

Communicating Climate Change and Energy in Alberta

ALBERTA NARRATIVES PROJECT



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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 organizations 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 was developed by Climate Outreach over 10 years, piloted in India, and will begin in Lebanon in 2019.

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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, business, faith organizations and youth groups.

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Cover: Enjoying the Albertan great outdoors at Maligne Lake in Jasper National Park. Photo by [jasper.guy](#).

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Why we need a new conversation about energy and climate change in Alberta

Few issues facing Canada are as nationally divisive as climate change and the future of energy. Although the majority of Canadians as a whole favor strong action on climate change and a transition to renewable energy, there are wide variations in attitudes between provinces, across age groups and with people of different political values.¹ Within this fractured national picture, polls reveal Alberta to be the most polarized province; showing that Albertans are split down the middle between those who are concerned about climate change and those who are dismissive² as to whether changes in climate are natural or human-caused.³

There are marked differences in opinion between different occupation groups, different parts of the province and, especially between people holding different political values. These divisions make it increasingly difficult for Albertans to discuss climate change and energy with each other, to conduct a civil debate around options for the future, or to form a coherent and sustained vision of the future.

The Alberta Narratives Project (ANP) seeks to address this challenge and identify new and more constructive ways for people in Alberta to talk about these pressing issues. In particular, it seeks to replace a combative and acrimonious debate with a constructive conversation based on shared values and respect for people's different ways of seeing the world.

We have looked for the language that reduces polarization. Effective language needs to resonate well with the two-thirds of Albertans who hold the middle-ground position that climate change is real, but not a major threat. Effective language also needs to avoid angering, alienating or insulting people who already hold strong views on climate change and energy and are unlikely to shift their views.

In conducting this work, Climate Outreach and partners have listened carefully to what people said while looking for common ground and new ways of talking. Climate Outreach's role has been as a facilitator of a constructive and respectful conversation not as advocates or educators. We have openly accepted the scientific evidence that climate change is real, serious, and is caused by human activities – including the burning of fossil fuels.⁴ Beyond this, though, we have been careful not to assert any policy agenda; leaving people to choose their responses for policy, lifestyles, and the economy. This research offers a roadmap for holding a productive conversation but does not favour one particular end destination. For example, we explored the ways that people think and talk about the future of the oil industry and renewable energy, but did not promote any specific pathway for either.

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/

The Alberta Narratives Project has three major outcomes:

1 It is clear there is a need, and a demand, for a different kind of participatory conversation on climate change and energy in Alberta.

We held discussion groups between April and June 2018 – called Narrative Workshops (see Appendix 2) – that provided nearly 500 people with the opportunity to come together and share their views among their peers. The groups represented a wide range of Albertan society from farmers to oil sands workers, to senior business people, youth groups and New Canadians (see Appendix 3).

For most of the participants, this was the first time that they had talked about these issues with people like themselves. Feedback clearly indicated that the participants enjoyed engaging in these conversations. In many cases, the discussions continued beyond the planned timing, some late into the night.

2 From these conversations we have identified language and approaches that are less divisive, speak to shared values and common ground, and could be the basis of a new and more constructive conversation.

We are confident that these findings are valid and robust. Our methodology is based on best-practice in social research (see Appendix 2). Our findings are supported by an extensive literature of existing Canadian communications research (see Appendix 5). The resulting project has become one of the largest “qualitative” climate change communications projects ever conducted.⁵ The speed with which this project has come together is remarkable and, we feel, a tribute to the Albertan entrepreneurial spirit and desire for a more constructive, balanced conversation.

3 Alberta now has an additional 87 trained communication researchers who understand the best ways of identifying effective narratives and engaging diverse audiences.

This significant capacity building leaves a legacy beyond learning new skills in good quality communications research – it also paves the way for a deeper, more considerate two-way approach in communicating climate change.

We want to thank our trained facilitators for dedicating so much time and resources to participate in this project, contributing their ideas and insights, recruiting and running groups, and attending the training and evaluation events.



The Alberta Narratives Project team at the first training session in March 2018. Photo: Amber Bennett/Climate Outreach

Alberta Narratives Project in numbers

19

Core
organizing
partners
and funders



75

Organizations
involved

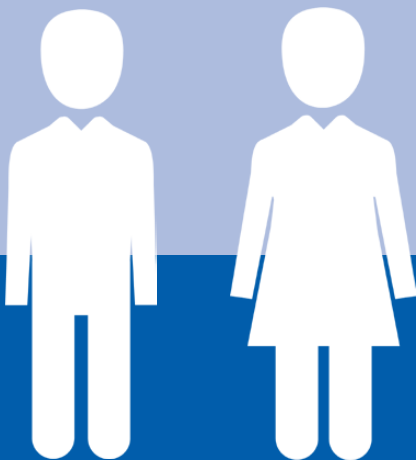


55

Narrative Workshops held

Hours
of group
conversations

120



482

People
attending
Narrative
Workshops

People
trained

87



720

Pages of
transcribed
conversations

Pages of marked up narratives



2,410

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is intended to provide **practical guidance for climate and energy communicators** about what language works well and – crucially – what language might pose an obstacle for communicating with any specific group.

This first volume is concerned with finding the language that works best across Albertan society by helping to find common ground across very different positions. This generates a **core narrative** that can be applied for general public engagement.

The second volume, which will follow in 2019, will look in detail at the language that works with specific audiences. These **sub-narratives** are built on the values and identity of each audience and therefore represents a wide range of approaches. Although these differ substantially – as can be expected given the diversity of views – they all support the larger core-narrative. Communicators can choose whether to apply the core-narrative or the sub-narrative for each particular audience.

The issue of trust emerged across all groups, particularly those that are skeptical 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 are seen as authentic and honest in their intentions (see section on trust, page 31).

Finally, we stress that **this is a guidebook, not a rulebook**. Skilled communicators should always hone their messages to their audiences, and experiment with new and fresh ways of speaking.

The following sections explore:



Key findings: most successful language and least successful language



Approaches for successful communications



A narrative for climate change and energy in Alberta



What people say about Albertan identity: findings & recommendations



What people say about climate change in Alberta: findings & recommendations



What Albertans say about oil and gas: findings & recommendations



What Albertans say about renewables and transition: findings & recommendations



MOST SUCCESSFUL LANGUAGE

Speaks well across multiple audiences, is engaging and stimulates a strong discussion.

LEAST SUCCESSFUL LANGUAGE

Feeds division, does not engage people, or fails to stimulate discussion.

Climate change is in the mix, but not necessarily the top concern



Most people see climate change as an important issue. Most of the study participants said they were concerned or very concerned about it. However, almost nobody mentioned climate change as their main concern.

Climate change should always be part of the discussion, but where and how it is mentioned should reflect the concerns and priorities of each different audience and recognize that other issues — work, economy, standard of life — may dominate.



Climate change is the most important issue we face

In surveys, less than 10 percent of people hold this position. In testing, most people felt that strongly worded statements about climate change were exaggerated, untrustworthy, or reflected the ideological agenda of the communicator.

Using such adamant language is appropriate for some audiences and communicators, but is likely to be divisive across the broader public.

Climate change is an *emerging* challenge



Most — though not all — people accept that the weather is changing, but see such changes as manageable. The best approach is to frame climate change as a “challenge” to prepare for, recognizing that Alberta has historic strengths in finding solutions for tricky problems and coming together during extreme weather events.



Climate change is a huge and immediate threat

Most people in Alberta recognize climate change as a real problem for the world but one that, as yet, has little relevance to their lives or is unlikely to threaten Alberta.

In conversations, most people placed both climate change impacts and a transition away from fossil fuels far into the future. They regard Alberta as coping well with extreme weather events.

Gratitude for a good life



People see Alberta as a good place to live, work and raise a family. Narratives based on gratitude and thankfulness scored highly with study participants and initiated a positive discussion.



Albertan is BEST!

Most people consistently rejected language of Albertan exceptionalism, including claims that it has the *best* environmental legislation. They saw these claims as inauthentic and overstated.

Recognize the contribution of oil and gas to this good life



To initiate a positive conversation, communicators should reflect on the connection that many Albertans have with the oil and gas industry and recognize the contribution that those working in the industry have made to their prosperity and way of life.



Blame and intolerance

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 attacked and tend, through a sense of loyalty, to defend their friends, family and community.

Everyone is important in Alberta



Recognition must also be given to the non-energy sectors, such as farming, tourism, and other service industries. Discussions about transition and diversification should also include a vision for these other sectors to play a larger role in the provincial economy.



Excessive focus on oil and gas

In the energy and climate change debate the focus on oil and gas companies leads other sectors to feel ignored and marginalized. Many people in rural communities are already skeptical about climate change and will need to see a place for their concerns and opportunities in the discussion.

The main problems with oil and gas are over-dependency, vulnerability and insecurity



People's primary concern is that the provincial economy – and their livelihoods – which are tied to a volatile global demand and oil prices. This boom and bust cycle, external criticism and the tightening of national and international climate change policy generates insecurity and uncertainty.



The main problem with oil is climate change and environmental destruction

Few study participants identified the burning of fossil fuels as the leading cause of climate change or associated the Albertan oil industry with local or global environmental impacts. Most are proud of Alberta's environmental regulations and see the evidence in the clean air and water they value.

We need to diversify



There is a strong interest in building a broader economic base and supporting new growth sectors, including renewables.



Alberta can be a leader on climate change

There is insufficient acceptance of climate change for people to accept policies that, they fear, will impact the productivity of the oil industry.

We can discuss our choices



In their conversations, study participants repeatedly talked about the choices they have made in their lives. Many of them chose to move to Alberta and many of them shifted careers as the economic situation changed. Narratives that allowed people to choose their own options were favoured.



This is the only way

People are wary of imposed solutions and are defensive of their independence. Assertive language that precluded discussion and debate was consistently rejected.

Working together and finding shared solutions that work for all Albertans



People responded most positively to co-operative language rather than combative language. The experience in many jurisdictions (including British Columbia, California, Germany and the United Kingdom) is that building a cross-party consensus, based on shared values, has been essential for building lasting policy.

“Made in Alberta” Climate Change Policy



The narrative, used by many politicians, is that Alberta needs its own policy to avoid having one imposed by Ottawa. It tested poorly. Many people rejected the confrontational and anti-Canadian framing. Those who might support provincial rights did not feel sufficient ownership of the current policy (originating from one party) to lend it their support.

Open-mindedness and discussion



All groups favoured more discussion and many people disliked the increasingly polarized and ill-mannered debate.

Even those who rejected environmentalist arguments favoured the sentence “environmentalists should feel free to raise their concerns.”

Tribalism



People consistently rejected language that set one group against another. Even those who were critical of environmental campaigners wanted an open discussion and rejected language such as: “environmental extremists take a very narrow view that is not grounded in reality.”

Investing in the future



Study participants were widely concerned about the long-term implications of investment decisions, especially in infrastructure.

They questioned the cost of pipelines, whether they could pay back their high-capital costs and the lack of investment in oil refining. A discussion about the choices of where to make long-term investment decisions would initiate a broad and open discussion.

Pipeline battles



At the time of research (spring 2018) pipelines were not a major topic of sustained discussion for any group and were typically only mentioned in passing as a *symptom* of wider issues, such as bad government policy or environmental extremism.

This is an evolving issue, and may yet change, but the research recommends caution in assuming that pipelines are a topic that will galvanize productive or fresh conversation about climate change or energy.

Balanced yet critical evaluation of oil and gas



People recognize the contribution of oil and gas to the economy. And they recognize that, as with any benefit, there have also been costs. A balanced evaluation of both is required.

Uncritical praise for the oil and gas sector



Uncritical praise such as: “we have one of the best-regulated energy industries in the world” was highly polarizing for study participants.

Straight talk



In their conversations, study participants frequently demanded or praised authenticity and “straight” talk. They favoured simple language that presented clear options.

In particular, honesty in a communicator might involve admitting that the options are not easy and that one does not necessarily know all the answers to the long-term outcomes.

Techno-jargon, euphemisms and slogans



Very few people spoke about “emissions” or “carbon.” When they did use these words it was often in a critical context, complaining about carbon “tax” or emissions “regulation.” These words and their derivatives (such as low-carbon, negative emissions) have little meaning with the Alberta public. Participants generally expressed a dislike, and sometimes a disgust, with massaged slogans which people described as “sounding like a politician.”

This will not be easy



People in Alberta are proud of their ability to respond, adapt and cope. Study participants strongly favoured language that responded to climate change by saying an energy transition will “not be easy” and will be “challenging” but, through that process, it could be rewarding. This language was seen as authentic and honest.

This will be easy – eco-boosterism



People do not believe that major changes, including energy transition, will come easily.

They do not believe that renewables can simply replace fossil fuels, and most are skeptical that it can simply provide the same jobs and economic opportunities that were provided by the oil and gas sector.

Renewables offer new opportunities and positive challenges – the next “boom”



Participants supported a major expansion in renewable energy, and described it in terms of new opportunities and innovation. Oil and gas professionals were enthusiastic about the technical challenges. Hoping for an upturn in the energy sector, some said renewables could provide the next “boom.”

“Clean” energy will replace “dirty” fossil fuels



Very few people believed that renewables could replace the oil and gas industry in the foreseeable future, or provide the same level of revenue or employment. The dichotomy of “clean” vs “dirty” energy – often used in environmental messaging – was not accepted. Few people proposed renewables for environmental reasons or used the phrase “clean energy.” The only mention of the phrase “dirty oil” was when quoting outside criticism.

Building a transition towards something new



People are proud to see Albertans as “builders.” A transition to new energy sources can be presented as building new infrastructure towards a positive objective (clean energy, diversified economy, new opportunities). Transition should also be a move towards a *diversified* economy with increased growth outside the energy sector.

