

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

(Episode 2) John

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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 Lək'wəŋən (Songhees and Xwsepsem/Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək'wəŋən 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.

My second interview was conducted with John Lamont, a peer support worker and member of Mental Health Recovery Partners South Island or MHRP SI. MHRP SI provides programs and services for people with mental illness. They also offer a variety of services for family members and friends supporting their loved ones, including one on one peer support, group support, family counseling, education, advocacy and policy development.

I was introduced to John by Marion Mendoza, Program Manager of MHRP SI. John and I coordinated over email and planned to meet at the MHRP SI location in Quadra Village in

Victoria. I biked the 10-minute journey from my house and met John around midday. I locked up my bike near Cafe Fantastico, and saw the office sign just up the road. I knocked on the door, and it was opened by a person I, now unfortunately cannot remember, but I recall feeling welcomed into the space. It was a very standard office area with a few chairs and some cupboards illuminated by overhead fluorescent lighting. There was a short hallway that had doors leading to various offices and rooms. John came out of one of these rooms and greeted me. John had a warmth and friendliness to him that made me feel at ease and ready for our conversation. We then settled into a small room with the computer in it, with two armchairs and a small table, a perfect place to put my hand recorder. I set up the recorder and began giving John context of the Hot Topic project and my master's thesis, more generally. He then asked me what I studied for my undergraduate degree, which was in political science, and he said he'd studied the same thing! This shared interest and experience grounded our conversation, and we began our interview.

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So, if you could just introduce yourself and whatever you feel is relevant; your job and your experience with extreme heat and your identification in a priority population that would respond to why you want to discuss this with us.

John: Yeah, so I'm John Lamont, and I've been a peer support worker with Mental Health Recovery Partners South Island for about eight years now, and for about the past nine years now, I lived in a building owned by Island Community Mental Health Association. So, that's mental health housing. It's subsidized and no on-site staff, but we do have a housing coach or mental health worker that we can meet with regular like monthly or whatever support a person needs, but it's pretty light support. It's as much or as little as you need, basically, yeah, but it is mental health housing, though. So, it is kind of a vulnerable population. We were... In our building, we were

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some of the first people to get our COVID shot. So, right, definitely fall into that category.

Erica: Yeah, certainly. Well, that sounds definitely applicable to what we're talking about here. So, as we were discussing earlier, the 2021 heat dome did happen a couple of years ago now, so it might be hard to relive and discuss that, but we'll talk about the 2021 heat dome as well as just heat events that have happened since then. So, if you can recall from that time in 2021 How did that heat dome affect you, and where were you during that time?

John: So, I was in Victoria still. And well, one thing that I remember that happened there, that it wasn't directly related to me, but in our building, I think we had somebody on the upstairs floor, and I think there's one, one side of the building that faces the sun, or whatever. That's the one like it really hot. I think the other side of the building, it might not be as bad, but yeah, we did have somebody, I don't know who, if it was an older person or not, but we did have somebody that passed away during the heat dome I had heard. So that kind of makes it a little bit more real.

Erica: For sure, definitely, yeah.

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John: I remember too. I was facilitating some zoom workshops during this time. So, yeah, it was basically from my house, and one of the workshops happened to be on Zoom on one of the days where it was like the heat dome, and it was good because, well, not good, but it's tough because there was COVID going on as well. But I probably could have came down to the office and maybe done the meeting from the office here, which would have been cooler, but I just still elected to do it from home, otherwise, like, it was so hot that I wouldn't have been home during the time that I was doing the workshop if it wasn't for the workshop. So is about a two-and-a-half-hour workshop. We had about a 15-minute break, and, like, in between the break, I had to, like, just sit in the tub and the cold water to cool down, and I got through it somehow. And like I said earlier to you, I'm about how at that point I felt pretty invincible. I'm like, this is uncomfortable. I'll tough it out. And I don't, I didn't think about, like, negative consequences that extreme heat can have on you, and sometimes you don't know it until you feel like heat stroke or whatever, right?

Erica: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, and that's kind of the thing, I don't think at the time, we realized how impactful and how negative the experience was, ultimately how hot the heat was, right? Yeah, and during that heat dome, so you kind of already alluded to this, you took some baths, you found a way to work through it, but how did you respond to the heat dome, and how has your behavior changed since the last heat dome?

