best of the best to Alberta.”* Like other groups, they also commented on the *“ton of volunteerism going on in the province.”*

Their Concerns

Like many others in Alberta, they were especially concerned by increasing social polarisation, fuelled by social media, that is *“creating incredible division and conflict.”* They feared that *“there’s no forum for civil discourse anymore,”* and used the frame word “civility” frequently.

They argued that responsibility and accountability had been replaced by a sense of entitlement, especially among “fringe elements” whose issues “have become mainstream.” They feared that *“life has become so good that now we’re letting the tail wag the dog.”*

Among these fringe elements are environmental activists who embody the negative qualities of ingratitude and entitlement. Many of the participants in the conservative groups work in the oil and gas industry, and share a sense of being “treated like criminals” by these activists, and as “bad, ugly people that don’t care.”

One concern expressed by c’onservatives alone was the growing level of debt:³ *“There’s gonna be fiscal catastrophe on the planet if we don’t get that under control.”* The reasons mentioned for the debt included a decline in personal responsibility and the pervasive belief among people that *“they’re entitled to something.”*⁴

Attitudes to Energy

C’onservative views on energy and renewables were similar to those in the oil and gas industry, with a similar mix of expectations about the future of oil. They supported renewables as a new energy source but not as a replacement for fossil fuels: *“Who’s gonna fly on an airplane that’s powered by a wind turbine or go on a train or on an ocean liner or heavy equipment or fly to the moon.”*

Attitudes to Climate Change

They had mixed views about climate change and whether it was caused by humans. All groups contained a range of opinions, from deep concern to outright dismissal, though they were inclined to be sceptical.

Participants tended to accept that the weather is changing. One participant who worked for a property and auto insurance company said, *"I'm convinced that it's happening. We got hit with claims when there was catastrophic storms, so tornadoes, hail, wildfires, etc. Now, it's just up and it's completely different. Something has changed."*

However, many saw climate change advocacy as a "form of religion," and used religious metaphors to describe how they were made to feel about it. The word "shame" was used frequently by c'onservatives across all groups: *"[Climate change] is not necessarily about a physical thing but it's about the shaming or values attached to it." ... "it's a tool to shame you or make you feel bad about your lifestyle" ... "We've been shamed in some capacity into believing that if we use carbon, that has an impact. It's like one of the seven deadly sins or something."*

Climate change was therefore *"a political tool to push an agenda,"* invoked by people who *"just want to shut down our free market economy"* or who may even be *"funded by other participants within the oil market."*

Their trust, or lack of trust, in the communicator was fundamental to the way c'onservatives formed opinions. It was very important for them to know who was giving them information. When invited to comment on the test narratives, they immediately wanted to know *"who is talking? Who's reading it? Who's giving the speech?"*

Without clear, positive signals from their own in-group, they did not trust the people advocating for action on climate change. *"What is your source of information that will help you to decide how you're going to respond to that situation? I'm not a scientist but I don't know who to trust. You get two MIT professors on either side. Who's telling the truth?"*

C'onservatives were therefore disposed to be influenced by personal and anecdotal evidence from other c'onservatives, especially around extreme weather events.

At the root of their attitudes to climate change was also a specific view of the environment as something to be controlled and managed. *"The left is trying to tell you that the environment is tame, and [that] humans have made it violent, when in fact the reality is the environment and the weather has always been violent, and humans, through ingenuity, have found a way to tame it."*

For them, the story of Alberta was therefore that humans have used their skills to tame a hostile environment, most recently by means of fossil fuels, which *"fuel our quality of life."* *"It was only through burning hydrocarbons that this topography or this place has been tamed for people to inhabit. I think it's very, very difficult to claim that renewables can play a leading role in allowing a place like Alberta to still exist."*

Participants had mixed views about personal responsibility for climate change. On the one hand, they rejected messaging that “shamed people into feeling bad about their lifestyle.” On the other hand, they said *“the expectation that corporations will solve the problem... goes to the lack of personal accountability. It’s become this debate about reducing emissions when the focus should be on individual behaviour.”*

Narratives for c’onservatives



Keywords: realistic, responsibility, truth, shame, civility, balance, structure

Gratitude

We are grateful for our standard of life. We are grateful for the hard work of the people in the oil and gas industry that have built the prosperity of our province and nation”. Oil is a precious and valuable resource that enables us to prosper in a challenging environment. People in Alberta are fine people: hard working, enterprising, and innovative.

The weather is changing

We hear it from the farmers, the insurance companies, and from our elders. [Enable people to tell their own stories about how things are changing.]

We need to prepare and protect

“When we have weather disasters, we know how to pull together and help each other out and take care of our neighbours.” This is one of our great strengths in Alberta.

Now the weather is changing and bringing new extremes. We need to be ready to *“protect our families, our communities, vulnerable people, our property and our way of life.”* [Property is rarely mentioned in conventional climate narratives but is an important concern and mark of identity for many people.] *“We are hardy people who built our prosperity in a difficult and sometimes harsh environment. We know how to live through change, and how to work hard.”*

We need all of our energy resources

We have become too dependent on this one industry and now we are all tied to the rollercoaster of international oil prices. The boom and bust cycle generates economic and job insecurity, and many thousands of workers have lost their jobs in the oil patch in the last downturn. [This test narrative performed well with c’onservatives, possibly because it plays to key concerns around security and loss of opportunity.]

We need to be realistic – common sense

We need to be realistic. Coping with climate change and shifting to new energy sources will not be easy. The road ahead is likely to be challenging, but Albertans are resourceful and hard workers who face challenges head-on. This is not about being “green” or “eco” or “politically correct” – it is simply good common sense. [Common sense is a strong c’onservative value, though should be used with caution. One participant said he was “sick” of the term, which he felt had become overused.]

Renewable opportunity

Our economy is built on natural resources, and we are also rich in those resources – including sun, wind and water – that power new forms of renewable energy. We need to develop all of our natural resources, spread our investment, and create a balance in our energy economy. *“Responsible development of our resources will be key.”* The development of the oil sands demonstrated the ingenuity of our engineers, our ability to innovate, and our entrepreneurial drive.

Conserve

“Within the root of the word ‘conservative’ is the idea of conserving. It speaks to conserving something for the future and leaving something for others.” [This observation speaks strongly to c’onservative values, but it is best used by a peer—it would sound hollow and manipulative coming from an outsider.]

Take the initiative

We are enterprising. *“Everybody is waiting for somebody else to do it. We need to step up. We can work on this together.”* Let’s take control and chart our energy future.

Waste

“We can all agree to avoid waste,” to take responsibility to reduce waste in our work and in our personal lives. [Waste is a strong and repeated concern.]

We need a civil conversation

There will be many different points of view on climate change and energy, and everyone in Alberta has something important to contribute on the way forward. We have to stop aggressively shouting each other down and have a civil and honest discussion.



Language to Avoid

Political and campaign speak

C'onservatives were quick to reject language that sounded like it came from politicians—*"I just don't like political speak"*—or from environmental campaigners. As noted above, the focus should be on authentic communicators, sharing the values of the audience and speaking in their own words.

Over-emotional and moralistic language

In the test narratives, c'onservatives rejected language that described climate change as "first and foremost an ethical issue. Our basic sense of right and wrong guides us to protect people and our shared home". The groups chastised environmental campaigners for their over-emotional language, mimicking it as *"Oooohhhhhh, dooo it for the children!"* Such language may be effective if it comes from social peers, but it felt manipulative when coming from outside groups.

Transition

The key concern with the concept and language of transition was around ownership and control. The term "transition" is essentially neutral. It was not rejected by c'onservatives, but nor was it strongly approved. Several participants expressed concerns over who would be managing the transition process. The facilitators of c'onservative groups proposed the alternate language "controlling and planning our energy future", though this raised similar issues around ownership. The focus, therefore, should be on promoting Transition as a term owned and used by c'onservatives rather than residing entirely with those on the political left. To accomplish this, c'onservative communications and networks will have to take ownership of the language by placing it within a narrative based on their own values.

Focus on communicators

Of all the groups and demographics in the ANP, c'onservatives were the most concerned to know who was talking and whether the communicator was trustworthy. They were also the most likely to reject language that might be spoken by a non-conservative. Communications with conservatives should therefore pay close attention to the credibility and authenticity of the communicators, encouraging people with shared experiences and values to speak in their own words and to draw on their own lived experience.

Government action

Although government intervention is accepted by c'onservatives in certain domains (social services, education and health), it is strongly distrusted when it targets the business sector. Language aimed at this group should put limits on the role of government, and recognize the contribution of business. Language that has tested well elsewhere has proposed a contract wherein all sectors—government, business, community, and individuals—play a role – by taking responsibility for their own impacts and contributing what they do best. This approach would work well in the context of c'onservative calls for business to be “*allowed to do what business does best.*”

Judgmental or patronising

Be careful to avoid language that is critical of people who aren't entirely on-board the climate change train or people who work in oil and gas. The audience is already feeling under attack and sensitive to criticism.

Alberta first

Language around Alberta developing its own climate change plan and “not resigning ourselves to policy imposed on us by Ottawa,” was not well received.

Sources

The primary sources are two Narrative Workshops held in Calgary on May 2nd and May 3rd, 2018 at the invitation of the Canada West Foundation. Ten people attended, of which nine were men from the age of 40–60. Participants came from a range of business backgrounds but primarily from consulting and finance. Most had a strong connection with the energy sector. To balance the demographic, additional material has been drawn from a workshop composed of female professionals from the energy sector, hosted May 25th, 2018 by Young Women in Energy.

ENVIRONMENTALISTS

Introduction

Environmentalism broadly pertains to environmental protection and improvement of the health of the environment. For environmentalists, nature and the environment tend to form a core aspect of their identity. For example, it is very important for this group to be well informed about the impact of their actions on the environment, as well as the impact of environmental problems on themselves and others.