Transition away from something old



Albertans do not regard the oil industry as obsolete and are proud of its innovation. Language should avoid demeaning the oil industry, for example, as an obsolete, dirty industry, and instead, see it as a source of skills and ideas for moving forward.

APPROACHES FOR SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATIONS



Build language around people's values and identity

There is a large body of international research showing that people's positions on climate change and energy are shaped by their identity and their values – particularly their political orientation.⁸ For this reason, our research began by asking people about who they are and what they care about. Effective communications must begin by recognizing identity and enabling an open and respectful conversation. We explored the ways that people think and talk about the future of the oil industry and renewable energy, but did not promote any specific pathway for either.

State common ground and values from the outset

There are so many things that we can agree on. We should not lose sight of this when there are issues that we debate. This does not mean that we need to agree – we should and will discuss these differences because they are important to us. But, we can share our different views and ideas and emphasize how much we still have in common. The project itself is a demonstration of how we can listen to each other with respect and seek a shared understanding.

Trusting the messenger will be critical to success

Because attitudes are rooted in people's identity, people will shape their attitudes according to the attitudes of the people around them and will listen to the communicators who they respect and whose values they share. Most Albertans are distrustful of the main sources of information on climate change, including government, environmentalists, and the media. Identifying new messengers within communities should be a priority.

“*I think trust is another big factor in that, the reason why this debate is not happening – or one of the big reasons – is because people don't trust each other. People don't trust the industries that are saying 'we're doing good things', or 'the profits from there are doing good things.'*” –Business Leaders Group

Remove absolutes

People across all groups strongly disliked language with sweeping generalizations: such as *all*, *everyone*, *every*, *only*, *never*, *none*, *the best*, *the worst*, even when they agreed with the general sentiment. They also disliked imperatives such as *have to* and *must*. Communicators should use these words sparingly. Communicators also need to be very careful with language that forces a consensus – talking about what “we” think or what “Albertans” want or need – especially if it comes from a distrusted communicator.

A narrative for climate change and energy in Alberta

We tested detailed language around climate change and energy built around different themes and values. The narratives ranged from those stating that climate change is a major threat requiring an urgent response to language that was strongly supportive of the oil and gas industry and critical of environmentalist arguments. Each participant marked the words and sentences they liked or disliked and gave personal feedback in comments and group discussion (see Appendix 2).

Our objective has been to find language that will create the best basis for a shared conversation and does not feed polarization. In the narratives below, we selected the language that was consistently approved across all groups and rejected language that was strongly disliked by any group (even if it was liked by others). We also rejected language that did not generate any significant response. In addition, we added language that emerged in conversations and in discussions with Narrative Workshop facilitators.

Please note that every audience has a unique set of values and identities. Communicators should always experiment in message testing to fully understand what narratives resonate best with their own audiences.

Albertan values and identity

Opening up sustainability to wider meanings.

Avoiding waste is a good common ground issue with more skeptical audiences.

People feel that Alberta is under attack and this leads to a defensive rejection of criticism.

Shared values identified throughout all discussions.

Using construction terms like “foundations” supports the overall frame of building.

People preferred language around informed choices to language around compulsion.

This independent choice language performed much better than more confrontational language, opposing federal imposition.

Alberta is a great place to make a home and raise a family, which is why people come here **from around the world**. We want to keep our quality of life for our children and generations to come. Sure we want good opportunities, but that **doesn't mean just money**. We want strong communities for the long-term where we can live our best lives. **Sustainability** is important in every sense of the word. Yes, we want to protect our environment. And we also want secure jobs that will sustain long-term employment.

We want to keep our **clean air and water**. It is only fair for businesses to do the right thing and be rewarded for reducing their pollution. Avoiding **waste** is also something that we agree on. That is why **energy efficiency** is so important: who can argue with the idea of doing more with less?

In Alberta, our environmental record is criticized from **all sides** – from environmentalists to other provinces, and even Hollywood celebrities! This is not fair: Albertans want to be recognized for the **positive steps** we have made to reduce our energy waste, pollution and greenhouse gases.

The road ahead is likely to be challenging, but Albertans are **resourceful and hard workers** who face challenges head-on. The past years have shown that Albertans pull together when there are challenges. The **development of the oil sands** demonstrated the ingenuity of our engineers, our ability to innovate and our entrepreneurial drive.

These skills will continue to support us as we diversify the economy and develop other energy sources. In Alberta, **people build things**, this is something we're good at. There is a chance for Alberta to build a more diversified economy. The **broader our foundations**, the stronger and more stable we will be.

We need to be realistic. These changes will **not be easy**.

Alberta stands at a crossroads and can make a **choice**. We can fight these changes, be **dragged along** behind other countries, and finally be left behind. Or, **we can make our own choices**. We cannot rely on others to solve our problems. It's our province and our future.

Recognition of social diversity and the importance of New Canadians.

Appeal to wider intrinsic values.

Very highly rated as a source of provincial pride.

Efficiency is a good starting point for a discussion about reducing emissions, including lifestyle emissions.

It is important to recognize previous achievements, although without encouraging complacency.

Recognize that the oil sands development is a source of pride for many people, but use it as an exemplar of skills and values that can be extended and transferred.

The framing of “building” is positive, forward-looking and widely shared.

People recognize this caution as authentic and “realistic.”

Responding to a fear that people outside Alberta are controlling its future.



Let's talk about it

We find it hard to talk about climate change and the future of energy, especially because so many of us, including our friends and our families, are connected to the oil and gas industry.

Validate people's experience that this is hard.

But we cannot let this lead to silence. We need to talk about this while respecting different points of view and drawing on everyone's ideas to find new solutions. While environmentalists should feel free to raise their concerns about oil and gas developments, there must be informed and intelligent discussion on the energy future and what energy diversification will look like.

Criticism must be accepted as part of a balanced discussion with input from both sides.

Name the silence and identify it as a problem.

Enable an open and diverse conversation.

A direct challenge to anyone in politics or leadership roles who shuts down open informed debate and criticism.

Responsible leaders talk about difficult things that need to be talked about. They do not walk away from challenges; they listen and take tough decisions. We should be careful to not shut down a conversation that will impact us for every generation to come. We cannot let this issue divide us.

A recognition that this issue is divisive, that people want to come together, but that the best way to do this is to discuss it, not suppress it.

Climate

The climate is becoming increasingly uncertain, variable and unpredictable. The 2013 Calgary Flood, the wildfires in Fort McMurray and Southern Alberta, the recent droughts – have cost Albertans more than \$5 billion in the past five years. This is a global problem in which many people are struggling.

Recent extreme weather events with strong resonance for Albertans.

Conservatives liked this phrasing but rejected more social justice language about the impacts on "disadvantaged" groups.

It is our most vulnerable people – children, elderly, sick and disabled – who suffer the worst health impacts from the increased temperatures and extreme weather. We must make sure that they are not left behind. In Alberta, we're well positioned to prepare and adapt for this and protect our families and communities. We need to get the best scientific advice about what preparation means for this region. And we can learn from traditional knowledge, it helps us to understand how nature is changing and provides us with insights into how to live sustainably and in relationship with this land.

Rural people responded to claims of exceptional cost, rather than exceptional weather.

Obtaining advice is preferred to being lectured.

Preparation and adaptation is a strong narrative for all groups, including people who are skeptical about climate change.

There is common ground that all Albertans can learn from traditional knowledge, though such arguments must be handled authentically and with respect.

Our basic sense of right and wrong guides us in protecting people and our shared home. When we have disasters we know how to pull together and help each other out. When facing climate change we will take care of our neighbours and build a strong community.



Energy

Starting a conversation from a position of recognition and gratitude.

This phrase needs to be handled carefully. There is a shared view that the benefits have not been fully realized. However the debate about government management and royalty systems is potentially divisive.

The pipeline and international climate policies, which are usually divisive can be applied to a more fruitful discussion of dependence and diversification.

This language seeks to give wider ownership of issues often seen as monopolized by left-leaning environmentalists.

Oil and gas has provided many benefits for Alberta. 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 needs to be used with care. We have given ours away for too little. It makes sense to plan for the future and use it more prudently. Oil and gas revenues could be focused on building a more diversified economy, something that will build a more solid future for Albertans.

However, 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 last downturn.

Our products and pipelines are vulnerable to policies set in other provinces and countries. The world's largest economies have commitments to reduce their emissions – something has to give.

Our economy is built on natural resources and we are rich in resources – including sun, wind and water – that power new forms of renewable energy. We can spread our investment and create a balance in our energy economy. This is not about being “green” or “eco” or “politically correct” – it is simply good common sense.

While there is much uncertainty, we can be sure that people will need schools, access to health care, housing, food and energy. Genuine prosperity, opportunities and balance lie in developing new sectors. Skills can move to new areas, of which renewables is only one.

The gratitude is focused on the people rather than the industry.

Rather than denigrating oil, this treats it as special and important.

The dependency frame speaks well to Albertan values of independence and personal responsibility.

Framing renewable energy as an extension of the economic heritage of extractive industries.

Transition is not just about developing new forms of energy; it includes diversification across all sectors.

Perspectives of engagement and Indigenous People

At the outset of the Alberta Narratives Project (ANP) there was interest from practitioners working within Indigenous climate change and clean energy transition to take part in the project. However, over the weeks and months that followed, it became clear that despite best intentions and an urge to press on, there were issues with the ANP that were deeply problematic for Indigenous participants.

For example, during the skills trainings and Narrative Workshops in which members of Indigenous communities took part, it became apparent that the notion itself of an Alberta narrative was difficult to separate from the broader context of Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) taking place in Canada. Nor could concerns about climate change and energy be separated from wider issues of peoples' relationship to land. Finally, all engagement projects occur within a history of research and consultation that has often been extractive, something that has been done by white researchers *to* Indigenous People.

Initially, we considered making adjustments to the proposed format but eventually it became clear that moving forward required a fresh approach developed in collaboration with a broader group of Indigenous community partners.

We hope that raising these issues within this report will honour those who shared their perspectives openly and honestly during the workshops. In order to give context, three advisors who patiently provided support over the past months have offered a critique in their own words.

To consider how we best move forward, the Alberta Narratives Project will work with community advisors to convene a working group of diverse organizations and individuals with a shared Indigenous experience to explore the issues raised above. We hope that this will inform future participatory research of this kind and give rise to an approach that better addresses our many ways of seeing and being in the world – a legacy that may be of benefit long after this project ends.

Marilyn Shingoose

Saulteaux Elder, Knowledge Keeper and Facilitator with Kairos Canada

Climate change poses a threat because it affects plants and herbs, which is our medicine; it affects access to traditional foods like fish and game, which is our well-being and our culture. Indigenous ways see plants, animals and people as our relatives and when we lose these, we lose our way of life.

When developing narratives around climate change and energy, Settlers should try to get to know about Indigenous People — what we believe, where we come from — and respect Indigenous People enough to get educated, to get to know history. Understand that Indigenous Peoples owned Turtle Island and that Europeans took the land away. It's good to know that history. And it's good to know what we live with today. This has a lot to do with trust and how we start any conversation.

I think it is good for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to think about what we can do to make things better, and then do it together. It's like Truth and Reconciliation — how can we make a difference, how can we make a change, what can each of us do? I'm excited to see what will come out of this and what we'll accomplish together.

Melissa Quesnelle

Naato'i'lhkpiakii

In this place called Alberta, there are more than 60 distinct Nations, with unique cultures, from five different language families, that have traditional homeland territories and histories running from time immemorial here.

My first concern in participating with the ANP came from the realization that there were very few First Nation or Metis participants — in terms of both numbers and diversity — and, resultantly, there was a real risk I was participating in a project with a sufficiently flawed methodology that it would produce yet another false-positive for “Indigenous Engagement”.

It was extremely difficult to balance my feelings on the importance of contributing my perspective to ANP against the very real concern that my presence would be used to check-off a little box beside the word “Indigenous”; that my voice would become homogenized under that Indigenous label; that I would unwittingly become complicit in propagating the idea that there is any such thing as “The Indigenous Opinion” or “The Indigenous Perspective”.

I am Blackfoot. And in identifying myself, or speaking of my family, or people, I would say, “I am Blackfoot”. I have friends who would say, “I am Cree” or, “I am Nakoda” or, “I am Metis”. I don't know anybody who would ever just say “I am Indigenous”.

No one Indigenous person can speak for all Indigenous People; no one Indigenous group can speak for all Indigenous groups: There is no such thing as a ‘random representative sample’ of “Indigenous People”. Not here. Not anywhere.

Alexia McKinnon

Associate Director, Indigenous Leadership and Management, Banff Centre

As my elders taught me, “We are all walking the same path forward.” We are living on this land together. However, since the creation of Canada and the implementation of our laws and legislations, Indigenous communities have been excluded from making decisions that affect the land they know and are in relationship with. The wisdom and knowledge that is missing creates a singular worldview on best practices, rather than turning to the voices of the community to reveal the wisdom and knowledge from generations of lived experience. The relationship we have with the land is embedded into every practice we are raised upon — our songs, our culture, our ceremony, our laws. The land is not separated from our being, it is critical to our existence and knowing that relationship will sustain life. In my opinion, we must find the common ground for climate conversations and a starting point is questioning our relationship to land.

While good intentions are a great starting point, the implementation of how you go about being in relationship with Indigenous communities matters. For far too long, Indigenous people have been the subject matter of studies rather than being asked to be the knowledge experts. Indigenous practice and wisdom and ways of knowing, being and doing, have existed for generations and have built communities of practice and governance systems. Unilaterally creating a process of engagement that is not inclusive of Indigenous practice will always create a tension. The outcomes generated will be false representations of the community experience because the right questions and the right process of engagement were not utilized. The Alberta Narratives Project should co-design an engagement practice reflective of Indigenous knowledge.