John: I don't know. I feel like there... I don't know if it was in the same year, if there was, like, a... another heat dome that just wasn't quite as bad, or if it was maybe the next year, but definitely no, it wasn't like, maybe the other ones weren't as extreme. But there, there were some challenging moments, I think that year, and then the following year. But basically, I didn't really change too, too much, because it was just kind of like, okay, well, it's a little bit hotter, a little bit more uncomfortable. I, I play tennis, so, like, I usually just play however warm it is, like, it's even if it's like 35 degrees, it's like, okay, we'll still play and tough it out. And I ride my bike too. So, it's kind of like another thing too. It's like, I guess riding my bike, I'm out in the outdoors as well. So, I'm kind of like, and then the summertime, I am outdoors a lot too. So, I'm used to the, the warmth, or, yeah, like building up some body heat as well, so feeling warmer than if so, I was just standing around right? So, I had a pretty good tolerance for heat. And I guess another factor too, though, was I was doing yoga for quite a few years, and it was not hot yoga, but it was in a heated room. So, it was about 31 degrees, so in there, it's like, very stuffy and all that stuff. And, after that hour an hour and a half, you can go home. But when the apartment's like that, it's like, you don't get to go home after an hour and a half, you just you have to deal with it hour after hour. But I think our body gets used to certain things. That's why I think, like, I probably dealt with the heat dome probably better and had less effects than I did, maybe later on, with some ones that maybe weren't as intense or whatever, because my body was no longer as acclimatized on a regular basis to that heat. Because, like, if you go week after week to these yoga classes and you, you're always in 31-degree temperatures, then that's just normal. So, if it's 35 it's a little bit more uncomfortable, but yeah, and I guess, like, where I would play tennis, there was the Willow's Beach nearby, so I would go to the beach, and then the savior would be finding shade, because it's like, it's like, okay, it's really hot there, but I'm in the shade here, so I'm kind of good. But the tricky part, though, is it's like trying to

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kill the time too, because then I'm just sitting there, I'd bring a book, and then eventually I get restless, right? It is, like, head home and maybe, like, stop at the mall, where it's like, air conditioned and stuff like that. And I don't know if it

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was then that I really started doing it, but then eventually I just started, yeah, just taking more, like, colder showers, but then, yeah, cold baths too, just like, soaking in it for quite a quite a while, and not in the heat dome. But I, yeah, like I said back then, I was just like, whatever it is, I'll deal with it. And I didn't really, because my building's always been, like, semi-hot, right? But as I said, because of the yoga for the first few years in that building, I didn't really, yeah, it was warmer in the summer. I wasn't like, dreading it or anything like that, and heat waves were fine, but I just had to think of a lot of different strategies, too. And what it forced me to do, though, was get out of the house more than I normally would, and find things to do, like the gym would always be a good place, because it's like, air- conditioned, but it was still kind of hot in there a little bit, because I don't know people like had the windows open, maybe the air conditioning wasn't working as it good as it could be. But yeah, it was. Yeah, it had a big impact, because it kind of changes my routine, or whatever, trying to not be at home as much. And then the real effect, though, was, um, on sleeping. Like, it's usually, like, I can't really sleep until it cools down a bit. I try to use all the fans and all that stuff. Like, right now it's, it's somewhat warm in the apartment, but I'm not even using fans and all these ice packs and cold packs, like, and then, like, wearing a wet t-shirt, or, like, evaporative pooling, or whatever. So, I've just really had to be very resourceful with what I'm doing. And I can't remember when I got it. I don't know maybe if it was me, because after the heat though, maybe the heat dome made me get, like, a thermometer so I could actually see what was going on in my apartment, like, how hot it was, what the humidity was like, if it was like, a certain temperature, that it would be like, okay, it's not good to be in here. While it's this temperature, we have a common room in our basement and in the apartment building, but it's, it's not the nicest place, but at least I have that too, if I if I get felt too tired to, like, go anywhere, part of thing too, is like, when you try to find things to go to, it's like, I don't know, it's like you've made the rounds everywhere, and it's like they see you again the next day. But I remember just like eating my like meals in the Mayfair food court and just walking around the mall, and then at night, sometimes I would go downtown by the water, where it, it's cooler and stuff. So, it's really, I think, though it's like little bit of anxiety, and it's... I'm kind of worried sometimes too, if I don't have a lot of energy, like this past year and stuff, that if I don't have the motivation or strength to get out of the apartment much. How am I going to deal with it? But in some ways, I think sometimes, even if feeling a low mood or whatever, if it gets so uncomfortably hot that's like, kind of overrides anything, it's enough of a push to get me out to go do something.

Erica: Yeah, absolutely. And I guess kind of to lift off from that, how has the extreme heat affected your mental, physical and emotional health and well-being? So, you did discuss physical, but, yeah, mental and emotionally, how would you...?

John: Well, that's the thing too, is it kind of usually, some are supposed to be really good, and I like it when it's hot. But then it became a sense of, like, anxiety, fear, and then, in some ways, though, like, that's what it was like with the heat dome. Though, I didn't think of it as a nuisance or whatever. I just thought of it as, like, a challenge, and it's like, okay, that kind of gets me through it, just seeing it as a challenge, and that's kind of how I see it still now, is it's this challenge that's temporary, and I'm doing my best and stuff like that. But it's

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yeah, it's tricky, though, for sure.

Erica: Yeah, absolutely, yeah. So, we discussed a few things with relation to the 2021 heat dome.

John: Yeah.

Erica: And so, what are some of the barriers you yourself experienced, or other people that you know during the heat dome of 2021?

