

A Hot Topic Podcast: Addressing Heat Vulnerability in the Capital Regional District (CRD)

(Conclusion) Glenys & Kirsten

00:04

Erica: Welcome to A Hot Topic: Addressing Heat Vulnerability in the Capital Regional District, also known as the CRD. Thank you for being here. I am your host. Erica Dolman, a researcher, equity advocate and resident of Victoria, located in the CRD in British Columbia, or BC, Canada.

Before we begin, it is important to acknowledge the land on which this podcast was recorded and produced. We as a research team, acknowledge and respect the Ləkʷəŋən (Songhees and Xwsep̓səm/Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Ləkʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

I live and work on this unceded and stolen territory. I think of how some people may not consider their relation to the land until they experience a threat to their proximate environment, like an extreme heat event. As I work, play and live on this land, I sometimes feel struck as a white settler by how much I take from the land without considering my place on it and how to take care of it with this self-awareness and curiosity I practice being present as much as I can, approaching people and life with patience, listening, expressing gratitude for the land I live on, and other land that I do and will visit, and by engaging in efforts to integrate indigenous ways of being and knowing into my community by prioritizing relationships, having respect for all living things, understanding the cyclical nature of knowledge, and remembering the value of traditional knowledge passed down through generations. As I recently finished my master's thesis, which centered on the importance of connection between one another during extreme heat events. This project cannot be shared without an understanding, acknowledgement, and appreciation of the land on which extreme weather events occur, and the encouragement to turn to each other when the next one comes. Though this research discusses the geographical area of the CRD as its frame of reference, I want to highlight that extreme weather events are experienced worldwide because of climate change and extends and effects beyond the constraints of borders.

For our last interview, I interviewed Glenys Verhulst and Kirsten Mah. Glenys is a Sustainability Planner with the District of Saanich, and Kirsten is A Hot Topic project co-lead, who was interviewed in our first episode of this series, Introduction, who works in local government and community health planning, focusing on various determinants of health, including climate change.

Kirsten and Glenys, both work in the local government, who is one of the main audiences this podcast series is designed for, to engage in “policy listening.” As a reminder, policy listening is when people's stories are heard and digested with the plan to later integrate these stories into local policy to provide better support to these communities during extreme weather events for more equitable policy outcomes. We asked Glenys and Kirsten to listen to the previous episodes of this podcast series of Eva, John, Ruth, and Maggie, and to take note of their reflections and thoughts and share them with us in this interview.

We begin this episode like many others, huddling around a high-quality handheld recorder with me crossing my fingers that the recorder is actually recording. Dr. Sarah Marie Wiebe, our other A Hot Topic co-lead and Associate Professor at the University of Victoria in the School of Public Administration, who was also interviewed in the introduction episode of this series, hosted the three of us in her office on campus. As I work on campus in the building beside Sarah's, I made the less-than -32 second walk from my office to hers. Glenys and Kirsten were already waiting outside of Sarah's office, and we caught up briefly before the interview. Sarah then showed up and let us in and offered us tea as we talked about the podcast, what sort of content we'd like to hear from Glenys and Kirsten, and what she'd like to share, as well as logistical preparation for the interview, including where we'd all sit and where the best place for the recorder is.

Like our previous episodes, you will hear ambient noise to bring you into the room with us, including the opening and closing of the nearby stairwell door, the notifications on Glenys' PC computer and the turning of notebook pages. This all serves to emphasize how place informs conversations and to immerse you, the listeners, by interviewing Glenys and Kirsten.

We are ending this series with a somewhat instructional guide on policy listening. Glenys and Kirsten share how their work directly relates to these stories the power of podcasting as a platform and communication and educational tool for climate change and advice to policymakers on how to engage with policy listening in an authentic way.

Erica: Glenys and Kirsten, if you could please introduce yourself and explain your experience with and relationship to extreme heat.