Knowledge shared by Indigenous communities is not owned by anyone. No one owns knowledge and we share knowledge freely and with good intention. However, traditional stories, songs and protocols may not be shared by those who have not been given the permission to share those, usually transferred through community ceremony.

People seeking to engage are often unsure, and are too afraid to engage in the dialogue necessary to question what they have been taught and know. It is fear for not wanting to get it wrong, not knowing where to start and not knowing who to talk to. It is fear of building a relationship with people they have been taught are inferior to them, who have no value and have no worth. Approach every conversation from a place of love and good intentions and do the hard work needed to heal yourself of your own barriers.

The Narrative Workshop conversations

Each of the 55 groups followed the same script, delivered by a trained facilitator. Following a methodology developed over 10 years (see Appendix 2), they began by talking about their values and their identity. They then discussed their concerns, especially about the future. Climate change and energy were not specifically mentioned to ensure people established common ground and became comfortable in the conversation. This was then followed by a series of open-ended questions concerning climate change and energy. The conversation ended with the narratives testing discussed previously.

The following sections follow the same structure as the conversations.

The quotes are taken from the 10 Narrative Workshops that were fully transcribed (see Appendix 3).



Key findings

- Provincial pride is a powerful way to speak to shared identity
- All people held a positive view of Alberta, but not to the same degree
- People preferred a modest approach — overstating provincial pride and identity was seen as insincere and “political”

Four aspects of Alberta identity were commonly shared:

1. Alberta has a great quality of life and environment
2. Alberta is a place where “things can happen”
3. Alberta builds
4. Albertans support each other

Provincial pride is a powerful way to speak to shared identity

A large body of research finds that people’s attitudes to climate change and energy are shaped by their values, identity and group loyalties.⁹ This is particularly evident in Alberta where, as shall be discussed later, attitudes are strongly aligned with people’s political values and occupations.

Finding a new way to talk about these issues, therefore, requires speaking to the identity and experience that people hold in common. Across all groups, people expressed an appreciation of Alberta, its opportunities and its way of life. This can be the basis of a positive, shared narrative.

All people held a positive view of Alberta, but not to the same degree

At the beginning of the workshops, all participants were asked what qualities make Alberta different from other provinces and what makes life here special. There is remarkable consistency across the groups. The main difference was one of intensity. Rural conservatives were the most likely to talk about their “pride” in Alberta and their sense that Alberta is an exceptional place to live.

“When you see how the rest of the world lives, we are very privileged. Alberta is literally the best place in the world to live, hands down. Like, hands down.” –Farmers Group

In other groups, people were consistently positive about Alberta, though their strongest identities related to ethnicity, location, occupation, and community. People were far more likely to identify first with being a Calgarian, a farmer or an oil worker — and in some cases — just as a Canadian.



People who were born outside Alberta — who make up half of the population — were still positive about Alberta but less emphatic and far less likely to say that it was exceptional. New Canadians brought a wider perspective and were sometimes more critical than first-born Albertans, although also grateful for the opportunities the province has given them.

People preferred a modest approach - overstating provincial pride and identity was seen as insincere and “political”

In testing, most people rejected language that spoke *too strongly* of Albertan exceptionalism – even some of the people who spoke most positively about Alberta in their own words. Such language was seen as overused in communications. For example, study participants often described Albertans as “innovative” in their own words, but some then complained that the word “innovative” has been overused and “sounds like a politician talking.”

“Some parts of [the test narratives] are written in an extremely prideful way that goes beyond the pale actually, in terms of thumping our breasts about the kind of people that we are. I don’t know if that’s helpful.” –Faith Group

Many people, especially New Canadians, rejected messaging containing sweeping generalizations, such as “in Alberta we...”, “Albertans are...”, “You have to be...to live in Alberta.” They preferred to identify themselves as “people who live in Alberta” rather than some generic label of “Albertans.”

Four aspects of Albertan identity were commonly shared

The groups contained people from across Alberta including many who have recently arrived and see the province from an outsider’s perspective. They agreed on four qualities:

1. Alberta has a great quality of life and environment

People said that Alberta has “a great standard of life,” that it is “a good place to bring up a family” and spoke often of the pleasure they derive from the closeness they have to nature and outdoor activities. They are particularly concerned with the need to protect their clean air, water, and forests.

2. Alberta is a place where “things can happen”

The entrepreneurial spirit, hard work, and preparedness to try new approaches were all repeatedly mentioned. Consistent with people’s rejection of overused language, many people rejected the phrase “get ‘er done” as too clichéd, too “political” or disrespectful to women, although they accepted the sentiment.

“I think we’ve attracted the most creative, innovative, competitive, aggressive, successful, entrepreneurial, some cases arrogant and overly cocky but we’ve attracted the best of the best to Alberta.” –Conservative Group

“One of the things I like about the Albertan identity is this hardworking thing... Like, I see so many of my peers so motivated to do things and just feeling empowered to do so.” –Youth Group



-20C game of hockey, Boxing Day party, Grand Valley Road, west of Calgary. Photo: Hamish Kerfoot

“ I am proud to be Albertan, but I don’t know if I know exactly why. I love Alberta for the mountains, but I also think that a large reason people are here is for opportunity. A lot of people move here to Alberta for opportunity and I think the new people that come here are often willing to take chances, which is what I like.” -Environmental Group

3. Alberta builds

Running through all the conversations about Albertan identity was the focus on tangible, physical achievement, and language on doing, making and building things. City dwellers spoke of the speed with which the cities had grown. Older people talked about the rapid changes and improvements they had seen over their lifetimes.

“ I would say, by-and-large, Albertans are builders, whether it’s the pipelines, or roads, or bridges, or the electric industry. As a city, we’re far newer than really any of the other major cities, by 80-100 years, and what the province has accomplished really reflects the attitude in this province.” -Business Leaders Group

“ I think that there’s a spirit of hard work and doing things in the city which I am really proud of. It’s the reason I moved back here. I feel like it gets muddled up in economics and weird aspects of politics, but I think that there is a lot of caring and community at the heart of the Alberta identity. I think there’s a lot of compassion in this community.” -Environmental Group

4. Albertans support each other

People felt that there was a strong sense of community, friendliness, compassion, and ability to help each other, particularly in times of need such as extreme weather events and the 2013 floods.

“ We are very quick to help each other out, especially when there is a disaster. When there was the fire, there was the cheesy, “Alberta is strong,” but I think it was trying to get this idea of resilience, so economic changes, disaster changes, cultural changes, still keep on going.” -Policymakers Group

“ In a crisis, the whole province will pull together and help each other out... it’s an old-school Western character... it’s a real salt-of-the-earth bunch of people, and Albertans are just really, really great folks that really take care of each other. And that’s great.” -Rural Group



Recommendations for communicators when talking about Albertan identity

- Start with an attitude of gratitude
- There are opportunities to draw on the shared values and strengths of Albertans in conversations about climate change and energy.
- Communications about identity must avoid exceptionalism, clichés and grandstanding
- Base communications on examples and experience, not sweeping generalizations

Start with an attitude of gratitude

There is a strong case to be made for starting conversations from a position of gratitude rather than complaint. Many people identified gratitude and respect as their core values. Conservatives lamented that “we’re moving from a society of gratitude to a society of entitlement.” Farmers spoke of a lack of respect for their own work as symptomatic of a wider problem.

“We sort of lost respect along the way, if you want to think of it, the parenting, we’ve lost respect for elders. We’ve lost respect for our parents and our grandparents. –Farmers Group

Therefore, positive engagement should be grounded in gratitude for the Albertan quality of life and those who provide for it. And a love of place.

“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. –Environmental Group

As noted below, this should include a recognition of the contribution made by the oil and gas sector, but also farmers and the many other people who work hard to sustain Alberta’s way of life. The tone of gratitude can be taken from a participant in the New Canadians group, who immigrated to Alberta from Nigeria:

“In every first meeting that I have with people I like to give my appreciation for those that have come before me. 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. When I see people that are new as myself, I’m like, “we’re going to make this place better. You’re welcome.” –New Canadians Group



There are opportunities to draw on the shared values and strengths of Albertans in conversations about climate change and energy. In particular:

- A transition to renewable energy infrastructure can be presented within the context of previous achievements, growth and change — because *Alberta builds*, its people are “hardworking and innovative” and this is a place where *things can happen*.
- Alberta can prepare and respond positively to the extreme weather events resulting from climate change because of the past experience of how *Albertans support each other*.
- People in Alberta care for nature and wildlife and may be receptive to evidence that this highly valued environment may be threatened and needs to be protected against climate change.



Young boys play at Fish Creek Park in Calgary. Photo: CplusN

Communications about identity must avoid exceptionalism, clichés and grandstanding

Talking about Albertan identity must be handled carefully. Language about Alberta (and Albertans) being the “best” and other strong expressions of provincial pride may appeal to some constituencies, but the testing showed that this is polarizing language that is alienating to many people and distrusted by most.

Base communications on examples and experience, not sweeping generalizations

In their conversations, people identified Albertan qualities through specific examples and anecdotes. This is, therefore, good practice for engagement. For example, communicators should use examples of the skill and speed with which Alberta has developed previous energy resources or infrastructure projects to exhibit the ability of Alberta to move rapidly towards new goals such as renewable energy. Rather than saying “in Alberta we are”, communicators can say “in Alberta we can....because we have...”



Key findings

- Climate change has a low profile and is not widely seen to be an immediate or pressing problem
- Political values were the strongest predictor of attitudes to climate change
- People's attitudes about climate change and its causes were also influenced by their personal connection to the oil and gas industry
- However, there was a diversity of opinion in all groups
- Most (though not all) people accepted that the weather is changing
- Albertans were split about whether climate change is caused by humans or natural variation
- Very few people mentioned burning fossil fuels as a cause of climate change
- People find it hard to talk about climate change and rarely do so
- People are dissatisfied with the current public discourse
- People want a new kind of conversation
- People would prefer to talk about preparation and adaptation than causes and mitigation
- Most people rejected the government's "Made in Alberta" message

Climate change has a low profile and is not widely seen to be an immediate or pressing problem

Groups were invited to discuss the things that troubled them about the present and their concerns for the future. As people were given no context or prompts, their responses are a good reflection of the issues that were at the front of their minds.¹⁰

They raised major concerns about the economy and employment, especially following the downturn in the oil industry; the rapid growth of new technologies; the spread of "fake news", and social media and its effect on mental and moral health — especially on children. Wider moral and systemic concerns included greed, poverty, overpopulation, and, for left-leaning groups, capitalism as a whole.

“ I think technology too. I saw someone who was having an overdose in the train. No one looked at them. Everybody was just looking at their phone and...it's like, "You guys got to engage here." ” -Environmentalist Group



Very few participants mentioned climate change or extreme weather events as their major concern for the present or future. In a 2017 national survey, when Albertans were asked to identify “the most important problem facing Canada today”, they were less likely to specify *climate change, the environment or pollution* than people in any other Canadian province.¹¹

Surveys also find that Albertans are more likely than other Canadians to place the impacts of climate change far over the time horizon, and twice as likely as the average Canadian to say that it will not start harming people for a hundred years.¹² Similarly, Albertans are far less likely than the average Canadian to say that climate change will affect them at all.¹³

When specifically asked for their views about climate change, participants were evenly split between those who said they were concerned or very concerned about climate change and those who said they were doubtful or reject its existence. This split is also reflected in wider polling.¹⁴ This is a far lower level of concern than found in Canada as a whole where nearly two-thirds of people say they are very or somewhat concerned.

Some participants were more concerned about the impact of climate change *policy* on their livelihoods than their views on climate change:

“*Sure, I’m concerned about climate change. My concern is the people that are using climate change to disrupt my livelihood.*” –Energy Professionals Group

Political values were the strongest predictor of attitudes to climate change

In the Alberta Narratives Project (ANP) research, people’s political worldview was a stronger predictor of their attitudes to climate change than any other factor including their age, educational level, occupation or location. It affected their overall levels of concern, their observations about changes in the weather, and how they attributed causes and responsibility.

All ANP participants filled in a form that asked them to place their political values (not their actual voting patterns) along a spectrum from very left-wing through to very conservative. The people who were most concerned about climate change were largely found on the left of the spectrum.¹⁵ The people who reported themselves as being conservative were most likely to be unconcerned or dismissive about climate change.

This finding is entirely consistent with a large body of global research. In 2016, an overview of 171 studies, across 56 countries, found that political orientation and values were, by a large margin, the dominant determinants of people’s level of concern about climate change.¹⁶ This political polarization is especially marked in the English-speaking world and has been found in all recent Canadian surveys.¹⁷

Putting aside the multiple theories about why and how this division occurred,¹⁸ the result is that the entire issue of climate change is now interpreted through a political lens. In the discussion groups, conservatives consistently presented climate change as a scare tactic designed for an ideological agenda, to increase taxes or undermine the oil industry:

“*I’m not a denier either but at the same time, I believe it’s being used as a political tool to push a certain agenda... It’s like a religion... I have no proof if they’re being funded by other participants within the oil market but there’s certain definitive winners and losers.*” –Energy Professionals Group



“ *We're not addressing the real issues, and they have created a new issue. I know why they created a new issue. I hate to say, I believe it's political because it's something that you can point to and rally people around, but you can never be proven right or wrong on, so it's the best thing for a political agenda.”* -Energy Professionals Group

People's attitudes about climate change and its causes were also influenced by their personal connection to the oil and gas industry

As shown in the quotations above, there is also a strong predominance of climate skepticism among people working in the oil industry. In some places, people openly shaped their position on climate change in the light of this allegiance. One woman in a rural group said: “If I say climate change is real, maybe my son won't have a job if we shut off the tap tomorrow.” An energy professional said: “I can't believe in climate change because my whole life has been involved in oil and gas. I cannot have this conversation.” In a youth group, held in a school, some parents prompted their children to deny climate change because “your dad is in oil and gas.” In all these cases, people were openly citing their social allegiance as a basis on which they would accept, or reject climate science.