John: Yeah. Well, so the one thing is that I knew somebody that they were really telling me that should try to somehow see if they could, like, in, get in the in the building, get, like, some sort of

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central air conditioning or something like that because the building itself is, we have these windows, and I don't think they're... I don't even know if, even if I wanted one, if I could have one of those window air conditioners, and then there could be one, maybe, where it's a portable one, and it's super noisy and I have to, like, take the tray out and empty the liquid or whatever, unless it's extreme temperature, just and I guess before too I was, I.

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Yeah, like, now I wouldn't think twice about paying for an air conditioner if I felt I needed it and it was mandatory. But back then too, it was a bit of a price thing to being on BC persons with a disability but having some additional employment income as well. So that kind of helped to,

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like, I would love to have, like, the way my apartment is set up. I couldn't really see a way to put blackout curtains, because I would keep the heat out as well. Oh yeah, that's what happened the last year. Is, just, I had bad blinds, though, because it took forever for them to order them in. So, it was like a bed sheet that would, just wouldn't block anything out. So, so, yeah, just having good curtains can actually even be a thing too. So, but yeah, like not being able to find a way to have an air conditioner that I would tolerate. It's like, do I want to buy this air conditioner and have it? And it's like, I use it, like two weeks a year or whatever? But, yeah, I don't know, it's being 44 years old right now. It's different. Like, if I was, like, 15 years from now, if I was 60, I would be a little bit more concerned, hoping that maybe in the next few years, that I might end up in a different building, like, from that kind of housing, the more like, just subsidized housing in general, and, yeah, hopefully have, um, better luck with that. So, I think maybe I'll be able to tough it out with ever getting an air conditioner there. But yeah, there's a lot of people in the building. I know who they yeah, they would, they wouldn't be able to afford an air conditioner.

And I remember last year, I think it was they made this announcement about how, I think it was the Mr. Dix or something, the one of the NDP ministers, or whatever, like Health, I'm not sure, but they wanted to get a lot of air conditioners for people with, I don't know if was poor people or people with mental health issues or whatever, because, yeah, it was, I don't know. They put it out there, and it's like, well, is it what's practically going to be done? Is it just this, like, this thing? A year later, we haven't really heard of any steps that a person could do to get a free air conditioner or anything like that, or a rebate. It hasn't really been talked about. So, it sounded really good a year ago. But I'm like, yeah, it's they put it out there, but until I actually see people benefiting from this, then that's just a theory so far.

Erica: Yeah, absolutely. And you did already kind of speak about this as well, but of the resources and tools you use to cope with the extreme heat, you've kind of discussed that. But, was there any government resources that you used to cope during the heat dome of 2021?

John: Well, I did end up going on to like, I think because the Government of Canada, they have a lot of really good, practical informational pages, like they have all these guidelines for travel. And then I don't know if what maybe was client, it was the BC government, maybe, maybe it wasn't Canada, but one of the governments, they had a really good page on tips about extreme heat and good things to do, and all the different things. So I, I learned a lot from there too, as well, and during the heat dome, like, no, I don't think I would say that I used anything as, like, a one of those cooling station type of things that they would they would talk about, but it's kind of a nice idea, though, because it's like, you're there, and you don't have to look like somebody that's just like loitering around, like trying to find a cool place, because, especially if the person's like, working in the mall or whatever, a coffee shop air conditioned in there, so they don't realize that people are coming here because it's so darn hot outside.

Erica: Yeah, yeah, absolutely, yeah. I feel like the resourcefulness that you're talking about people really have to tap into that and see what they can, they can do. But of course, there's many people that experience barriers in which they can't be resourceful, right? So how would you say extreme heat has changed your community in general?

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John: I'm not sure, but it's like, I know, like the people that live in my building, a lot of them, they don't get out of their apartment very much, so it must be very, very, very tough for them. It's yeah, as a community, I don't know though. It's like...

Erica: Would you say you've kind of more focused on your individual experience of getting through a heat dome, as opposed to exactly being able to, like, collaborate with your community and your building, right? Because it seems like you've had to focus more on how you can take care of yourself, yeah, and it's been a challenge to actually provide that kind of support or kind of help or look out for your community during heat waves.

John: Well, I think in just in general, I think people just end up doing less when it's that hot, like they're just little bit more on the like lazy side. They're not making all these plans and throwing parties and that stuff as well too. Because I remember some, yeah, I would even just go out, go out at night, just to, to have somewhere to be other than in an

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apartment, really so, but then, yeah, I would see a lot of times not a lot of people would be there, though, because, yeah, just, people, very trying to stay inside, like you go outside for a bike ride. You know, it's such a nice day, and you're like, where are all the people? It's like... Erica: Yeah, absolutely. So, you would say maybe your community hasn't changed that much because they haven't maybe had the resources to change their situation?

John: Yeah. And I think people just kind of do their best to avoid the heat, to like just instead of trying to build tolerance or just doing whatever they can, they either avoid it, or then you have some people who just, they love going to the beach and stuff, and then it's nice though, because you have some people that they kind of get together and like to the same places, and you kind of feel a bit of a community there too. Like, everybody's like, you're in it together. You're all in there just to try to, to beat the heat wave. I remember in the heat dome, like, because at Willow's, no, barely anybody ever goes in the water, right? But during the heat dome, everybody's in the water. I'm like, I've never seen so many people in there just, just hanging around. They would be in their circle, talking in the water, like socializing in the water, basically, that's how hot it was, yeah? And that sounds like kind of a change that people have made. They say, okay, straight to the water. We're gonna hang out, but it's gonna be happening at the shore of the beach.