05:31

Glenys: I'll go first. My name is Glenys Verhulst, and I'm a Sustainability Specialist with the District of Saanich in our Sustainability Division. And I guess from my personal perspective of relation to heat, I was definitely around in the 2021 heat dome in Victoria. I live in a condo building on the bottom floor, and it was not as hot as on the top floor, but it was quite hot, and I was lucky enough to have already purchased a portable air conditioner, so I was all right. And I also have moderately severe asthma, and when the heat happens, it's often associated, at least, you know, somewhat with wildfire smoke problems, and so that's really dangerous for me. Like, I've been hospitalized before, and I have to go on, like, strong steroid meds that have lots of side effects if I get too exposed. So, I like to have a lot of precautions against that, too. And I've learned through my job that you know, when it's hot outside, the air quality suffers just from the chemical reactions to heat as well. So, yeah, it was really important to me to be cocooned in my house with my air filters and my portable AC. And I also checked in on some of my senior friends who live alone and offered on my Facebook page for my friends who didn't have air

conditioning to come and hang out with my air conditioning if they wanted, and tried to share information. So, I guess that's the the personal relationship to heat, and it is, like, quite distressing to know how serious it is in terms of human health and in terms of, like, everything else that's living health. So, yeah, and from... I guess we'll talk a little bit later about how it relates to my job, so, I'll save that for later.

07:37

Kirsten: It sucks because we can never go to the beach when it's hot out, because you can't go outside. My name is Kirsten Mah. I am a Healthy Communities Planner with the Capital Regional District, and I work on all kinds of social and structural determinants of health, including climate change and how it's making us sick and not as healthy. As for my relationship to heat, I've done some research and work in that area professionally. Through my current role during the heat dome, I was laying on a floor in Vancouver with a dog and not working very hard because it was so hot, and we lived in a on the top of a four, four story building, and it was very hot, but luckily, we are privileged enough to now live in a home, and this past summer, it was great. We didn't even use our air conditioner because it's shaded by the trees all around us, and I'm scared that one of them is going to get cut down eventually, but it works really well, and we were chilling, it was perfect.

08:50

Erica: Glenys, what is your role with local government? And do you consider yourself a policy maker when this question is asked to you as well? Kirsten?

08:59

Glenys: Yeah, so, my title is Sustainability Specialist, but I think it should be "Generalist," but that doesn't sound as fancy, but there's no real way to be a specialist with climate change in local government, because I'm part of a team in our Sustainability Division that's looking at climate adaptation and climate mitigation. So, what we can do to become more resilient and also reduce our impact on the climate, as well as looking at things that affect our municipal operations, like getting our fleets and buildings off of fossil fuels and onto renewables, as well as community wide kinds of considerations, like, I run a small grants program for neighbors to do projects that bring them together to work on climate action, care for nature, and emergency preparedness. So, there's a lot of different. -projects. I led an e-bike incentive program for the community, things like that. So, there's, there's a broad range of things that local governments take on when it comes to climate change. And in terms of a policy, I would say that I'm a policy informer and that I'm in my happy place where I get to look at, so, what is... climate change is a wicked problem, and local governments have a role to play. And so, what my job and others in the team get to do is look at, how do we define this chunk of climate action that we can work on as a local government, with our current information, our current like best practices, where we're at, what budget we can find, etc, and what engagement we do. And then with the policy maker, I would say that what we do is we present recommendations that then, of course, ultimately require council approval after a whole layer of things, and then they require funding, and then they require implementation, and then hopefully after that, people will feel the benefits. So, yeah, I'd say I'm a policy informer.