However, there was a diversity of opinion in all groups

Although politics and occupation created a strong correlation with attitudes to climate change, the conversations revealed that the situation is more complex, with different attitudes distributed across all groups. For example, although rural conservatives as a whole were strongly disposed to dismiss climate change there were some people in those groups who were deeply concerned and supportive of action.

Most (though not all) people accepted that the weather is changing

Scientists argue that the weather in Alberta is changing and that extreme weather events are becoming more common.¹⁹ The fire season has lengthened over the past 100 years and fires have intensified,²⁰ in part, because of climate change.²¹ Some researchers argue that climate change contributed to the severity of the Fort McMurray wildfires in 2016.²² The 2013 Calgary Flood and the wildfires in Fort McMurray were the two most expensive natural disasters in Canadian history with insurance claims alone of more than \$5 billion.²³ The frost-free period in South-West Alberta has increased by up to 20 to 40 days since the 1950s.²⁴ Summer temperatures have been consistently increasing since the 1950s²⁵ and Calgary has set a new record-high temperature, reaching 36.4°C in August 2018.²⁶

Most participants in the groups (and 85 percent of Albertans in wider polling) agreed that the weather is changing and offered anecdotal experience. The farmers were also aware of changes in their growing seasons.

“ *I'm sure everybody even noticed that in the last few years our winters are starting a little bit later and the spring thaw is happening a little bit later in the spring. It's not so much April showers bring May flowers anymore, it's May showers bring June flowers.”* -Farmer Group

However, some rural conservatives, such as those in the Red Deer group, disagreed that the weather was changing at all and argued that Alberta naturally has variable, extreme weather.



Talking about climate change at an Alberta Narratives Project event at TELUS Spark, Calgary. Photo: Kerri Singh

Albertans are split about whether climate change is caused by human causes or natural variation

All participants were asked: *What do you think causes climate change?* This open-ended question, which contained no cues or prompts, provided valuable insights into people's core understanding and associations.

Recent polling finds that Albertans are evenly split as to whether changes in climate are natural or human-caused. This is markedly different to Canada as a whole where nearly three-quarters of people recognize the human cause.²⁷ This skepticism was reflected across the discussion groups, especially among conservatives and people with a close relationship to the oil and gas industry. One participant commented that "everything has an impact on the natural environment. Even wolves can change river flows." A scientist working in the oil industry said, "humans change things, but our impact on the climate is minuscule." In a group of people with conservative values, a participant commented, to general laughter, that "politicians cause climate change": in other words, that it has been created "to charge taxes or exert control."

Very few people mentioned burning fossil fuels as a cause of climate change

All participants were asked what they thought was causing climate change. Once again, they had received no prompts to lead them towards any specific answer. Among those who accepted that humans have a role in causing climate change, there were mixed views about the actual cause. Responses ranged from deforestation, gases, general pollution and overpopulation to more general moral or systemic causes such as "greed" or "capitalism."



The scientific consensus is that the burning of fossil fuels (oil, gas and coal) is by far the dominant cause and accounts for 78 percent of the increase in greenhouse gas emissions causing climate change.²⁸ Significantly, very few people, except within the two groups containing dedicated environmentalists, mentioned the burning of fossil fuels as a cause of climate change. A wider survey in 2017 found that only 9 percent of Albertans identified burning fossil fuels as the reason why they believe that temperatures are rising.²⁹

Partners and steering group members suggested several reasons why participants did not mention fossil fuels: a general lack of public education about climate change and its causes; the focus of government communications on coal plants or policy; and the suggestion that “it is so obvious they did not mention it.” However, it was also clear from the conversations that people’s own relationship with the oil and gas made the connection challenging and uncomfortable.

People find it hard to talk about climate change and rarely do so

All participants were asked how often they talked about climate change with friends and family. 17 percent said that they rarely or never talked about climate change. Our sample was, inevitably, more engaged with the issue than the norm. A national survey found that 32 percent of people rarely or never talked about climate change³⁰ and this is almost certainly an underestimate given the wider evidence that people tend to overstate how much they talk about climate change.

Failure to talk was often described in terms that suggested a conscious decision to suppress the topic: as a farmer said: “we simply never go there as a family.” Even in the more neutral space of the discussion groups, people clearly found it difficult to talk about climate change.

Many of the workshop facilitators reported that the mood in their groups became “deadly serious”, “heavy” or “tense” once the conversation moved to climate change. The facilitator of a group of business people said that “this section of the session blew up emotionally.” The dynamic of the conversations often shifted at this point, lost its focus or veered into wider political grievances or safer “environmental” issues, especially recycling.

Among those who expressed a strong concern, there were sometimes feelings of helplessness and guilt.

“*I already feel like my mental health is diminished by seeing climate change and feeling this hopelessness. The thought of the coral reef dying just breaks my heart. It makes me wanna cry.*” –Youth Group

The responses in Alberta including anger, denial and collective silence are entirely consistent with those found in the growing literature on the psychological strategies people adopt to defend themselves against the personal challenges of climate change.³¹ They are also similar to those found by US academic, Kari Norgaard, on the social attitudes in Norway, a country that, like Alberta, is dependent on oil, yet considers itself to be socially progressive and concerned about nature.³²

People are dissatisfied with the current public discourse

Participants from across the whole spectrum of views were tired of the division and antagonism in the public debate. Environmentalists were frustrated with the political polarization and rejection of science. People of conservative values repeatedly said that opinions about climate change are being pushed “down their throats” and there was no space for “honest conversation without blame and



shame.” The key issue, for both groups, is the imbalanced public discussion in which their views are not heard or treated with respect.

“People used to be so much more thick-skinned. They get offended and you turn out to be the worst person ever because you give your opinion when they ask for it. Sometimes you ask for their opinion, you give your opinion and they don’t accept your opinion.” –Conservatives Group

As invariably happens with polarized debates, all groups felt that they were in possession of the real facts which, they felt, would win if only there was a fair and balanced discussion. Their arguments often contained anger towards people who disagreed with them yet no one suggested any process for reaching a resolution.

“The facts are always constant as well and I like that about it. It’s not a gray area when it comes to climate change. The science is there, so the issues, the ones we’re fighting in the community, it’s pretty black and white with me. It’s clear-cut, so I like that about it.” –Environmental Group

“There are facts and facts don’t lie. Your opinion is not more valid than these facts and your opinion is not more valid than somebody else’s opinion. You know what I mean? It’s very frustrating when people push their opinions on others without really understanding the basis of their opinion. That’s one of the things that really bothers me.” –Farmers Group



Family and neighbors gathered to round up and brand cattle in the Wildcat Hills, west of Cochrane. Photo: Hamish Kerfoot



This view was especially pronounced among oil engineers who prided themselves on being well informed and having a rational science-based approach, though, on the whole, they rejected the conclusions of most international climate scientists.

“We’re blessed to be as educated as we are and our ability to understand, so we have an obligation to help those that aren’t as blessed as us to understand that.” –Energy Professionals Group

People want a new kind of conversation

People yearned for a new kind of conversation, especially within their own social group. They found the process of the roundtable discussions energizing and referred to them as a model for good conversations. They were able to hear and respect different opinions from people who shared their values and life experience.

“These are my friends, and I can talk to them, and we’re having these debates, these massive debates, and they’re very heated, but you know you come to a table like this, where there’s a diversity of views, and you might not agree with each other, but one-on-one, you can have a good conversation about it.” –Business Leaders Group

“They [Energy Leaders] have an opportunity to be leaders and I guess I expect them to be leaders in the interest of their own business. We need them to be leaders and change the discussion.” –Environmental Group

People would prefer to talk about preparation and adaptation than causes and mitigation

Many participants expressed a frustration with the discussion about causes and responsibility. They said that the scientific and policy discussion is overly technical and abstract, “focused on goals, not the long-term game plan.” Rural groups were most interested in knowing what it meant for their lives and livelihoods and how they needed to respond.

“I think a lot of finger-pointing is what comes to mind immediately. You’re burning this, you’re doing this... sometimes I think, just address the change. Just acknowledge it and do something.” –Rural Group

“Why don’t we just look at how we’re going to have to adapt to make our quality of lives? Don’t deal with the who and why.” –Farmers Group

“We can’t have those rational, fully fleshed out conversations with good outcomes because we’re fighting over the science. We say we’re not fighting over the science, but we’re at least fighting over the importance of the issue.” –Environmental Group

“Everybody should be grabbing onto the rope and generally pulling in the same direction and allowing our economy to kind of evolve and keep pushing forward I guess, rather than just kind of digging our heels in and pushing up against each other.” –Business Leaders Group



Most people rejected the government's "Made in Alberta" message

The federal Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change requires provinces to establish their own policies to meet national targets. If they fail to do so these will be set for them. In Manitoba, centre-right climate advocates aligned to the ruling Progressive Conservative Party created a narrative based on provincial pride. Drawing on public consultation and polling, the "Made in Manitoba" climate plan³³ was grounded on shared values, especially the desire to maintain provincial control over policy and reject federal interference.

This formula has been repeated regularly by the Albertan government, for example, "We don't want a plan imposed on us by Ottawa",³⁴ "[We have a] Made in Alberta Plan...rather than leaving it to Ottawa to write a plan for us."³⁵

We tested this language and it performed poorly. Responses were split on the sentence "we need to stand up for ourselves, take control, and plan our own energy and climate change futures" and the majority of people across all groups rejected the phrase: "not resigning to policy imposed on us by Ottawa."

Analysis by the partners and advisory group suggests that the message may be failing because too few people feel ownership of the current climate policy. Unlike Manitoba, where the ruling party received a majority of the popular vote, "Made in Alberta" will require a broader base of support to be effective.



Recommendations for communicators when talking about climate change in Alberta

- Increase engagement, education and “climate literacy”
- Break the political polarization
- Support new trusted communicators
- Recognize the diversity of views in all audiences
- Enable a new conversation
- Keep climate change in the mix, concentrating on adaptation and solutions
- Avoid blame, recognize the facts and move on to positive solutions

Increase engagement, education and “climate literacy”

In polls, 79 percent of Albertans consider themselves to be very well or somewhat informed about climate change.³⁶ However, it was clear in the conversations that people are still seriously under-informed about climate change: its causes, its solutions and, especially, the imminence of the threat and its likely impacts on their lives and livelihoods — what some educators call “climate literacy.”³⁷ In their discussions, many people showed an interest in knowing more, providing they heard this through trusted sources (see the third point below). Communicators should not assume that people understand this issue and should invest in well-designed outreach materials on the core science. This can be most constructively done around preparedness, adaptation and solutions.

Talking about climate change should use simple and practical language and avoid academic jargon and campaigner slogans. There have been attempts in Canada to rethink the core language of climate change, but study participants appeared to be most familiar and comfortable with the term “climate change.” The term “global warming” was used rarely. There was some criticism around advocates seeking to deliberately manipulate the language and we suspect that introducing neologisms such as “climate chaos” and “climate crisis” would be a distraction from the core arguments.

Specific mention should be made of the term “carbon pollution” which has been promoted by climate communicators³⁸ and is used frequently by Canadian politicians.³⁹ This compound phrase did not appear once in any Albertan conversation. In conversations, people applied the word pollution to litter, car exhausts, tailings ponds and wastewater from pulp mills. Although this phrase has not been tested in Alberta we advise that it is best avoided.

Break the political polarization

Attitudes towards climate change have become strongly linked with political identity and climate change policy is now threatened with every shift of government. Creating a broad-based consensus



that crosses political boundaries is essential. Without this, it will not be possible to maintain any sustained and effective policy in Alberta – of mitigation, adaptation or transition.

This report suggests some communications options for doing this. But, it also needs practical measures: diplomacy, cooperation, conflict resolution and strong leadership from all parties and public figures from across the political spectrum. Jurisdictions that have achieved a cross-party consensus, such as California, British Columbia, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Denmark, and Germany, are now benefiting from the economic advantages of their technical lead in low-carbon technologies. It should be noted that most of these places first adopted climate policies under centre-right governments: climate change does not inherently *belong* to any single political worldview.

Support new trusted communicators

Trust is fundamental to how people shape their attitudes: throughout the conversation, people aligned their opinions with the sources and communicators they trusted to share their concerns, values and political worldview. People who were skeptical or dismissive of climate change often did so because of a lack of trust or respect for those they saw communicating climate change: especially the media, environmental campaigners and politicians.

In Alberta, there is an urgent need for new advocates drawn from different communities and audiences and who are able to speak from the perspective of shared values and concerns. Engagement should include a programme to recruit and support peer communicators, enabling them to speak directly to their peers, especially audiences that are otherwise harder to reach.

Recognize the diversity of views in all audiences

Effective communication must enable the diversity of views within groups to be expressed openly. By comparison, ineffective communication will encourage people to side with the majority view in their group and suppress that diversity.

Although certain audiences were disposed to dismiss climate change, there was a diversity of views in every group. For example, even among rural conservatives, or people working within the oil and gas industry, there were people who were deeply concerned about climate change.

Enable a new conversation

Conversations between social peers and friends are a critical part of learning and attitude formation: allowing people to shape their own positions in negotiation with people they trust. Yet, most people told us they find it hard to talk about climate change and rarely do so. Most participants enjoyed the conversations in the workshops and the opportunity to talk about these issues — often for the first time.

