

The Art of Messaging and Storytelling

Climate Communications Training Series
Week 2

February 6, 2025



**As we wait for people to join,
let us know in the chat...**

What is your name and organization?



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

The Art of Messaging and Storytelling

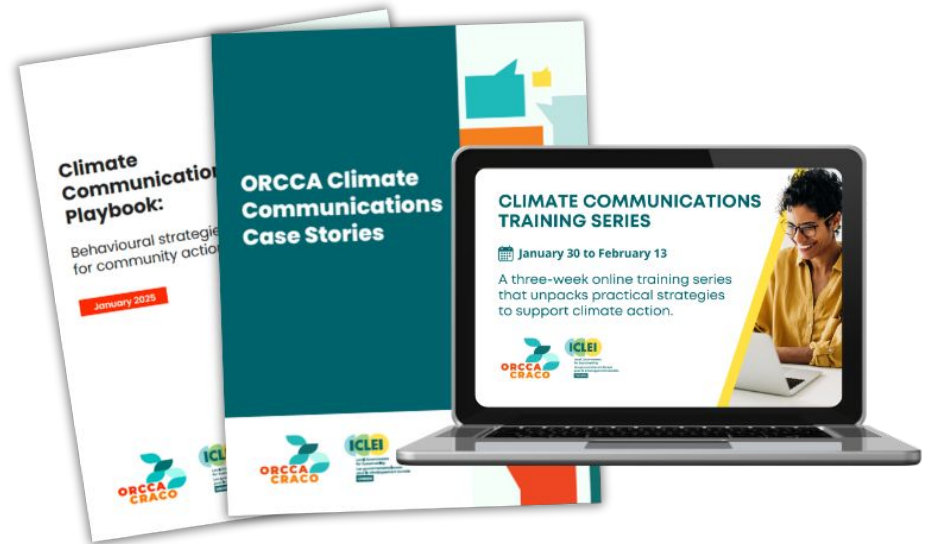
- Introduction and **Activity 1**
- Audiences “have feelings” and **Activity 2**
- The power of storytelling
- Develop your messaging and **Activity 3**
- Discussion and wrap up

🗒️ Develop messaging that will resonate with your audience on an emotional level and motivate them to take action.

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 TRAINING SERIES

WEEK 2

- ✓ Define your audience so you can align your messaging with their priorities, worldviews, and values
- ✓ Explore how storytelling can be used to make climate messaging resonate on a personal level
- ✓ Practice using storytelling and other behavioural strategies to develop compelling messaging



Curniss McGoldrick
Communications
Manager, ICLEI Canada



Ian Mauro
Executive Director,
Pacific Institute for
Climate Solutions,
Professor of
Environmental Studies,
University of Victoria

ACTIVITY 1 — CLIMATE ACTION TREE

On page one of your **Activity Sheet**, fill in your climate action tree.



- **Trunk:** Broad strategic goal
 - *E.g., Reduce basement flooding*
- **Branch:** An action that has a very specific outcome
 - *E.g., Increase uptake in backflow valve subsidy program*
- **Leaf:** An outcome that will be achieved by engaging a certain audience through climate communications
 - *E.g., Increase uptake in backflow valve subsidy program in the Hillside neighbourhood*

✓ Identify a climate action to work with in today's session.

Let us know in the chat...

What is the climate action “leaf” you would like to develop messaging for today?





Audiences “Have Feelings”

AUDIENCES “HAVE FEELINGS”

Climate emotions

- Climate communications generate feelings and emotions
- These emotions play a central role in how people respond to messaging and whether someone will take action or not



