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Social Mobilization for Climate Solutions
Post-Workshop Summary Report: March 11-12, 2010
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This workshop addressed Social Mobilization: one of four major research themes identified by PICS. The scope of the workshop included outreach, engagement, and motivation of the public and multiple stakeholders, where climate solutions need to be implemented through social learning, behaviour change, social movements, community-led action, and policy change. The workshop goals were to launch the Social Mobilization theme, discuss research objectives and methods with leading researchers, practitioners, and stakeholders, and develop defined research priorities and strategies for public engagement.

This was a solutions-oriented workshop focused on how British Columbia can move social mobilization forward to achieve climate action. This document is a brief summary report of the workshop that summarizes the: (i) BC context for social mobilization, (ii) research priorities and recommendations for PICS, (iii) successful social mobilization actions and precedents, and (iv) critical issues in social mobilization. It is accompanied by a literature scan addressing the psychology of behaviour change, social movements, social learning, place-based approaches to social mobilisation, and digital media.

Social mobilization is an important PICS theme, and central to any response to climate change. Overall, the purpose of social mobilization in British Columbia is to:

1. Engage British Columbians in developing and implementing climate change solutions through collective, 'bottom-up', informal, organizational and institutional initiatives.

2. Change collective behaviour to reduce carbon footprints.

3. Build public support for (and contributions to) low-carbon climate change policies and actions focused on the green economy, ecological resilience and sustainable communities, in order to achieve greenhouse gas reduction targets by 2020 and beyond, as well as other provincial climate change goals.

4. Build capacity and resilience to plan and respond to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

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I. British Columbia Context for Social Mobilization

There are a number of characteristics of the British Columbia context that makes it different from United States and Europe in its ability to foster social mobilization for climate solutions. Indeed, British Columbia's policy experimentation is unique in North America; for example, there are currently over 125 communities attempting to become carbon neutral. In addition, British Columbians are already feeling the massive and highly visible local impacts of climate change (e.g. mountain pine beetle).

1.1) Advantages for social mobilization in British Columbia

- Provincial government that is leading the action and setting a positive policy context since 2007, for example, by:
    - Creating and implementing a BC Climate Action Plan.
    - Setting aggressive GHG emission reduction targets for the province and requiring local governments to do likewise.
    - Enacting a suite of supporting and enabling legislation.
    - Implementing a carbon tax.
    - Initiating a LiveSmart BC incentive program.
    - Hosting regional forums and sector events on climate action.
- Fairly high documented public concern for climate change.
- Multiple social mobilization efforts underway (formal and informal).
- Generally, not yet much strident opposition on climate change measures.
- Ongoing public conversations on climate change and many people appear pre-disposed to act.

1.2) Disadvantages for social mobilization in British Columbia

- Mixed messaging: weak federal-level messaging and action on climate change.
- Mixed policy signals at the provincial level (e.g. subsidies to oil and gas industry, home renovation credits withdrawn, then re-instated).
- Many citizens and businesses have high carbon footprints relative to the footprint necessary to achieve climate stabilization.
- Low residential and industrial energy costs.
- Very rapid learning curve on climate change in the province: lack of capacity at many levels, inside and outside government, and poor in-depth knowledge by citizens on local impacts and effective solutions.
- Climate action targets not well understood and/or visible to the general public.
- Poor understanding and lack of guidance of how to meet the reduction targets.
- Social mobilization efforts are not closely coordinated and monitored.
- Some effective mobilization against some potential climate solutions, e.g. certain forms of clean energy such as run-of-river, micro-hydro, windpower, and biomass.
- Significant resource constraints, especially budgets at the provincial and local government levels.
- Shortage of experienced, trusted "translators" between the science of climate change/solutions and the public/communities.