Erica: Yeah, absolutely. So, moving into kind of a solutions focused question, how could municipal, provincial and federal government and service providers better communicate with the community about extreme heat events?

John: Just has how I was before. Well, I guess that's the thing too, is like people aren't too informed, kind of like I was. I didn't know a lot of the risks. And the one thing, though that's always been good for me, is that I've always placed a big emphasis on hydration, but then I've also had to really, because I would sweat so much, especially in the apartment stuff, I would have to pay attention to electrolytes and all that stuff as well too. So yeah, it just feels like maybe people aren't as informed as they could be about like, heat related illness and how to, how to keep themselves safe. And I don't know, I maybe it's like I never was watching, I don't watch the news, so I don't know if people were hearing stuff on the news, like tips and all that stuff too. Like it just, I don't know, other than, like, me doing, like, my own research, a little bit that it wasn't like out there, everywhere on social media and all these tips and stuff, it was like, kind of kind of hidden a little bit, yeah, yeah.

Erica: And would you say most people in your community don't really watch the news, and, so, it would be tricky for them to kind of get this information?

John: Yeah.

Erica: Yeah, yeah. And what types of community support do you think would be useful during extreme heat events? So for example, the people in your building who don't really leave their apartments and are just getting really hot in them. What kind of community support do you think that they could get?

John: Well, it's tough too, because I'm like, beneficial that I ride my bike for transportation. Because if you're just taking transit, it's, it's, it's tough, because it's like, okay, well, figure out

where you're gonna go. And it's like, I don't know it'd be a lot. I find it would be a lot harder to deal with that heat dome too, then too. And, yeah, because we can improvise quite a bit when you're on your bike, but when you're taking busses, you have to kind of have an idea what you're where you're going, what you're doing and, and all that stuff too. And when, when I think about it now, though, is that, like in our building, it would be like, I don't know how it would happen, or if anybody would even be part of it, but maybe to even organize activities in the in the common room, or whatever, so like, because that would keep me just being alone there in this dark, big room in the basement, like sitting there by myself for two hours. But if there's peeps, a few people playing cards or whatever, right? That would help too.

Erica: Yeah, absolutely, kind of created as, like a community event, but also a cooling down, yeah and yeah, certainly, yeah. That definitely sounds like a way to kind of bring people together when these major events are happening.

John: Yeah. And like, sometimes I would go to my mom's and have dinner as usual, and then it's just that it would be nice to just stay a bit longer there, where it's air conditioned and stuff too. So yeah, it's like, sometimes it's tough to have that heat stuff, but then it pushes me to do maybe more than I normally would do, try to have more contact with people and stuff as well. Like, I feel like if I had more friends too that were willing to do all these other things and

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that it would be even better. But, and then the other thought too was that that's the thing too, is not everybody can afford it, but if it's like, really, really, one of those heat dome type of things that's like, maybe I could look into some sort of, I don't know, some sort of hotel even just like, could make a difference, if it's just, like, really, really bad or whatever. Just to know that sometimes it might be better to be on the safe side too, as well.

Erica: Yeah, absolutely. And just knowing that people can hang around

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places they're air conditioned and that that's okay, you know, other than libraries or these already existing public spaces where people are allowed to kind of hang around, but people should be able to hang around where they have access to, for sure, being able to cool down, right? Yeah, so you think about the mall or whatever it is, but definitely there could be more resources.

John: One thing is, I guess, when I thought about it too, is, so, is it a bit of that paranoia there? Because now, now that I think about it, like, if I'm going to the library for like, 30 minutes and just looking to kill some time, I don't, I'm not going to really stand out. I'm just, I just look like somebody who's at the library, they don't know my motivation, yes, right, exactly. And then yeah, and like, that's great and everything, but maybe not everybody can get access to the library or, you know, right? So, there's all those challenges to those public spaces and actually getting somebody from point A to point B to actually experience that. Or even, like, yeah, like, even, because we as, like, I said, we have these in my building. There's maybe two or three mental health workers that have vet residents of our building as part of their caseload that, yeah, I think that maybe more could be done on, on that end, but maybe, like they they organize something kind of on the fly. They're like, okay, kind of like a field trip or something, right? It's like, okay, guys, we're gonna go to go to the water park or go to, go to Mount Doug or

something, right? Yeah, because they might not be able, like, you said, like, with the bike, it's okay, but other people, with the bus and stuff, they or they might need a lot of push or whatever. They don't have a lot of motivation to get out and do stuff. But if you organize something and be like, okay, we're gonna do this thing.

