

## WORKSHOP REPORT

### Building Climate-Resilient Communities

The Prairies Regional Adaptation Collaborative (PRAC) hosted its 2020/21 annual regional workshop as a series of four virtual sessions centred around the theme of building climate-resilient communities. Held in January and February of 2021, each event focused on different aspects of how communities throughout the Prairie Provinces can build resilience to the multiple shocks and stressors they experience, including those associated with our changing climate. Through each of the four sessions, the PRAC hosted issue experts and community representatives to share their experiences and begin a conversation around resilience building throughout the Prairie Provinces.

#### **Session 1: Envisioning Resilient Prairie Communities**

**January 13, 2021**

This session explored the concept of resilience, how to build a climate-resilient community, and the ways in which communities and organizations have increased their resilience by building back better after extreme events. Two case studies were presented that showcased how communities and organizations increased their resilience during recovery from a climate event.

##### **Speakers:**

**James Magnus-Johnston**, Director of the Resilience Institute, Canadian Mennonite University

**Glenda Watson**, Mental Health & Addiction Advisor, Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority, La Ronge, Saskatchewan

**Patrick Hassler**, Emergency Response Coordinator, Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority, La Ronge, Saskatchewan

**Jon Kell**, Acting Transmission and Civil Design Department Manager, Manitoba Hydro

#### **Key Messages From the Session**

- Resilience is the ability to withstand shocks and disturbances and use experiences to spur renewal and innovative thinking. This type of thinking needs to be fostered at the individual and community levels.
- Resilience strategies should include proactive adaptation and anticipatory action. Engaging stakeholders in this type of action can help individuals make meaning of climate change impacts while planning for the future.
- Trust and social connection are essential elements of building a resilient community. This can be done as part of a strategy to identify and engage with stakeholder groups within the community.



## Session 2: Envisioning Resilient Prairie Communities

January 27, 2021

The session explored the concept of resilient food systems, featuring case studies from different perspectives within the Prairie food system. The session provided attendees with an understanding of key challenges and opportunities to build resilience across the food system in the Canadian Prairies.

### Speakers:

**Susanna Klassen**, Ph.D. Candidate at the Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability at University of British Columbia (UBC) and Director at Food Secure Canada

**Carl McCorrister**, Community Garden Coordinator, Peguis Community Garden

**Alanna Gray**, Policy Manager, Keystone Agricultural Producers

**Lara Ellis**, Senior Vice-President Policy and Partnerships, ALUS Canada

### Key Messages From the Session

- While Prairie agriculture might benefit from higher temperatures and longer growing seasons, achieving net benefits will require a lot of adaptation to limit the impact of climate extremes such as water limitations, vector-borne diseases, and invasive species.
- Food systems are complex socio-ecological systems. It is therefore important to consider their social, economic, and political dimensions.
- Climate change is expected to affect the entire food supply chain, exacerbating issues of societal inequality and the ability of people to access food. Public policy and adaptation planning should consider the unique challenges people face accessing nutritious and preferred foods, along with how race, age, gender, and poverty amplify vulnerability and resilience to climate hazards.
- Historically, many Indigenous communities had diversified food systems, including traditional activities such as hunting, fishing, and agriculture. As a result, they were food secure. Through experiences with colonization and the residential school system, food security was lost. Community-initiated food programs can play a significant role in reclaiming food practices that support food security and build a resilient local food system. Food security can be developed through intergenerational sharing of stories, traditional knowledge, and respect for the land.
- Past decisions on land use practices mean that building resilience requires land restoration. Wetland restoration can help to filter and store water, which is an essential natural defence in the face of changing climate patterns, especially flooding and drought. Environmental Farm Plans build on-farm resiliency as they provide farmers with the tools to assess agro-environmental risks and adopt strategies to mitigate them. These farm plans encourage the use of beneficial management practices and diversification of crops and livestock, all of which improve resiliency.



## Session 3: Engaging Diverse Voices in Adaptation Planning Processes

**February 10, 2021**

The session explored why diverse voices are needed to inform adaptation planning and emphasized the importance of engaging groups that are often left out of decision-making processes. The session brought together speakers to showcase concrete strategies for engaging stakeholders, exploring what the challenges were and what worked in different contexts.