Environmentalists tend to be highly engaged on environmental and social issues and mostly liberal in their political values. Discussion group participants were also more likely to be younger and university-educated than the general Alberta population. They stated that outdoor activities and nature were important to them, a value confirmed by wider research.⁵

It is worth noting that the vast majority of Alberta's environmental non-profits (ENGOs) are grassroots, community-driven initiatives, many of which enlist volunteers to deliver their mandate. Alberta ENGOs often focus on education and on-the-ground solutions, and participate in multi-stakeholder groups with industry and government. Very few engage in direct action (such as social protest), advocacy or lobbying.⁶ People with strong environmental values can be found throughout the oil and gas sector, especially among professionals working in environmental sustainability departments.

Despite their affiliation with the oil and gas industry, 'environmentalists' are often pilloried as the "enemy", described as irrational and naive, and seen as opposing Alberta's economic interests. Research shows that a key influence in some Albertans' decision to disengage with the issue of climate change is fear of being characterized or perceived as an environmentalist by their colleagues, friends and family.

Values

Environmentalists saw their role as trying to make things happen for the betterment of the environment and the public by getting involved socially and politically. When asked to describe their values, they consistently came up with the words compassion, empathy, integrity, responsibility and making a contribution. Three values dominated:

1. Compassion/empathy

While compassion and empathy were raised as general values, these values also surfaced repeatedly when participants discussed their concerns about climate change. For example, they empathized with the inability of many underprivileged groups to manage the impacts of climate change. They also expressed sympathy towards those for whom the behavioural change required to mitigate climate change is currently too costly and/or difficult. Listening and being listened to were important to this group.

2. Contribution

Contributing and making a difference to the environment and their community are important values for members of this group, who consistently expressed a sense of responsibility, pride and hope: "I

feel like making the city more the place I want it to be and that is really important to me because I care a lot about this city and this place.” Conversely, the failure and inability to have a positive impact were frequently expressed concerns: *“I don’t contribute as much as I would like to sometimes, and I sometimes feel overwhelmed.”*

3. Integrity

There was also a strong sense that living a life aligned with the values of honesty, respect, and “walking the talk” is important. Riding a bicycle was identified within one group as a defining marker of an environmentalist. A perceived lack of integrity, such as deliberately misleading people or seeding false information, was highly criticized. Environmentalists hold themselves to a high standard, too, and often feel guilty about not contributing enough to the cause: *“I don’t feel particularly proud because I don’t feel I’m doing much at the moment. I feel guilty because I’m not giving enough.”*

Attitudes to Alberta

In line with other groups, environmentalists felt that opportunity, hard work, risk-taking and caring are markers of Alberta: *“I think that there’s a spirit of hard work and doing things which I am really proud of. I feel it gets muddled up in the weird aspects of politics, but I think that there is a lot of caring and compassion at the heart of the Alberta identity.”* They also acknowledged that Alberta offers a *“good quality of life, even for those people who are somewhat disadvantaged.”*

Participants welcomed what they perceived to be a progressive change, particularly in the major urban centres of Calgary and Edmonton, where they can *“have different discussions about things and be proactive and strategic and talk about issues... It’s kind of devastating to live here when you feel like you can’t express your views.”*



Family paddling in Banff during Summer 2018 wildfires. Photo: Amber Bennett

Their Concerns

While there was a sense that “things have gotten better” on a range of social issues, environmentalists still expressed concern over the declining respect for science, the deterioration of politics, short-sightedness of leaders, waste and consumption. The expression of these concerns was connected with deep anxieties about “a great unravelling” and the impacts of climate change on people within Alberta and particularly vulnerable people elsewhere.

They expressed hopelessness over the possibility of change, and about the scope and scale of change required. Words like “terrifying”, “depressing” and “worst reality” were used in relation to the decline of natural systems, overpopulation, disenfranchised people, and the terror of witnessing unimaginable human suffering. *“It’s already quite painful to have to witness how other people have to live on our planet.”*

They also expressed a concern over the rise of individualism and deterioration of community: *“Our parents’ or our grandparents’ generation was much more community-minded. [They] looked out for the whole rather than [themselves] as individuals.”* They also speculated that a combination of our emotional hard-wiring and the complexity of technology put climate change beyond our ability to comprehend.

Like all other groups, environmentalists raised concerns over hyper-partisanship and polarisation: *“I think the lack of engagement in people [for] defending things like democracy and defending access to information [is]... terrifying. It’s a major issue and we need to stand up and take control.”*

Attitudes to Climate Change

There was strong agreement across all groups that the weather is changing. Participants pointed to recent natural disasters such as flooding, forest fires, and changing rainfall patterns and seasonal temperatures as evidence of climate change. The only uncertainty seems to relate to the severity of changes to come.

When asked what climate change means to them, they mentioned the human cost, the existential threat and “the end of the world”. They also found in climate change a sense of purpose, however, and the chance for humanity to awaken or “reset”. They readily recognized that the cause of climate change is the burning of fossil fuels. They were unusual in this respect—as noted in Report I—since very few participants in the ANP mentioned fossil fuels as a cause. They also proposed systemic and moral causes for climate change, such as greed, capitalism, bad planning and weak implementation of environmental policies.

Attitudes to Energy

Like most participants, many environmentalists had a personal or family connection to oil and gas. Having worked in a non-profit sector for a long time, they held a general appreciation for the industry, acknowledging that *“most of the money [for their work] comes from oil and gas coffers.”* However, they also characterized their relationship to oil and gas as conceptually limiting: *“it’s done so much for the people who live here...that it becomes very hard to think outside of it.”*

Attitudes to Transition

Although this group found the word “transition” to be too comfortable and soothing, they considered the goal of abandoning oil and gas altogether unrealistic, as some “fossil fuels will always be required.” “Diversify” was seen as a better word and, potentially, as a euphemism for climate change: “[someone I know] calls it ‘economic diversification’ and she will never say climate change.”

Nonetheless, the need to diversify was thought to be urgent: “Albertans are the only people who haven’t caught on that it is over—it’s laughable, it’s an embarrassment.” As one participant explained, “I think in general it’s just important to diversify the economy regardless of what you’re focused in.” Like the oil and gas groups, they saw a potential for the redeployment of existing skills: “We have some of the most talented engineers and physicists in the city—could they not be transferred across?”

Some felt that agriculture would become much more important in a diversified economy, and others were excited by the possibility of a mix of high-value petroleum products—“contact lenses or windshields or whatever”—agriculture, tech and renewable energy.

Narratives for Environmentalists



Keywords: contribute, change, possibility and diversify

Gratitude

“The energy industry provides a lot of benefit to our community.” We are grateful for the hard work of the people in the oil and gas industry who have built the prosperity of our province and nation. Oil is a precious and valuable resource that has enabled us to prosper.

Diversification

The world is changing. We need to balance and diversify our opportunities. We have become too dependent on one industry. While oil and gas may be some part of Alberta’s economy, we can all agree that we need to diversify.

Responsible leadership

Responsible leaders do not shut down a conversation that will impact us for generations to come. We need all leaders to contribute—community, oil, government and business—to change this discussion. *“We expect our leaders to lead with the interests of both their own business and their community in mind. We need them to be leaders and change the discussion.”*

Opportunity for change

Alberta is changing, and environmentalists are an important part of that change. *“There’s a spirit of hard work and doing things in this province. This is our community and we can make this place what we want it to be because we care a lot about this place. A lot of people move to Alberta for opportunity, and the people who come here are often willing to take chances.”*



We need more conversation

It can be hard when you feel attacked from all sides, but respectful, informed and intelligent discussion is critical right now. It can be hard to make change. *“Whenever you try to challenge the status quo, people call you a hypocrite because you drive or do something that uses oil and gas.”* But each time we retreat is a missed opportunity for discussion. There are so many values Albertans have in common—honesty, contributing, community—we can have informed, intelligent and respectful discussions about Alberta’s energy future and what the transition will look like.

Language to Avoid

Overly economic and capitalist framing

Positioning climate change exclusively within an economic frame was consistently criticized by members of this group: *“I don’t like being labelled as an economy. It rankles me... we have an economy. We aren’t one.”* Environmentalists preferred to frame climate change more holistically by including community, people, health, vulnerable people, wildlife, nature and ecosystems in the conversation.

Colonial, patriarchal, exclusive and polarising language

Avoid clichéd language such as “get ‘er done,” or language that “others” and dehumanises people. Environmentalists work in every sector, so avoid language that assumes they are against the oil and gas industry as a matter of course.

Overstatements about Alberta’s ethical oil and environmental regulations

Like other audiences, environmentalists will be very discerning about political or manipulative messaging. Be authentic and open about intentions.

Sources

The primary source for this chapter is a Narrative Workshop held in Calgary, Alberta on June 7th, 2018 at the invitation of Alberta Ecotrust Foundation and Calgary Climate Hub. Six people attended the workshop: four men and two women, aged 20–40. All participants were professionals holding university or post-graduate degrees. To help balance perspectives, additional material has been drawn from a workshop hosted by the Green Calgary Association on June 7th, 2018; a workshop hosted by Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE) and Climate Justice Edmonton on May 24th, 2018; and three Workshops hosted by Climate Leadership Program on May 4th, 2018.

RURAL ALBERTANS

Introduction

Today, fewer than 20 percent of Albertans live rurally,⁷ though nearly half of all Albertans live outside of its two major urban cities in small towns and cities.⁸ This chapter draws on discussions held in both very rural and small communities.

While ranching and farming are a defining way of life in rural areas, three quarters of rural Albertans are employed within service sectors (including energy), or commute to nearby urban centres for work. In terms of demographics, rural communities tend to have older populations, vote conservatively, have fewer university graduates, and have far fewer New Canadians. They are often the most established settlers within the province, sometimes fourth and fifth generation Canadians.

