

# Behavioural strategies to inspire climate action

Climate Communications Training Series  
Week 1

January 30, 2025



# Reconciliation is a fundamental component to building equitable, net-zero, and climate-resilient communities.

We respectfully acknowledge that ICLEI Canada's work happens across Turtle Island which has traditionally been and is home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples since time immemorial. We are committed to strengthening relationships with Indigenous groups and knowledge keepers, knowing that reconciliation requires ongoing learning, unlearning, reflection, and action. We endeavour to listen to and learn from Indigenous Peoples on an ongoing basis in the process of our work.



# RUN OF SHOW

## Part 1

- Run of show
- Introduction and **Activity 1**
- Climate Communications Then and Now and **Activity 2**

## Part 2

- Behavioural Strategies and Examples and **Activity 3**
- Review and **Activity 4**
- Wrap-up

✓ By the end of this session, you will be equipped with behavioural strategies that can be integrated into your climate communications.

# CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

## About the toolkit

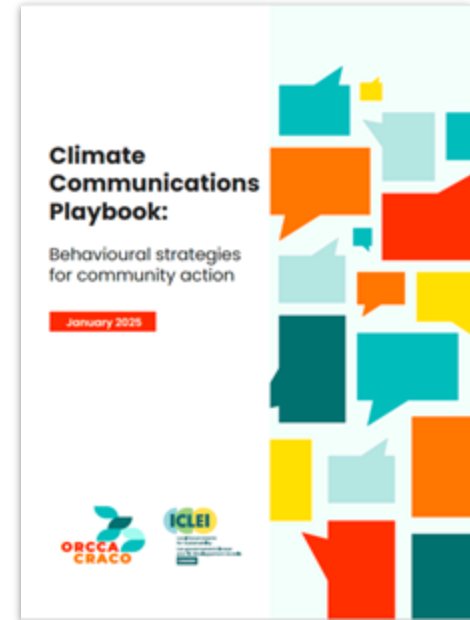
- It isn't enough for people to know about climate change—they need to be inspired and motivated to take action.
- The Climate Communications Toolkit is designed to help you use communications to support the implementation of climate action and build better, more resilient communities.



## CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

# Climate communications playbook

- The playbook introduces actionable approaches and strategies for creating action-oriented communication campaigns that incorporate behavioural science insights.
  - Part One: Provides an overview of communications then and now
  - Part Two: Outlines how to get started with action-oriented climate communications
  - Part Three: Describes how to apply behavioural science strategies in climate communications to inspire action



## CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

# Climate communications case stories

- 30 case stories have been compiled to complement the playbook.
  - Real-world examples of communications strategies
  - Practical applications of 13 different behavioural insights
  - Include everything from leveraging the broad appeal of hockey to working with landlords to protect tenants from heat-related climate risks



## CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

# Climate communications training series

- The strategies shared in the playbook are meant to support to real climate communications efforts.
- This training series is an opportunity to:
  - Dive into behavioural communications concepts, approaches, and strategies
  - Develop and/or sharpen your communication skills through activities
  - Take away actionable insights



# CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS TRAINING SERIES

## WEEK 1

- ✓ Reflect on the evolution of climate communications
- ✓ Review 13 different behavioural strategies that can be integrated into climate communications
- ✓ Take stock of your current climate communications and identify where behavioural strategies could be used to support your work



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ICLEI Canada





# Communications Then and Now

Ewa Jackson



Local Governments  
for Sustainability  
Les gouvernements locaux  
pour le développement durable  
CANADA