### Speakers:

**Amber Fletcher**, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Social Studies, University of Regina

**Darrell Corkal**, President, H2Adapt Inc.

**Amanda Broad**, Senior Policy Analyst, Climate Risk Management, B.C. Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

**Jocelyn Joe-Strack**, Indigenous Knowledge Research Chair, Yukon University

### Key Messages From the Session

- Gender, culture, race, sexuality, age, socio-economic status, and other factors influence people's vulnerability to climate change. Inequality affects the resources available for adaptation and undermines the resilience of communities, provinces, and countries.
- Participation is a right, but the inclusion of diverse knowledge and perspectives also adds value to adaptation planning processes through inclusive collaborative governance and identifying potential for maladaptation, among other benefits.
- Inclusive processes start with understanding the potential barriers to participation and working to systematically remove them in a flexible process that can be adjusted as new ideas emerge.
- Relationship building and dialogue among different actors are essential to enable emotional connections, share stories of lived experiences with climate change, and blend different types of knowledge—including Indigenous and local knowledge—to co-generate solutions that build resilience.
- Effective engagement often requires meeting people where they are—for example, at libraries, Indigenous gatherings, and community centres—and designing the spaces and processes in ways that work for different groups, including using inclusive language, visuals, and creative facilitation approaches to encourage participation.

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### Audience Participation

The audience was asked to engage in the conversation using the interactive message forum Padlet. The Padlet received 41 interactions during the webinar. The forum interactions are available [here](#).

## Session 4: Enabling the Implementation of Adaptation Plans

February 24, 2021

The session explored the current status of adaptation planning on the Prairies; shared the challenges experienced by municipalities as they initiate, prepare, and implement their adaptation plans; and communicated the experiences of two communities in putting adaptation plans into action.

### Speakers:

**Dave Sauchyn**, Director, Prairie Adaptation Research Collaborative and Professor of Geography and Environmental Studies, University of Regina

**Jeff Zukiwsky**, Director, Climate Adaptation and Resilience, All One Sky Foundation

**Kerra Chomlak**, Manager, Environment, City of Leduc

**Megan Jakilazek**, Asset Management/GIS Technician, City of Selkirk

### Key Messages From the Session

- Many communities across the Prairies are taking steps to understand their climate change-related risks and develop adaptation plans for their communities. Few, however, have taken the next steps to implement these plans. Moving from planning to implementation is a difficult process that requires established institutional arrangements to enable collaboration; access to data for decision making; increased capacity to integrate climate change risks into plans, processes and access to funding; and systems for monitoring and evaluation.
- Key messages from the Prairie Provinces chapter of *Canada in a Changing Climate: Regional Perspectives Report* highlight that cities are at the forefront of adaptation planning across the Prairies. Some areas of improvement in these plans include greater use of future climate projections to assess climate, and better mechanisms for evaluating progress and monitoring the effectiveness of their adaptation plans.
- Capacity, time, and funding are the principal barriers for communities developing a climate change adaptation plan. While larger municipalities on the Prairies have robust adaptation plans, smaller communities still lack the capacity to develop their own plans. To address these barriers, communities can seek support from various sources such as federal and provincial funding and training, along with local experts and organizations to build capacity, provide and interpret climate data, and support the planning process.
- Lessons learned from the Cities of Selkirk and Leduc included:
  - Implementation of adaptation plans requires that communities take a step-by-step approach to implementation, link their adaptation goals to other municipal priorities to cover costs and optimize synergies, build and maintain community buy-in, and regularly revisit the plan and assess new potential risks.
  - Implementing an adaptation plan can be done systematically by integrating key projects into a community's business planning process and regular activities. By integrating adaptation projects into the long-term budget process, ownership, and execution of activities are spread across multiple departments.

- Having an adaptation plan that clearly communicates a community’s adaptation priorities makes it easier to identify opportunities to link them with other initiatives. This enables the implementation of an adaptation plan to be more opportunistic by linking adaptation actions with emerging community initiatives and interests.
- Having local champions and clearly communicating anticipated climate impacts and the importance of adaptation planning to the community are essential elements in convincing communities to invest time and resources into adaptation planning.

## Conclusions

Through the Building Climate-Resilient Communities workshop sessions, the PRAC engaged with 396 participants on the topic of how communities throughout the Prairie Provinces can build resilience to climate change and the many other shocks and stressors they experience. Key messages heard throughout all four sessions included:

- The importance of sustained and meaningful engagement with community members before and during the creation and implementation of a climate change adaptation plan
- The need for clear communication that is inclusive to all to build community buy-in for resilience building processes
- The pressing need for all communities to begin taking steps—small or large—to reduce their climate risks and increase their resilience.