11:19

Kirsten: I have a similarly nuanced response, because I think policy, there's all these intersections of policy, programming and planning, and I think I work in that space. I've done research that, similar to Glenys, informs policymakers specifically. We did work that this podcast is related to around extreme heat, and hearing from the community and then translating that and sharing that information with policymakers so that hopefully they can integrate more voices into their policies. Another component around programming, I work hard to educate service providers about things like climate change and other determinants of health so that they integrate it into the programs that they offer to our community members. And then I do some of my own programming, like, we're doing a project around relationship building and connectedness with part of the incentive is around mental health and people's wellness generally, but also so that they're more connected so they can respond to climate change. So, I think, I'm not sure I'm a policymaker right now, especially not related to climate change, but hopefully I'm a policy and programming informer, and I think programming is a space that sometimes gets overlooked but has a huge impact on the real daily lives of the people that we're trying to support, and the, the information and evidence coming out of academia should be targeted and supporting those people as well so that they can have a direct impact on the lives, a direct positive impact on the lives of those marginalized.

13:09

Erica: And what types of consultation and public engagement do both of you enact in the workplace?

13:17

Glenys: Such a big question. Yeah, so I'll talk about, like, Indigenous relations, and then we'll talk about community engagement. It's two different things. But yeah, in terms of Indigenous relations, the district we're operating on the territories of the Ləkʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples, and we're working to establish, really, like and enhance and develop council to council relationships. We have just hired last year, a new position at the district that's indigenous relations. So that's been, I think, probably really that will be really helpful. And oh, and also, the district has committed to and is doing a lot of cultural safety and humility training for staff. And we have and are looking into how we can establish with other nations whose territories we're operating on. But we have an MOU with some of the nations already, and our Sustainability Division staff, in terms of what we do, we reach out to all the nations locally, really early in the process about what we're what we're up to, and ask how or if they would like to be involved in any way. And we build in budget for compensating people for their time for that, and we also look for other opportunities for us to do more training as staff on understanding all sorts of things about colonialism, reconciliation, etc. Myself and another member of our team, so far, have taken the Victoria Native Friendship Centers Community Learning Program, which is so good. I highly recommend it. It's just such an amazing journey that takes such care of your emotions and building community and practicing the skills that we need while talking about all of these like difficult histories and hope for the future and things. So, anyway, I highly recommend that to everyone. But I think we're very much in the beginning of where, we can go in the future, in terms of understanding and like learning from and centering Indigenous priorities and climate action, and then in terms of engagement methods, we're, as an example, we're currently updating our climate plan, and for phase one engagement, we've offered two in-person, open

houses. We've run workshops, including with high school students, and ran presentations and an online survey. We had booths at a whole bunch of community festivals, displays at our rec centers. We rode the bus to encourage people to take our survey. We handed out little QR code flyers. That was really fun. And then in terms of who we're reaching out to, we really want to reach out not just to the people who are already really engaged in municipal processes, like our community associations and industry stakeholders. They're very important. And we're also working with a community organization, the Community Social Planning Council, to run engagements that are targeted to priority populations who are disproportionately impacted by climate change, that includes seniors, low income households, parents with young children, people with disabilities, people facing racism, all sorts of things. And we've also talked with UVic students, so that's been fun through the Environmental Studies work. And we have two advisory committees with the District of Saanich that have volunteer residents on them, that we've talked to. We have lots of advisory committees, but we've talked to two so far about the for our accessibility, diversity, equity and inclusion committee and our sustainability and climate action committee. So, we've got that input, which I've really appreciated, and we also review other recently completed and relevant local engagement and strategies and research, definitely, including the Hot Topic research report and listening to the podcasts. So, that's been really helpful. So, I think that engagement is we're, in a nutshell, trying to make sure that we're going to where people are at instead of only expecting them to come to us. And we're really trying to ensure that we're reaching, like, different parts of our community.

