Canadian Mental Health Association
South Cariboo

Climate Distress: Helpful Resources

"Our children and youth are worried about climate change and it's affecting them at a very deep level. It's affecting their daily life and functioning."

-Margaret Eaton, National CEO, Canadian Mental Health Association, in a letter to Prime Minister Trudeau, on February 28th, 2023.

If you would like to learn how the impact of climate change may typically influence the mental health and well-being of individuals, you may be interested in the list of resources that can be found below. The resources may be appropriate for your own personal application and/or to assist others, who are emotionally impacted by the influences of climate change.

It is important to stress that the South Cariboo Canadian Mental Health Association does not view climate distress as a distinct clinical condition, but an inevitable and even healthy response to the ecological threats that we are facing. Climate distress can also be a risk amplifier for existing mental health conditions.

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A. Resources Related to Children and Youth

"A 2021 study by The Lancet revealed that more than 45% of children and youth said their feelings about climate change negatively affected their daily life and functioning. Further to this, 75% said that they think the future is frightening while 83% said that they think adults have failed to take care of the planet."

-Deb Wise Harris, National Manager, Communications, Canadian Mental Health Association-February 17th, 2023

1. The Royal College of Psychiatrists from the UK provides information for parents and carers, as well as teachers and others who support children and young people, to help understand what eco distress is, how to recognize if your child is experiencing eco distress, and provide some suggestions to help them cope with their feelings.

2. The Climate Mental Health Network is an American organization that aspires to urgently address the mental health impacts, especially upon youth, of the climate crisis, through education, community engagement and by harnessing the power of media and technology. There is a treasure trove of resources available by browsing this website.

3. Harvard University provides general information on climate anxiety and provides several links to the growing connection between the climate crisis and mental health, accompanied by tips on how to help a young person.

4. The American Psychiatric Association offers five brief, but key things to know about children and climate change.

5. The David Suzuki Foundation offers tips, posters, and activity worksheets that help nurture conversations with children about climate change.

6. The Climate Psychology Alliance is a diverse on-line community of therapeutic practitioners, thinkers, researchers, artists and others who believe that attending to the psychology and emotions of the climate and ecological crisis is at the heart of their work. The organization has its origins in the U.K. and has expanded to an international context. The website provides access to one-to-one climate aware therapeutic support, group support and youth focused services. *

B. Resources for Parents, Teachers, Other Professionals and Community Leaders

1. The Mental Health and Climate Change Alliance (MHCCA) is a Canadian Not-For Profit organization, that is a community of interdisciplinary researchers, healthcare providers, and community organizers committed to identifying and addressing the adverse impacts of the climate crisis on mental health. The MHCCA has created a list of leading resources for dealing with mental health distress related to the climate crisis, including a list of therapists and counsellors*, guides and toolkits, on-line communities, books, podcasts, and resources for mental health care providers.

2. The Ending Violence Association of B.C. offers a downloadable document that provides evidence that natural disasters are associated with an increase in violence against women.

"Climate change poses one of the most significant threats, with environmental disasters, record heat waves, melting ice caps, flooding, and forest fires contributing to increased displacement. Natural disasters are often associated with increases in some types of crime, such as family violence, sexual violence and thefts - with already vulnerable groups often most impacted. Indigenous communities, particularly in northern regions, are also disproportionately impacted."

-RCMP report, February 1st, 2022

3. The National Library of Medicine in Maryland U.S.A., provides an academic publication, titled The Psychology of Climate Anxiety, that highlights the importance of differentiating between pathological and adaptive forms of climate anxiety.

4. The Climate Psychology Alliance is a diverse on-line community of therapeutic practitioners, thinkers, researchers, artists and others, who believe that attending to the psychology and emotions of the climate and ecological crisis is at the heart of their work. The organization has its origins in the U.K. and has expanded to an international context. The website provides access to one-to-one climate aware therapeutic support, group support and youth focused services. *

5. Climate Doom to Messy Hope: Climate Healing and Resilience is a practical handbook for climate educators and community. The handbook was created by Meghan Wise for UBC Climate Hub's Climate Wellbeing Engagement Network.

6. Climate Well-Being Resource Kit is a toolkit put together for the UBC Climate Hub, to help generate some easy access for people looking to connect with climate mental health and wellbeing resources, information, and strategies.

C. Resources Related to Indigenous Communities

1. Indigenous Climate Action is an Indigenous-led organization guided by a diverse group of Indigenous knowledge keepers, water protectors and land defenders from communities and regions across Canada. They believe that Indigenous Peoples' rights and knowledge systems are critical to developing solutions to the climate crisis and achieving climate justice. Indigenous Climate Action is proud to develop programming and resources that speak to the wants and needs of Indigenous communities in so-called Canada, that empower knowledge and awareness of climate change issues and how they

are intricately connected to Indigenous rights and sovereignty. Guided by five pathways of hosting Gatherings, providing Resources and Trainings, Amplifying Voices, uplifting Indigenous Sovereignty and Self Determination and Healing Justice, program areas are made for and by Indigenous peoples.

2. Attutauniujuk Nunami / Lament For The Land is a 36-minute video that tells a story told through the voices of 24 people from Nunatsiavut, Labrador. The film weaves together the voices and wisdom of Labrador Inuit with stunning visual scenery to tell a powerful story of change, loss, and hope in the context of rapid climate change in the North. A collaboration between researcher Dr. Ashlee Cunsolo and the five communities of Nunatsiavut, this film brings attention to some of the most pressing climatic and environmental issues of our time, and the resulting mental, emotional, and cultural impacts on one of Canada's oldest and most enduring cultures.