## COMMUNICATIONS THEN AND NOW

# Traditional climate communications

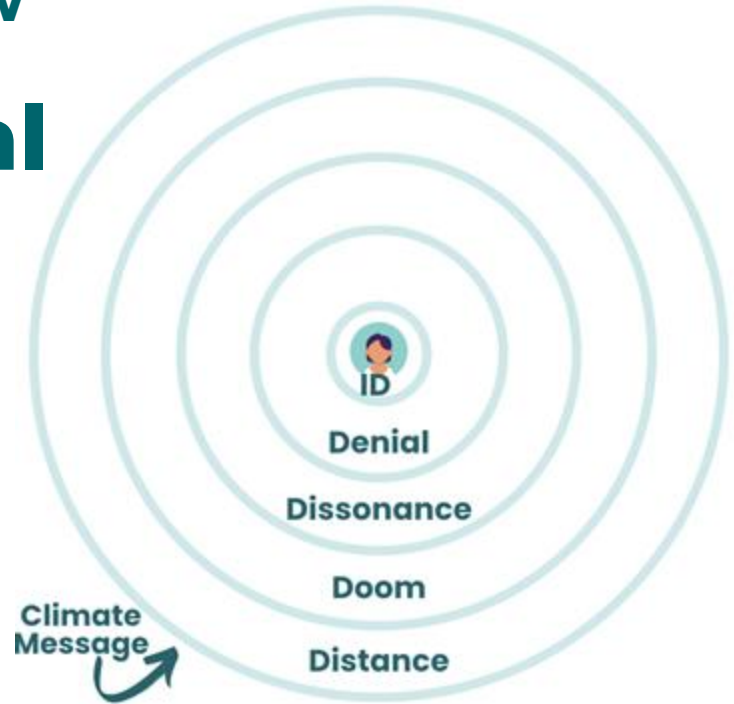
- Done through outreach and engagement
  - Public meetings
  - Online surveys
  - Coffee chats
- Focused on facts
  - Charts and graphs
  - Numbers and data
- Centred around convincing
  - General Public
  - Winning arguments
  - Targeting the “deniers”



## COMMUNICATIONS THEN AND NOW

# We are behavioural beings

- Logic and reason are a piece of the puzzle
- Complex series of barriers that a climate message must overcome

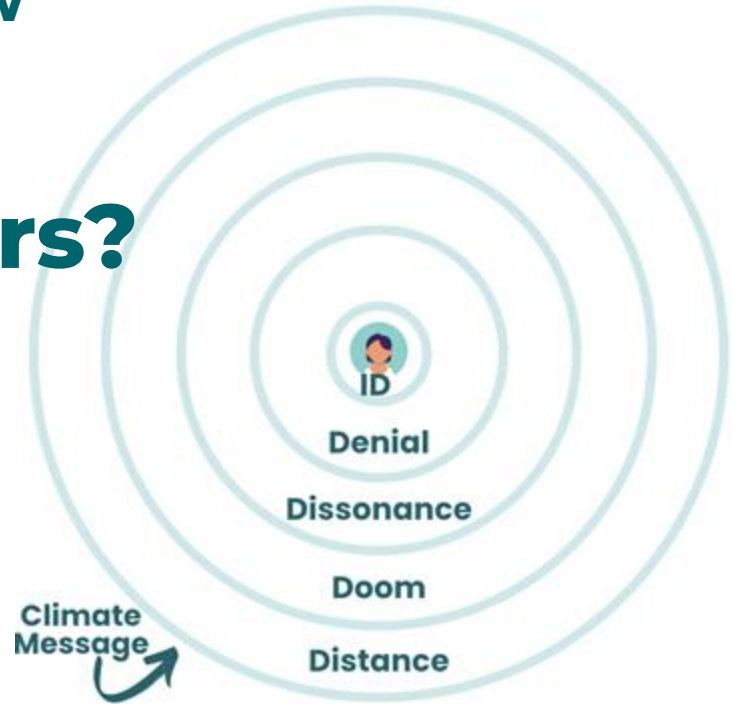


*Adapted: Per Espen Stoknes, 2015*

## COMMUNICATIONS THEN AND NOW

# How do we break through the barriers?

- Understand that feeling and perception is stronger than logic and reason
- Meet people where they are
- Step back and work with partners and messengers



*Adapted: Per Espen Stoknes, 2015*

## COMMUNICATIONS THEN AND NOW

# Trends in climate communications

- Moving towards dialogue and listening
- Employing frames that are positive
- Story-based signals that create meaning
- Engaging with people who are movable



**PART 2**

# **Behavioural strategies and examples**

Starts at 2:00 pm ET



# Behavioural Strategies and Examples

Curniss McGoldrick  
Haley Anderson



## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES

# 13 Behavioural strategies

- **Accessibility**
- Behavioural Contracts & Goal Setting
- Carrots & Sticks
- Cognitive Dissonance
- Feedback
- Gamification
- **Intrinsic Value Framing**
- **Personalization**
- **Positive Framing**
- **Social Influence**
- **Social Norms & Prompts**
- Timing & Tipping Point
- **Visual Storytelling**



## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES



# Accessibility

Meet people where they are physically, digitally, and in terms of language and cultural references you use.