17:47

Kirsten: I think the CRD does a lot of similar engagement that Glenys identified, and our Climate Action team is doing a lot more right now to build up involvement, more direct involvement from the community, like they're developing a newsletter. There's an initiative working on trying to support community organizations to do more around climate action. In my specific role, the majority of my engagement is focused with service providers, local nations, and not as much directly with residents. I think their lived experience and living experience is very important for decision making, but I think a component that gets missed sometimes is that service provider lens, because they take the experiences of all of the people, a large group of people that they work with, and they distill it into actionable things, and they bring in their own lived experience, which I try to encourage more and more with the people that I work with, is that they can bring their whole selves to our conversations, and they're not just professionals or just lived experience, but you can have many different facets to your life. And, so, the work that I, the public, the consultations and engagement that I do, varies. We have a monthly meeting where different organizations join, and we talk about different topics and try and gain an understanding of some of the most pressing issues related to the determinants of health for our region, and then we identify those, and then we have some bigger engagements with all kinds of different service providers that might not be a regular member of our network, but provide that perspective. So, we've done a lot with the Hot Topic research. We did different engagements, but we've also done it around housing and health and primary care, mental health, and one component that we're working on kind of consistently now is around data access and how organizations are able to access evidence to inform their programming and the challenges that they face. And that's a two-way dialogue, so that we can share information that we have with

them, but also, gain a better understanding of what is needed to plan programs and develop policy and all kinds of stuff to help people's lives.

20:10

Erica: So many amazing things are happening.

20:14

Erica: So, how can policy- and decision-makers listen more deeply to the stories of those with lived experiences of related policy concerns, for example, sustainability, housing, etc.?

20:27

Kirsten: I'll start this one because I want to comment about what you said, "go to where people are at," and I think that's a really key component. We often kind of in engagement, host something at a municipality or like the town hall, but that's not easy for people to get to. So, in our research, the Hot Topic research, we went to people where they were at. We went to seniors' groups that existed already. We went to language groups at the Intercultural Association (ICA). We hosted focus groups with parents online so that they were able to join even if their children were napping or they had their children, and I think that's a key component that people often miss out, is that idea of going to where they're at. But in order to be able to do that, you have to build and maintain relationships with those service providers, because they get so many different questions and requests and all kinds of things, and so having a relationship with the ICA as a policy developer or planner or whatever makes it easier for you to say, hey, we have this project that's happening now. Can we work with you to capture the voices of whichever group, I mean newcomers, if it's ICA, and I think one piece that is not always present in planning and policy is diversity in hiring, because when we started this project, a lot of the people that I was working with around extreme heat were detached homeowners, and kind of the solution that was being presented from all levels of government to extreme heat was heat pumps. Oh, heat pump incentives will help people install heat pumps. And that's like, the majority of people in Victoria rent, I believe.

Glenys: Correct, in the City of Victoria.

Kirsten: Yes in the city, yes, in the actual City of Victoria, the majority of people rent so they're not able to put in heat pumps, and these incentives don't help them, and having people with kind of that lens and the diversity working in these positions is really helpful so that they understand different walks of life and different experiences of life and how to build better programs and policies to reach a broader group of people.

22:46

Glenys: Okay, yeah, I agree. And this is a really big topic, and I think to talk about how to listen, there's like so many precursors, so, one of them is being clear on your mandate to incorporate equity into whatever it is you're planning in terms of, like, making sure that, like, you've got some framework to be listening and who you're listening to. So, for the District of Saanich, our 2020 climate plan made a commitment to climate equity along four different pillars that we borrowed from the USDN, the Urban Sustainability Directors Network. So, we're looking at procedural, so,