II. Research Priorities & Recommendations for PICS

2.1) PICS Research Priorities

These research priorities will inform PICS on the Social Mobilization research theme in setting research directions and developing, supporting and leveraging funds for collaborative research projects and other activities. The workshop revealed a shortage of evaluation research on effectiveness of social mobilisation. The over-arching theme was therefore **"What works"--** identifying, developing, and evaluating effective social mobilisation solutions on climate change:

1. **Identifying and resolving social barriers and incentives to clean energy solutions**, as well as to other mitigation and adaptation solutions such as low-carbon transportation, density/urban form, local food production, etc. This should include assessing successful precedents and promising approaches to overcoming these barriers **ahead of** controversies where possible. Apply to the other three PICS research themes (sustainable communities, low-carbon economy, and resilient ecosystems).

2. **Developing a practical evaluation framework/metrics/simple tools for defining and measuring outcomes of social mobilization** on climate change, relevant to different scales, sectors (including the collective public, government, other institutions, and private sector), and urban/rural contexts. This should include preparing guidance for both independent and self-evaluation of social mobilisation activities.

3. **Monitoring and effectiveness evaluation of ongoing social mobilization activities, pathways, and processes** related to climate change (action research) in BC: this should consider both formal and informal mobilisation activities, online and place-based methods (e.g. various visioning processes), and both activities focused on climate change and broader activities relevant to climate change solutions. PICS should collate and report back on an overall assessment of effectiveness, on a regular cycle (e.g. every 3 years), integrating findings from other relevant research to identify synergies, gaps, and policy implications.

4. Improving understanding of the **use and potential of existing digital media/tools,** and **developing/testing new digital media/tools** to engage the 'silent majority', in order to improve our knowledge on their attitudes, acceptance, flexibility and ideas with regard to policy/behaviour change. Tool strategies may include 'deepening' engagement activities initiated though social media networks, place-based visioning informed by scientific models, and gaming.

In addition, it is hoped that follow-up workshops on behaviour change and related research activities by other research programs [such as the Climate Justice Project (CURA) and SFU's Adaptation to Climate Change Team (ACT)] will build upon the information generated through the PICS Social Mobilization Research workshop and ongoing PICS research program.

2.2) Social Mobilization Recommendations

The following recommendations have been distilled from the comments and suggestions made during the workshop. These recommendations address ways to implement research

knowledge for pragmatic purposes and are focused on how PICS, the province, and others can be most effective in engaging with British Columbians on climate solutions.

PICS Role:

1. **Active involvement** of PICS staff and researchers in contributing to social mobilization activities to infuse research findings in on-the-ground solutions, through:
   a) Climate change science extension (e.g. lecture tours, courses, etc.)
   b) Piloting and testing the more experimental and promising social mobilization methods that may be beyond the current capabilities or risk-tolerance of other agencies
   c) Targeting the hardest-to-reach societal groups and those with the highest carbon footprints that are not already being engaged by other climate change activities.
2. **Provide resources and support** to ongoing social mobilization processes and activities in British Columbia, in collaboration with Climate Action Secretariat and other agencies/groups.
3. **Leverage** other organizations' social engagement processes, with PICS involvement in implementation and/or evaluation of effectiveness.
4. Develop and disseminate **guidance and best practices** for conducting, integrating, and self-evaluating social mobilization activities.

Province-Wide Activities:

1. Provincial agencies should establish structured program or strategy to provide **resources and support** to enable other groups to devise and conduct social mobilization activities, at provincial, regional, and local levels.
2. Provincial agencies should provide more systematic **co-ordination** between government agencies with engagement mandates on climate change across sectors.
3. Government, at all levels, should **collaborate** with both businesses, NGOs, communities, and the informal sector to coordinate social mobilization activities, linking both formal (decision-making) and informal (voluntary) actions where possible, as in the 2010 Regional Forums.
4. Active mechanisms should be established to **pilot, replicate and monitor successful social engagement techniques,** such as the Columbia Basin Community Adaptation program and the UK Rural Community Councils (see below) community-led planning.

III. Social Mobilization Precedents, Principles & Strategies

3.1) Successful Processes and Precedents

Participants and speakers at the workshop highlighted and discussed a number of current social mobilization activities in British Columbia, and internationally, that are achieving gains in their aim to activate the public and communities to act on climate change.