We conclude that there is a need, and a demand, for a different kind of participatory conversation; allowing and enabling people to discuss climate change and energy in their communities, workplaces and with their friends and families. Communicators should recognize this “climate silence”⁴⁰ and provide resources that can guide and support concerned people to talk about climate change in their local community. At a programmatic level, community organizations in Alberta are already holding roundtables and town hall meetings about climate change, its local impacts and adaptation.



Students identifying species at the Calgary BioBlitz. Photo: Alberta Council for Environmental Education

Provincial-level agencies and institutions could also initiate a programme of systematic conversations. In Scotland, for example, the government has enshrined community conversations as a central part of its climate strategy, and we recommend this approach in Alberta.⁴¹

Keep climate change in the mix, concentrating on adaptation and solutions

Climate change is still not a major concern for most Albertans. However, it would be a mistake to focus solely on the positive arguments for renewables without mentioning climate change. It will require long and sustained engagement (combined with increasing impacts) to raise the profile of climate change and it should therefore be maintained in the public discussion and debate. This issue is not going away!

The primary opportunities for engagement are to concentrate on how climate change will affect people's lives and livelihoods and how they might best prepare and protect their communities and property. This conversation can be grounded in the positive shared value of Albertans caring for one another and the past experiences they have had of pulling together during extreme weather events.

Avoid blame, recognize the facts and move on to positive solutions

People are conflicted about climate change and feel judged by their involvement in the oil and gas industry. Avoid language that focuses on the “responsibility” or “fault” but, do not deny or diminish the role played by the oil and gas industry in provincial and personal emissions (which are among the highest in the world). Instead, recognize honestly that this is challenging and that we are “all in this together.”

Without ignoring the underlying causes, move quickly to practical solutions for adaptation, mitigation and transition, promoting the positive narrative that Alberta changes, grows, innovates and *builds*.



Key findings

- Most people have a strong personal or family connection with the oil and gas industry
- There were no clear demographic differences in attitudes to oil and gas
- Oil and gas industry workers feel judged or criticized, even when doing the right thing
- The main concerns about oil and gas related to insecurity and dependence, not climate change
- People are unsure about when or even whether another oil boom will come
- People agreed that oil was a precious resource and that its revenue had been wasted in the past
- Comparisons with the Norway Sovereign Wealth Fund were not of widespread interest
- Pipelines were mentioned only rarely and then usually as a symptom of wider problems

Most people have a strong personal or family connection with the oil and gas industry

Participants in the groups were asked: “do any of you or your family have a personal connection with the energy industry?” The large majority of participants said they had a strong personal or family connection to the sector. Facilitators reported that asking this question often led directly into strongly worded “us versus them” conversations.

“How I interpret it, working in a non-profit sector for a long time, most of the money comes oil and gas coffers.” -Environmental Group

There were no clear demographic differences in attitudes to oil and gas

Unlike climate change, we found no significant differences in attitudes to the oil and gas industry in people of different genders, ages, education levels or political values. Across the board, most people felt connected to and supportive of the industry. We found that most people, including environmentalists, saw benefits from the oil sector and very few people expressed opposition to pipelines.



We wished to see whether age affected attitudes to oil and gas given that, in Canada as a whole, younger people tend to be more aligned to the environmental movement and more critical of the resource industries, including oil and gas.⁴² We did not find any significant differences in attitudes among young people. Young participants were no more likely than older participants to reject or criticize oil and gas.

“I was at a coal mine [near Edmonton] and a lot of young people in that area work there full time. They are happy to work there, no problem, a lot of them, for years to come. And they’re younger than me, and they want a career. And they’re pissed at the new generation for trying to force their jobs out of this.” –Environmental Group

The test narratives included a paragraph designed to explore whether young people were rejecting the oil and gas sector: “Young people don’t want to work for oil companies.⁴³ What was good for the older generations is not going to be good enough for young people. The oil and gas industry will eventually decline and will be unable to provide the long-term secure jobs that our young people need and deserve.”

This language was rejected across the groups for its negative tone, and young people and New Canadians expressed a continued desire to work in the oil and gas sector if jobs were available. Among young people, we found a reflection that the oil boom was a historical event and a regret that they had missed the opportunity to benefit.

“I was a kid and we grew up around the oil boom, and my parents were into oil, so I benefited a lot from that, and now it’s over.” –Youth Group

Oil and gas industry workers feel judged or blamed, even when doing the right thing

People working in the oil and gas sector felt demonized as “bad” and “ugly” oil workers and repeatedly said that they are being treated like “criminals.” This framing was also repeated by farmers who feel undervalued and unfairly attacked by urbanites.

Oil workers spoke about their high standards, improving the environmental performance in the sector, and their resentment that they are still judged by outsiders, environmentalists, and other provinces. A common theme was that their critics happily use their products and then blame them.

“‘Keep the fossil fuels in the ground’: say the protestors who use the fossil fuels to get to the protest.” –Conservative Group

People said that their environmental regulations “may be sabotaging us,” or that “Russia is laughing at us.” They recognized that criticism was useful but felt that the discussion was often unbalanced.

“Some of the criticism is deserved, and freedom of speech is a thing, so if people want to judge they can. But we should be recognized for many positive steps that we have been taking and that sometimes gets missed in a lot of the messaging.” –Policymakers Group



Albertan oil workers applying epoxy coating to a pipeline. Photo: [jasonwoodhead23](#)

The main concerns about oil and gas related to insecurity and dependence, not climate change

As noted above, few people were willing to make the connection between oil and gas and climate change.

In the groups, we heard widespread acknowledgement of the uncertainties within the oil and gas sector. The term “rollercoaster” of boom and bust appears regularly across Albertan media and was fully endorsed in the narrative testing. Several groups commented that they felt there was too much focus on the oil and gas sector and that their own work and contribution to life in Alberta was marginalized (see below).

People are unsure about when or even whether another oil boom will come

Although they anticipate that the age of oil is far from over, participants were less confident that world oil prices will return to the high levels reached earlier in this century.

People who supported the oil industry assumed another boom was likely, although not in the short term. Activists who were critical of the oil industry did not anticipate another boom. Even people in the oil industry anticipated that by the time the prices recover demand for oil sands may have changed.

“Prices will creep up again over a period of 10 years and it will come back alive, though it will be more and more controversial to produce oil sands, where most of our remaining oil exists.”
-Faith Group

“I don’t know that the geopolitics is going to give us another boom.” -Environmentalist Group



People agreed that oil was a precious resource and that its revenue had been wasted in the past

Most participants, especially older ones, were familiar with the popular bumper sticker: “Please God give us another boom. This time I promise not to piss it all away... again!”

All the groups were asked about this slogan and many shared its sentiment that previous oil wealth had been wasted. The test narrative that “oil is a precious and valuable resource” was universally approved and many people agreed that “we have given our [oil] away for too little.” There was also some agreement that that revenues “could be focused to build a newly diversified economy.” The conversations did not explore why people agreed with this and whether the fault lay with the royalties system, rates of taxation or the price received from the wider market.

Comparisons with the Norway Sovereign Wealth Fund were not of widespread interest

Albertan policymakers and pundits⁴⁴ often refer to the Norwegian model of investing a large percentage of oil revenue into a permanent national fund. They contrast it with the troubled Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund which was depleted to feed general government spending.⁴⁵ Proposals for the investment of revenues was seen to be an important debate – consistent with the broad interest in narratives around future choices – but people did not feel sufficiently well informed about the Norwegian model to respond.

Pipelines were mentioned only rarely, and then usually as a symptom of wider problems

We deliberately avoided prompting a conversation about pipelines to see how and where they were mentioned. Although professionals working in the oil and gas industry mentioned them as an aspect of their work, pipeline politics was mentioned far less than anticipated. It is important to remember that the research measured opinions in Spring 2018 and that attitudes may have since changed.

Despite the high-profile climate change campaigns against Keystone XL and Kinder Morgan pipelines, people in the Workshops did not associate the pipelines with the wider issue of climate change.

Pipelines were primarily mentioned in the context of wider concerns: under-investment in refining, environmental extremism, short-term government policy-making and the frustrations of inter-provincial rivalries. As one participant said: “this whole political climate with this pipeline, in BC, and Montreal. It sort of drives me nuts.” Farmers complained about the heavy investment of their taxes in the pipeline and an over-concentration on this single investment.



Recommendations for communicators when talking about oil and gas in Alberta

- Recognize and be grateful for the contribution of the oil and gas industry
- Focus on vulnerability and security first, climate change second
- Do not use pipeline politics as an entry point for discussing climate change

Recognize and be grateful for the contribution of the oil and gas industry

People across Alberta respond defensively to criticism and blame of the oil and gas industry. As noted above, starting a conversation from a position of recognition and gratitude produces a far more productive discussion. A far more constructive position is to start by recognizing and being grateful for the contribution of people working in the oil and gas industry. In the narrative testing, the phrase: “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” was strongly approved across all groups.

Focus on vulnerability and security first, climate change second

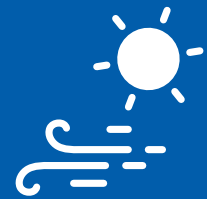
People’s main concerns about oil and gas are economic — relating to job security, the uncertainty of future demand and the long-term prospects of the industry. These concerns can best be addressed in a wider discussion about economic choices and energy diversification, as discussed in the next section. Climate change is best mentioned as one of the main factors affecting the future viability of the oil and gas industries. Climate change policy is already generating national and international pressure on the industry. When the emissions commitments in the Paris Agreement are implemented they will reduce demand in many key markets.

Do not use pipeline politics as an entry point for discussing climate change

Outside environmentalist groups, pipelines are not strongly associated with climate change and are often a proxy for other grievances. Talking about pipelines will stimulate attitudes, antagonism and polarization rather than cooperation.

Pipelines can usefully be mentioned within a wider narrative of the uncertainty and vulnerability of the oil and gas industry to outside pressure. Across all groups, people approved the sentence: “our products and pipelines are vulnerable to policies set in other provinces and countries.”

Pipelines are also a part of a more constructive collective debate about how Alberta wishes to invest in the future and how major infrastructure decisions entail a decisive commitment to a given future.



Key findings

- Most Albertans believe that demand for oil will continue for the next generation and further
- People agree that developing renewable energy in Alberta has strong economic potential
- Some argued that the next energy boom could be in renewable energy
- Most people did not believe that renewable energy could replace fossil fuel production
- The word “transition” can be used...with care
- Transition is understood to mean a gradual phased approach, not radical change
- People anticipate that it could be a “tough” transition more than a “just” transition
- Some argue that “transition” might require an increase in fossil fuel production
- Most Albertans want less economic dominance by oil and gas
- Diversification is not just about renewables

Most Albertans believe that demand for oil will continue for the next generation and further

All participants were asked when they thought the world would move away from oil. All accepted that the world is now moving away from oil but placed the time at which we would stop using oil far beyond their own lifetimes – in some cases up to 200 years away. In surveys, Albertans are twice as likely as other Canadians to believe that demand for oil and gas will still be increasing globally over the next 30 years. But, this does not mean that Albertans are solidly backing the oil industry: as so often they are split, with 39 percent in surveys wishing to see an expansion and 35 percent wishing to see a decline.⁴⁶

People agree that developing renewable energy in Alberta has strong economic potential

Across all groups, most people accepted that renewables had a role in Alberta’s future energy supply. Engineers and oil specialists did not question that renewables had a potential, and became energized when talking about the technical aspects.



There was some cynicism about government intentions, as one farmer commented it is “just another way to waste a bunch of money.” But this was unusual. Nobody argued on economic grounds that Alberta should not develop renewables and several people said that developing renewables is “essential” or “mandatory.”

This finding is supported by wider polling showing that two-thirds of Albertans agreed with the statement: “if we are smart and thoughtful in how we plan a transition away from fossil fuels, Alberta’s economy can be even more successful in future.”⁴⁷ In the ANP groups, there was strong support around the language that renewables can provide new opportunities for work, innovation and enterprise – qualities that people associate with the province.

People’s primary objection to developing renewables concerned the speed of change, which, they claimed, has been overstated and their doubts that demand for fossil fuels will decline.

Some argued that the next energy boom could be in renewable energy.

As noted above, Albertans are used to cycles of booms in the energy sector and some are anticipating the next one. Some thought that renewables might provide it:

“ I think the [future] boom is gonna be more diverse. It’s not gonna be a boom in the sense of one industry, like fossil fuels picking up. It’ll be a boom where it’s solar, and then there’s gonna be advancements in different kinds of applications for the fossil fuels.” –Oil Workers Group

“ Yeah, I think about the next boom is more about innovation There’s gonna be advancements in different ways to grab energy from the earth, geothermal, solar, hydro. It’s not gonna be, all of a sudden oil’s price skyrockets and demand’s huge. It’s gonna be, we’ve found better ways to do this, and how do we apply this in the areas we live? –Oil Workers Group

“ We’ll have another energy boom. It might not be in the form of oil.” –Farmers Group

Most people did not believe that renewable energy could replace fossil fuel production

There is a strong consensus across governments and major agencies (such as the World Bank, United Nations and International Energy Association) that the world needs to reduce its use of fossil fuels and move rapidly towards renewable energy. In Canada, many national-level advocates speak of Canada making a total “transition” to renewables.⁴⁸ In this sense “transition” means a “replacement”. Many ANP audiences rejected this meaning, arguing that a full transition is not technically possible.

