



# Mend the Gap:

having a constructive climate-energy conversation

---

George Marshall  
Director of Programmes



Amber Bennett  
Canadian Program



[www.climateoutreach.org](http://www.climateoutreach.org)

@ClimateOutreach



# 2017 Mind The Gap: How We Can Talk With People Who Disagree With Us

---

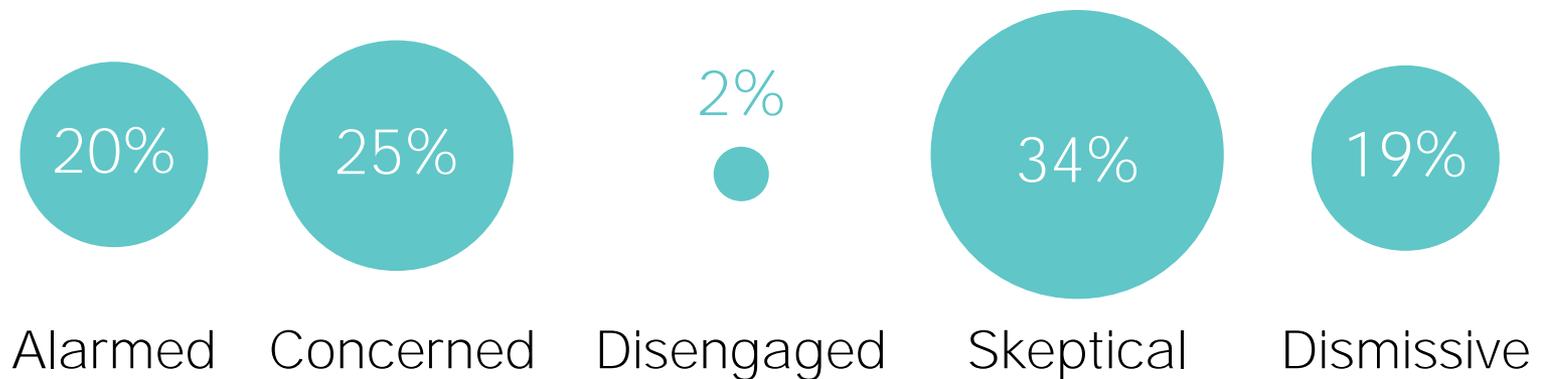
- Who do we get attacked by?
- Why do we love Alberta ?
- How will climate change harm the things we love?
- How do we respect the people in oil and gas?
- How will new forms of energy be good for Alberta?



# Albertans are split....



## Albertans are split about Climate Change



Source: Erick Lachapelle,  
EcoAnalytics



# Albertans are split



About the causes of climate change.

54% say human, 46% say natural

About the future of energy

39% want more oil and gas, 34% want less



# Albertans are split



Climate change challenges people's loyalties to their politics, their family and friends, and their sense of identity.



“

*If I say climate change is real maybe my son won't have a job if we shut off the tap tomorrow.*

- Rural Group

”

“

*Sure, I'm concerned about climate change. My concern is the people that are using climate change to disrupt my livelihood.*

- Energy Professionals Group

”



# Mind the Gap

And then a lot happened....





# Four ambitions

---

1. *Training* partners how to conduct communications research
2. *Holding conversations* with a wide-range of Albertans
3. *Co-designing* and *testing* effective language for talking about climate change and energy
4. Putting research into *practice*



# Alberta Narratives Project in numbers

19

Core organizing partners and funders



75 Organizations involved



55

Narrative Workshops held

Hours of group conversations

120



482

People attending Narrative Workshops

People trained

87



720

Pages of transcribed conversations



Pages of marked up narratives

2,410

# Two trainings- practice and evaluation



# The lead partners and funders



Pat + Connie Carlson



IVEY foundation

Allan + Helaine Shiff



# Who we spoke to

---

Agricultural producers Rural Albertans Youth Oil & Gas workers Policymakers Faith leaders Conservatives New Canadians Business leaders Indigenous people Energy leaders Environmentalists

Rural Albertans Families with young children Environmental Educators Teachers Artists Renewable Energy Workers Energy Service Providers Watershed protection groups Health Care workers and professionals City of Calgary communications employees Environmental Health & Safety specialists



---

*Let's hear from some of the  
people who ran the groups...*



**ALBERTA  
NARRATIVES  
PROJECT**

# Narratives that don't work

---



# Narratives that didn't work



## Green Absolutism

- Climate change is the greatest threat we face. Renewables are clean and new.
- Oil is dirty, destroying the world and dying out.
- Replace oil with 100% renewables.
- (and renewables have lots of jobs and income).