Erica: And, yeah, it's just to have some more options to, yeah, and to remind people that there you live in a building, and those are your neighbours; that is your community. And if you're more involved with your community, or if there's more opportunities for people to be involved, then when, when you know an extreme heat event strikes, people can look to their neighbors, look to their you know, people in their community to reach out for support, so they're not alone in their apartments during these events, right? So, there's a lot of opportunity for people to connect, really, and to get to know each other and become familiar with each other, to deal with these major events, right? So, yeah, absolutely all, everything you've, you've mentioned, is so important too.

John: And, you know, to the other thing to say is that with the heat dome, it's gonna be a lot different, like, my perspective is gonna be totally different, because, like, say, for my mom, with air conditioning, right? Like, it could be 45 or it could be minus 45, she's all good at home, right? But me, I'm in my apartment, and it's like, okay, how do I deal with this? It's like, is it hotter inside or outside? Like, that's part of the decision too. Sometimes it's like, okay, well, it's 35 outside, but it's still cooler than the apartment, right? So, I'm going to be outside. And I guess when I was thinking about nobody's out there, because everybody's in their air-conditioned place, but because of my thing being so hot, I'm actually outside where nobody wants to be.

Erica: Yeah, that's kind of interesting to see how people without air conditioning or furnaces or whatever it is, have to, well, spend their time outside as opposed to as opposed to inside, and how that's kind of creates a bit of like a separation, right, of the people who have their air conditioning and their comfortable life, and people who are going out into the public and just by default, communicating with more people and being in the community, really, to collectively cool down.

John: And, actually, the mall is like, actually, I don't know about hillside, maybe sometimes I could see that a little bit, but yeah, Mayfair, I'm just like, the mall maybe was even less busy than normal. It's like, nobody has the same view as I do here. Yeah, I'm lucky too, though, because, like, Mayfair is like a five-minute bike ride away to have a lot of different options of where I can go. It's a pretty centralized location.

Erica: Yeah, absolutely. So, I guess that's another thing even to think of, you know, having central public spaces that people can access from many different points in the community, right? So people can come to Mayfair if it's five minutes away, or the library if it's a couple minutes away, you know, just knowing that people have a community center that is there to help them, which, I know there are community centers all around the city, but some people might not be aware of the resources that a community center could provide for people.

John: Yeah, and that's what happens too like, in the evenings. It's like, especially during the week or whatever. Like, sometimes it's like, like, 9pm or 10pm I'm not ready to get to go to, back to my apartment. I'm like, what's open? Like, where can I go? And I remember last summer, it's

okay because I had money and I could do it too. I just like, go to like, I was like, okay, Earl's closes at midnight up. Let's go there. And then I'm like, like, McDonald's. I'm like, Oh, they used to be open a lot later. That sucks. So I like, pretty much get can't stay out past, well, I guess if I went to one of the pubs or whatever. But yeah, 11-12, o'clock sometimes it's like, you just try to find some way.

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Erica: And very difficult in Victoria, so many places close so early, yeah. And that's actually a really interesting point that when I often know people come to visit Victoria who live in other Canadian cities, they're quite shocked, because they're like, Wow, everything closes so early relative to other places, right? And that's a great point just to think of how, if places were open longer, cafes, I don't know, bookstores, or something like that, especially during extreme heat events, how that could really help people kind of cope with the heat? Yeah, I hadn't. I hadn't considered that. That's a very good point.

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Is there, is there anything else I should have asked about but I didn't, or are there any other last thoughts or input that you have on these events? Well, I think the thing too is sometimes, with the heat dome?

John: If it's like, can't remember, but sometimes, if it's ends up being a long stretch, like five days or seven days, like, I think it starts to wear people down to, like, it's, you can have resilience for a few days, and then after, it really becomes a bit of a grind to get through the last part of it. So, I think that was the challenging part of it too. Was the intensity, but then also it had a bit more duration to it as well. Because I know, like, the last couple of years, I think it's been more like, there's been some hotter ones, but then it's like, three, four days. And sometimes, if it's been cool too, it takes a while for the apartment temperature to really rise with the hotter days. So, then it raises a bit, and then stays with like that, maybe a couple days, and then cools off a bit again. And we're lucky in Victoria that it does cool it off a bit better in the evening too.

Erica: Yeah, absolutely, yeah. And that's yeah, definitely an important piece is just thinking about the duration and how long these events can go on, and how that can just put a strain on people. And, yeah, yeah, that's why it's good for the education too. Like, if they're kind of letting people know, like the forecast and how long it's expected to be and stuff like that too. That's often good to know as well, that people know, okay, we're, we're in it for a while, like it's, you can kind of, yeah, try to create resources that people can tap into over the course of a long duration of extreme heat. Yeah, yeah, absolutely, yeah. Well, that's so great. Is there any last thoughts you have on extreme heat, or experiences of it, or tips, or anything like that?