Climate Emotions Wheel



Climate Emotions Wheel © 2024

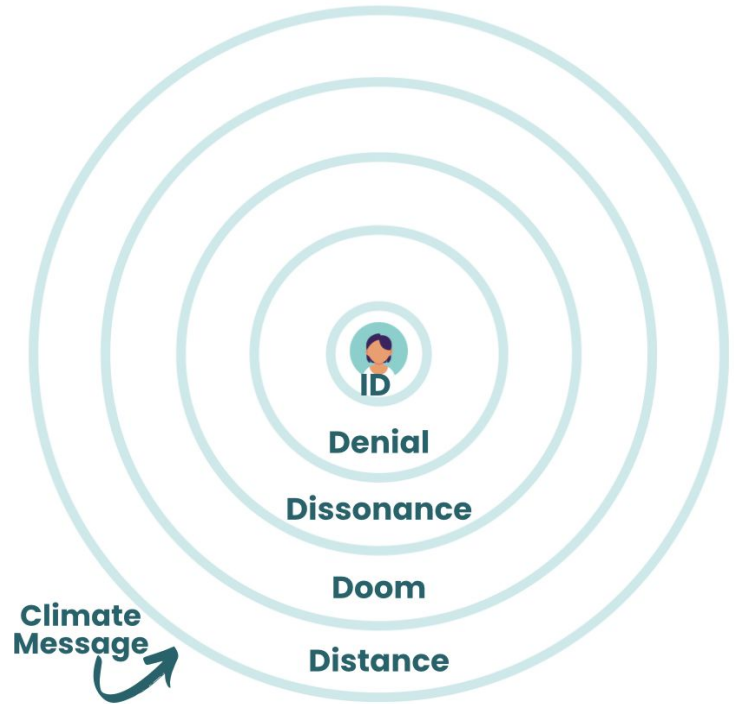


ClimateMentalHealth.Net

AUDIENCES “HAVE FEELINGS”

How do we break through the barriers?

- Feelings and perception are stronger than logic and reason
- There are a complex series of barriers that a climate message must overcome
- Climate messaging also has to be accessible and inclusive



Adapted: Per Espen Stoknes, 2015

AUDIENCES “HAVE FEELINGS”

Different messages for different audiences

Examples of different audiences that typically require different messaging:



Elected officials



Municipal staff



Community residents



Businesses and industry



Academic institutions



Community groups & NGOs

AUDIENCES “HAVE FEELINGS”

What ties your audience together?

- Age
- Education level
- Employment status
- Family and marital status
- Housing status
- Income
- Physical or mental health
- Religion/spiritual affiliation
- Indigenous identity
- Racialized group
- Ethnicity
- Place of origin/arrival in Canada
- First language
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity or expression
- Other

Is this the right audience for your climate action and outcome?

AUDIENCES “HAVE FEELINGS”