“ You can’t just build a bunch of wind and solar and then replace oil and gas. That’s crazy. 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? But I think we can certainly rely on wind and when solar drops further, it’s gonna be 8 cents here pretty quickly, then you can use that too, but again, it can’t happen overnight.” –Energy Professionals Group

People also questioned whether renewable energy could generate the same level of employment and income as oil and gas, arguing that renewable energy is more expensive to produce (though



Installing solar panels on the roof of a Traditional Living house at the University of Calgary. Photo: [Carol Anna/U.S. Department of Energy](#)

recognizing that the price is falling) and not viable to transmit to outside markets.⁴⁹ They also had mixed views about whether the skills of one industry could simply be transferred directly to another. And, as noted above, they believe that the global market for oil — and therefore for Alberta's exports — will continue far into the future.

The word "transition" can be used...with care

We wanted to test people's understanding of the word "transition". All participants were asked a carefully worded question: "Some say that the government and investors should be making a planned transition from oil and gas to sustainable energy. What do you think of this word, "transition"? Do you like it or does it mean anything to you?"

We found that people were neutral about the word, generally interpreted its meaning as a change or shift (rather than a replacement or removal) and accepted its underlying premise. Even climate change skeptics used it freely in their speech. The word fitted well with many people's existing values: just as they saw the economic cycle as a metaphor for the life cycle, some people described "transition" as a "natural" and "essential" part of life and evolution, commenting that ecosystems die without change.

However, as with all language, some objected that it could just be another slogan word lacking any substance and clear commitment.

“It's like a politician who says that they're going to bring change. Yeah, change for what? You're changing from what we have now to what? I guess that's part of the issue with the word transition is people are like, 'well, transition to what?' Like you said, is it technological, is it economical, is it what?” –Oil Workers Group



Another concern was who would manage or enforce the transition:

“It’s a loaded term. It gives this impression that somebody is the controller and somebody’s forcing us to go from X to Y.” –Policymakers Group

Conservatives sometimes disliked the phrase “planned transition” because it sounded like it’s “mandated” or “centrally planned by some government.” They favoured “energy transition” or “market transition.”

Transition is understood to mean a gradual phased approach, not radical change

People understood *transition* as meaning a gradual change in energy supply. They contrasted this with the impacts of a radical shift. An oil worker expressed a common sentiment when he said: “if we turn off oil and gas tomorrow, the Stone Age is here to come.” Another added: “there would be riots. There would be blood on the streets.”

Depending on one’s point of view, this gradualist approach was either a strength or a weakness:

“Renewables, there’s gonna be a role there but it’s not replacing oil and gas, so transition might not be the best word for it.” –Conservative Group

“The problem with the word “transition” is that it sounds too comfortable, too soothing. It implies that this is all going to happen over a long period of time.” –Environmental Group

“In Alberta, transition means you can always change your mind and go back, change the government, go back to coal.” –Policymakers group

People anticipate that it could be a “tough” transition more than a “just” transition.

In their conversations, people were always more inclined to talk about changes and the economic cycles as natural, evolutionary processes that encouraged innovation and hard work. People from all groups welcomed the phrase “it will not be easy” in the test narratives as being honest and authentic.

We tested language saying that “we owe it to [workers in the oil gas and coal sectors] to make sure that their livelihoods are secured during this transition.” This sentence expresses the core principle of a “just transition” which has been strongly promoted by trades unions, the International Labour Organization, and the Paris Climate Agreement. However, there was little interest in Alberta in protecting peoples livelihoods in this way, possibly because of shared values of resilience to change and independence from government.

Some argue that “transition” might require an increase in fossil fuel production

From the perspective of climate change advocates, the danger of the energy diversification narrative is that it could justify an expansion of fossil-fuel production in order to generate the revenue to pay for diversification.



“We should make as much money as we possibly can with the resources we have today, and squeeze out our competitors in Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela, and Nigeria, and sell our barrels today, and get as rich as we possibly can, and then use that for other good things.” –Energy Professionals Group

“Basically, for these next 50 years, we should cash in like crazy on oil as long as we possibly can.” –Rural Group

“It would be great if we could completely power ourselves renewably in Alberta and sell high-priced hydrocarbons to somebody else.” –Energy Professionals Group

Most Albertans want less economic dominance by oil and gas

In polling, when asked about the best way forward for Alberta's economy, a third of people say that it should prioritize oil and gas, but two-thirds feel it should “prioritize *other ways* of building our economy.”⁵⁰ The findings of our research are consistent with this polling. A minority of people in the conversations strongly supported expanding oil and gas development, but a majority, including many conservatives and rural people, felt that the economy was too dependent on oil and gas and favoured wider forms of development.

As noted above, the primary concerns around oil and gas production were not about climate change but about the economic insecurity and vulnerability of the industry. There was a strong view among rural people that the economy continues to be too dependent on the oil and gas sector, reflecting the grievance that they had been marginalized in the process.

“They put all their eggs in the oil industry basket and I think because it was the money, so there was no reason to put the eggs in a deposit. But then deposit arrived and now I think Albertans learned a lesson. Well did we? Now with the pipeline, we're going right back and we're putting all of our eggs back in that same basket.” –Farmers Group

Diversification is not just about renewables

The discussion groups with participants from outside the energy sector – including farmers, teachers and artists – said that the narratives focused too strongly on energy as a whole and that the contribution was under-recognized. They therefore wanted to see a stronger focus on broad-based diversification within which they too would have a stake. This argument was especially strong among the farmers.

“I think people forgot that before 1947 and the oil hit, there was agriculture. Agriculture was number one. Then agriculture became number two, and when the oil patch went down, it probably got back up to number one. Energy's not going to last for forever, but you know what? Agriculture will. So look after agriculture, look after the people in agriculture. Teach, educate the other people to support the farmer. But like we're saying, a lot of people don't respect it. And I really think it starts at the top level.” –Farmers Group



Recommendations for communicators when talking about renewables and transition in Alberta

- The conventional “transition” narrative does not work well in Alberta
- The Albertan transition narrative should be one of diversification and broadening...
- ...a real diversification...
- ...within which all people feel valued...
- ...building on Albertan strengths...
- ...not just a “transition”...
- ...continuing a process that is already underway...
- ...in which all people can debate long-term choices...
- ...making a steady transition towards something new, not away from something old

The conventional “transition” narrative does not work well in Alberta

The conventional transition narrative follows an arc that begins by asserting the dangers of climate change, then criticizes the oil industry, followed by an imperative to reduce or close down fossil fuel production and an economic case for expanding renewable energy. This narrative was tested with all groups throughout the ANP.

This narrative does not hold up well in Alberta. Firstly, because many people’s loyalty to the fossil fuel industry led them to reject the threat of climate change and criticism. For them, the greatest threat of climate change is to their jobs and communities. Secondly, because renewable sources cannot simply replace the revenue of fossil fuel exports for a major producer.

The Albertan transition narrative should be one of diversification and broadening...

The alternative narrative, emerging through the conversations, is a positive vision of diversification: building a stronger, more secure and sustainable economy on broader and more diversified foundations.



Listening to each other at an Alberta Narratives Project event at TELUS Spark, Calgary. Photo: Kerri Singh

...a real diversification...

In the name of diversification, past governments have focused on activities that are still strongly dependent on the oil and gas sector, such as manufacturing (to supply the sector), financial services (to support it), and petrochemical processing (to use its products).⁵¹ These new activities actually reinforce the centrality of the oil and gas sector and the insecurity being tied to the “rollercoaster” of international demand.

...within which all people feel valued...

All people in Alberta should feel valued and see a personal opportunity. Diversification could include investment in agriculture, tourism, education and services. Renewable energy fits well within this more inclusive diversification narrative. If it does not have to justify itself on the same terms as oil and gas people will readily accept that it offers major opportunities.

...building on Albertan strengths...

This is a narrative of continuation, not transformation. It should recognize the contribution that the oil and gas industry and, especially, the people who work in it, make to the province. New industries, especially renewables, should be shown as building on the same skills and qualities many people associate with the province: especially initiative, innovation, and entrepreneurialism.



...not just a “transition”...

Although currently accepted, “transition” is strongly promoted by the environmental movement and could become associated with this single perspective. Other terms should be explored include *rebuilding*, *restructuring*, or *evolving*.

...continuing a process that is already underway...

People already recognize that change is part of life, and has been part of the history of Alberta. The percentage of provincial income from the oil and gas industry has been falling: from 36 percent to 17 percent since the mid-1980s.⁵² Communications should focus on the rapid growth of renewable energy, especially over the past ten years. This is a process of re-balancing that can be portrayed as a positive reinvention of provincial identity.

...in which all people can debate long-term choices...

As noted above, people wish to weigh up and participate in choices. Investment in pipelines and other major energy infrastructure, including renewable energy, represents a commitment to different long-term outcomes. These can be the basis of a positive conversation about the “future we choose.”

...making a steady transition towards something new, not away from something old

Optimal public engagement comes with presenting a forward-looking vision of the future and the choices needed to make those changes. A negative vision based on a rejection of the oil and gas sector will have some supporters but will not generate a new and broad-based engagement.

Appendices

1. About Alberta and its importance for the global climate conversation
2. What we did – the methodology
3. Who we spoke to – the demographics
4. What we asked – the test narratives
5. Other relevant communications research

Appendix 1: About Alberta and its importance for the global climate conversation

Alberta is the 8th largest producer of oil and gas in the world and produces 80 percent of Canada's crude oil and 72 percent of its natural gas. The industry makes a large contribution to government revenues, paying \$500million in annual royalties. In times of high world prices, royalties have exceeded \$8billion.⁵³

However, Alberta also makes a correspondingly significant contribution to the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. The Albertan oil industry is an exceptionally high consumer of energy for the processing of the heavy oil in the oil sands. The province generates annual emissions of 263 megatonnes of carbon dioxide (and equivalent).⁵⁴

This has risen by a half since 1990 and is expected to keep rising into the 2020s, potentially undermining Canada's national commitments under the Paris Climate Agreement. The emissions of 67 tonnes per person is nearly the highest in the world⁵⁵ and ten times higher than the global average. And none of this includes the far greater climate impacts of Alberta's oil and gas exports when they are burnt.

As a result, the Albertan oil industry has become the target for international campaigns and is repeatedly criticized in documentaries and news features. The construction of pipelines to carry the crude oil to the coast continues to be the focus of mass mobilizations, protests and civil disobedience campaigns around the world. Although many Albertans consider this attention to be disproportionate and the criticisms to be unfair, the conversation in Alberta is of global interest and significance.

Appendix 2: What we did - the methodology

Participatory “citizen research”

The process behind the Alberta Narratives Project (ANP) was highly participatory, involving the partners in all stages of design, content and implementation of the programme. It applies the principles of “citizen science”, mostly found in the natural sciences, to social science research; training the partners to conduct robust qualitative research within their own networks and communities. We have not found any comparable example of “citizen communications research” and recommend this approach for other forms of social research.

For the purposes of communications research, the major benefit of this approach is that it enables access to a wide range of audiences, including those that would be very hard to reach through conventional recruitment. For example, a community level organization can, through its networks, recruit participants from groups that are politically disengaged, disinterested in climate change or actively opposed to climate policy measures — all of which are essential to include in a representative sample.

This approach requires a substantial investment in training and support and the overall ANP should be considered as *both* a research project *and* a training project, generating a lasting legacy of improved skills across Albertan civil society. The increased costs in training can be largely offset against the greatly reduced costs of the qualitative research — removing most of the costs of recruitment, facilitation, and payment to group participants. What is more, the “citizen research” approach enables much larger projects with major economies of scale. A project on the scale of the ANP would be unaffordable within a normal research project.

The “Narrative Workshop” model

The core of the research, which partners were trained to deliver, was the Narrative Workshop qualitative research model, developed by Climate Outreach over the past decade.⁵⁶ There are two aspects to the methodology which distinguish Narrative Workshops from other forms of qualitative research:

- a. Using a structure and format which promotes peer-to-peer dialogue, and
- b. Grounding the dialogue in participants’ values and identity, which are the sources of their attitudes.

This approach is designed to allow participants to engage in conversations about climate change and respond to the narratives provided in their own terms, with reference to the things that matter to them, rather than seeking to generate a debate on the basis of complex and abstract science. Hence, the process begins by exploring participants’ own values, concerns and aspirations rather than a particular policy proposal or technological response. This makes the Narrative Workshop methodology applicable across all sections of the population.

Each Narrative Workshop followed the same script, leading participants through seven successive topics:

1. **Values** – What do you care about? What do you dislike? What makes you proud of who you are?
2. **Identity** – How do you feel about Alberta and your place in it?
3. **Changes** – What changes have you noticed and what concerns do you have for the future?
4. **Climate change** – What does it mean to you and what do you think causes it?
5. **Climate change impacts** – What are the impacts and how will you and others cope?
6. **Energy** – What does the future of energy mean to you?
7. **Renewables** – What do renewables mean to you and can they replace fossil fuels?

The final activity tested short passages of narrative text that had been co-designed with the local partners during their first training workshop. These presented climate change and renewables around different themes (for example, economy, responsibility, or opportunity) and are provided in full in Appendix 4.

Five Stages of the research process

There were five distinct stages to the research process based around two major training events.

1. Project promotion, partner recruitment and initial design (January – February 2018)

The core partners in Alberta, through their own networks, invited organizations to participate in the program, establishing how it will support their own work. Partners were required to invest their own time and resources into the program and needed to see the potential benefits.

A scoping exercise consolidated the previous research on attitudes and communications in Alberta, which was included or further tested. Demographic and attitudinal data provided a framework for ensuring that the programme covered a representative sample of Albertans, with particular attention paid to recruiting groups with hard-to-reach audiences.

2. Training Session One (March 2018)

The first session, spread over two days, concerned the overall ambition of the project and the challenges it would address. A consultative process enabled all partners to propose the specific issues that the Narrative Workshops would explore, and select the narratives for testing.