1.	Transition Town Movement	Transition Towns have emerged in the last four years as a community-led/community-guided, solutions-focused response to peak oil and climate change. This movement has spread very quickly and now includes over 300 formal transition towns in the UK and thousands of informal Towns across the world, with several in B.C. (see: www.transitionculture.org/)
2.	UK South East Rural Community Councils (SERCC)	SERCC is a charity in the UK that promotes the needs of rural communities through sustaining and supporting vibrant and inclusive rural villages and by developing rural voluntary and community organizations. Successful processes include community-led planning and the greening campaign with significant community action on reducing carbon footprints. It has spread across the UK. (see : www.sercc.org.uk/)
3.	350.org	350.org is an international climate campaign dedicated to building a movement to unite the world around solutions to the climate crisis-- the solutions that science and justice demand. On Oct 24, their campaign, which included innovate uses of social media and online tools, achieved over 5, 200 events around the world calling for climate action. Ongoing activities include organizing community-led follow-up meetings in preparation for the "Get to Work" campaign. (see: www.350.org)
4.	goBeyond Campus Climate Initiative	goBeyond is a youth-led project, which works to educate, inspire, engage and support youth in taking climate action at British Columbia's colleges and universities. They are finding a strong desire for climate action among B.C.'s youth and are enabling action with concrete tools, action plans, capacity-building, awareness-raising. (see: www.go-beyond.ca/)
5.	Columbia Basin Trust: Communities Adapting to Climate Change Initiative	This initiative funds and supports selected local communities to increase their adaptive capacity and resiliency to climate change impacts at the community level. Climate change researchers and agency planners in an advisory role provide input on adaptation for local community planning and capacity-building. The communities such as Kimberley, Elkford, and Castlegar have so far undergone this process, with some links to Official Community Plans. (http://www.cbt.org/Initiatives/Climate_Change/?Adapting_to_Climate_Change)
6.	Formal community planning and engagement	The City of West Vancouver has a citizen-led Climate Action Plan that was recently accepted by Council, supporting Bill 27 target setting. West Vancouver has set up working groups where community stakeholders are able to drive the process and council-members participate as "keynote listeners." The working groups develop recommendation and present them to Council. (see:

		http://westvancouver.ca/uploadedFiles/Your_Government/Committees_and_Groups/Working_Groups/Climate_Action/Climate%20Action%20Working%20Group%20Final%20Report.pdf) Dawson Creek has also made significant progress in acting on climate change by targetting key related issues such as renewable energy and water. The focus is on creating a common vision, strong leadership and communication. Outcomes include a comprehensive Climate Action Plan, as well as a Community Energy Planning project. (see: www.planningforpeople.ca)
6.	Cool Northshore	A citizen-created and driving initiative to bring North Shore residents together to help make the North Shore even more sustainable and to do something *now* about global warming. Regular meetings are held with interested people from various formal and informal sectors/organizations across the North shore. Focused on promoting dialogue and ideas for shared action on climate change, it regularly attracts sizable groups, and has helped the District of North Vancouver with public engagement around planning. (see: www.coolnorthshore.ca/)
7.	Local Climate Change Visioning Process *(LCCVP)*	LCCVP is a new participatory visioning process which uses realistic 3D imagery and mapping of alternative climate futures at the community scale, to bridge the gap between global climate science and local action. First piloted by the Collaborative for Advanced Landscape Planning at UBC with communities in Delta, North Shore and Kimberley, evaluation research shows this kind of visioning can increase awareness, concern, urgency, willingness to act, and support for climate policies. (http://cfubc.ehosting.ca/?page_id=6)
8.	Private sector/ tools for public engagement and learning	Various proprietary tools and processes have been developed for building awareness of sustainability and/or climate change. Examples include: MetroQuest, an educational tool/process developed by Envision on sustainability and some aspects of climate change mitigation, designed to reach several thousand people at some level through kiosks, workshops and online; and the Seeds Software program for hands-on learning about global warming and climate change in schools.