Rural Albertans are important because, as a whole, their attitudes to climate change and energy are distinct from urban Albertans and other Canadians. Far fewer think the earth is getting warmer, fewer support carbon pricing, and less than one third believe the earth is warming due to human activities.⁹

Values

Farmers saw their role as knowledge keepers and stewards of the land, protecting it from detrimental land-use changes such as urban encroachment, which was seen to harm not only the land but the community as well: *“As long as my farm operates, the environment will be just as good or better. Because we’re good stewards of the land.”*

When asked for a word to describe their values, the group mentioned family and community, faith, relationship to the land, hard work and respect. Most notably, respect, community and integrity surfaced again and again as values that distinguished farmers and other rural Albertans from urbanites. Four values dominated:

1. Respect

Respect defined both the group’s identity and their concerns. The loss of respect for food and farming and for one’s neighbours and elders was seen as a growing problem: *“We’re undervalued. Or devalued. Just, we’re covered in crap.” “Farmer to farmer, we respect each other’s land....” “We’ve lost respect for elders. We’ve lost respect for our parents and our grandparents.”* Importantly, farmers also sensed that their work was not respected by environmentalists.

2. Family and community

For this group, a defining aspect of rural life is family and the commitment to places and practices that bring rural people together—for example, the simple act of dropping in for coffee, or volunteering to take care of community places such as churches, halls and societies: *“There still are community halls that you belong to. It’s where you socialize. You take care of the home, or you take care of the church, or these grounds, or the Ag Society. And you come together that way and look after each other a little*

more too.” *“The closer you get to the city, the more community disappears. [Here] people still stop by, visit, have coffee. People are rooted to the land and to their community.”*

3. Integrity/ethics

Finally, integrity/ethics surfaced both explicitly and implicitly as an underlying value of rural people and the farming way-of-life. Building and maintaining long-term relationships with people and the land, often over multiple generations, was seen to be rooted in a commitment to the hard and often unprofitable work of small-scale family farming as a principled and honourable way of life. Ethical values also surfaced in discussions of what makes a good neighbour, a code of conduct centred around respect, humility, forthrightness, doing what needs to be done and helping each other: *“And that’s kind of the unwritten code of the West and you can’t put it in a book... You can’t legislate those things. And it’s almost like common sense. You can’t legislate common sense.”*

4. Nature

For farmers and other rural inhabitants, connectedness to nature was valued as something that made living in the country special and worthwhile: *“I really enjoy all of the parks, the greenery. I went for a walk through one of the parks and there was a moose there—how does this even happen?”*



Canola in bloom in Alberta. Photo: Nalidsa

Attitudes to Alberta

They spoke with pride of Alberta and the foundational role of agriculture in building the province: *“We’ve been here a hundred years or more. We’ll be here a hundred more.”*

They also spoke about Alberta as a good place to live and work: *“Canada is probably one of the best places to live in the world. Alberta’s probably the best place in Canada to live.” “Alberta is literally the best place in the world to live, hands down. Like, hands down.”*

Their Concerns

Aside from the decline of core values of respect, community and integrity, rural people had wide-ranging concerns about societal changes related to overconsumption, overpopulation and increasing urbanisation.

Farmers consistently expressed concern over the devaluing of food and farming in general and the disconnect (a word they used often) between urban and rural residents. More specifically, they fear having to compete with the oil and gas sector for government investment and labour. One farmer remarked, *“well, and the reason is there, if you watch the train tracks, it’s all oil cars. And they’ve even admitted that the grain isn’t moving.”*

They also raised concerns over their children’s and grandchildren’s decisions to move away from the farm in search of higher salaries, fearing tough times once land and farms are no longer within the family. However, they also worried about the vulnerability to economic busts of those who decide to stay. They felt under attack from both environmentalists and the government, who *“shove [their policies] down your throat.”* They also felt a general sense that ordinary, everyday people are often pitted against each other for the benefit of elites. Politicians and the media were specifically singled out as having narrow, short-term interests and little long-term vision.

Rural Albertans often feel under attack, and are frustrated by people who push their opinions on others without really understanding the other side. *“There was a time that you could talk to somebody and you could give them your views on something without them feeling like it was a personal attack.”*

Attitudes to Climate Change

Within the Rural Group, most participants identified recent shifts in weather patterns as a sign of more general climate change: *“It’s not so much April showers bring May flowers anymore; it’s May showers bring June flowers.”* Still, a minority did hold the belief that *“understandings of climate change are not based on facts.”* There was also diversity of opinion among those who acknowledged climate change: *“Climate change is real, we’re not arguing that point, but [the issue] is destroying the province economically.”*

In contrast with the Rural Group, the Farmers Group held much more homogeneous and stronger attitudes towards climate change. They believe that the weather is *not* any more extreme now than in other years, and that climate change is natural. Many believe that “certain groups” exaggerate climate change to justify more regulation and control. *“It’s been used as a poster child because there’s a whole lot of other things that are probably changing the climate.”*

They felt that if the climate is changing, it is due to natural causes. Their general attitude is therefore “*what will be will be.*” Insofar as they are inclined to “*deal with the what,*” they are motivated by a desire to maintain their current standard of living. When pressed, participants within the Farmers Group said they are concerned about the impacts of climate change on people in other places, but expressed confidence in Albertans’ resilience and ability to adapt. They believe that Albertans may even benefit from a warmer climate.

Attitudes to Energy

There was a general appreciation for the energy industry and the benefits it brings to Albertans: “*If we didn’t have that sector, we’d be pretty poor...It puts food on the table.*” Those who had lived through previous downturns held the generally consistent view that Alberta’s energy sector will continue to decline: “*There’s probably a shelf life on oil and gas of maybe 50-100 years.*” They expressed concerns about “short-sightedness” and over-investment in a “losing horse”, especially when investment in pipelines comes at the expense of agriculture and economic diversification: “*Now with the pipeline we’re going right back and we’re putting all of our eggs back in that same basket.*” “*So how can you support Alberta, with agriculture and everything else, when nobody gives you any respect [or] investment?*”

There was openness to renewable forms of energy, though participants believed government to be “too plodding and slow” to head innovation. They also questioned the reliability of renewables given Alberta’s unique climate, and welcomed the opportunity to look to other northern countries that have tried wind and solar, in order to determine what would work best in Alberta.

Attitudes to Transition

Transition made sense to rural audiences as a shift into a broader, more diversified economy with opportunities for generational employment, which was very important to them. “*Then, you have a hundred years of work instead of five years of work.*” They felt that government needs “*to start transitioning now to become an education state or a medical university type state. Because when the energy is depleted, or when it’s almost gone, we’ll have no choice but to make the transition.*”

Narratives for Rural Albertans

Keywords: community, respect, steady work, generational employment, overconsumption, disconnect and devaluing



Respect

We are proud of Alberta farmers and ranchers, and respect the hard work they do to grow food and take care of the land and water. Agriculture is the bedrock of Alberta: “*it’s been here a hundred years, or more. It’ll be here a hundred more.*”



RURAL ALBERTANS

Balance and opportunity

While we appreciate the benefits the energy industry provides Alberta, *“we have put too many eggs in the oil and gas industry basket. We need to move past narrow and near-sighted ways of thinking that”* tie us all to the boom and bust rollercoaster of international oil prices. *“Oil and gas are not going to last for forever, but agriculture will.”*

For the benefit of our families and communities, Alberta needs more balance. We need to spread our investments across other industries. *“We need to start investing in other industries like agriculture and value-added commodities that can help balance our economy, providing good, steady jobs for generations to come.”* We want opportunities that allow families and children to grow and thrive in rural communities. *“We need leaders who build generational opportunities for 100 years of work instead of five years of work.”*

We need all energy opportunities

Alberta is rich in the sun, wind and water that can power new forms of renewable energy. We cannot rely on others to solve our problems. *“While we can learn from other Northern places about what works well in our climate, we need to figure out what works here in Alberta.”* It will be our practical, industrious, entrepreneurial people who will lead Canada’s energy evolution. Rural Alberta receives the most sunshine in Canada; it only makes sense to take advantage of sun and wind resources. Some Alberta farmers are already taking advantage of these new forms of energy to power their homes and buildings.

Prepare and protect

Alberta has always had harsh weather; you must be tough to live here! Scientists tell us that the world’s weather is changing [Use with caution, some will not trust a statement from scientists.] We need to prepare for shifting seasons and increasing drought and fires. *“Rural Alberta has faced challenges before; we take care of each other.”* Preparing for these types of changes will help us build stronger communities for the future.

Let’s talk

“There is often a lot of finger pointing: you’re burning this, you’re doing this. It’s time to acknowledge the climate is changing, whether it’s natural or not, and look at how we can make our quality of lives better, have better productivity, or crops, or deal with forest fires or flooding. Don’t deal with the who and why; let’s just deal with the what.”

Diversification and preparing for the future are important issues that will change our communities for generations to come. We need informed, respectful and intelligent discussion, and to include agriculture and many other industries in that conversation.



Language to Avoid

Pushing climate change

While many farmers respect scientists, and while some will engage with climate change as a natural phenomenon, talking about climate change from the outset is likely to lead to strong push back. Focus conversations around the here and now—specific phenomenon such as drought, solutions such as solar panels—and bring climate change in later.

Urban-based solutions

Biking and electric vehicles are still not realistic in many rural communities, where long distances and larger vehicles are the norm. Focus conversations on solutions that make sense within a rural context such as renewable energy.

Overstatements and exaggerations

Avoid statements such as “recent disasters have been worse than anything we’ve experienced before”. Instead, invite audiences to share their experiences and perceptions of weather changes. Similarly, imperative language such as never, must, all, etc. did not perform well in our testing.

Urban or elite communicators

Rural Albertans have a strong sense of identity, and trust and feel most understood by people within their group. Whenever possible, choose authentic communicators who are a part of this community.