Worldviews



**Progressive
activists**

15%



**Civic
nationals**

21%



**Centrist
liberals**

20%



**Disengaged
middle**

30%



**Fossil fuel
conservatives**

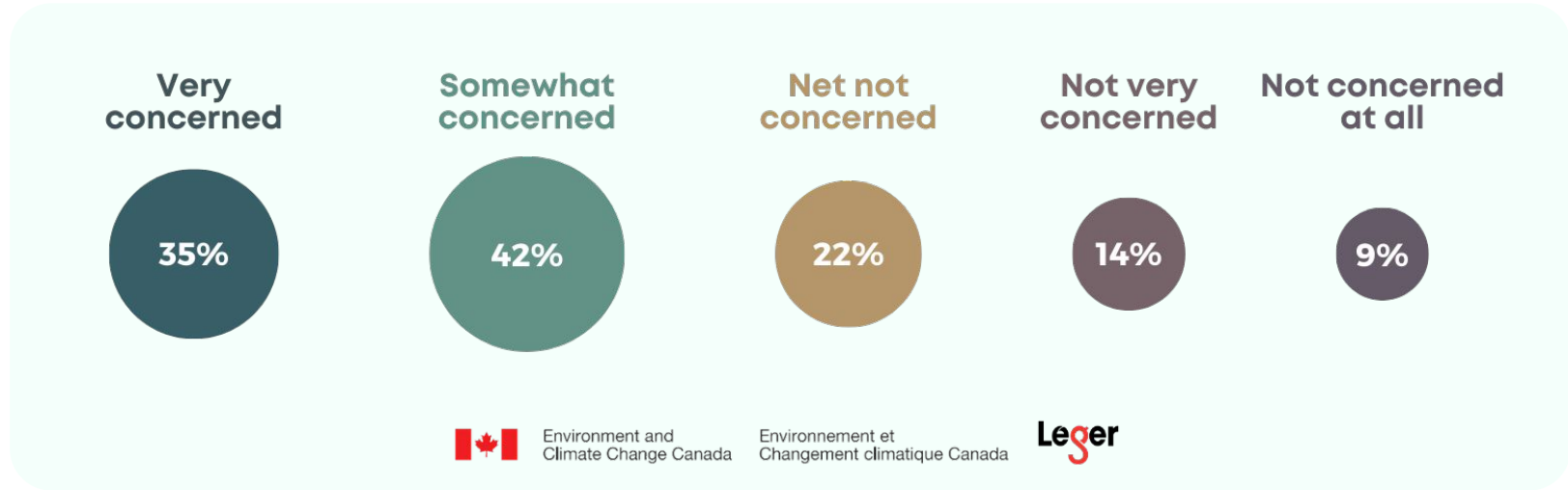
14%

Re.Climate © EcoAnalytics

Source: Lachapelle, E. & Comeau, L. (2024, October 15). Knowing Your Audience: Who Are the 5 Canadas? [Webinar]. Re.Climate. <https://reclimate.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Re.Climate-Webinar-1-The-Five-Canadas-Slides-Oct-2024.pdf>

AUDIENCES “HAVE FEELINGS”

Level of climate concern



Source: Leger Marketing Inc. (2024). Public Opinion Research on the National Adaptation Strategy: Final Report, March 2024. Environment and Climate Change Canada. publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2024/eccc/en4/En4-531-2024-eng.pdf

AUDIENCES “HAVE FEELINGS”

Other concerns and priorities

For example...

- Agriculture
- Biodiversity
- Civil liberties
- Costs of living
- Economy
- Energy (e.g., energy security, energy poverty)
- Environment (e.g., waste, plastics)
- Family
- Food and food security
- Future generations
- Health
- Housing
- Lifestyle and culture (e.g., recreation, tradition)
- Local issues (e.g., safety, road, taxes)
- National security
- Reconciliation
- Risks and costs of extreme events
- Social justice and equity
- Technology
- Other



ACTIVITY 2 — What defines your audience?

Define your audience on pages one and two of the **Activity Sheet**.

- Who is your audience?
- What characteristics tie your audience together? (Refer to your cheat sheet if needed.)
- What do people in your audience care about? Check all the boxes that apply.

- What sociodemographic characteristics are relevant to your climate action?
- If you have a hard time defining your audience, it might be too broad. Do you need to get more specific?
- You can repeat this exercise for other audiences!

🕒 Define your audience so you can align your messaging with their priorities, worldviews, and values.



Develop Your Messaging

DEVELOP YOUR MESSAGING

Action and outcome specific

- **Trunk:** Broad strategic goal
 - *E.g., Reduce basement flooding*
- **Branch:** An action that has a very specific outcome
 - *E.g., Increase uptake in backflow valve subsidy program*
- **Leaf:** An outcome that will be achieved by engaging a certain audience through climate communications
 - *E.g., Increase uptake in backflow valve subsidy program in the Hillside neighbourhood*



DEVELOP YOUR MESSAGING

Audience specific

Develop messaging based on your audience—their level of concern, priorities, values, and identities.

Examples of different audiences that typically require different messaging:



Elected officials



Municipal staff



Community residents



Businesses and industry



Academic institutions



Community groups & NGOs

DEVELOP YOUR MESSAGING

Frame your messaging

Frame your messaging based on your audience's priorities and concerns.

- Agriculture
- Biodiversity
- Civil liberties
- Costs of living
- Economy
- Energy (e.g., energy security, energy poverty)
- Environment (e.g., waste, plastics)
- Family
- Food and food security
- Future generations
- Health
- Housing
- Lifestyle and culture (e.g., recreation, tradition)
- Local issues (e.g., safety, road, taxes)
- National security
- Reconciliation
- Risks and costs of extreme events
- Social justice and equity
- Technology
- Other

DEVELOP YOUR MESSAGING

Use storytelling

Use storytelling to humanize your communications, evoke an emotional response, and inspire action.

Examples of different types of storytelling:



Personal stories



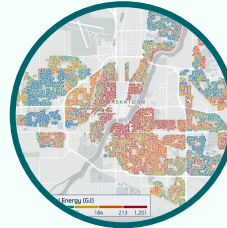
Local success stories



Future vision stories



Visual narratives



Data-driven narratives



Cultural narratives

DEVELOP YOUR MESSAGING

Behavioural strategies to consider

- 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

ACTIVITY 3 — DEVELOP YOUR MESSAGING

In breakout rooms, work through pages three and four of the **Activity Sheet**.