Following a detailed manual, partners received dedicated training sessions on the principles of robust research, facilitation and analysis, and the practical logistics of recruitment and organizing their workshops. The trainees then conducted a shortened one-hour Narrative Workshop around climate change and energy during the training and were encouraged to run a similar one-hour session with their work colleagues.



One of the table groups at Training Session One in Calgary. Photo: Climate Outreach

3. Research and reporting (April – June 2018)

Over the next two months, the partners recruited and held 55 Narrative Workshops across Alberta. To ensure that the findings could be compared across groups, all partners followed the same facilitation script and tested the same trial narratives, both of which had been refined in consultation with the steering group.

Workshops held with the ten priority audiences, identified through earlier audience mapping (see Appendix 3), were recorded and transcribed. All other Workshops reported their findings through an online survey.

4. Training Session Two: Evaluation and analysis (June 2018)

During the second two-day training in Edmonton, partners reported their findings and, working in small groups, drew out the main findings. These collective insights form the core of the findings in this report. The evaluation process required co-operation between partners with different and sometimes opposing positions, encouraging them to understand each others' perspectives and find common ground.

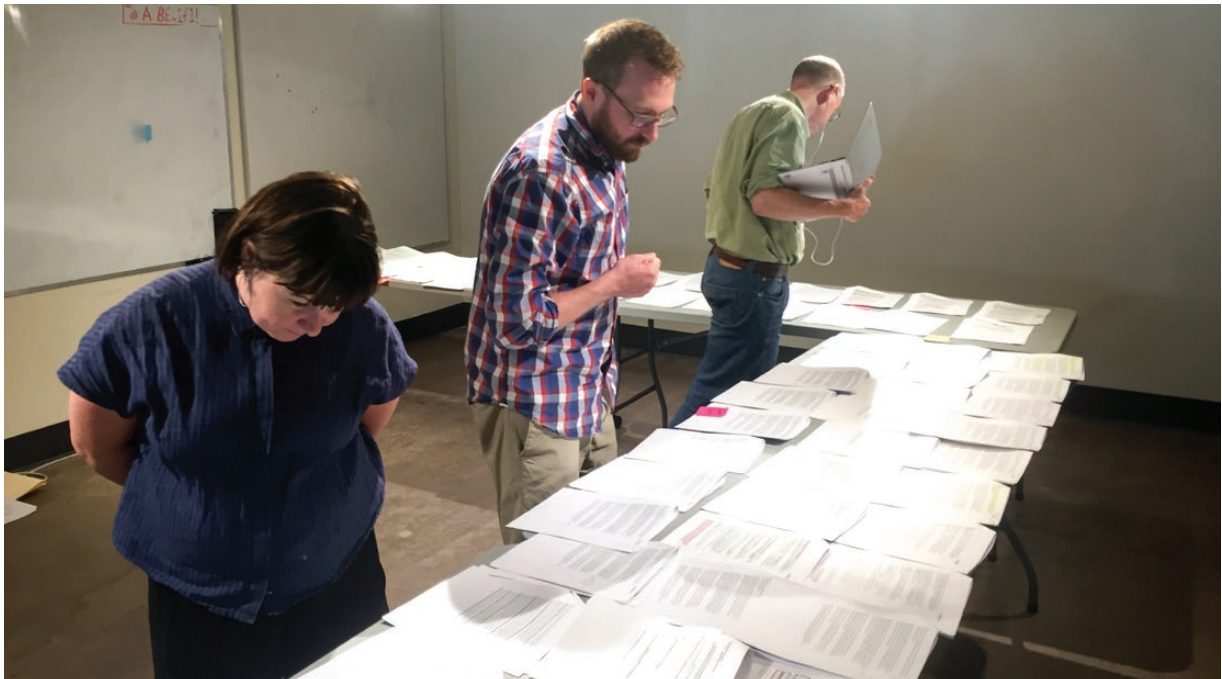
This second training also evaluated the overall process for future applications (see Global Narratives Project below) and celebrated the achievement of all partners.



Working in small groups to draw out the main findings, at Training Session Two in Edmonton. Photo: Climate Outreach

5. Evaluation and preparation of final conclusions (July - September 2018)

The research team conducted a detailed analysis of the online questionnaire feedback and over 700 pages of transcripts to confirm the findings from the Evaluation Training session and draw out any additional insights. All 550 copies of the marked-up test narratives were laid out alongside each other and cross-compared to produce the final conclusions. The draft text for this report was then reviewed by the advisory group and further amended.



Reviewing the marked-up test narratives. Photo: Climate Outreach

6. Roll out and support (September 2018)

A program of promotion includes a slidedeck for partners to use in their own networks. The budget also allows for six months of sustained support for partners in applying the research in their own projects.

The Advisory Group

A five-person advisory group provided additional input in the test narratives and findings. The advisory group providing input but did not have any formal control over the process of findings.

It was recruited to comprise a balanced range of Albertan constituencies, including participants from the oil industry, rural communities, environmental advocacy organizations and from across the political spectrum.

The Global Narratives Project

The Alberta Narratives Project is an important step towards a global ambition to enable national-level partners to design and test communications tailored to their own cultures and values.

In 2015/16, Climate Outreach ran the first pilot programme in India training six partners to design and test climate communications.⁵⁷ The 16 Narrative Workshops they ran across a wide range of demographics in Northern India remains, to date, the most extensive qualitative climate communications research conducted in the subcontinent.

The ANP builds directly on the experience and materials from this Indian pilot. In turn, the experience and refinements in Alberta will be directly applied in a major initiative in Spring 2019 with Climate Action Network International to train partners across the Arabic speaking countries of the Middle East. The Albertan project will provide valuable insights for communicating climate change in another region that depends strongly on oil and gas exports. There is also strong interest in running similar programmes in Ontario and British Columbia in Canada and across Germany.

Appendix 3: Who we spoke to - the demographics

Introduction

Narrative Workshops are a qualitative research methodology which draws on a smaller sample size than quantitative research such as surveys. The Narrative Workshop methodology generates robust research results from a relatively small sample, by generating a large quantity of qualitative data which is used to generate ‘thick’ descriptions. Thick descriptions pay attention to the social and cultural context in which opinions and attitudes are formed.⁵⁸ This provides descriptions which are thick with descriptions of the subjects’ intentions, values, concerns and beliefs. To provide robust and reliable results the recruitment process employs a ‘purposive’ methodology.⁵⁹ This is a strategic approach in which the researcher samples on the basis of wanting to recruit people who are most relevant to the research questions. The groups where participants offer the most honest and forthright opinions (and hence provide data which can be used to generate thick descriptions) are typically those where they feel the greatest affinity with other participants – typically through shared identity and values, and so shared identity and values may be one criteria which will inform a purposive sampling method. This also requires careful selection of which qualities will be the basis of recruitment.

There is a very large number of options for segmenting a large population; basic demographics – age, gender, class, and education; ethnicity and place of origin; location – in particular urban and rural; or occupation. And there are also less tangible differences in cultural values, politics, and religious faith that, research shows, are sometimes the strongest determinants of attitudes to climate change. The final variable, inherent to the co-design process, concerned the priorities of the partner organizations who had their own organizational priorities when deciding which groups to recruit.

In the design process we sought to balance these many factors by identifying ten segments that we considered to be priorities for a representative sample which we designated “Tier 1.” Based on criteria that previous research showed played a significant role in attitudes to climate change and energy, these included age, ethnic identity and origin, politics, faith, degree of urbanization, and association with the oil industry. We also included groups for senior decision-makers in business and government because they have a major influence on policy and public attitudes. The final priority audience, Indigenous People, will be included in a later report (see Perspectives of Engagement and Indigenous People). These Tier 1 groups provide the core of the ANP findings and their conversations were transcribed and analysed.

The remaining groups in “Tier 2” were recruited according to demographic, geographic and occupational criteria chosen by the partners. In each case, participants were recruited to ensure that the groups was representative of that specific audience. For example, a group of “energy professionals” or “teachers” would have a composition of gender and ages reflecting those found throughout that occupation.

All participants filled in a personal profile sheet to provide demographic and attitudinal data. Overall the ANP engaged a fair cross-section of Albertan society. There was a good gender balance (50 percent women, 47 percent men, 3 percent non binary/prefer not to say) and an age profile that closely matched the provincial census. The overall sample was significantly better educated than Alberta as a whole (35 percent college education compared to 21 percent in the census).

Participants were invited to report their political values on a five-point scale from very conservative to very left-wing. A quarter of people refused to identify their politics. Those who did were distributed

across the spectrum, though a majority (62 percent) identified themselves as left-of-center. There was no comparable survey research on current Albertan political values and the measure of voting patterns. However, in recent polls approximately 47 percent of people intended to vote United Conservative. This suggests that people of left-wing values may be over-represented in the sample.

The major shortfall in recruitment was the under-representation of Indigenous People and a bias towards the south of Alberta. Overall, the ANP had a fair rural representation but the lower recruitment in the north may have resulted in a reduced representation of oil sands workers. It also proved hard to recruit farmers because the research period was in spring during the sowing season, and because of logistical problems associated with convening a workshop in areas of low population density.

During analysis we responded to these distortions in our sample. The main findings were drawn from the Tier 1 groups which had the most balanced recruitment. When reviewing findings from the other groups we gave slightly more weight to conservative and rural participants to allow for possible bias.

| TIER 1 | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Audience | Location | Organizing group |
| Business leaders | Calgary | Hawkesworth Consulting |
| 'c'onservatives ⁶⁰ | Calgary | Canada West Foundation |
| Environmentalists | Calgary | Alberta Ecotrust Foundation |
| Energy professionals | Calgary | Papillon Consulting |
| Faith leaders/congregants | Calgary | Anglican Diocese of Calgary - Creation Care Calgary |
| Farmers | Leduc | ALUS Canada |
| New Canadians | Calgary | Independent Consultant |
| Oil & Gas workers | Edmonton & Grand Prairie | Iron & Earth |
| Rural Albertans | Red Deer | The City of Red Deer |
| Policymakers | Edmonton | Government of Alberta |
| Youth (k-12, post-secondary) | Edmonton | MacEwan University |

| TIER 2 | | |
|---|----------|---------------------------------------|
| Audience | Location | Organizing group |
| Artists | Calgary | Calgary Arts Development Authority |
| Citizens | Calgary | Speak Business Communication |
| City of Calgary communications employees | Calgary | City of Calgary |

| | | |
|--|----------------|--|
| Community leaders | Calgary | Next Up (Climate Leadership Program) |
| Community leaders | Grande Prairie | Iron & Earth |
| Energy service providers | Calgary | Energy Efficiency Alberta |
| Energy leaders | Calgary | Suncor Energy |
| Environmentalists | Lethbridge | Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE) |
| Environmentalists | Calgary | Green Calgary Association |
| Environmental Health & Safety specialists | Calgary | ENMAX Corporation |
| Faith leaders/congregants | Calgary | Roman Catholic Diocese – Calgary |
| Faith leaders/congregants | Sylvan Lake | Solas Energy Consulting Inc. |
| Faith leaders/congregants (youth) | Edmonton | Zion Baptist Church |
| Families with kids 8-12 years | Calgary | TELUS Spark |
| Health care workers and professionals | Calgary | Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) |
| New Canadians | Calgary | Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Southern Alberta |
| Oil & gas workers | Calgary | Young Women in Energy |
| Renewable energy professionals | Calgary | Pembina Institute |
| Rural Albertans | Devon | Walk The Talks |
| Teachers | Calgary | Alberta Council for Environmental Education |
| Teachers | Calgary | Calgary Board of Education |
| Watershed protection groups | Edmonton | Government of Alberta, Environment and Parks |
| Women | Calgary | Calgary Women's Centre |
| Young environmentalists | Edmonton | Climate Justice Edmonton |
| Youth (k-12, post-secondary) | Calgary | Alberta Council for Environmental Education |
| Youth (k-12, post-secondary) | Calgary | Calgary Board of Education |
| Youth (k-12, post-secondary) | Calgary | ENMAX Corporation |
| Youth (k-12, post-secondary) | Calgary | TELUS Spark |

Appendix 4: What we asked - the test narratives

We tested detailed narratives across all of the groups in order to compare their performance with different audiences. Each narrative explored a different framing and was presented in the form of an article or speech.

The test narratives were prepared in four stages:

1. Draft narratives

Climate Outreach constructed draft narratives from multiple sources including campaign materials, articles in the media, high-profile political speeches, and previous research by Climate Outreach.

They included approaches and sometimes specific text that had been developed from three major Albertan sources:

- Albertan Climate Dialogues: a four-year participatory process of social research and facilitated citizen deliberation, with 23 government, academic and civil society partners.⁶¹
- Energy Futures Lab: multiple stakeholder collaboration to identify Albertan transition pathways⁶²
- Focus groups on climate change strategy held in Edmonton and Calgary in 2016.⁶³

2. Partner Review

Participants attending the first training voted on the draft narratives and added any additional language that they wished to test. The advisory group provided additional feedback on the selected narratives. We then compiled the feedback and re-wrote the selected narratives blocks of text based around distinct values and themes.

3. Testing

In the Narrative Workshops, participants received printouts of the narratives and were asked to mark the words or sentences they most liked in **green** and the ones they least liked in **red**, leaving the text they neither liked nor disliked unmarked. They also made any comments they wished in the margins. The facilitator, scanning the marked copies, then led a discussion about why people liked or disliked specific narratives and drew out general conclusions from the group.

4. Analysis

The marking method allowed us to identify the general themes that were most and least acceptable, and test specific sentences or words within each narrative. The analysis was in three stages. First, the facilitators reported the line-by-line preferences of their Workshop in an online questionnaire following a standard scoring rubric. Secondly, they reported on the findings at the second training session. Thirdly, we laid out all of the sheets alongside each other and cross-compared the findings.