Sources

The primary source for this chapter is a Narrative Workshop held in Leduc, Alberta on May 15th, 2018 at the invitation of ALUS. Six people attended the workshop: four men and two women from the ages of 40–60. All participants were either ranchers or farmers. To help balance perspectives, additional material has been drawn from a workshop hosted by the City of Red Deer on June 5th, 2018 and a workshop hosted by Walk the Talks in Devon, Alberta on May 7th, 2018.

Introduction

Business leaders are defined as people holding positions in senior management. While they only make up a few percent of the total labour market, they are highly influential in politics and economic decision-making. Many business leaders work directly in the energy field or in the service, engineering or property markets that depend on it.¹⁰ Conservatives are also strongly represented in this group. Since their attitudes therefore tend to follow those expressed above, this section seeks to identify the characteristics that are most specific to the group.

Values

When asked for a word to describe their values, business leaders primarily mentioned honesty, integrity and accountability. “Honest” was a word that they used repeatedly, often in connection with their belief that current political and environmental debates were “dishonest”. Three values dominated for this group:

1. Contributing

Participants said that one of their core values was *“being an honest and contributing citizen.”* They saw their work as a means for *“everybody [to] be lifted up a little bit.”* Thus, they considered themselves contributors at many levels of society: *“[Your work is] not just for yourself and your personal goals and family but also meaningful for the community, the city, and the country at large.”*

2. A pride in achievement, including the achievement of others

Business leaders took pride not only in their own achievement but also in the achievement of others and society as a whole. *“I’m a big proponent of seeing people become fruitful in what they want, and it gives me a lot of joy when I see that happening.”*

3. Pulling together

“Help” was a word they used many times, and they repeatedly expressed feeling grateful to live in a society where people help each other and where, in turn, they can help others. Together they want to *“help society get better.”* Against the wider perception that business is highly competitive and self-interested, business leaders stressed the value of mutual support in business.

These attitudes are well summarized in the following quotation, which uses the keywords *success*, *step* and *help*:

“Whether they are a farmer looking to do something new on their land, or whether it’s something the city does that’s a good idea, or they want to set up a new social enterprise, that’s what jazzes me up, that I can do that myself, or I can assist somebody to help them find that next step. And, when they succeed, I feel that I’ve got a little small checkbox of success in my book as well.”

No one mentioned wealth or status as their motivation. Money was regarded as a necessity of life and a means to provide for people. They spoke of their pride in providing employment or *“helping people put food on the table.”* Co-operation was also an important value: *“[business] is not thinking ‘how can I insert myself into this transaction to make a buck?’ It’s ‘how can I make this work? How can I help this person succeed?’ First think about contribution, then we’ll figure out whether or not this is a business deal.”*

Attitudes to Alberta

The natural beauty of Alberta was a source of pride for many within this group, who therefore sought a “balance of natural beauty and business.” Business leaders spoke of Alberta as a place of “unlimited opportunity” which epitomized the values of enterprise and mutual support, and where *“people are comfortable to take risks because they know that there are people around them that will support them.”*

Their Concerns

They feared that society is moving away from these values, and is becoming dishonest. They also worried that people were no longer working together, and that money was making people selfish: *“Now, everyone needs a buck.”*

In particular, participants feared that political polarisation, fuelled by social media, was pulling us apart: *“We are fighting against each other instead of doing what the federation was originally built for: work[ing] together and help[ing] each other.”*

They felt there was a lack of balance (a word they used frequently) in public debates: *“People that are wanting to have meaningful dialogue in the middle are saying they don’t want to be a part of that anymore.”* They said that a *“more honest conversation is what we are desperately needing now,”* one which people *“enter willing to be changed.”*

Attitudes to Climate Change

They had mixed views on climate change and, at times, heated debates about whether it was a real problem. They agreed that *“it’s a responsibility to be conscious of the environment,”* but believed that environmentalists *“lose sight of what’s really important.”* Business pays for our way of life and *“we still need to have these things so that we can have those frills.”*

They felt under attack from progressives, especially environmentalists, who *“want to shove [their views] down your throat.”* Some perceived hypocrisy among environmentalists who use oil products and *“protesters that go protest an oil tanker in their plastic or fiberglass kayak.”*

Importantly, they feared a loss of their public standing: *“One day we were innovators and helpful; the next day we were bad and ugly.”*

Attitudes to Energy

Almost all of the participants worked closely with the energy sector. They saw energy as a fundamental part of the economy and, beyond that, as the “creator of civilisation.”

They had mixed views about energy transition and the shift away from a centralized electrical grid. On the one hand, they welcomed the changes and saw them as the basis of new opportunities. On the other, they feared that the changes could be too abrupt and destroy their legacy. They used the analogy of “classic railways” being destroyed by cars.

Narratives for Business Leaders



Keywords: success, achievement, contribution, opportunity, stepping up, help, honest, economic diversity, innovation and balance.

Validation

We acknowledge and respect the contribution you have made to our standard of life both in Alberta and across Canada. We are proud of all the people who have done the hard work that has built the prosperity of our province and nation.

We need to work together to plan our future

There must be informed and intelligent discussion of our energy future and what the transition will look like. *“We need an honest discussion in which people say, ‘Yeah we haven’t figured it out. We don’t know what this future is going to look like. Let’s take a step back and have a conversation around the outcomes we’re after. What are the values we’re trying to put in place?’ And then figure out how to get there.”*

[This approach speaks of authentic co-operation around shared goals and problem solving. Uncertainty is seen as an authentic and “honest” approach compared with the certainty projected by professional politicians and issues advocates.]

Alberta has the ability to solve problems

“Because of our people, the interconnectedness of our resources, our companies, our government, we have almost limitless potential to really tackle any problem that we decide to go after.”

Change will not be easy

We need to be realistic. These changes will not be easy. *“Rather than looking in fear at the change as being devastating to our economy, we need to look at how we can do it in a new way so that we can bring solutions to the world.”* [Admitting that something is hard and needs new approaches is the “honest” approach.]



So, we can look back with pride

“We will be able to look with pride at our legacy, the infrastructure we create, and how it makes a difference in people’s lives.” [A major motivation for all people but especially senior decision makers in business and politics, is creating through their work a lasting and tangible legacy.]

We need a balance

We need to create a balance in our energy economy. Renewable energy can provide steady growth, reliable employment and new business opportunities, and it can attract investment. This is not about being “green” or “eco” or “politically correct”—it is simply good common sense. [Balance is an important frame used frequently in this group’s speech.]

We can all pull together

Everyone has something to contribute and share at all levels. There is a vital role for business and we need their help. We need businesses to do what businesses do best: innovating, finding solutions, generating new opportunities. And business leaders can support and help new initiatives. [This narrative utilizes the key value of pride in supporting and helping enterprise.] *“We can’t have people standing on the side-lines. Everybody can grab onto the rope and generally pull in the same direction and allow our whole economy and society to kind of evolve and keep pushing forward.”*

Language to Avoid

Overstatement and imperatives

Like c’onservatives, business leaders disliked language that involved imperatives such as *never, must, always*. They also disliked the assumption of collective identity in language such as “all of us”, rejecting it even when based on values they shared, such as a pride in Alberta. Finally, they rejected language that sounded, to them, too assertive or overstated, such as the statement that “recent disasters have been worse than anything we’ve experienced before”. Their first response was to question and challenge such statements.

Transition

Compared to the flexible and co-operative approach they advocated, transition language seemed to this group forced and non-negotiable. Their scepticism centred around the suspicion that transition might be imposed, overplanned or mandated.

Sources

The primary source for this chapter is a Narrative Workshop held in Calgary on May 30th, 2018 at the invitation of the Calgary Chamber of Commerce. Ten people attended, of which nine were men from the ages of 40-60. Participants came from a range of business backgrounds but were predominantly from consulting and finance. Most had a strong connection with the energy sector. To balance the demographic, additional material has been drawn from a workshop attended by female professionals in the energy sector that was hosted May 25th, 2018 by Young Women in Energy, as well as from a workshop for renewable energy leaders hosted by the Pembina Institute on June 1st, 2018.

Introduction

Statistics Canada classifies those between the ages of 16–28 as ‘youth’ and those under the age of 16 as ‘children.’ Youth and children make up just under 40 percent of Alberta’s population, and across the province there are approximately 700,000 students in kindergarten to grade twelve.

Children and youth were the largest audience category represented in the Alberta Narratives Project. Partner organisations held eight Narrative Workshops with urban students: four with children, two with high school students and two with youth aged 19 to 28. To make sense of this wide spread of ages, this chapter distinguishes children and includes high school students in the youth category with their older peers. When possible, this chapter also draws on best practices and insights found within the wider literature.

Youth are much more likely than any other age group to report that there is conclusive evidence of climate change,¹¹ and they will be most impacted by the legacy of decisions made by older generations. Referred to by some as “generation hot”, children and youth are an important audience of, and contributor to, Alberta’s climate–energy conversation. The 2018 International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report found that we are on track to meet or exceed 1.5C° of global warming by the time today’s kindergarteners graduate from high school in 2030.