3.2) Principles & Effective Strategies

Throughout the workshop, a number of over-arching themes and principles for effective social mobilization emerged, including (in no particular order) the need:

- For people to enjoy the process of creating a sustainable world.
- To assume that everyone is part of the solution, and has a piece of the answer.
- For people to own and develop social mobilization processes and activities.
- To recognize that we will be mobilizing to act on climate change for a very long time, and we will need to be extremely persistent with a strong and concrete, shared vision in order to summit setbacks.

- For collaboration between formal sectors (e.g. local government and businesses) and informal sectors (e.g. community groups).
- For sustained, participatory engagement to create a shared understanding of why the climate is changing and therefore what responses are required.
- To provide incentives and positive reinforcement for action.

Consistent with these principles, participants and speakers also identified a number of effective strategies for social mobilization. These include:

- Using positive messaging.
- Making the process engaging: e.g. through two-way communication & collaboration.
- Presenting options and positive solutions.
- Emphasizing, showing, and publicizing success stories and precedents.
- Implementing early childhood environmental education.
- Leveraging existing organizing networks e.g. soccer-moms and church groups.
- Using engaging techniques (e.g. visual media, participatory, interactive).
- Employing experiential learning.
- Giving people simple tools to use to move forward.
- Using dialogue techniques to help people connect the dots on climate change issues.
- Using the power of narratives.
- Practicing friendly communication.
- Using caution when communicating the impacts of climate change.
- Making the causes and solutions visible.
- Communicating that we are in this together, and that we will solve it together.
- Using digital media tools.

IV. Critical Issues in Social Mobilization

There were many thorny issues on social mobilization identified at the workshop which to some extent remain to be resolved. Some of these should be the subject of continued debate in the context of a British Columbia-wide strategy for social mobilization. Such issues include:

Scaling	Should we be trying to create many different processes and activities, or should we be attempting to create one movement? Are we creating one big daisy, or many small daisies?
Persuasive vs. Emergent model	Are we engaged in processes of social mobilization to gain public support for climate policies and actions designed by experts? Or are we engaged in social mobilization to create processes where answers for how we can respond to climate change emerge?
How to be strategic	Given limited resources, how can we be strategic about which pathways to support in mobilizing society? (e.g. online communities, sectoral, grassroots volunteer initiatives, and community planning processes)
Inclusion	How can social mobilization processes and activities in British Columbia be more inclusive and take account of class, race and gender? How can we get beyond the "usual suspects"?
How to deal with setbacks.	Given that we will be mobilizing for climate action for at least the next century, how can we create resilience within social organizations and networks to deal with set-backs?
Honesty	How do we be honest about the scale of transformation necessary to achieve climate stabilization while also being optimistic and positive in our messaging?
Role of the media	How do we treat the media given that members of the industry insist that the media is not going to be a change agent, while campaigners insist that media coverage is essential to the success of their campaigns?
Active opposition	Given limited resources, how do we both mobilize the middle 60 percent of the public as well as confront the active, well-financed, and well-framed counter mobilization against action on climate change at the national and international level? How to we deal with the reality that we are mobilizing in the context of political economy, heavy path dependence, and significant interests in maintaining the status quo?
Visibility of climate change	How do we make climate change causes, impacts and solutions more visible and tangible to people, to help resolve concerns over denial, disbelief and disinterest?
Naming	Is social mobilization the right name for what we are trying to achieve? Is that right name for desire increased collaboration, cooperation, engagement and shared action?

PICS welcomes further comment and suggestions on these and other relevant topics. For more information or to provide feedback, see: www.pics.uvic.ca/.

For details on the workshop and archived webcasts of presentations, please see: http://mediasite.mediagroup.ubc.ca/MediaGroup/Catalog/pages/catalog.aspx?catalogId= 1543f032-ed36-4517-8c11-7dffe4ff9872.