what Kirsten was talking about is, who's involved? Do you have the right people involved? Secondly, is distributional. So, how are the benefits and burdens of climate change and climate action distributed within your community? Is it contributing to inequality, or is it lessening it? And then, structural. So, looking at how the work that you're doing right now is fitting into larger, historical and ongoing systems that have disadvantaged some parts of our community and advantaged others, and so being aware of that, as well as transgenerational equity, because we know that the people who are younger will have longer to live with climate change, and the people who are yet to be born have a lot of... what we do now is very important for them, so we have to think about that. So, I would say that's a precursor to inform how, how you're planning your listening. And then I think making sure that you have some training to understand equity concepts like intersectionality and some reflection on the role of your own and local government generally and positionality, because those are two different things, right? Depending on your own lived experience, you might, like, really understand something, but when you're coming with the local government hat on, it's different, and then having a sense of who the priority populations are., are for your project, which isn't always simple, and then having a sense of how to best reach those groups. So, we've talked about that, and also you have to include how sensitive your questions might be those kind of considerations, or what kind of supports might be needed to have those conversations. So, yeah, there's a lot, and I know that I'm talking to, you know, people here, who are researchers, who do this at university, who have ethics committees. So, you're really good at this. Local governments, we don't have ethics committees before we engage with the public. So we're, we're learning, and I think also echoing what Kirsten said about working with trusted community partners, I think asking open ended questions is really important, and sometimes we run up with barriers about asking open ended questions in terms of privacy, in terms of what we collect, because we're only supposed to collect our little sliver of information, only about the topic that we're collecting, and nothing more. But when people are talking to you about their lives and their barriers that they're facing for climate adaptation it's, it's a big topic, right? And we have to understand that broad thing. But, so, that's a... we still haven't figured that out, how we stay within our own privacy rules. And I think one of the things is when you're listening, is to have sort of, like, the emotional skills, to stay curious, to stay oriented, to be learning, to not be distracted, to not assume that you already know what people are going to say. And then, of course, there's a thing that you do with what people tell you, and I think that's like, so important, and it can be... because climate adaptation, I mentioned, is linked to so many other equity issues. It's very complex. It crosses many, many jurisdictions. Climate adaptation just generally crosses many jurisdictions, right, like our emergencies program, things that the province does, things that the federal government does, things that the health department or the Health Authority does even within our own organization. Is this a, this a problem for, you know, how do we talk about trees, like, that involves the planning department, that involves the storm water engineers, that involves transportation. You know, involves everybody. It involves our parks department, of course, so involves private citizens on private land making decisions, and by law, you know, enforcement. So, it's just, it's so complicated to take what people say and then move it forward in the ways that you have jurisdiction to do in the next say, you know, a year or five years, however long your plan is. So, we're aware that we don't want to exhaust people by asking them and then not

showing them what happens with the things that they've told us, so, but it's challenging, absolutely.

27:58

Erica: I mean, the complexity is just when I hear you're both talking about it, I'm like, oh my goodness, working from that perspective, it's just so challenging. Yeah, so to kind of pivot toward the episodes of the podcast, what are some key themes that resonated for both of you when listening to the Hot Topic podcast?

28:17

Glenys: Well, there's a lot there, there's, there was, there were... it was very rich and informative. I think the overarching theme that I noticed was that people were facing a new challenge with the heat dome, and they all have learned and reflected so much since and have all sorts of different plans or processes or knowledge in place for future heat events. So, I think that was something that came up. And I was impressed by how community-minded all the interviewees were, and they spoke about how the heat wave was affecting themselves and others, and how their actions they could take to protect others, as well as not just themselves. So, that was great. I resonated with Eva and Ruth's message about having worked on this issue for decades with the, "Now? Now, do you believe in climate change?" Kind of reaction that they were hoping to get from others that were in their networks. I also really resonated with what Eva was saying about the role of government, which is building infrastructure that's ready for tomorrow's climate, and how the role of so many different things, affordable housing, clean water, connected walkable communities, forest management, diversity of like food, all of that kind of stuff. So that when people hear about climate action, they hear what they're getting, not what's being taken away from them. I'm giving thumbs up right now, but it's radio, so you can't see it.