Values

Aside from their age, young people didn’t see themselves as particularly different from other groups in Alberta. Friends—spending time with them, being supported by them, making new ones—dominated responses to questions about what they enjoy. When asked about their personal values, they mentioned acceptance of others, friends and family, and qualities related to change and personal growth. It’s also worth noting that neither wealth, ambition nor success were named as important values by this age group. Top three values:

1. Acceptance/social justice

The idea of acceptance was by far the most widely discussed value across all groups. In addition to acceptance, youth and children referred to closely related principles such as compassion, empathy, respect and being ‘nice’. As one facilitator remarked, *“they identified strongly as people who want to be accepting of everyone.”* According to one participant, *“Everyone should be treated the same, no matter what.”* Another participant emphasized the importance of *“acceptance, in the workplace or social environment, of other people’s views on a subject, whether [or not] they conflict with your own.”*

2. Friends and social time

All groups mentioned socializing, playing sports, and spending time with friends as things they enjoy. When asked about values, they mentioned community, relationships, friends and family. *“If you go to church, then you know friends there or families, and they know each other.”*

3. Openness to change

When surveyed on their values (all participants filled in a profile sheet before the narrative workshop), both children and youth rated ‘personal freedom’ highest. In conversations, they used words like personal growth, education, knowledge, imagination, self-awareness and open-mindedness. *“I’d say being self-aware [is important], so knowing what you don’t know and knowing what you do know in order to learn further and understand each other better.”*

Attitudes to Alberta

Like other groups, youth valued Alberta’s nature and landscapes. Wildlife, mountains, prairies and parks were points of pride, and considered markers of Alberta. Young people also spoke about the energy industry as one of Alberta’s defining characteristics: “Oil IS Alberta”. They said that what has made them different from their parents has been growing up in a *post-boom* era: *“There was an economic boom in this province for several decades, but it’s now changing. You don’t have some stability in younger people. Old people used to buy their house in cash.”* They saw themselves as agents of economic and political change, as illustrated in the quote below:

Participant 1: *“I think that with the major political changes ... I think, that is, I’d like to say, [they were] due in part to younger people voting more in the election and being sick of 34 years of PC (Progressive Conservative) rule in this province.”*

Participant 2: *“Not that I support the NDP (New Democratic Party) wholeheartedly. It’s just it was good to see that change.”*

Their Concerns

Youth – The concerns of Alberta’s youth mirror those of their Canadian and international peers. Wider research shows that youth’s concerns about unemployment and economic stress tend to trump their concern with climate change.¹² Participants often spoke about Alberta’s changing economy: jobs, economic turbulence *“my salary expectations decreased to half.”* They also worried about not getting the education they need to be prepared *“for a future of innovation and adaptability.”*

Like the environmentalist group, children and youth expressed fear of the future, citing environmental destruction, ecosystem failure, species endangerment, animal extinction and world politics as particular concerns. *“I guess my most pressing concerns would be overpopulation and environmental degradation, especially the oceans at this time.”* *“I can’t keep up with the amount of animals that need help.”* More generally, they raised concerns over changing technology, political correctness, greed, consumerism, disparity, waste and pollution (particularly ocean) and climate change.

Children – When asked, children said that homelessness, pollution, school shootings, wars, bullying and hatred, government corruption and poverty concerned them. The children in faith groups also mentioned refugee crises, media influence, and a culture of drugs and sex as particular concerns. Generally, they felt that things were getting worse, but that events could go either way because *“someone might help”* with pollution and global warming.

Youth Attitudes to Climate Change

For youth, climate change meant global warming, floods, fire, “severe” and unpredictable weather patterns, ecosystem collapse, water shortages, increasing instability, refugees and decreasing mental health. Like environmentalists, they were well informed about the causes of climate change, citing greenhouse gases, human activity, pollution, driving, industrial activity and meat consumption. While they thought Alberta would fair pretty well, they believed they would see the negative impacts of climate change within their lifetime. They felt that Canada would need to prepare to welcome refugees. When asked, all expressed concern over climate change, and said they talk about it with friends but not always with family: *“No, they don’t get it, my family is a bunch of rednecks.”*

Several groups also talked about feeling powerless or disempowered: *“I already feel like my mental health is diminished by seeing the environment fall apart, and seeing climate change and feeling this hopelessness.”* They worried that *“I can’t make a big enough change”* and that *“our class won’t actually make an impact.”* Their awareness of the scale of the climate change problem was accompanied by feelings of helplessness. *“For me, it’s just overwhelming. You can’t even wrap your head around it.”* *“I feel it’s something that as an individual you feel powerless about because you can’t really do much about it even though you see it on the news all the time.”* They felt that new and hopeful narratives about possible solutions were critically needed.

Unique among the groups, they saw a strong role for government intervention and regulation: *“It’s not a personal responsibility any more than it’s a national responsibility.”* They believed that individuals should motivate government, and that government should fund more research and support innovation: *“It can’t start at the personal level. It has to be a collective action.”*



Children playing in Fish Creek. Photo: Amber Bennett

Children's Attitudes to Climate Change

Attitudes to climate change were split between the children's groups, testifying to the influence that educators and family have in shaping children's attitudes and understanding. One facilitator noted that a volunteer parent coached her child to dismiss a question on climate change *"because your dad works in oil and gas."* When asked what climate change meant, the faith school group said they didn't accept that climate change was an issue, believing that scientists were wrong or exaggerating the issue, and that climate change was only going to affect polar bears not them.

By comparison, the group of children from the science centre, aged 8-12, were eager to share their ideas about climate change, reporting that it was *"because of the CO2 we make—it goes into the atmosphere, making it hot."* Discussions of climate change mostly centred on weather, including extreme temperature change and flooding. They said that people *"don't care about the environment."* Another children's church group attributed climate change to a range of causes, from a hole in the ozone layer to bad gases in the air, greenhouse gases, cars, pollution, littering and overpopulation.

The science-school children believed that we were unlikely to survive unless technology changes. One attempt to put a positive spin on climate change—*"at least you get to go swimming all the time"*—was followed by the realisation that there would probably be no humans left to go swimming.

All children's groups said they infrequently talk about climate change with their family.

Youth Attitudes to Energy

Like all other groups, youth expressed gratitude towards, and appreciation of, the energy industry for the jobs and benefits it provides: *"Even if you aren't in oil and gas, you rely on other people's wealth."* They noted that even Edmonton's NHL team is called the Oilers.

However, they also expressed a concern about overdependence on the one industry, saying that Alberta is "stuck" and "intertwined" with it: *"Everything in Alberta is tied to the energy industry."* One high school student remarked that the *"economy needs to diversify, or we're effed."* Participants also suggested that Alberta's energy industry needs to be vertically integrated by engaging in refining as well as drilling and pumping: *"I think we need to refine our oil right here for the benefit of the global environment, as well as the Canadian economy."*

They felt that the transition away from fossil fuels will be difficult, and placed it 15-20 years in the future. Like other groups, they felt that transition needn't be extreme, and should involve a gradual move from oil towards renewables, as both energy sources are needed within the economy.

There was a sense that Alberta would not transition easily, and not before the creation of an alternative that would provide good wages and careers. While students wanted to act on climate change by pursuing a different career path, they felt ill-equipped to do so without strong leadership and an educational system that can prepare them for a future of innovation and adaptation.

Children’s Attitudes to Energy

Children, too, believed that oil and gas brings jobs and is a “big part of our economy,” providing many benefits to Alberta, other provinces and other countries. They said that it is ‘very important’ for transportation and recreation. The church group noted that we are all connected to renewable energy now that their church has solar panels.

Children also noted that Alberta is not in the best economic position because of falling oil and gas prices, which have led to people getting laid off. They expressed concern about the workers who would need to find new jobs.

The children generally agreed that transition would not happen in the next few years, although the faith group placed transition sometime within the next 0-25 years. The children also discussed uses for oil beyond just burning it, such as making it into plastics.

Narratives for Youth



Keywords: land, nature, acceptance of others, honesty, change, climate change, animals/wildlife, ecosystems, weather, transition, new jobs, social justice

Climate change here and now

The people who live in Alberta are close to the land and nature. We can see that the weather is changing. *“We’re kind of beyond the point of discussing whether or not climate change is real or not. The evidence is there, it’s irrefutable, it [has been for] the last 20 years.”* Scientists say that increases in extreme weather are linked to global climate change, and predict that these impacts will continue to increase if we don’t act now. [Frame climate change in the here and now.]

For the love of

[Link climate change to youth’s everyday personal lives by talking about the ‘things we love’.]

Gratitude

We are proud of all the people who have done the hard work that has built the prosperity of our province and nation. Oil is a precious and valuable resource that needs to be used with care and respect.

Change brings opportunity

[Youth are concerned about unstable and uncertain job futures, but open and eager to change. Energy and economic change could be positioned as new opportunities for their future.] Alberta stands at the crossroads and can make a choice. We can fight change or we can make our own choices and reinvent ourselves. *“We want reliable employment and opportunities for the long-term.”* We need to create a balance in our economy and invest in new industries and new energy opportunities.

Climate change can feel overwhelming and scary

"Climate change can be overwhelming. You can't even wrap your head around it. There's so much to think about, and so many different factors. It's like corporate, it's government, it's personal, in your own homes. It's hard to even know what you can do as an individual; at some point, the issue becomes way too big for all individuals to tackle." [Address worry and concerns about the future.]

We can make a difference

We are often underestimated, but collectively we can make a big difference. The future is ours, and we can take charge of what our planet looks like moving forward. We are young and energetic, and we can take control of our future. [Focus on action, solutions and the difference they can make.]

Leaders need to get real

"This isn't going to be easy, and what has already happened cannot be changed. Global warming is something we need to actually tackle and not just talk about. And I think everyone can agree that it's gonna affect us, and it's not gonna be in a good way. So instead of just saying, "This is terrible, but there's nothing we can do," [we need to] actually come up with solutions that we can actually accomplish. And I'm not just worried about money either, 'cause I know a lot of people focus on that; [climate change] is a little more important than that."

We need responsible leaders

Climate change is everyone's problem. It demands immediate transformation of the way we live, from the bottom up, and responsible, effective policies from our representative governments on clean energy, independence, smart technology and innovation.¹³

We want to keep our clean air and water. It is only fair that businesses that do the right thing, like reducing their waste and pollution, be rewarded. And we want businesses that pollute the environment to be made responsible for their damage. They should be made to clean it up.

"It's not just me as a consumer that needs to be ethical. I think that the focus should be on individual action in part... but governments and corporations ... need to be ethical as well."

Let's talk

There must be informed and intelligent discussion of the energy future and what the transition will look like. *"We need to look at [our] community as a whole, and find ways to handle it together, and have the discussion. And it's gonna be uncomfortable for some people, but it's better to talk about it than just put your head in the sand."*



Language to Avoid

Imperatives

Imperatives and absolutes such as never, always, all, none, and “should do” rather than “can do”

Doom and gloom

Pessimistic or doom and gloom language that can fuel a sense of hopelessness—youth are energetic and want to make change!