How to use this strategy in your climate communications:

- Develop communications for specific **audiences** (not “General Public”)
- Research where your audience **already spends time**
- Identify your audience’s preferences, worldviews, values, identities, and priorities and develop **messaging** that will resonate with them
- Identify potential **barriers** (e.g., language, transportation, childcare, cultural values, community identity) and ways to remove these
- Partner with **trusted messengers and allies**

## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES

# Example of Accessibility



*The City of Hamilton engages landlords as key partners in protecting tenants from heat-related climate risks.*

- Information is made accessible to landlords on a dedicated website.
- Landlords use the free poster templates to produce posters and post them within apartment buildings so that residents can easily access the information.

## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES



# Accessibility



Combine it with other behavioural strategies:

- Timing & Tipping Point
- Visual Storytelling

Use it to overcome common climate communications barriers:

- Climate change as a distant issue

## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES

# Positive Framing

Highlight the positive outcomes and benefits of taking action.

How to use this strategy in your climate communications:

- Focus on the beneficial outcomes of climate action, such as health improvements, financial savings, and the creation of a better community in your **messaging**
- Use your communications to evoke **positive emotions** (move beyond facts and information)
- Positive framing is an effective way to inspire **concerned but disengaged** to take action and address other common barriers
- It is also a great way to **bolster public support** and influence **social norms**

## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES

# Example of Positive Framing



*The Small Acts of Conservation campaign is a nationwide effort that encourages Canadians to take small practical steps to protect wildlife and their habitats.*

- The campaign focuses on small, achievable steps that have a real, positive impact, making participation feel rewarding and attainable.

## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES

# Positive Framing



Combine it with other behavioural strategies:

- Behavioural Contracts and Goal Setting
- Intrinsic value framing

Use it to overcome common climate communications barriers:

- Concerned but disengaged audience (doom and gloom)
- Climate misinformation

## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES



# Personalization

Tailor your climate communications to reflect the characteristics (e.g., geographic location, age, occupation, etc.) and past behaviours of your audience.

How to use this strategy in your climate communications:

- Develop communications for specific **audiences** (not “General Public”) and tailor **messaging** by making it relevant, timely, personal, and actionable
- Understand the characteristics and demographics of your audience and build **context-specific** climate communications

## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES

# Example of Personalization



*The City of Mississauga, with the Credit Valley Conservation Greening Corporate Grounds initiative, helps businesses and institutions reduce stormwater charges and save money.*

- Businesses can consult a stormwater manager to receive tailored recommendations and apply for a landscape assessment designed specifically for their properties.



## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES



# Personalization



Combine it with other behavioural strategies:

- Carrots & Sticks
- Feedback
- Intrinsic Value Framing
- Positive Framing

Use it to overcome common climate communications barriers:

- Climate misinformation

## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES



# Visual Storytelling

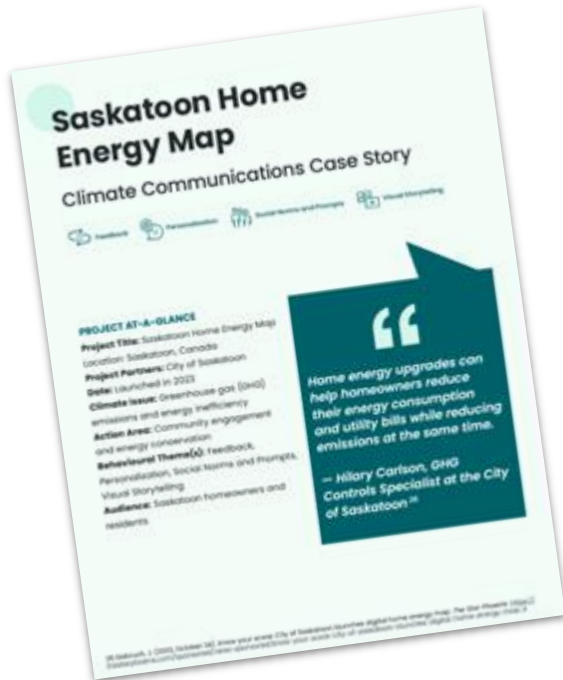
Leverage images, videos, infographics, and other interactive media to convey complex climate information and stories in an engaging and accessible manner.

How to use this strategy in your climate communications:

- Make the invisible visible and the intangible tangible by creating visuals
- Use your communications to evoke **emotions** (move beyond facts and information)
- Communicates **messages** more quickly and memorably than text alone

## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES

# Example of Visual Storytelling



*The City of Saskatoon introduced a free online tool that allows residents to check their homes' digital energy score and identify potential energy-saving upgrades.*

- Tools like colour-coded maps, infographics, and demo videos present complex energy data in a clear, engaging way, making it easier to understand and act on the information.

## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES



# Visual Storytelling



Combine it with other behavioural strategies:

- Accessibility
- Feedback
- Social Norms & Prompts

Use it to overcome common climate communications barriers:

- Concerned but disengaged audience
- Climate change as a distant issue

## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES



# Social Norms & Prompts

Refer to social norms and/or use social prompts to encourage people to adjust their actions to align with those of their peers.

How to use this strategy in your climate communications:

- Identify the social norms within your **audience** and find ways to connect these to climate action
- Highlight certain **behaviours** as both common and expected
- Use **testimonials** and **real-world examples** from within your community
- Reinforce climate action as a community-wide **identity**
- Combine social norms with **positive emotions** and a sense of shared responsibility

## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES

# Example of Social Norms & Prompts



*Canadian social media influencers and content creators are leveraging popular culture and current events to foster climate awareness and inspire action.*

- By weaving climate messaging into popular, widely discussed content, creators normalize climate awareness and responsibility, prompting followers to change their behaviours and take action.

## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES



# Social Norms & Prompts



Combine it with other behavioural strategies:

- Cognitive Dissonance
- Social Influence

Use it to overcome common climate communications barriers:

- Climate change as a distant issue
- Climate misinformation

## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES



# Intrinsic Value Framing

Align climate actions with deeply held values for greater engagement.

How to use this strategy in your climate communications:

- Develop communications for specific **audiences** (not “General Public”)
- Align climate **messaging** with deeply held **personal values**, such as community well-being, family safety, and environmental stewardship
- Use your communications to evoke **positive emotions**



## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES



# Social Influence

Work with respected and admired figures like community leaders, influencers, celebrities, or experts to motivate others by example.

How to use this strategy in your climate communications:

- Work with people in positions of **power and influence** – like community leaders, influencers, celebrities, experts or well-respected community members
- Work with **trusted messengers** to develop and deliver messages
- People will emulate the behaviours and practices of those they admire or respect which in turn sets **social norms**

## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES

# Example of Intrinsic Value Framing & Social Influence



*Leveraging the broad appeal of hockey, NHL Green amplifies climate change awareness, encouraging fans and the broader public to change their behaviour.*

- By aligning climate messaging with this hockey, this initiative speaks to the personal identity and values of many Canadians.
- Involving high-profile players mobilizes fans while engaging a broader audience.

## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES



# Intrinsic Value Framing



Combine it with other behavioural strategies:

- Social Influence
- Timing & Tipping Point

Use it to overcome common climate communications barriers:

- Concerned but disengaged audience
- Climate change as a distant issue
- Climate misinformation

## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES



# Social Influence



Combine it with other behavioural strategies:

- Accessibility
- Intrinsic Value Framing

Use it to overcome common climate communications barriers:

- Concerned but disengaged audience
- Climate misinformation

## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES

# Explore 30 case stories!

- #BackyardBiodiversity: Enhancing Urban Canopy Cover
- Big Oil Satirical Video Series
- BroomBusting Parties
- Building Resilient Neighbourhoods: Connect & Prepare
- Building Strong Neighbourhoods through Community Events
- Changing for Climate Video Series
- Climate Science Translated Video Series
- Climate Stories, North Carolina
- Depave Paradise
- Educational Resources on Flooding in Canada
- Emergency Preparedness for Older Adults
- Extreme Weather Can Hit Quickly Video
- From Here to There Podcast
- Get Ready Game
- **Green Corporate Grounds**
- Harlem Heat Project
- **How Content Creators Talk About Climate Change**
- **Landlords as Communications Partners: Extreme Heat Alerts**
- Love Your Lake
- Metis Nation of Ontario Fish Monitoring Surveys
- Neighbourhood Heat Wave Response
- Persistent Communication to Homeowners
- Pledge to Stop Invasive Species
- **Protecting Hockey While the Climate Changes**
- **Saskatoon Home Energy Map**
- **Small Acts of Conservation**
- Solastalgia: Eco-Anxiety Digital Zine
- Stories from the Field
- The Art of Change
- Whitby: ISeeChange

## CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

# Climate communications training series

- Week 2: The art of messaging and storytelling (FULL) on Thursday, February 6 from 1:30 to 3:00 pm EST
- Week 3: Optimize your communications for better results (FULL) on Thursday, February 13 from 1:30 to 3:00 pm EST
- Recordings will be made available
  - Keep an eye on your inbox
  - Sign-up to ICLEI's email list and/or follow us on LinkedIn



# Thank you!



Visit [icleicanada.org](https://icleicanada.org) to learn more and access the full Climate Communications Toolkit.



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