

## Vital Café January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020

### Climate Change: Summary

This summary's goal is to provide a snapshot of the event's table conversations.

Panel Members	
<u>Arthur De Jong</u> : Municipal Councillor, Manager of Mountain Planning and Environmental Resource Management for Whistler Blackcomb	<u>Irie Smith</u> : Whistler youth with interest in climate action, environmental protection and is a zero-waste advocate
<u>Kristina Swerhun</u> : Whistler Naturalists Board Member, Glacier Monitoring Team Member	<u>Diane Boone</u> : AWARE Board member <u>Michael D'Artois</u> : Mature Action Community Board Member, lived experience in Whistler for 45 years
<u>Max Kniewasser</u> : RMOW Climate Change Coordinator	<u>Sue Maxwell</u> : Waste Management Specialist

### Question 1: What do you know about the Climate Crisis?

#### Summary of Answers

Younger audience members have known about the climate crisis their whole lives, for some their knowledge began over 30 years ago with the alert that there was a hole in the ozone. Still, with clear science there are climate deniers and communities and countries unable or unwilling to make changes.

There was a sense of an overwhelming shadow of big business manipulating behind the scenes. Some people felt fear for the future, some people doubted they would have children. Others, afraid for the what is to come, there was a certain level of climate anxiety, guilt, fear, and mourning. They are worried but also carry a level of anger and frustration. Some wondered whether their small contributions would make a difference and one was "gleefully fatalistic" in thinking what would come after homo sapiens?

The problem seems overwhelming, where governments make short term decisions based on being re-elected rather than far sighted, making tough decisions to affect change. We have come to a tipping point. Drastic, innovative, and tough measures are needed by political and business entities. There needs to be collaboration in collective global action.

People knew about changing temperatures, that normal weather systems have been interrupted with severe conditions; flash floods, severe snowstorms and droughts. Warmer oceans are causing rising sea levels and melting glaciers. We are experiencing hotter drier summers causing droughts, crop and livestock failures and forest fires. In Whistler our greatest threat is wildfire and the Kelowna fires were wake-up call to our vulnerability.

People know about the health risks of pollution, that acid rain caused by the burning of fossil fuels have affected food production and the health of water sources, and therefore fish stocks. There is a sense that industry rules with bigger farms pushing up yields but at a devastating cost. There was a wide appreciation of the loss of habitat and that animal lives and ecosystems have been affected by climate change. Impacts on sea-bird colonies, the spread of the pine beetle, insect migration and dropping bird counts.

Some participants have learned to be a mindful citizen in our changing world. There is a growing acceptance that our actions affect others. Other people remember a simpler time, when people had less, walked more, towns and cities were less crowded. A time when items were reused, mended and repaired, passed down to the next family member, the next generation. These people have witnessed the world change to one where items are made to be limited use or single use. Planned obsolescence.

Some people are changing their eating habits; removing or reducing their meat intake and eating a more plant-based diet. There was a comment that activism is changing conservation and this in turn has an influence on action-based movements and effects how people vote. Others wondered if their actions were making a difference and were interested in what more they can do.

### **Question #2: What are you/we currently doing in Whistler to combat the Climate Crisis?**

#### **Summary of Answers**

Currently people are quite engaged with waste disposal, composting, using reusable containers and cups. Whistler Community Services provides the ReUse-It and ReBuild-It Centres to assist with waste diversion. The waste transfer centre allows for the separation of garbage and recyclables and provides supervision at the waste transfer station. This was seen as a positive. There are AWARE's clothing swaps and neighbourhood grants to bring people together to discuss actions where they live.

Wildfire mitigation techniques and forest thinning are being employed by the RMOW in their FireSmart program to lower the risk of fuel at the forest/urban interface. Single-use vehicle travel is the single bigger contributing factor to greenhouse gas emissions in Whistler. Participants commented that pay parking was seen as a restriction on vehicle use.

The hiring of Max Kniewasser as the municipalities Climate Change Coordinator was seen as a very positive step. Many people said they were trying to buy local food or growing some of their own food. Some people had attended training sessions through Whistler Community Services or AWARE. Others have had, or thinking of having their homes inspected by for energy efficiency.

There are now free bus passes for high school students and other participants made comments that they are trying to take the bus, walk or ride their bikes more. Some find that services offered in areas, many kilometres apart are a detraction to taking a bus. There was a suggestion to have some decentralized pods of services. Others have bought hybrid or electrical vehicles or may contemplate a purchase in the future.

**Question #3 What can we do as a community/individual to improve?**

**Summary of Answers**

Participants were very enthusiastic in their responses about how we might do better. For readability, I've broken the responses into three groups: individuals, community and business, with the answers shown in point form.