Sugar-coating

Clichés or sugar coating; youth want authentic and real language.

Divisiveness

Language that ‘others’ or dehumanizes vulnerable groups.

Focus on communicators

Peer networks and social media are important sources of information on climate change for young people. They are sceptical of corporate leaders, politicians and other elites.

Narratives for Children

A highly abbreviated version of the narratives were created and tested with children, so they can be used with confidence. However, it is recommended that additional research and testing be done, particularly with rural students, to further refine the language and ways of talking about climate change that are most engaging for younger audiences. It is important to note that wider research recommends avoiding doom and gloom narratives for very young audiences, and, whenever possible, creating meaning by connecting climate change to the communities, things and landscapes children know and understand.

Climate change is affecting our lives here and now.

The people who live in Alberta have always been close to the land and nature. So we can see that the weather is changing.

We want to keep our clean air and water. It is only fair that we ask the companies to do the right thing and reduce their waste and pollution. And we want companies that pollute the environment to be made responsible for their damage. They should be made to clean it up.

We are rich in the resources - including sun, wind, and hydro - that power new forms of renewable energy.

In facing climate change, our biggest opportunity may be taking care of each other and building strong community.

Sources

The primary source for this chapter is a Narrative Workshop held in Edmonton, Alberta on May 18th, 2018 at the invitation of Grant MacEwan University. Nine people attended the workshop: five men, two women and two persons who did not hold gender-specific identities. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 28, and represented a mix of professions, including electrician, nurse, student, educator and engineer. They were mostly Caucasian and identified as left of centre politically. Additional material has been drawn from workshops hosted by the Alberta Council for Environmental Education on May 4th, 2018; the Calgary Board of Education on May 24th, 2018; Climate Justice Edmonton on May 17th, 2018; Enmax on May 8th, 2018; TELUS Spark on May 10th, 2018; and the Zion Baptist Church on May 3rd and May 5th, 2018.

Introduction

For many years, Alberta's booming economy has attracted new Canadians from other parts of the country and other parts of the world. In 2017, 17 percent of all immigrants to Canada moved to Alberta, second only to Ontario. Despite the recent economic slowdown, Alberta has remained a top destination for newcomers to Canada, matching the pace of other metropolitan centres. The largest group of recent arrivals in Alberta has been South Asians, which includes Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans and Nepalese, most making their homes in one of Alberta's two largest cities.¹⁴

Most participants worked in highly skilled professions, and did not represent the diverse educational and socio-economic backgrounds of immigrants as a whole. The views of these groups should be considered in this light.

Values

New Canadians saw themselves as adaptable, and believed their role was to contribute to making things better in Canada for everyone. When asked for a word to describe their values, they mentioned respect, honesty, personal freedom, and contribution.

These values are well represented in this quote from a man born in Nigeria: *"In every first meeting that I have with people, I talk about my appreciation for those that have come before me and made this place better for me to want to come here. When I meet people that have been here for a very long time, I'm always giving them respect. Kudos for what you've done to make this place something very nice for me to want to come here. There are several countries that I could have gone to, but I chose Canada, right? When I see people that are new as myself, I'm like, 'We're going to make this place better. You're welcome.'"*

Three values dominated:

1. Respect and diversity

The dominant shared value was respect. *"Respect is the most important thing, irrespective of level of education, culture." "Where we come from, respect is everything. It's everything. Every culture deserves respect, right?" "We arrived as professionals. We have respect for those who arrived to Canada before us." They also enthusiastically endorsed diversity as a principle from which everyone can gain: "That unity in diversity makes us a lot more accommodating. It's a strength."*

2. Honesty

Honesty was mentioned as a core value, and was understood to include the willingness to speak your mind. *"In Canada, everyone is too polite... you never know how you are doing. What if I am doing something the wrong way? Will anyone let me know?"*

3. Hard work and achievement

The group expressed aspirational values around hard work and achievement. They emphasized their desire to contribute not just their work but their cultural experience: *“We contribute to them what we know, what we’ve learned from our home country.”*

Attitudes to Canada and Alberta

Their primary point of reference is Canada as a whole rather than just Alberta. Everyone expressed positive attitudes towards Canada and the reception they had received. *“What I’m proud about Canada is they welcome multicultural people. Everyone is welcome. Yeah. That’s what I’m proud of.”* Nonetheless, they consistently talked about their original countries as “home”, and referred to Canadians in the third person, as “they” rather than “we”.

The New Canadians made an active choice to emigrate to Canada rather than other countries, and are keenly aware of Canada’s relative strengths. They were very critical of the USA and of Donald Trump in particular. Some even said they felt that *“we didn’t choose Alberta—Alberta chose us.”*

They particularly noted the cleanliness and natural beauty of Canada. They recognized the high quality of government services and the investment in welfare, education, and health.

In regard to Alberta specifically, they commented on the high level of volunteerism, including the way that people help each other during extreme weather events. *“All people try to help each other. When you ask something from your neighbour or your friends, they try to help you in everything.”*

Nonetheless, they also found Canadians reserved, and missed the community support of their home countries. *“When I came here, my social support broke down completely. Back home, even if I don’t have cash on me, I could eat, I could literally go to my neighbour’s house and we eat, we have fun.”*

And they found it hard to navigate Canadian politeness. *“It’s important to say what you think but you have to be diplomatic to say things here. I feel here in Canada, people are too nice sometimes, that they don’t tell you what you need to hear.”*

Their Concerns

Participants shared a generally optimistic attitude, but mentioned a few concerns, such as the loss of social respect: *“We’re getting to a point where being inappropriate and being inconsiderate is allowed, and we are less tolerant of each other’s cultural differences.”* They did not draw specific examples from Canada but were more likely to use examples from world politics, in which Donald Trump featured prominently. Other concerns included crime, the cost of mortgages, the inability to find professional work and environmental destruction.

Attitudes to Climate Change

Participants were all concerned about climate change and well-informed about its impacts. However, because they were highly educated, and since some had been recruited through an environmental network, it is not possible to ascribe these attitudes to New Canadians as a whole.

They held strongly global perspectives on climate change, talking frequently about its impacts on poorer countries, and placing it within the wider context of global inequality. They were among the few participants, outside of environmentalists and youth in the Alberta Narratives Project, to talk about the role of climate change in forced displacement and migration.

Conversely, the changes in Alberta's climate held little meaning for them. All the participants came from countries with warmer climates, and regarded the cold weather in Alberta as extreme. They all agreed that Alberta's harsh winters were sometimes depressing and hard.

Attitudes to Energy

The New Canadians were very alert to the way that the oil and gas industry supports the economy, as evidenced by the high quality of government services. More than any other group in Alberta, they focused repeatedly on the need for solutions that provide revenue: *"If we're going to say we don't want to pollute the environment with oil, drilling oil, where is the government going to get money from, to provide services for the people, to fund education and everything that we need?" "The key thing for Alberta is to find other revenue streams, find other ways to generate income."*

All participants, including those working with the oil and gas sector, strongly supported the need to diversify the economy, and responded positively to the trial narratives around this topic. *"I wish Calgary and Alberta could diversify more, because of their own employment and job situation."* As newcomers they had a strong awareness of the recent decline in Alberta's fortunes: *"There was a time when Calgary was the booming city. When the oil and gas dwindled, everyone moved, right?"* They agreed that Alberta had not prepared well for the downturn, noting that *"If you don't learn from your past, you most likely will be condemned to repeat it."*

Their support for energy diversification stems from the same value that informs their support for cultural diversity: namely, their belief that diversity creates strength. Their description of the reception of renewable energy echoes their personal experience as new immigrants: *"Even renewable energy, like every new product, goes through a phase. There is an issue of rejection, there is an adoption, then after that, there's acceptance."*

Narratives for New Canadians



The narratives for New Canadians broadly follow those for the Meta Narrative in Report I. They are the most diverse group in terms of politics, faith, employment and age, so those creating messaging aimed at New Canadians must first identify which party, faith, profession, and age group they belong to. The following narratives emerged from the findings above. They have not been formally tested and should be applied cautiously.

Keywords: respect, contribute, learn, earn, diversity/diversify.

Validation

Thank you for choosing to come to Alberta, and for the contribution that you make to our province.

Global impacts

Climate change threatens people around the world, and will have the biggest impact on the people who are already most vulnerable. We have a responsibility to take action on climate change so that they can also have the opportunities we have and a better standard of living.

Learning

As we prepare for a new climate, we need to learn from other countries about how they have coped with heat waves, drought, forest fires, etc. There is a very important role for you in this process, and we welcome the new ideas and experience you bring with you. It is sometimes hard to hear criticism, so we invite you to be open and honest with us about what we can do better.

Canada as an exemplar and superior to the US

Canada is a forward-looking and progressive country and open to new ideas. As Donald Trump tries to withdraw the US from international climate agreements, Canada can lead North America in innovation and practical solutions.

Diversification

Diversity makes us stronger and more resilient. Alberta has been too dependent on oil and gas, and it needs to have a broader and more diverse economy. We recognize and respect the huge role that the oil and gas industry plays in supporting our prosperity, and realize that we must seek new ways, in a diverse economy, to maintain the same level of government services and standard of living.

Language to Avoid

New Canadians have limited experience of Albertan weather, and already regard it as extreme, it is therefore not helpful to focus on local impacts and extreme weather in Alberta.

Sources

The primary source is a Narrative workshop held on May 14th, 2018 at Calgary Catholic Immigration Services in Calgary, Alberta. All quotations are taken from this workshop. Additional material has been obtained from a second workshop convened by Nature Conservancy. The participants in the workshops were from a range of countries, including Iran, Iraq, India, Nigeria and Malaysia. However, they were not fully representative of the range of origin countries. No people from the Philippines were present at the workshops, for example, even though it is the origin country for a quarter of Albertan immigrants.