- Choose one action and one audience to work with
- Think of ways to use frames, stories, and/or behavioural strategies that will resonate with your audience for your chosen action
- Brainstorm messaging
- Finalize one or two messages

- Work with a single action and audience at a time (beware of action and audience creep)
- Keep your messages simple
- Ask yourself: “Is this something I would say to someone in my audience?”
- Get creative and have fun!

🔗 Practice using frames, storytelling, and other behavioural strategies to develop compelling messaging.

ACTIVITY 3 — EXAMPLE

Frames, stories, and behavioural strategies

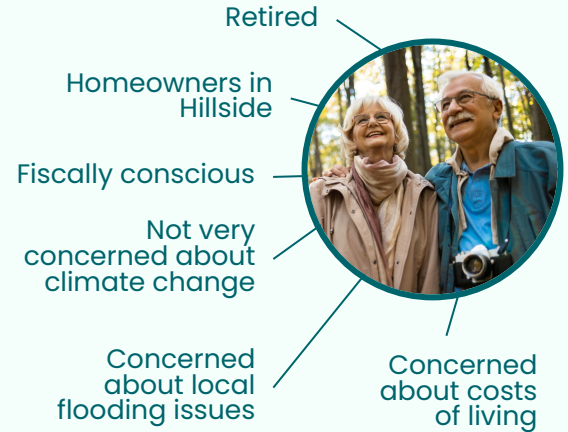
Action: Increase uptake in backflow valve subsidy program in the Hillside neighbourhood

Audience: Hillside neighbourhood homeowners

Frames: Protect your home, protect your investment, save money, be prepared for flooding

Stories: Personal stories from other homeowners with similar worldviews and values

Behavioural strategies: Carrots & Stick (save money), Intrinsic Value Framing and Cognitive Dissonance (flood protection is a smart investment), Positive Framing (protect your home), Social Norms & Prompts (others are doing it), Timing & Tipping Point (flood season is coming)

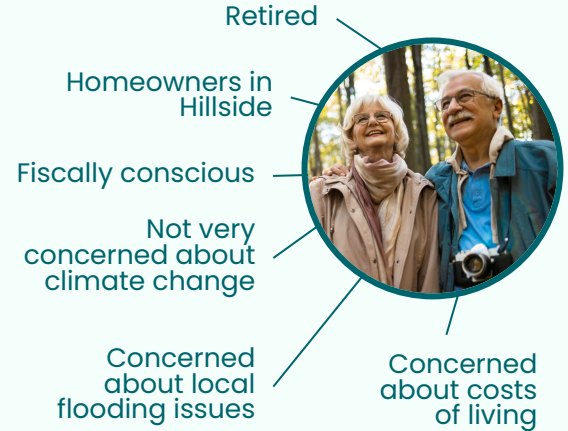


ACTIVITY 3 — EXAMPLE

Brainstorm messaging

Action: Increase uptake in backflow valve subsidy program in the Hillside neighbourhood

Audience: Hillside neighbourhood homeowners



- Are you prepared for flooding season?
- Do you want to protect your home from flooding?
- Backflow valves can protect your home from flooding.
- Get money to protect your home.
- You can get money back when you install a backflow valve.
- Backflow valves are a smart investment for your home.
- Install a backflow valve in your home.
- Learn more about backflow valves.

ACTIVITY 3 — EXAMPLE

Refine a few messages



- Why are people installing backflow valves in their homes? Learn how they prevent flooding and how you can get money back when you install one.
- Backflow valves are a smart investment if you want to protect your home from flooding. Learn more.
- Take the first step toward protecting your home from flooding. Apply to our backflow valve subsidy program.
- Flooding season is coming. Don't wait to protect your home—install a backflow valve.
- Cassey's basement stayed dry this spring thanks to their backflow valve. Learn how you can protect your basement too.
- Cassey protected their basement from flooding and saved money with our rebate program. You can too. Learn how!

Let us know in the chat...

What was a unique/fun/different message you heard today that stuck with you?



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 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
- The full Climate Communications Toolkit is available online



2025 Livable Cities Forum: Acting on Climate Together

October 6-8, 2025 | Halifax, NS

SAVE THE DATE

HALIFAX



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



Thank you!



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

Follow us at [/ICLEI-Canada](#) and [/orcca-craco](#) on LinkedIn



Email us at iclei-canada@iclei.org



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