John: I think too is just it feels like

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a person can maybe think they're okay, but maybe not be quite okay too, it's like, and then part of it too, is sometimes when you're kind of feeling a little tired and sluggish during the heat wave, you'll just take it like, Oh, that. That's the way it is, and you'll kind of get used to it. And then you'll recognize like, oh, maybe it's a, like, a little bit of a heat illness here, or something

like that, right? So I guess that's when education, again, it's really Yeah, and having people have that education, but then also having people who can check on people who might not have family or friends or community that they can rely on, right? So yeah, that's kind of another thought, because people might think, Oh, I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm fine, just like you said, and then actually not be so fine. I think it was quite a quite a learning experience. So it'll be interesting to see if ever, like people are more and more aware now, more educated now because of that, because that's what happened to me, too. And I feel like it probably could be like that for a lot of people too. They, yeah, especially if you lived in Victoria your whole life, too, right? It's, uh, you're, not used to it being 30 degrees that often, right?

Erica: Yeah, absolutely. Did you grow up in Victoria?

John: Yeah.

Erica: Okay, so would you say that this kind of extreme heat is relatively recent?

John: Yeah, no, I don't remember ever being like, oh, it's too hot to play tennis. Or I'd play tennis whenever I would want to, really, I would never be the guy that's so like, Oh, it's too hot.

Erica: Yes, you'd always be like, let's play.

John: But I know that heat dome, it was like, right on right on the edge, it was just kind of like,

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Erica: Yeah. And especially the kind of heat radiating from the cement, yeah, because I play tennis too, and sometimes when it's, it's been a hot day and you've realized that the court is so much hotter than the grass or even whatever else.

John: I think it was probably a savior too, I guess, because the courts were kind of by the water too, so, so that's probably why I somehow managed, if it would have been away from the water, it might not have been tolerable.

Erica: That's true, actually. And it's even just to think of how we live in a community that is surrounded by ocean, and how we have this maybe, if there's not a community center close to somebody, or what have you, but there's an ocean surrounding the community pretty much. And so that's another resource, because it's always cooler about the ocean, right? So, yeah, that's interesting to think about the specific

35:00

geography of where we live and how that could be a resource for some people.

John: Yeah.

Erica: Yeah. Okay, well, excellent. Any, any last thoughts, or...?

John: Well, just, I guess, with the back to the, like some other cities, that you can't live there without air conditioner, it's like here, it's just what we're acclimatized to. We're just so used to

22-23
35:21

degrees. So, when it goes all the way up to 33 it's like, what the heck is this?

Erica: Yeah, and that's also kind of a bit of a cultural change in the sense of, like the city and thinking of Victoria as a place that actually gets really hot. It's not just a place that remains 22-23 in the summer anymore. That's now an old version of Victoria. We're in the new version of Victoria, in which it can be extremely hot, and that should, you know, that's a bit of a culture change that kind of needs to be considered.

John: Yeah, I think that's what some people were feeling that you had the 2021

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but then in 2022

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it felt like it was, it wasn't this bad. But you, you're like, oh, this is; this is not normal for Victoria. So, it's like, to have it, like, two years in a row, people are starting to get a little bit more worried. But I'm glad that we're already into July, and I haven't really had to pull out a lot of my wellness tools. Like, I haven't even, like, turned a fan on anything yet, yeah, so, yeah, but it's like, okay, we'll see. It's because usually, for me, it's like, the way the sun is, I guess June, July and August, and maybe at the end of May, when we had a bit of a heat there, it was actually probably worse than it's any of June. But I usually have these three months, but at least June, I it's not so bad. Like it's gonna be a shorter summer this year. So, in some ways I'm happier about that too.

Erica: Yeah, absolutely. And I imagine many people are with regard to heat domes, but at the same time, we don't know what's in store these next few months. We could see if things could really heat up. But yeah, it's definitely beneficial to have a cooler month, like we have this past June. But of course, that's not a guarantee every year.

John: And like I said, too, with the housing that I was in, like, if somehow, they could have, like, um,

37:05

seems like it would be, like an expensive venture, but

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I don't know, like, having the air conditioning for the vulnerable population, like in a place like mental health housing and stuff like that, they're not, not a lot of that type of housing around. So that's...

Erica: Yeah, so to consider those particular people living in those situations and saying, hey,

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let's help these folks a bit more.

John: Yeah. Like, I know that well, I guess, like, who knows if I lived on the across the hall on the other side of the building, if I would be saying the same thing? So maybe, maybe our building only has like 10 residents that are hugely impacted. So, it's like, okay, well, we're gonna put some sophisticated air conditioning thing in for these 10 people or whatever, right?

Erica: Yeah, and that's kind of interesting to think about too, because it's just that, like, hopefully we would, you know, help those 10 or so people. But at the same time in terms of cost and whatnot, it can be difficult to to,

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I guess, provide for just a few folks. But really, I guess that's the idea here, is that we're thinking of those folks and how they might need more support and help when there's extreme key events going on. So, yeah, it's a, it's a challenging situation to see what will develop and how things will change and grow as we deal with this new hot, hot city that we live in.

John: Yeah, our... there was one person on the upper floor with an air conditioner. And like, when you're walking down the hall and you're like, a couple doors down, you can, you can already hear that somebody has an air conditioner. That's how loud it is. I think there's one person maybe in our building that has a, air conditioner. So, it's, yeah, nobody, nobody has one. It doesn't really work for me. And no other people don't have that as well.