Introduction

In the Canadian national census, two thirds of people in Alberta identify with a faith.¹⁵ The remaining third say that they have no religious affiliation. Around 30 percent of people say that they attend a religious service once a month.¹⁶ Although this percentage is high compared with other parts of Canada, there has been a substantial and ongoing shift away from faith affiliation—only five percent of Canadians in Prairie provinces reported no affiliation in 1971.¹⁷

Eighty-eight percent of Albertans⁷ with a faith are Christian. Forty percent of these are Catholics and 12 percent are United Church, the two largest denominations by far. A third of Christians identify with a large number of other denominations, including the many evangelical churches. Muslims are the second largest faith group with three percent of the population. Sikhs, Buddhists, and Hindus account for one percent each.

Four Christian workshops were held for the Alberta Narratives Project. These included congregants of Zion Baptist Church, the Anglican Diocese of Calgary, and the Catholic Diocese of Calgary. There were also two workshops held with young people from Christian schools. There was a good mix of ages, political orientations and rural/urban locations. Two of the groups included people of Chinese and Hispanic origin. People of other faiths were present in workshops with New Canadians, but did not have workshops specifically tailored to their identified faith.

Values

As expected, people's faith figured strongly among their core values. They described it as *"a rock I can stand on when all of the ground is sinking sand"*. *"Being Christian means receiving a gift of grace and forgiveness."* *"God asks us to be a force for something better in the world around us."* *"What gives me pleasure is to be a steward of God's creation."* Their other values—authenticity, honesty, trustworthiness, tolerance, integrity, openness—were very similar to those of other groups.

Overall, though, people made surprisingly little reference to their faith in the longer discussions. Although a participant said that *"having that belief changes how you think about everything,"* their answers were very similar to those of other people who shared their politics and demographics.

People were modest about their faith. It was very important to them but not something they sought to impose on others, because, as one noted, *"In our personal life and our professional life, we are constantly surrounded by people who are not Christians."* They therefore spoke of it as a source of personal strength and comfort rather than a truth they were beholden to declare. In the test narratives, they rejected messaging that generalized about what "Albertans want", remarking that *"I don't want to speak for others."*

Their Concerns

A group with left of centre participants identified “the pursuit of justice and advocacy for those who’ve had their voice taken away” as a major concern. In another group, a conservative participant with ties to the oil industry said his major concern was “*Alberta’s pipelines and oil prices.*” As in other groups, participants in the faith-based groups were concerned about the divisions in society, and about how “*we don’t really work together to try to solve our problems—we’re kind of working against each other.*”

Unlike other groups in the Narratives Project, Christians across all faith-based groups expressed strong concerns about waste, especially the waste of food. One participant described waste as “*the manifestation of sin. It is a physical representation of the evil that we’re at war with.*” Some also rejected consumerism and the excessive consumption of resources.

Attitudes to Alberta

All participants spoke highly of Alberta, saying they liked the positive “can do” outlook and the outdoors, as well as the “openness of people to welcome newcomers.”



Participants at Talking Climate Change in Edmonton. Photo: Trevor Chow

Attitudes to Climate Change and Energy

We found little evidence that people's faith had a strong influence on their attitudes to climate change and energy. The greatest influences were their politics and their involvement with the oil and gas industry.

The Baptist group, whose members held mainly conservative values, was very polarized around the issue of climate change, with some people expressing concern, and others saying that climate change were fear mongers who had created the issue for political ends. There was no sign that the common faith of the two sides could resolve these differences, and participants did not look to scripture for guidance in their conversation.

Participants sometimes invoked their faith to justify action on climate change. For example, Christians with left-wing and environmentalist identities said that we needed to move to renewable energy because of our *"responsibility to be stewards for God's creation."* A conservative Christian working in the oil industry used similar language when he said we needed a continued but "balanced" use of oil for transportation because, *"as a Christian, I am called to be a steward of all the resources God has provided."* The religious language of stewardship was thus flexible enough to be applied to different positions.

The Christians were more alert than other groups to the role of collective guilt and silence in climate change, noting that *"[climate change] will display itself in ever increasing ways the less we want to grapple with it, recognize it and talk about it. Ultimately, we really don't want to admit our sin, don't want to name it."* This quote was from a left-leaning environmentalist.

Narratives for Faith



As noted, Christians held closely to the views of people in their demographic, and these demographic markers were more present in their conversations than was a shared faith-based perspective. Those seeking to engage Christians in climate change action should therefore start with the sub-narrative in this report that resonates with their demographic (in order of importance: their politics, their relationship to the oil industry, their age, their location). The following narratives relate more specifically to their Christian identity, but, as noted, should be nuanced to reflect their broader identity.

Care for Creation

As Christians, we have the obligation to care for God's creation. That means respecting nature and using the resources He gives us efficiently. [For some Christians, this language lends itself to action against climate change; for others (such as older or more conservative groups), it might motivate waste reduction and a more "balanced" use of energy, as in the narrative.] *"We are rich in the resources – including sun, wind and hydro – that power new forms of renewable energy. We need to develop all of our natural resources and create a balance in our energy economy."*



Nature is a gift

God has given us this gift. It is our duty to care for it. [Although not used explicitly in workshop conversations, *the gift* as a narrative frame has performed strongly in testing with Christians around the world. The language resonates well with this group's appreciation of Alberta's natural beauty and resources.]

Skills are also a divine gift

In developing new energy sources, we can build on the skills of workers from the oil, gas and coal sectors, and develop new talents. *"We've got so many well-trained people, we've got all this opportunity. We can recognize the talent and the gifts of each one of us, and help one another to become better."*

Waste

We need to avoid waste. This is something we agree on. That is why energy efficiency is so important: who can argue with the idea of doing more with less? It is simply wrong to waste energy, resources or food. [Waste could be a leading narrative for Christians of all denominations, and has been successfully used to frame discussions of climate change in other countries.]

Ethical issue

Some may see climate change as a political, economic, or scientific issue, but it is, first and foremost, an ethical issue. Our basic sense of right and wrong guides us to protect people and our shared home. [Test narratives grounded in moral principle scored highly among Christians. One participant noted that *"climate change burns so strongly through me that it is an ethical issue"*. However, here, too, ethical definitions of climate change depended on worldview. One participant, for instance, commented that his sense of ethics required that we use Albertan oil because it meets strong social and environmental guidelines, and because *"we are importing oil from other countries where there is no ethics."*]

Care and protect

It is our most vulnerable people – children, the elderly, the sick and disabled – who suffer the worst health impacts of these increased temperatures and extreme weather. We need to prepare for the changing climate so that we can care for and protect the vulnerable.

We need a new conversation

The debate around climate change is dividing us. *"When Christians are praying, we can all pray [for] the ability [of the] people of Alberta to have a loving and grace-filled conversation."*

Peer communicators from each denomination

[Unlike the other groups in the ANP, Christians come together regularly, usually every week, to meet and listen to one of their peers. The communication in church and outside prayer meetings is therefore an exceptional opportunity to engage with people, and enable priests or church leaders to speak about climate change and energy from a faith perspective. The one caveat is that communicators should ideally come from the same denomination as their audience. Although Christians have a very strong common faith, the differences between traditions are marked and sometimes divisive.]

Language to Avoid

New Canadians have limited experience of Albertan weather, and already regard it as extreme, It is therefore not helpful to focus on local impacts and extreme weather in Alberta.

Excessive 'Alberta is best'

Although participants spoke well of Alberta, they disliked the trial narratives that expressed Albertan identity too strongly: *"There are some parts of it that are written in an extremely prideful way that goes beyond the pale—thumping our breasts."* This concern related to their modest reluctance to speak for others and impose their views.

Transition

Compared to the flexible and co-operative approach they advocated, transition language seemed to this group forced and non-negotiable. Their scepticism centred around the suspicion that transition might be imposed, overplanned or mandated.

Wider Reading

See for example the Renew Our Food campaign by the Christian charity Tearfund https://www.tearfund.org/about_you/action/foodwaste/. See also a set of resources for speaking with people of the world's five main faiths, which can be found at www.climateoutreach.org/resource-type/faith and www.greenfaith.org.¹⁸

Sources

The primary sources for this section are two narrative workshops held in April and May 2018 at the invitation of the Anglican Diocese of Calgary and the Roman Catholic Diocese, both located in Calgary, Alberta. All quotations are taken from these workshops. Additional material has been obtained from workshops convened by the Zion Baptist Church, Edmonton, Alberta; Camp Kuriakos at Sylvan Lake, Alberta; and two workshops held with young people from Christian schools at the invitation of the Calgary Board of Education and Alberta Council for Environmental Education.

CONCLUSIONS – APPLYING THE FINDINGS

Communications research consistently finds that people’s attitudes are formed by their values and social identity. They ask, “what position is consistent with who I am, what do I care about, and what do other people like me think?”

This is especially true in the case of climate change, which is a complex and unprecedented issue that challenges people’s understanding of the world and their own place in it. Climate change is therefore prone to a *confirmation bias*,¹⁹ where people form views based on their group identity and then find the external evidence to support that position.

Participants in Alberta Narrative Project discussion groups repeatedly explained their views in two related ways: as an expression of their own values and identity, and as a *rejection* of the values held by people who, they felt, criticized or undermined them. Most people felt under attack from people with different politics or worldviews. They then tended to project onto these opponents views that were opposite to their own, saying that they were dishonest, ungrateful, or disrespectful. People who were loyal to the oil and gas industry were particularly critical of “environmentalists,” who, they said, combined all of these negative qualities.

When speaking with any individual audience, we should recognize that a constructive conversation starts by recognizing and validating their identity and values.