We were looking for four categories of response:

- Language that was consistently approved (marked green) across all groups,
- Language that was consistently rejected (marked red) across all groups,
- Language that provoked a divided response (both red and green) within and across groups,
- Language that created little response (left unmarked).

Personal responses are always complex and it's rare for everyone to agree. Some individuals were innately oriented towards a more positive viewpoint, while some held a more negative position across all narratives. We therefore looked at the overall picture: language that was marked the same by the majority of people.

The Test Narratives

NARRATIVE 1

Commentary: Narrative 1 presents climate change as an ethical issue within overarching values of caring for one another and standing together through extreme weather events. It talks about a strong connection with nature and land, especially that found in the cultures of indigenous peoples.

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

Recent disasters have been worse than anything we've experienced before, the 2013 Calgary Flood, the wildfires in Fort McMurray and Southern Alberta, the recent droughts, have cost Albertans more than \$5 billion in the past five 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 plan now. Some may see climate change as a political, economic, or scientific issue, but we recognize it, first and foremost, as an ethical issue. Our basic sense of right and wrong guides us to protect people and our shared home. Humans may or may not be the sole cause of changes to our climate, but we can certainly be the solution.

It is our most vulnerable people – children, elderly, sick and disabled – who suffer the worst health impacts of these increased temperatures and extreme weather. Our poor and disadvantaged are the least able to cope. We must make sure that they are not left behind.

Indigenous peoples are on the front lines of both climate impacts and climate solutions. Climate change has wide-ranging impacts on Indigenous territories, rights and way of life. Everyone can learn from traditional knowledge, it helps us to understand how nature is changing and provides deep insights into how to live sustainably and in relationship with this land.

Alberta has always had harsh weather – you must be tough to live here! We will face this challenge the way we have faced other challenges: head-on, united and successfully. When we have disasters we know how to pull together and help each other out. In facing climate change, our biggest opportunity may be to return to the custom of neighbours taking care of neighbours and building a strong community.

NARRATIVE 2

Commentary: Narrative 2 is grounded in provincial pride and takes a defensive stance against critics. It incorporates the Alberta First narrative for a self-determined climate policy. It anticipates that people may feel that they are increasingly divided and want ways to come closer together.

In Alberta, our environmental record is criticized from all sides – from environmentalists, other provinces to Hollywood celebrities!

This is unfair: we have one of the best-regulated energy industries in the world. Why should we be judged by the people who happily use our oil and share in our revenue? Albertans want to be recognized for the positive steps we have made to reduce our energy waste, pollution and greenhouse gases. We are not interested in window dressing, or a public relations campaign – we want real and effective measures to reduce emissions.

Oil is a precious and valuable resource that needs to be used with care and respect. Unlike Norway, which invested its oil wealth, we have given ours away for too little. It makes sense to plan for the future and use it more prudently. This is why we need to stand up for ourselves, take control, and plan our own energy and climate change futures – drawing on the resourcefulness of Albertans, and the skills of our own engineers – not resigning to policy imposed on us by Ottawa.

In Alberta too many things divide us; action on climate change can bring us together. We cannot rely on others to solve our problems. It's our province and our future.

NARRATIVE 3

Commentary: Like Narrative 2, Narrative 3 is grounded in collective pride, but is less bellicose and defensive. It is forward-looking, presenting a transition to new energy sources as a continuation of provincial strengths in the energy industry.

Alberta is an energy economy and we are proud of all the people who have done the hard work – often dirty and dangerous work – that has built the prosperity of our province and nation.

But we have become too dependent on one source of energy, and now we are all tied to the boom and bust rollercoaster of international oil prices. Our products and pipelines are vulnerable to policies set in other provinces and countries. This generates economic and job insecurity. More than 100,000 workers have lost their jobs in the past three years.

We are also rich in the resources – including sun, wind and hydro – that power new forms of renewable energy. We can spread our investment and create a balance in our energy economy. Renewable energy can provide steady growth, reliable employment, new business opportunities and attract investment. This is not about being “green” or “eco” or “politically correct” – it is simply good common sense.

Alberta has always been a “get ‘er done!” kind of place. It will be our practical, industrious, entrepreneurial people that will lead Canada’s energy evolution. The skills of workers from the oil, gas and coal sectors are transferable to the growing renewable energy sector. And we owe it to them to make sure that their livelihoods are secured during this transition.

We need to be realistic. These changes will not be easy. Renewable power will not make as much money as oil made in the boom years. But as all the countries in the world commit to climate plans and shift to renewable energy there is no certainty that the boom will ever return.

Alberta stands at the crossroads and can make a choice. We can fight these changes, be dragged along behind other countries, and finally be left behind. Or we can make our own choices, reinvent ourselves, and reclaim our lead.

NARRATIVE 4

Commentary: Narrative 4 presents an intergenerational vision of concern for children, young people and continuity. It frames this within intrinsic values of fairness and moderation.

Alberta is a great place to make a home and raise a family, which is why people come here from around the world. Our quality of life is among the best in the world and we want to keep it that way for our children and generations to come.

Sure we want good opportunities, but that doesn't mean just money. We want strong communities for the long-term where we can live our best lives. Even if this means living more simply and within our means.

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

Things are changing. What was good for the older generations is not going to be good enough for young people. The oil and gas industry will eventually decline and will be unable to provide the long-term secure jobs that our young people need and deserve. Young people are becoming much less willing to work in the oil and gas sector. They want more choice and opportunities and rewarding jobs they can identify with.

They are tired of waiting, they want action now. If we don't make new choices, they could be left behind. Or they could leave Alberta behind.

NARRATIVE 5

Commentary: Narrative 5 presents a more skeptical voice that is openly critical of environmentalism. It does not deny climate change but defends the continuing relevance of an Albertan oil and gas industry.

Not everyone agrees with Canada moving forward on energy development. Some environmental extremists would rather see the oil sands shut down. They take a very narrow view that is not grounded in reality.

Regardless of where you land on the "climate change debate," the reality is that millions of Canadians will still wake up tomorrow and fill up their cars with gasoline. Oil and gas is not the issue, it's how, and how much, we currently use.

The world will continue to need fossil fuels in the decades to come – and Alberta can be the producer of choice. Our engineers can pioneer the future of hydrocarbon energy – from innovations that produce the cleanest oil and gas to finding new uses for oil beyond just burning it.

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.

Appendix 5: Other relevant communications research

Canada is exceptionally well endowed with communications specialists and high-quality research on climate change and energy communications. The ANP aims to augment and deepen this previous research, whenever possible including it in our analysis and test narratives. The following projects and reports are important precedents and had a major influence on the ANP. Other relevant research is referenced throughout this report.

Generation Energy

In 2017 the Government of Canada conducted a very extensive public dialogue across Canada on the future of energy. This involved 60 engagement sessions, 100 reports, and nearly 1000 online comments. The consultation was primarily concerned with energy policy and did not explore climate change in detail. The key findings reinforced many of those in the ANP, including calls for leadership and increased collaboration: “Canadians were unanimous in stressing the importance of collaboration between all Canadians, including governments, Indigenous communities, industry and civil society.”⁶⁴

Albertan Climate Dialogues (ABCD)

The ABCD was a major research initiative, involving specialists from 15 universities, that ran multiple consultations in Alberta around climate change and energy between 2007 and 2014.⁶⁵ Although ABCD was mainly concerned with designing methods for citizens to contribute to the policy process it generated useful insights for this project. For example, it recognized that many people in Alberta did not yet accept anthropogenic climate change and recommended that communications should reflect “the diversity of reasons for pursuing a low carbon future, such as the mitigation of climate and energy risks and the improvement of quality of life and health.”⁶⁶

Energy Futures Lab⁶⁷

The EFL is a project of The Natural Step to generate new leadership and public engagement around energy in Alberta. It has shown a strong interest in developing new energy narratives and its 2017 Leadership Bootcamp generated five narratives which we incorporated into the ANP’s testing:

- **“Future Fit” Hydrocarbons** – Securing a role for Alberta’s hydrocarbon resources in the global transition to a low-carbon future needs to be a key driver for our innovation agenda.
- **Leveraging our Energy Assets** – Alberta’s energy assets and infrastructure can be a source of opportunity for the transition.
- **People/Jobs in Transition** – Alberta’s human capital can be a major strength for the transition (if we support the transfer and development of new skills in Alberta’s labour force to help workers thrive in a low-carbon economy.)
- **Community Resilience** – Energy transition presents opportunities to enhance the long-term resilience of Alberta communities. (It will take new approaches to economic development, community planning, and mobility.)
- **Indigenous Leadership** – Energy transition presents new opportunities for trust and reconciliation between Alberta’s Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples.

Environics Research Climate Change Focus Groups

In 2016 the evidence-based consultancy Environics Research conducted focus groups on climate change with citizens in Calgary.⁶⁸ Participants were placed within four categories defined by their commitment to action on climate change (active allies, passive allies, passive opponents, active opponents). Seven messages were tested in the focus groups⁶⁹ from which the ANP integrated the four most successful in the test narratives.

- **It's time to lead (the most popular narrative overall across all groups, though most popular with allies)**

Calgary has always been a yes-we-can kind of place. We've led our country's growth for decades. Today, the next big thing is efficiency and clean energy. We are an energy city and we can lead.

- **Our City – Our Future (less favoured with an equal spread across all groups)**

We cannot wait for others to solve our problems. Smart cities face challenges head-on and turned them into opportunities, and a changing climate is no exception.

- **Calgary: a home worth protecting (more successful with opponents)**

Calgarians know that our city is a great place to make a home. Our quality of life is among the best in the world. Unspoiled wilderness, wildlife and nature are right in our backyard. Our air and water are clean. But many of the things we love and depend on are vulnerable to rising temperatures and increasingly extreme weather. A climate resilient future is within our grasp, if we act now and reduce carbon pollution, prepare for change and build capacity.

- **For Our Children (the most popular narrative with opponents)**

We want the best for our children. Calgarians want the kind of community where they can raise their families and have a good quality of life for generations to come. If we take action now, we can be proud of what we have created for the generations to come.

AB Message Testing: Clean Energy in Alberta, Bernard Rudny, Strategy and Communications Consulting

In 2017, communications consultant Bernard Rudny tested a range of messages on energy, promoted as news articles on Facebook. His research measured the responses to 100 different combinations of messages and audiences, gauging their effectiveness by the number of reads, shares and comments they received. The news item “Albertans see the transition away from fossil fuels as good for the Economy” was poorly received in his testing. One of the messages that prompted the most positive engagement titled “Young People Don't See Oil and Gas as a Good Career Choice” was subsequently tested in the ANP.⁷⁰

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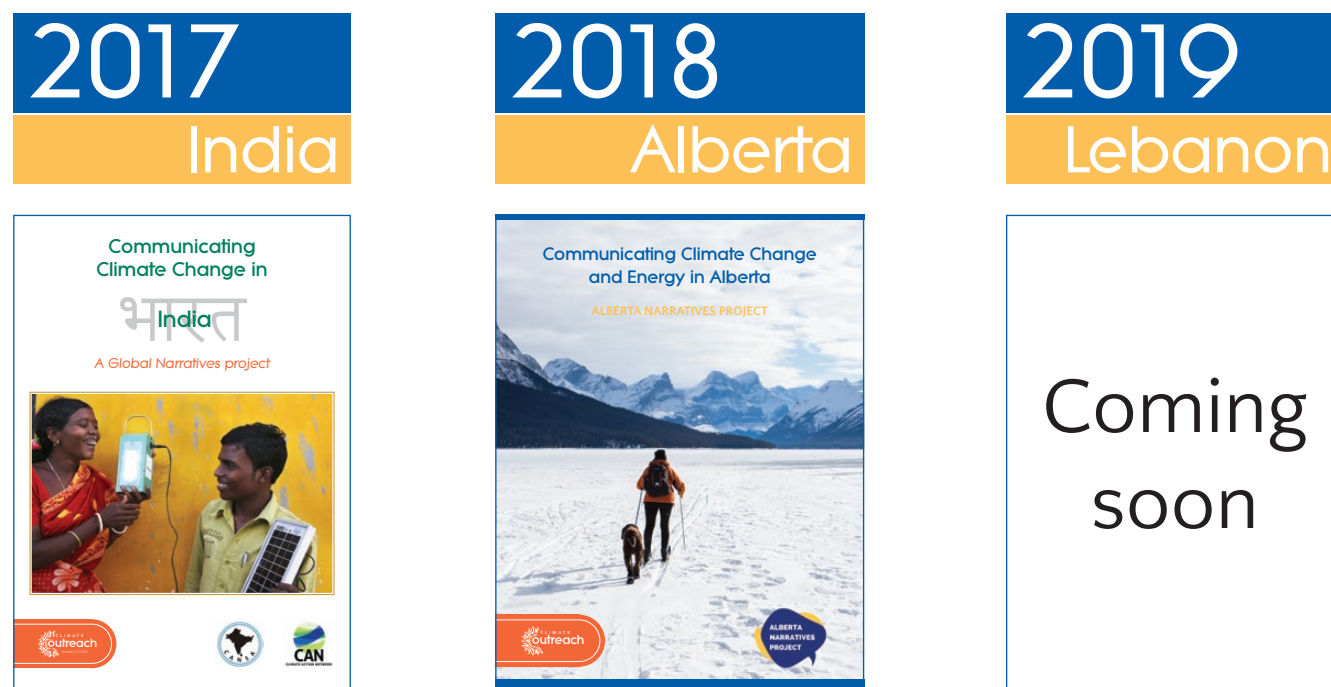
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The Alberta Narratives Project is a Canadian contribution to the Global Narratives Project. Through a process of partnership and co-design, the project works in different countries and regions, designing and testing the most effective language and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