30:02

Glenys: Yeah, and, also, what she was saying about how important it is for people to have the time and the means to spend time in nature and to understand what we have and what's at stake. Because there's a lot of sort of rich data that she had through her job about what was happening with the salmon and the berries and the recently planted trees and all of that kind of stuff. And I also really liked what she had to say about the gap not being between Indigenous ways of knowing and Western science, because they're telling us the same things or similar things about the threats from climate change to our life support systems, but between Indigenous ways of knowing and Western extractive policy. So, yeah, I agree with that. And I also really liked what Ruth had to say about the interconnectedness when we think, when we have a knee-jerk reaction to saying we're worried about fire when it's hot, so let's cut down the trees. But what she was saying is, think a little bit more the role of trees in an ecosystem, to absorb water, to keep the soils moist. We got to think in like ecosystem and connectedness, we can't just do a knee-jerk reaction. So, I really appreciated that, and I also really appreciated what John had to say about the really practical things that came out of like the heat dome experience for him. And sometimes, you know, we think of climate change as this wicked problem, as I mentioned. And like, the solutions are so complex and so draggy. But what he was saying was that maybe in the cool space that they had somebody could organize a card

game so people felt comfortable hanging out there and had something to do, or maybe like having a conversation with your doctor about, are you on any meds that make you more susceptible to heat, and what should you do about that? So, I really heard that, and I also heard things about how people were disproportionately affected by the heat dome depending on whether they had cooling at home, mechanical cooling. So, people who had, you know, some kind of cooling could just continue with their normal life indoors but people who didn't, had to make really involved calculations, monitoring the indoor temperature, monitoring their water intake, monitoring, like, do they need to make a plan to leave the house or not? Can they keep it cool enough, or do they have to go to a cooling center? So, it was very absorbing as a problem to deal with, whereas other people just got to live their lives in their cool house. So, I think that's, like, important to keep in mind that, like, burden and that load that people are facing. And I really liked what Maggie had to say about all of the ways that she was preparing, and also, from a transit user's perspective, about like, how challenging that can be when you don't have access to shade and you just have to be there. So, the way that she was planning ahead and getting food that she could put aside. So I was, like, really impressed by the resourcefulness there, too. Yeah, there's so much more. There's just so much to talk about in those things. I... but those are some of the things at the top of my mind.

33:15

Kirsten: I'm going to speak a bit about some of the ones that you mentioned, but one of the things that you just kind of triggered in me, that is both in the podcast and like when we were doing the research, is I feel like we were looking for people to be like, Oh, the system and systemic, big changes that need to happen. But what people talked a lot about was like, Well, I had a cold shower, and I prepare bottled water now and, and, it's just this like frustration of I mean, like, it's great and it's important for people to prepare individually, but the fact that everything environmental, like recycling, all of these things, are just a way for industry and government to kind of download the responsibility onto individual people, and that was reflected, and it's been reflected in conversations we have with people, because they're like, this is how I'm going to prepare. And there's not kind of, I don't know, that call as much to change things at a bigger level. I mean, I think it's important, and it's great to hear that people understand more how to prepare and how to support themselves, but I think we need to think a little bit more about what is our responsibility, especially for marginalized folks, because they in particular like, well, this is in my plan, and I think they in particular take a lot more responsibility on and it's not there. And so how do we make there be more equity within climate action, the pieces that you talked about, that I also reflected on, and I have biases, because the one conversation always comes up in my work is that, like intersecting crises and how, it's like... we'll be talking about climate change, but actually we're talking about housing but actually we're talking about income inequality and how all these things go together. And we have to figure out some way, which often, in this conversation, boils down to end of capitalism, but there's just so many things that are intersecting right now, and we are not good at holding and maintaining focus on multiple things. So, how do we manage all of these things coming together? And then the other piece that you mentioned as well is that community that flows through all of the podcasts, because we saw everybody was taken off guard by the extreme heat, especially government. We had no idea that it was, I mean, I wasn't in the CRD at the time, but most governments had no idea this

was going to be this bad and how to react and what to do. And, so, there was a gap. And people came in with community, they supported each other, and that's the most important protective factor to everything, is knowing your neighbors and having people around who care for you and who you care for because, I mean, like when the big one comes with the earthquake, we're gonna have to take care of each other. So, and that's something that's just personally, really important to me, is community building, but also professionally, we have our Connection in Action project that's going on, where we're training people to be better community builders and helping educate people about where they can go to build that community. So, yeah, those are some things that are important to me. I think because they're important in my real life.