Erica: Yeah. So, it's quite noisy though you can...

John: Yeah,

38:56

yeah. I guess that's another thing to consider. If I could sleep through that kind of noise that's, yeah, it's like, you can't sleep because of the heat. You can't sleep because air conditioning.

Erica: Yeah, exactly, yeah, absolutely, yeah. Well, yeah. There's just so much to that could potentially be done to help people, and also so many adaptation strategies and

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resourcefulness that you've kind of tapped into while you while you've dealt with extreme heat. So, I guess that's a big key takeaway, is that is being resourceful and learning about your community, and having the knowledge around your community to kind of use those resources when you need them.

John: And then too, I guess, like, it's a bachelor apartment too, so I only have one room, so if it's the warm room, I don't have a cooler room to go to, but it's amazing, how, how much cooler it is, like in the bathroom, yeah, oh, wow. It's like, you know, just, just camp out here for a while. Too bad, it's like a just pretty small bathroom. It's not, yeah, not a more spacious one where you could, like, just do some writing or some reading or something. But, yeah, it's amazing.

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Erica: How, yeah, I don't have the option of, like, when you have a one bedroom or something like, it's like, okay, well, yeah, you could. You got more things you can do, yeah, and more options. And if you have a whole house, yeah, well, there you go. You've got your basement, or whatever it is, and then you can really get to those cooler places. But again, I guess we're discussing the individuals that don't have basements and don't have air conditioning.

John: And then you mentioned too about, like, medications and stuff like, I'm not sure how it is, because I know definitely that they used to say that with certain medications that it's good to avoid, like, prolonged sunshine. And then I've also heard too, though, like heat in general. I don't know if people sweat too much or whatever. I'll ask my doctor the next time I see him

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what he says, because it's about how that works, because I never really took that into consideration. But yeah, it's definitely something to think about too, if some of the people's medications are, how it's affected, potentially by heat and sweating and sunshine and stuff like that, and whether they're aware of that, right?

Erica: Yeah, so whether their doctors are even expressing that to them and saying, hey, this is actually a pretty severe side effect of this medication. And it sounds like even you're not sure yourself. You need to talk to your own doctor. So, it's definitely a gap in kind of education that people will need to consider, right?

John: Yeah, it's like they might say, like, it's okay to go play tennis, but don't go and just lie on the beach for two hours under the sun type thing.

Erica: Yeah, exactly.

John: And if we don't have people don't know that exactly, I would have known that too. Like I, at that time, I was in a group home and the mental health workers making sure we all had enough sunscreen and stuff for the picnic. Because, yeah, yeah. So, that's when I first heard it, and then I've heard it again more recently. But other people saying that maybe it even, even if you sweat too much or get too hot, that it can affect the medications too exactly, and if you're not replenishing and drinking electrolytes with your water, and not just drinking water. Because I think that's another thing that people aren't entirely unsure about, is how hydration actually works, yeah, adding salt to your water electrolytes, right? So, a lot of individuals might not even know that, yeah, like, I remember reading it after a certain point, it's like, water is not the best thing anymore.

Erica: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. You need to add a little something to actually hold on to that moisture, especially, like you said, specific to individuals taking medications that could impact that.

John: So, yeah, it's interesting too, because I facilitate these mental wellness like, it's a recovery action plan workshops for people. So, a lot of it is, like, around wellness tools, and what are you gonna do on a daily basis, and then what to do, like, maybe

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when things are breaking down, or when there's a lot of triggers and stuff. So, like, I'm used to, like, kind of developing, like, ideas for, like, wellness plans and how to deal with situations, and then that's how it is with the heat too. It's like, okay, well, what's in my toolbox? What does my day look like? And a lot of people, they just, they're not really prepared, and they don't have a plan. So, like, that's kind of like, how I was during the heat dome. I was just kind of winging it and doing whatever I thought. But now I think I have a more of a good strategy, like, it's a, it's going to be a lot more intentional.

Erica: Yeah, and to think about having an intentional plan, everyone kind of having their own intentional plan, and how important that is now going forward, I mean, you think about living in a this area that's vulnerable to an earthquake, for example, they give you, they talk to you about

preparedness kits and having kind of something in your closet that you can just grab and go in the event of a natural disaster, but that individuals might not have that same kind of preparation, or even knowledge of how to create a plan or to create a kit that they use when things are

43:45

too hot.

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Well, that's great. Well, if you have, if that's kind of it, for your last comments, that's great. Thank you so much for your time and for telling us about your experience. And yeah, we've been meeting with me today. It's been really, really educational and useful information to share with people.

John: Yeah, yeah, I don't know. I just feel like climate's a really big thing. It's one of those things where it like, I guess I have everything that I need here in Victoria, and it's like, I don't feel like I'm like, mobile or whatever, in terms of moving, but I do feel like, I don't know if some people feel that way too, but like, I would like, climate would be a big factor in terms of, like, where I would choose to live. Like, yeah, like, I don't care about the air conditioning. When you hear like, about Phoenix, it's like, it's like, yeah, I've been 40 degrees for the last month.

