



ClimateWest

ClimateWest Forum: Benefits of Early Adaptation Action Key Takeaways

On May 3 and 4, 2023, we brought together ClimateWest's expanding network for our inaugural forum. We were so pleased that more than 100 in-person guests and 75 virtual participants joined us for this free, hybrid event. This forum was an opportunity for the climate adaptation community in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba to gather, to share our experiences, and to learn about the state of knowledge on climate adaptation.

Guests included educators, climate monitoring teams, university researchers, watershed managers, environmental network members, climate communications specialists, engineers, policy advisors, government staff, consultants, farmers and producers, and more. Over two days we heard from 16 incredible speakers and panellists.

This report highlights some of our big takeaways from the forum.

1

“The climate has changed, it will only continue to change.”

Amber Bennett, Re.Climate

In accepting the reality that we are not returning to the climate of the past, we can move forward together. There is still a clear path forward if we take urgent action to achieve a liveable future for all of us and our future generations. We heard this theme in many presentations, including those from Amber Bennett (Re.Climate), Dr. Heather Morrison (Canadian Centre for Climate Services), and Karina Cardona Claros (Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment). As the climate continues to change in the Prairie provinces, Dr. Danny Blair (Prairie Climate Centre) shared that we should expect much more potential for floods, droughts, wildfires, extreme storms, and unanticipated events.

Key Takeaways



2

“Costs of inaction: presenting climate impacts in ways that are familiar to decision-makers.”

Dr. Richard Boyd, All One Sky Foundation

Communicating “costs of inaction” is one way to convey the urgency of climate action. It frames the climate emergency in ways that decision-makers tend to use and accept. We have compelling information on the “costs of inaction.” Chris Rol (Insurance Bureau of Canada), Dr. Richard Boyd (All One Sky Foundation), and Ryan Ness (Canadian Climate Institute) shared information relevant to Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba:

- Recent Prairie-based extreme weather events, such as the 2016 Fort McMurray wildfires and the 2013 Southern Alberta floods, have been among the country’s costliest; and,
- There is a strong return on investment when we adapt early: \$1 of adaptation investment today will return \$15 in both direct and economy-wide benefits (low-emissions scenario); and,
- We need to scale up adaptation investments to match the risks that Canadians face. Per year, an estimated 0.26% of GDP is needed nationally in climate adaptation investments.

The National Adaptation Strategy, discussed by Laniel Bateman (Environment and Climate Change Canada), is a strong step forward. It outlines actions for a whole-of-society approach to climate adaptation in Canada, emphasizing collaboration and equity.

3

“Nothing about us, without us.”

**Karina Cardona Claros,
Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment**

As Brett Huson (Prairie Climate Centre) importantly noted, there is plenty of Indigenous-led climate action that is already happening and that should be better supported. We also heard from Jack Johnson and Bob Austman about their decade of climate monitoring work with Black River First Nation. Marlene Doyle (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada) shared more about federal programming and funding opportunities for Indigenous communities. Further, Karina Cardona Claros (Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment) highlighted the interconnectedness of disability justice and climate adaptation. These speakers emphasized the importance of building good relationships, respecting diverse knowledges, creating inclusive approaches, and upholding human rights as we work on climate adaptation.

Key Takeaways



4

“Protect what you have, restore what you’ve lost, build what you must.”

Dimple Roy, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) quoting Blair Feltmate from Intact Centre

Participants expressed a lot of interest in nature-based solutions during the forum. During the forum roundtable, participants shared their interest in improving tree canopy, protecting native prairie ecosystems, supporting regenerative agriculture, restoring watersheds, and developing grey and green infrastructure alongside each other. Paige Englot (ALUS), Dimple Roy (IISD), Joanna Eyquem (Intact Centre) elaborated on the potential for nature-based solutions in a panel discussion. Elder Mary Courchene closed our forum with a call to do better. When discussing adaptation topics, such as nature-based solutions, we need to be leading with Indigenous perspectives, voices, and experiences.

5

“ClimateWest as a trusted source, connector, facilitator, leader, concierge.”

Elaine Fox, ClimateWest Board Chair

During the forum roundtable, we asked forum participants: “What are the three ways that ClimateWest can support your work on prairie climate resilience?” We heard that ClimateWest should be:

- Highlighting adaptation case studies and success stories from the Prairies
- Creating more networking opportunities, like the forum, for the adaptation community to connect and collaborate
- Curating funding opportunities and how-to data guides
- Assisting municipalities in understanding and using climate data
- Developing climate communications resources

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Climate Data:

- [ClimateData.ca](#)
- Prairie Climate Centre's [Climate Atlas of Canada](#) (including the [Indigenous Climate Atlas](#), [Climate Analogues](#) & videos such as "[Crippling Climate Adaptation](#)")
- [Map of Adaptation Actions](#)

Support Services & Networks:

- ClimateWest [Help Desk](#)
- Canadian Centre for Climate Services' [Support Desk](#)
- [Indigenous Climate Hub](#)

Training & Learning:

- [Natural Asset-Management Course](#)
- [ClimateTelling](#)

Funding & Programming (Past & Current)

- [ALUS](#)
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities' [Green Municipal Fund](#)
- Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund ([DMAF](#))
- [First Nation Adapt Program](#)
- [Indigenous Community Based Climate Monitoring Program](#)
- [Climate Change and Health Adaptation Program](#) (for Indigenous communities)

Books:

- Hetxw'ms Gyetxw (Brett D. Huson)'s Mothers of Xsan [Book Series](#)

Guides, Policy Documents & Reports:

- Canadian Climate Institute's "[Damage Control](#)" Report
- Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation's "[Getting Nature on the Balance Sheet](#)" Report
- IISD's "[State of Play of Natural Infrastructure on the Canadian Prairies](#)" Report
- Government of Canada Adaptation Action Plan ([GOCAAP](#))
- Canada's [National Adaptation Strategy](#)

Tools:

- Indigenous Climate Monitoring [Toolkit](#)

Upcoming Events:

- [Adaptation Futures Conference 2023](#)