36:39

Erica: That makes absolute sense. Yeah, for sure, it is deeply personal, professionally, and it's, there's an intersection of those things. They're not necessarily separate. So, do you think, both of you, do you think a multimedia platform like podcasting is an effective way to reach policy makers? If not, what are some barriers?

37:02

Glenys: Okay, I'm going to go back to what Kirsten talked about, and then I'll answer this question, because I really resonate with what you said about, like, offloading responsibility for climate action at an individual level. And yeah, I think in our climate plan update this time around, we've got, you know, the opportunity to make sure that we're doing both and, and, I think we did that in the 2020 climate plan as well, in terms of advocating for changes to the building code, you know, things that just impact people's lives at the systemic level instead. So, yeah, the right to cooling legislation for people who live in rental buildings, people who live in stratas. How can we improve the free air conditioner program to make it more accessible? You know, I've, I think it's, it's helping a lot of people, and I've also heard from friends who tried to access it, who had some barriers. So, you know, there's a, there's a lot that we can do in terms of the the role of government and policy and codes and legislation and that kind of stuff as well, anyway.

But back to the question about podcasts. So, I really like how the podcast is a great accompaniment to the report that summarizes things, the Hot Topic report that summarizes the findings and has recommendations in it, and then this is a more deep listening exercise, and makes it very relatable with real people in our community. And I think that immersing yourself in another person's point of view is really great. Humans, we like to think that we're motivated by data, but we actually are quite motivated by story as well. It's just how we're built. I remember when I was studying geography here at UVic, one class invited us to read novels about different places to understand how the place influenced people in a really holistic kind of way. So, I feel like this podcast approach is doing the same sort of thing, very immersive, that being said, attention is really a sought after commodity nowadays, especially if you want to reach people who are, you know, higher up in the hierarchy of decision making in terms of policy and so before listening to the Hot Topic podcasts, podcasts were not part of my work life. So, it was, it was a different sort of flow. I usually get info from reading reports, attending webinars, presentations, conferences, that kind of thing. I did ask my colleagues and somebody, some of them really like listening to podcasts, and some of them don't. So, I think it's a great thing to add

to the mix, and I think that ensuring a full transcript is included is another way for people to get it. And you know, I hear this a lot about sort of like Western approaches to knowledge and how the written word versus spoken word is valued, but it is still very nice to have a written word to refer to. So that's what I would say.

40:15

Kirsten: I think it can be useful. One thing that in our data accessibility work we've been hearing is there's a lot of barriers, like, think journal articles and things like that, being behind pay walls. So, if these are not that, it makes it more accessible to a broader range of people who can use it. I think one of the kind of challenges, potentially or barriers, is a perceived, like, legitimacy of podcasts or multimedia. I feel like people believe reports and journal articles and those things are the only things we can base decisions off of, and so, I think breaking that down and working through that will help people access podcasts and other multimedia platforms more easily for their work. And I think it just comes down to time. It might seem like, oh, I have to sit down and listen to these podcasts. And that's just as much time I could just read this article instead. So, that might be a barrier. But, yeah, I think that people are looking for different ways to engage, and as long as it's not behind a paywall and isn't 100 million hours, people will use it more, but we just need to talk about that a little bit more about like citations. And how do we, even if you're just you're sitting at your desk listening to a podcast, how do you make sure your, your boss still knows that you're working but and then I think things like this, though, might be more accessible to those people higher up, like elected officials in particular, because they're probably less inclined to read through a report and more likely to be like, Oh, I listened to this podcast or whatever. So, I think it could be a tool to access elected officials more?

42:02

Erica: Yeah, absolutely. So, for both of you, are there any parting messages you would like to offer about what policy listening means to you?