Erica: Yeah, yeah, exactly. And I guess that's something that people are likely considering. You know, where can I live, where I can actually access things that? Well, how can I stay cool? Really.

John: I wouldn't choose that.

Erica: Yeah.

John: Some people it's like, you said, like, I said, like with Victoria, maybe some people in Phoenix that that's where they are, and it's hard to just go south.

45:00

More that might be better, or whatever, too. It's like, you know, like a lot of people, yeah, they don't like big changes in their life, yeah. Like me, I just kind of went to school here at UVic too, so I kind of never lived outside of Victoria. Just been in that bubble my whole life.

Erica: Yeah, yeah. And I think that that also kind of speaks to how people adapt to their environment. So, maybe those people in Phoenix are used to that, and the infrastructure is already kind of built around people having air conditioning and pools and whatever it is, and cool spaces, right? And so kind of, I feel like, with regard to this situation with Victoria, it's kind of like seeing Victoria instead as this cool coastal town, and kind of putting it to the category of a hotter place like, you know, Montreal or Toronto during the summer or whatever it is, right? And kind of considering it as a different city now. Times are changing, and it needs new resources and things to adapt to these changes, right? Specifically, climate changes. So yeah, it's interesting to think about that. Okay, excellent. Well, that brings us to pretty much an hour, which is excellent. So, I feel like we have a lot of information, and if there's anything you want to add

either right now or via email, please feel free to do so. But like I said, thank you so much for your time and your input. It's so helpful.

John: Yeah, it's kind of nice to talk about it, because it will sometimes talk a bit about it with my housing coach, but not in too, too much detail. And it's like something that's kind of on my mind, and especially go into that mode now that it's summertime too. Now I'm kind of in that mode of, how do I stay cool? So, it's kind of nice just to talk about it and yeah, just, yeah. It's a nice, nice thing sometimes, just to, to express what you've been thinking and feeling and all that stuff too. It's therapeutic, in a way,

Erica: Totally.

John: Some people like what? That's probably what. Sometimes I would, yeah, I'd go in the coffee shop, and then just to kill time, if I didn't want to read, I would just like journal and stuff too. So that's why just expressing different things can really help too, yeah.

Erica: Yeah. And I think with regard to climate anxiety and whatnot, especially being able to discuss that and having somewhere to kind of express that, I'm glad that this served as a platform in which you could kind of, I guess, relieve a bit of your anxiety for temporarily, if anything, but still, yeah, it's great that it had that purpose as well. So okay, well, if, if you're comfortable, I'm gonna finish the recording here, and I'll just press the button. And yeah, I think we did well here.

Erica: After an enriching conversation with John, I felt motivated and uplifted. His creative, self aware and resourceful nature showed me how extreme weather events are experienced so differently from one person to the next, no two people's experiences are the same, and this further supports the goals of hearing these individual stories of the heat dome John's specific experience as living in mental health, supported housing and being a peer support worker brought light to the barriers that can be experienced by those living in the same or a similar environment. These could include financial barriers such as buying an air conditioner, and structural barriers such as making air conditioner or heat pump rebate application processes difficult or unclear. If support is tailored to the unique needs of priority populations and therefore more accessible, it may give these population the tools to adapt and better cope during extreme heat events and to better equip the surrounding community who may not require additional support, to help those that may need it, this could increase community resiliency during extreme heat events. John's approach to seeing extreme heat events as a challenge to overcome is an example of the resilience of the community in times of crisis.

I'd like to note that it is important to understand that the term "resilience," especially as it pertains to individual resilience in the face of climate change, is not a neutral term for priority populations or vulnerable groups, as it is, quote, "rooted in an individual model of change, one that leaves untouched the structures and systems that are responsible for the trauma in the first place," and "the narratives that swirl around resilience often involve stories of strength in the face of adversity, telegraphing that you too can shake off the cumulative cycle of disadvantage," unquote, as noted by Michael Orsini in his 2020 article in Policy Options, the digital magazine of the Institute for Research on Public Policy, or IRPP.

In this episode, John shared his adaptive approach to extreme heat events such as using ice packs, taking cold showers and going for bike rides outside. He also acknowledged how that may not be the norm for those in his community, particularly those in his building. He notes that many folks in his building aren't used to leaving their apartments regardless of impending weather events, and suggests using existing spaces, such as the common room in his building as a cool place to meet and spend time with each other during extreme heat events. This outreach has the potential to create community, connection, and accountability for one another. Again, John's recounting of his experience emphasized the individual and tailored responses he took to cope with the heat, further emphasizing how support and resources that are tailored to the needs of priority populations are paramount in creating meaningful action plans. How do we engage in meaningful outreach with priority populations, particularly those who are living in mental health supported housing that may live in infrastructure that doesn't support them during extreme heat events, thereby resulting in increased isolation. How could engaging in policy listening lead to tailored support and resources to the unique needs of different members of priority populations.

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