3. The Indigenous Climate Health Action Program funds community-driven initiatives to address climate impacts on health and wellbeing for First Nations across B.C. Projects can focus on climate health in general or on developing a strategy or action plan to reduce climate change impacts on community health. The aim of the program is to strengthen community resilience in the face of a changing climate. By applying a flexible, community-centered approach and holistic view of health and wellness, the program has been able to support a wide range of initiatives that address diverse climate health priorities across different communities.

4. The Yukon First Nation Climate Action Fellowship believes that it is time to re-think climate change. We are living in an era of disconnection. This time is an anomaly in history. Today, the story we are told about climate change comes from a dominant worldview that narrowly defines the problem as one of increasing carbon dioxide emissions leading to degradation of our environment. We, the Children of Tomorrow, understand climate change as being about something much deeper: our current state of Disconnection from the Land, from

each other, and from ourselves.

5. Three sources of Canadian Research on the unique impacts of the climate crisis upon Indigenous communities are found below:

a. Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples' Health In Canada is a Health Canada report that describes the unique mental health distresses (pages 24-25) for many Indigenous peoples, who are attempting to cope with the climate crisis.

b. The Evidence Exchange Network is part of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Hospital in Toronto. This link addresses the impacts of the climate emergency on Indigenous mental health.

c. The National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health in Ottawa, describes how First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada are uniquely sensitive to the impacts of climate change.

D. Resources Related to Seniors

1. Hey Boomers, Pay It Forward is an article, written by Dr. Michael Smyer and published in Psychology Today. Dr. Smyer asserts that baby boomers have a chance to pay it forward on the climate crisis by listening to young adults, acting with them, and sharing hope.

2. For The Elderly, Climate Change Poses More Risks To Wellness is an article written by Melina Walling in Forbes Magazine. The article describes, within an American context, the unique health intersections between aging and climate change.

3. Seniors For Climate Action is an organization based in Ontario. The website provides a tool kit for seniors who want to have organized conversations with others about climate change.

E. Online Communities

1. Unthinkable is an on-line free newsletter plus links to various podcasts offered by a team led by Canadian climate change and mental health researcher, Dr Britt Wray. *Unthinkable* is dedicated to exploring the psychological roots and outcomes of the ecological crisis. Consider this newsletter the clearing house for new, old, and emerging ideas to strengthen our emotional intelligence, psychological resilience, and mental health while we're in this planetary pickle. By subscribing to the free newsletter, you'll become part of a community of forward-thinking people who are engaging with how we need to redesign our systems, institutions, and relationships to foster well-being as the planet heats up.

2. Project Inside Out applies the latest research and best practices in psychology to help people on the journey from despair, passivity, and denial toward courageous, more impactful environmental action. The founder of Project Inside Out, Dr. Renee Lertzman, a Canadian, applies evidence-based research, coupled with practices from psychology, neurosciences, as well as cognitive and social sciences; in the development of a treasure trove of resources and tools to guide the work with front line campaign strategists, sustainability leaders and organizations.

"We need to address all of our emotions about the climate crisis, not only for our mental wellbeing but also to remove roadblocks to action. If we can't look at how climate change makes us feel along with the dilemmas and difficult choices we face, we can't solve it."

-Dr. Renee Lertzman, Founder of Project Inside Out

3. The All We Can Save Project was co-founded by Americans, Dr. Katharine Wilkinson and Dr. Ayana Johnson, who authored the book, All We Can Save. The project aspires to develop climate aware leaders and communities, by bringing the climate crisis into the conversational sphere, through the provision of multiple tools and guides that nurture small group discussion and classroom education.

The vast majority of folks who've completed the Circles discussion group, report feeling a sense of community/belonging, engaging in exploration/growth, emerging more inspired/hopeful, and taking diverse actions as a result. According to the end-of-Circle survey, 94% of participants have taken action in some way! The website also contains a list of climate-aware therapeutic resources. *

"Are you hungry for deeper dialogue about the climate crisis and building community around solutions? We are too. That's why we created All We Can Save Circles–like a book club, but a cooler, deeper, extended version. Let's strengthen the "we" *in All We Can Save*".

-Dr. Katharine Wilkinson, co-founder of the All We Can Save Project

4. The Good Grief Network is an innovative peer support network for processing and integrating the uncertainty and grief that the climate and wider eco-crisis can awaken in people. Based on Alcoholics Anonymous, this group format moves participants through a 10-step program in which key topics are processed in a supportive setting, such as: "accept the uncertainty of the predicament," "practice being with uncertainty," and "honor my mortality and the mortality of all."

F. Further Video, Audio, and Reading Resources

1. Speaking of Psychology podcast — How to Cope with Climate Anxiety
American Psychological Association, interviews Canadian, Dr. Ashlee Cunsolo

2. Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Impacts, Implications, and Guidance-- An American Psychological Association report that addresses the mental health impacts and implications of our changing climate.

3. Three doctors and UBC nursing students discuss their own personal mental health impacts related to climate change ----25 minute video

4. Book by Harriet Shugarman titled, *How To Talk To Your Kids About Climate Change.*

5. Book by Sarah Jaquette Ray titled, *A Field Guide To Climate Anxiety, How to Keep Your Cool on a Warming Planet.*

6. Book by Dr. Britt Wray titled, *Generation Dread, Finding Purpose in an Age of Climate Crisis*

7. Canadian Mental Health Association BC Division - Coping with natural disaster stress
This web page provides information and resources for people that are feeling stressed or anxious about natural disasters.

**The Canadian Mental Health Association South Cariboo Branch bears no legal responsibility for therapeutic outcomes arising from accessing the above list of resources and has no financial involvement with individuals or groups on the above list. We do not verify therapists' professional standing. You are responsible for verifying therapist licensing with state/provincial or regional licensing bodies.*

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