42:12

Glenys: Yeah, I hadn't heard the phrase, "policy listening" until being invited to think about it for this podcast episode. But one of the things I'm wondering about is that we're in an era of growing mistrust, polarization, mis- and disinformation, and I wonder if the deep listening to a relatable person in your community's story is a way to work towards regrowing some trust and connection to counteract all of that. And it was making me think about an earlier question about engagement. And one thing that I failed to mention is that sometimes engagement is just between a resident and the local government sort of like two ways, but I, and, we, try a lot to make opportunities for residents to speak with each other, community members to speak with each other about this topic, to grow connections, to grow community, to grow opportunities to be constructive together. And I see a lot of polling that shows that people are still worried about climate change and amidst all the other things that we're worried about with the, you know, crises that we're facing, and they're worried that they're the only ones. So, when we can talk with each other about what's actually going on, I think that it's very, very helpful at addressing a lot of the concerns that people might be having, so that they don't feel like they're alone in their concerns about climate change. And we know that we're facing a growing isolation problem,

and I know that being able to feel like you can relate to people in your community will probably help deal with that too. So, yeah.

44:12

Kirsten: I think something in terms of “policy listening,” I would invite policy makers to do is to listen with the idea that they're listening from their whole selves. I feel like we break ourselves up into professionals and lived experience, which I mentioned earlier, but like Glenys said, people are having a harder time relating to each other, and I think if you come just as like a Climate Action Specialist, sorry, I didn't mean to make fun of your title or whatever, but, um, I think if you come as a professional, you sometimes are a bit removed, and then it makes it harder for you to relate and harder for you to create good policy that will resonate with residents. And I think if you come with a reflection on what you were doing during the heat dome or other experiences you've had or, and, you reflect on both your own experiences, but also your privileges and, and come with an open mind. And I think you said curiosity is really important, and just understanding that, one, you are an expert, both from your training, but an expert also from your own lived experience, and that other people have expertise from their experiences that can help inform your work. And it just feels better to be your whole self and come to work and connect with things than to come to work and maintain a distance. So, I would invite policymakers to do that.

45:40

Erica: Amazing, excellent. I mean, both of you, I just want to express gratitude for all the work you do like it's really inspiring and so thank you for sharing all of that today. Are there any last thoughts or anything else you would like to share?

45:55

Glenys: Well, I'm just going to give a pitch. So, if people want to learn more about what Saanich is up to, go to [saanich.ca/climate plan](https://saanich.ca/climate-plan). I don't know when you'll be listening to this podcast, but we will be doing engagement phase two on our climate plan update in the spring so, you can learn more about that at the website if you want to get involved, because we want to hear from you. And I think that a lot of times, people are very concerned about climate change and don't know what is happening at their local government level to address it. So, you know, we've had a plan to cut our emissions in half by 2030 and net zero by 2050 we're working towards it. We've got climate plan report cards every year showing the progress that we're making towards our targets in all sorts of different aspects of our community. So, yeah, check it out if you're curious.

46:54

Erica: Great, excellent, good. All right...

By interviewing Glenys and Kirsten, we are bringing this podcast series full circle on how to engage in the collective, co-created process of policy listening. Policy listening is a way to engage with community by hearing active listening and prioritizing the stories of people's lived experience and to use them to inform local policy for more equitable policy outcomes. By listening with curiosity and an attentive ear, we can learn from these stories and understand our neighbors a little bit more than we did before.

Through this podcast series, we find the opportunity to connect with those in our community. We hear stories that we may have not otherwise have heard, which has the potential to expand our perception, build our compassion and spark change. On a personal level, we think about our own experiences, our family and friends experiences, our neighbours' experiences, and reflect on what is happening in our communities and what we can do to engage more with those around us. There is no replacement for building community. It is the foundation that we as a community need to build so that new and more equitable government initiatives can be functional and effective.

As a parting message, I encourage you to say hello to your neighbor the next time you see them in the hall or in their front yard. If you don't see them, perhaps, knock on their door and give them some vegetables from your garden or cookies you made to show that you're there and that you care.

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