**Individuals: Be Mindful, Be Engaged**

- Pop a ride – ride share
- Help at your workplace / your roommates / your tenants: to compost and recycle
- Lower your carbon footprint on vacations
- Choose glass over plastic
- BYO containers to supermarkets
- Repair clothing and products
- Rent, share or borrow rarely used items or equipment
- Set a good example to: your family, workmates, kids, tourists
- Educate yourself
- Engage with other groups, petition government(s)
- Taking bus or walking
- Becoming a vegetarian
- Buying from the Reuse-It or Rebuild-It Centres
- Not using single use plastics
- Buy local food and items where possible
- Compost
- Buy less
- Eating in season
- Learn how to cook, to can and preserve food when it is in season
- Volunteer with a local organization that is effecting change
- Have your house tested for energy efficiency and then undertake any necessary resealing
- Buy items with less packaging e.g. fruit and vegetables
- Shopping where you can refill containers
- Carbon rating on all products
- Lobby senior governments to require businesses to make goods last longer and be repairable, rather than replaceable
- Fast fashion is seen as a problem. Buy only what you need. Buy items that are well made, will last and are repairable

### Community: Education

There was enthusiasm for the municipality to assist with bylaws/policies/codes/incentives that:

- Allow for clothes lines
- Incentivize transit use
- Incentives for electric cars
- Electric charging stations – in the community. Financial assistance to install strata complexes
- Tax rebate for electric vehicles
  - Especially freight or goods
  - Free charging points
- Free local transit, funded by parking
- Robust regional transit funded by motor vehicle/fuel taxes
- Labelling that shows carbon footprint on items (the backpack)
- A community climate change website
- First Nations leading environmental stewardship
- More community gardens and greenhouses
- Incentives to create desired behaviours
- Make it more obvious what we are doing wrong – education
- Be an example and educate our international visitors – be a global model

### Business: People Speak with Their Wallets

- Epic passes include free transit
- Stop logging old growth, make our unique environment the selling point
- Support data collection across the whole resort - all business
- Environmental tracking of our performance, successful challenges
- Simple metrics and stories in a regular/consistent column in the Pique
- Close business doors – summer and winter to save energy
- Longer warranties with focus on repair
- In-house education for staff and customers on zero waste, be a leader
- Add to the Tourism Whistler survey – how did you arrive?

### Question 4:

**In 2030, if Whistler has been successful in attaining all the United Nations Sustainability Goals, what would our community look like?**

### **Summary of Answers**

In 2030, Whistler will be a global leader in sustainable community living and zero waste practices. We will have demonstrated sustainable tourism on a global scale, inspiring other communities

There will be a robust local and regional transport system that would be no-cost or low-cost. As over 90% of Whistler's students and work force would be housed in the community, many single-use vehicles have been taken off the road. With the support of the provincial government, our local government has made 'tough decisions.' People have been affordably housed (50 % housed in Whistler Housing Authority), as the result of rigorous enforcement of residential zoning by-laws, the building of in-fill housing and provision of housing by employers. This has been assisted by the taxation disincentives for larger single-family homes. Some seasonal workers will be housed in 'pod' accommodation.

There is less traffic, less cars and a multi people-mover is the preferred regional transit choice. There is a satellite commercial area in Cheakamus and a grocery store in Emerald. Employees earn a living wage which is enhanced by the availability of local, low/no-packaged items and food. Every local tenant and landowner are fire smart, and there is a perimeter where fuel reduction around valley is maintained.

There is integration between community and visitors and our big hospitality players are doing their bit to be 'green' advocates and educate their guests in sustainability practices. Stores will have less single-use items and items will be sourced ethically, sustainably and where possible locally.

There will be cross-industry collaboration and collective procurement of food and goods and disposal efforts. The valley trail will be enhanced to allow more bikes, e-bikes. A monorail will be built from a central day-use parking lot in Function and will run to Creekside and the Village. More pedestrian overpasses will allow safer passage of people.

Heli tours won't be possible and ATVs and snowmobiling will be limited. Eco tourism will be promoted with the Interpretative Forest welcoming people rather than chainsaws. As there is a cap on bed units, there will be a restriction on day and overnight visitors. Strict maintenance of residential areas to solely house our permanent or seasonal workers and not overnight visitors. Our long-term locals will have left as it is too expensive. Some of their larger homes will be divided into multi-housing units and the 30/40 'somethings' will be able to afford to own a home and therefore achieve a level of stability. In turn, these people will carry on the legacy of engaged locals who feel that they belong and Whistler is their home.

#### **Local Resources**

- AWARE: <https://www.awarewhistler.org/>
- Whistler Naturalists: <https://www.whistlernaturalists.ca/>
- RMOW Climate Action and Energy: <https://www.whistler.ca/services/environmental-stewardship/climate-action-and-energy>
- RMOW Zero Waste: [https://www.whistler.ca/sites/default/files/2018/Jul/related/22311/whistler\\_zero\\_waste\\_plan.pdf](https://www.whistler.ca/sites/default/files/2018/Jul/related/22311/whistler_zero_waste_plan.pdf)



- Whistler Community Services Society: <https://mywcss.org/programs/reduce-reuse-recycle/>
- Whistler Mature Action Community (MAC): <http://www.whistlermac.org/>
- Protect Our Winters: <https://protectourwinters.ca/>
- Whistler Blackcomb, Environment: <https://www.whistlerblackcomb.com/explore-the-resort/about-the-resort/environment.aspx>
- Tourism Whistler, Whistler's Environmental Commitment: <https://www.whistler.com/about-whistler/environment/>
- Whistler Centre for Sustainability, Squamish Lillooet Food Project: <http://www.whistlercentre.ca/project/squamish-lillooet-food-project/>