That said a notable finding of the Alberta Narratives Project was how much people have in common. The same values emerged repeatedly across all groups: honesty, integrity, respect and acceptance. Also held in common were concerns around polarization and not being listened to or respected. In addressing this shared sense of polarization, we should emphasize the strength of the bonds that tie people together: for example, shared values around nature, helping one another, respecting each other, and a sense of gratitude for a good quality of life.

This common ground is explored in greater detail in the first report, *Communicating Climate Change and Energy in Alberta*.

10 Principles for Applying Sub-Narratives



The following principles can help communicators speak with audiences in this report, as well as provide a template for talking with other audiences.

1. Respect

Reflect back to people their views of what makes them proud of who they are. Emphasize the vital role they play in maintaining Albertans' standard of living.

2. Validate their contribution

Emphasize that they have something special and unique to contribute to the challenges of climate change and energy, and that Alberta will need their help. Show how their contribution is grounded in their own sense of worth.

3. Build messaging from their values and keywords

Each audience had specific words that they used repeatedly to describe their values and identity. In language theory, these are called “frames” because they embody meanings that help people make sense of the world. By using these words, communicators signal that they are speaking to their audience's values. For example, business leaders speak often of *contribution*, conservatives about *responsibility*, engineers about seeking *rational* and *balanced solutions*.

4. Use their narratives and language

In the sections above we identify language which may work with each audience. As stressed in the introduction, these narratives are a guide to effective communications, not a formula. It is important to rework the language to keep it fresh and authentic.

5. Draw support from trusted sources

Each audience trusts different sources of information—whether they be media, high-profile individuals, organizations or networks. Bring in external evidence and arguments from trusted sources.

6. Take people as far as they are willing to go

Recognize that people are often in very different places in terms of their attitudes to climate change and energy. Rather than confronting them with opposing views, recognize the existing grounds for a constructive dialogue. For example, people who are sceptical of the human role in climate change may be willing to engage in a conversation about changing weather patterns and the need to prepare and protect their communities and livelihoods. People who are committed to the oil and gas industry will still recognize the opportunities for diversifying into new forms of energy. And people outside the energy sector, for example farmers, will support proposals for increasing their own role within a broader economic base.

7. Enable an open discussion between peers

On divisive issues such as climate change, people tend to suppress their own views if they think those views will bring them into conflict with their friends and peers. As a result, all people in the group underestimate the diversity of views held by their peers.

The Narrative Workshops encouraged these diverse views to surface, and most groups revealed a wide range of attitudes to climate change and energy. People accepted and even enjoyed airing those differences, knowing that they were among people who respected them and shared their values.

The most constructive discussion around climate change and energy will therefore be one that provides a context within which people can express a range of views politely and respectfully. One way to support this is to promote the widely held value that everybody has something worthwhile to contribute, providing that they are respectful and tolerant. This more tolerant discussion can also be presented as reinforcing the core values of the specific audience: “in (our group) we are polite /respectful/rational people who like to get along and hear different ideas.”

8. Identify actions aligned with the audience's strengths

A major reason why people avoid talking about climate change and energy is they feel these are huge issues over which they have little personal agency. They often feel unfairly singled out, and respond by directing their attention elsewhere. For example, some participants from the energy sector asserted that changes were the responsibility of energy consumers not industry.

While emphasizing that everyone has a special contribution to make, highlight specific actions that relate to the audience's strengths and sources of pride, whether that be their own skills base, their community, or their occupation.

9. Present positive outcomes

Advocates for action on climate change often favour the narrative “Climate change is a huge threat and we need to make sacrifices to stop it getting worse.” It is important for people to appreciate that there is a real threat, but overemphasizing this narrative can lead people to deny the issue altogether. A more constructive approach is to show how action on climate change and the transition to new forms of energy will provide positive benefits.

Report I recommended ascribing benefits that are appreciated across all audiences, for example how developing diverse resources will create greater job security in the energy sector. In addition, people are inclined to see an outcome as beneficial if it reinforces their identity or addresses their specific concerns. Therefore, for each audience, explore both of these aspects and present positive outcomes that embody them. For example, preparing for increased extreme weather reinforces people's sense of community and the importance of caring for one another. Rural people often have concerns about young people leaving the countryside to seek work in cities, so a transition narrative that emphasizes secure local employment for young people will both reinforce this group's identity and address their concerns.

10. Test it. Above all, it is essential to test communications

This can be done informally, for example, by confidentially inviting individuals in the target audience to give their honest personal opinion. It is often worth testing formally any messaging that will be distributed widely (for example in printed materials, social media, videos, and broadcasts)—for example, by means of focus groups or testing techniques used in the Narrative Workshops. Informal testing will identify weak messaging, but formal testing will enable communicators to evaluate different messaging options.

What Not To Do

Poor communications criticize and undermine people. In the ANP we heard repeatedly from people that they felt “blamed” for who they were and what they care about. Sometimes it is important to challenge people, but it must be done in a way that supports their sense of shared identity and suggests that they hold the keys to solutions. Strong criticism is rarely effective, and then only when presented by people who are highly trusted by the audience.

Avoid language that is based on external values or concerns or that is not comfortable for the audience. In particular, be aware that many people expressed sympathy with environmental concerns but deep distrust of *environmentalists*. Be careful to reframe any images or language associated with an environmentalist identity or ideology unless speaking with an audience that clearly shares those values.

It is also important to avoid language that sounds forced, inauthentic or like the product of messaging design. This is a difficult nuance to achieve (especially in a communications guide!) and requires a strong intuitive understanding of the audience. We therefore encourage communicators to use the narratives in this report as a *guide* to communications, not as text to cut and paste, and to seek fresh and original ways to convey the same ideas. In particular we recommend a focus on working with authentic and trusted messengers who develop their own language rather than depending on materials designed by marketing or advertising professionals.

The Role of the Communicator

In the first Report we noted that “the issue of trust emerged across all groups, particularly those that are sceptical about climate change.” When presented with test narratives, people often demanded to know “who is telling me this?” because their response would be determined by their trust in the communicator. It is therefore essential that the person or organization that promotes the messaging is respected by the people they are addressing and is seen as authentic and honest in their intentions (see Report I’s section on trust, page 31).

A helpful programme may be to focus on identifying and supporting trusted communicators and working with them to speak in their own words. There are many ways that this approach can be applied in practical communications. It may include working closely with trusted media or networks, supporting and promoting speakers or high profile figures trusted by the audience, or ensuring that communications are built around images and language of real people found within the audience.

In the training for the Alberta Narratives Project, we recommended the promotional video “Iron and Earth” as an excellent application of these principles. In the video, workers in the oil sands industry use their own words, introduce themselves, and talk about their pride in their work and their support for the development of renewable energy. It is authentic and engaging.²⁰

We also identified a video that most participants agreed performed poorly by these standards. The video by the Government of Alberta to promote its Climate Leadership Plan was a mix of stock footage intercut with snippets of anonymous character-types, who may have been actors, quoting slogans

from a script.²¹ Although the video sought to promote a positive message built around common values, we agreed that it was fundamentally inauthentic and likely to fail with many of our audiences.

The qualities that define a *trusted* communicator are hard to define precisely.²² They include a sense that the person is from the audience (and “like us”); that they value, respect and understand the audience; and that they are well informed on the issue they are speaking about.

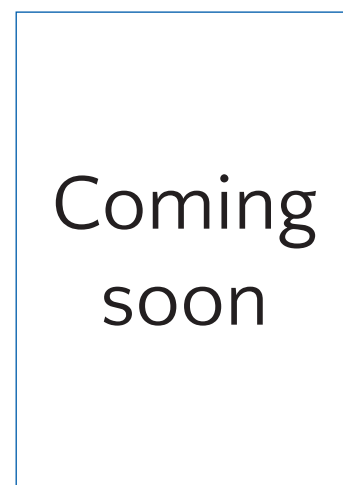
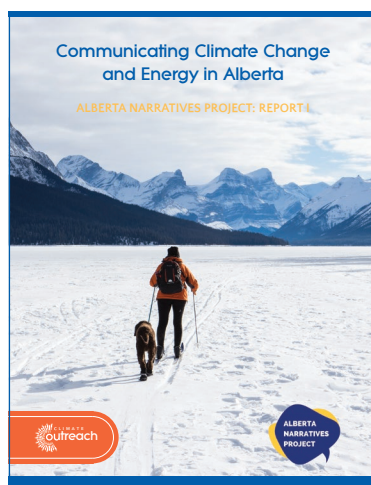
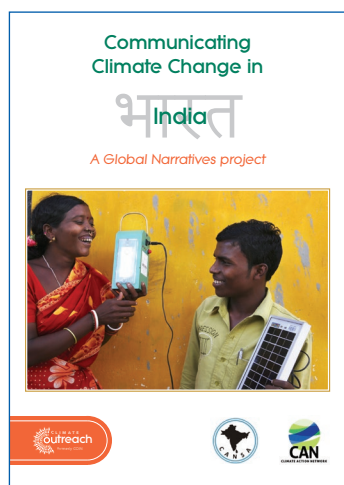
Although it is valuable for a communicator to be strongly associated with their audience, it is not essential, providing that they are perceived as being respectful, open to challenge, accountable and not motivated by personal reward. In speaker trainings, Climate Outreach recommends that all communicators focus on the values they share with their audience (such as a pride in place, family, community). They should be open and honest about who they are and the personal journey that has led them to hold and share their views.

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The Alberta Narratives Project is a Canadian contribution to the Global Narratives Project. Through a process of partnership and co-design, the project works in different countries and regions, designing and testing the most effective language and narratives for climate change and its solutions.

It is based on the principle that everyone has a right to understand and interpret climate change from the perspective of their own culture and concerns. It is building an international library of research comparing the many different and creative ways that people respond to these shared problems.



Climate Outreach's Narrative Workshop methodology is the basis for the Global Narratives Project and was published in the peer-reviewed journal *Energy Research & Social Science: Using Narrative Workshops to socialise the climate debate* (Shaw & Corner, 2017)



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