# Narratives that didn't work



## Elite 'lite' – costs and benefits.

- Climate change brings economic costs.
- Albertan oil is the *best* in the world.
- Renewables are a major opportunity for new *investment* and *markets*.
- There can be *new jobs* and *profits*.



# Narratives that didn't work



## Politicking

- Alberta can be a *leader* in taking action on climate change and renewable technology.
- We need a “*Made in Alberta*” plan, not one *imposed* by Ottawa.
- The *experts* say this policy is the best way to *deal with climate change*.
- PIPELINES!



# Narratives that can work



Gratitude  
Protect  
Everyone  
Secure  
Build

# Gratitude :



- Respect for “Albertan qualities”
- Gratitude for living in Alberta
- Respect for people who work hard in the oil and gas industry
- Oil and energy resources are precious and should be valued



“

*And I am proud to be Albertan,. I love Alberta for the mountains, but I also think that a large reason people are here is for opportunity. A lot of people move here for opportunity and I think the new people that come here are often willing to take chances, which is what I like.*

”

*Environmental Activist*



“

*In every first meeting that I have with people I like to give my appreciation for those that have come before me and give them respect: Kudos for what you've done to make this place something very nice for me to want to come here. When I see people that are new as myself, I'm like, "we're going to make this place better. You're welcome."*

*New Canadian*

”





*Oil and gas has provided many **benefits** for Alberta. We are **grateful** for the **hard work** of the people in the oil and gas industry that have **built** the prosperity of our province and nation.*

*Oil is a **precious** and **valuable resource** that needs to be used with **care**. We have given ours away for too little. It makes sense to plan for the future and use it more prudently.*



# Protect



- We love our quality of life
- Nature, landscape, clean air and water
- Facing a challenge we work together
- We pull together, support, protect each other in extreme weather



“

*In a crisis, the whole province will pull together and help each other out... it's an old school Western character... it's a real salt-of-the-earth bunch of people, and Albertans are just really, really great folks that really take care of each other. And that's great."*

*-Rural Group*

”



# Everyone



- Transition includes all sectors, not just energy
- Respect for the contribution of all sectors especially farming.
- Allow a voice for all groups: settlers, New Canadians, Indigenous People



“

*I think people forgot that before 1947 and the oil hit, Energy's not going to last for forever, but you know what? Agriculture will.*

*-Farmers Group*

”



# Secure



- We are too dependent on one sector
- The problem of oil and gas is the insecurity of jobs
- We need to broaden the economy
- A *Secure* Transition



“

*They put all their eggs in the oil industry basket . Now I think Albertans learned a lesson. Well did we? Now with the pipeline, we're going right back and we're putting all of our eggs back in that same basket."*

”

*Farmer*





*We have become too **dependent** on this one industry and now we are all **tied** to the rollercoaster of international oil prices.*

*The **boom** and bust cycle generates economic and job insecurity. Our products and pipelines are **vulnerable** to policies set in other provinces and countries.*

# Build



- Change is “essential”- part of life, natural cycles and evolution.
- Need to **build** stronger foundations, spread the load, more balance.
- This is not easy- it is challenging
- Transition **towards** something new (not away from something old)



“

*Albertans are builders, whether it's the pipelines, or roads, or bridges, or the electric industry. As a city, we're far newer than really any of the other major cities, by 80-100 years, and what the province has accomplished really reflects the attitude in this province.*

*Business Leaders Group*

”



# Towards a new conversation

---



# A new conversation



People find it hard to talk about climate change and rarely do so.

People are dissatisfied with the current public discourse. **They don't see themselves in it.**

People want a new kind of conversation:

- More Open
- More Respectful
- Discussing our choices
- Balanced and critical



“

*These are my friends, and I can talk to them, and we're having these debates, these massive debates, and they're very heated, but you know you come to a table like this, where there's a diversity of views, and you might not agree with each other, but one-on-one, you can have a good conversation about it.*

”

*Business Leader*



# A new conversation



So when can you bring up these issues?

- Be confident people want to have this conversation (if based on respect and recognition)
- Based on their main concerns
- Maybe climate change is not the lead



[www.albertanarrativesproject.ca](http://www.albertanarrativesproject.ca)

