

EcoA Tips

Notes & news from EcoAnalytics Research

Welcome to *EcoA Tips* #5, our most august issue yet! Here you will find choice *snacks* for the hungry minds of communications specialists:

Three tips for a summer of heat domes, wildfires, and a possible federal election campaign

- **Tip 1:** Frame nature protection as a safety measure
- **Tip 2:** Entangle nature-based solutions and a fossil-fuel phase-out
- **Tip 3:** In teachable moments, leverage peer pressure

Other research

- Skepticism and trust
- Engaging women on climate
- Green and renewable winning, nuclear divisive
- Oil workers ready for a just transition
- Love conquers climate inaction
- Plus, a poll by Angus Reid on Line 5 and weekly tracking by Nanos

Cool uses of EcoA ***New feature***: EDC exposes Canada's climate laggardship

EcoA News and calendar

[Ideas, suggestions, comments? \(survey\)](#)



Fire in Lytton, British Columbia, June 2021. Photo Credit: Jack Zimmerman

Three tips for a summer of heat domes, wildfires, and a possible federal election:

Tip 1: Frame nature protection as a safety measure

In the dog days of summer, try this: compare the performance of social media ads using familiar narrative frames for nature (e.g., protect nature for nature's sake) with less familiar frames stressing human safety (e.g., protect nature so it protects us). Fresh research by Louise Comeau for Nature Canada and the David Suzuki Foundation suggests that most people who actively support nature conservation campaigns believe we should protect nature for nature's sake (a biocentric perspective). No less than 50% of "passive" supporters of conservation — people who might fall into the so-called moveable middle of Canadian society — also respond well to this biocentric frame, but they respond even more enthusiastically to frames that emphasize protecting nature for our sake: how nature benefits us, our health, well-being, and safety. What's more, qualitative research conducted in June by EcoAnalytics suggests that this variation may resonate with people of different backgrounds, including youth. You could also test various messaging within these frames: about how nature benefits our mental health, prevents floods, etc. Or go a step further and test responses to this holistic assertion, with images of people witnessing extreme weather: "protect nature because it protects us."

Tip 2: Entangle nature-based solutions and a fossil-fuel phase-out

In the qualitative phase of EcoAnalytics' latest wave of research, Environics found that while people are excited about nature-based solutions for climate change (Nbs), they are concerned that these solutions do not address the root problem: fossil-fuel combustion. "Nature-based solutions may help mitigate some of the effects of climate change being driven by greenhouse gas emissions, but [they] will do nothing to stop them," said one respondent. The biodiversity and climate crises are deeply entangled, and it's an opportunity to communicate to the public about both and how to tackle them together. To address this ambivalence, start by clearly defining nature-based solutions — Louise Comeau's new research for Nature Canada and DSF reveals that most people living in Canada are not familiar with or have misconceptions about what these mean. In addition to offering a clear definition, describe how these solutions could be coupled with other transformative actions (building transit, retrofitting homes, phasing out fossil fuels, etc.) to both slow global warming and protect wildlife and humans. Stay tuned to *Tips* for more guidance on this matter, as the upcoming quantitative phase of our current wave of research reveals how to communicate the need to couple fossil-fuel phase-out with far-reaching Nbs.



Be normal: A UK anti-litter campaign in 2015 used peer pressure to get litter-bugs to pick up their garbage — because it's the normal thing to do. Photo credit: Kathy Kohn, July 9 2018, *Anthropocene Magazine*

Tip 3: In teachable moments, leverage peer pressure

Extreme weather events (including heat domes, wildfires, and floods) can be productive moments for connecting with people about the climate crisis. But be careful how you connect — rather than flooding people with information about climate change and the science behind it, focus on solutions instead. In addition to avoiding fear tactics, clearly articulating the challenge, and showing the human face of disaster-response, [Kanyar Rasavi](#) emphasizes the need to foster conversations on how to take action so we can make the crisis feel solvable. Norming theories suggest that most people will take action when they see their peers doing the same, and when they believe the action is effective and beneficial. Norming combined with solutions communicates that the problem is real and that people like them are doing something about it. Good examples include the David Suzuki Foundation's *Charged Up* campaign which showcases "communities just like yours" to inspire individuals and communities to take action. Tell stories about what needs to be done and how, and show people getting involved — this is one of the most powerful tools in the climate communications toolbox.

Other research

Nature allies don't trust government: Trust is good — we want to believe that governments are capable of fixing problems — right? And skepticism is bad — climate deniers are numbskulls! — innit? Turns out it's not that simple. Recent [research](#) suggests, paradoxically, that people who engage in environmental activism tend to be those who both trust in political processes and institutions while also doubting that, without their involvement, those processes and governments will produce the right results. Noting that environmental campaigns often question the competence or commitment of governments, Dr. Louise Comeau, author of a new study for Nature Canada and David Suzuki Foundation, recommends more environmentally focused research on the nature of trust and skepticism. "Trust is not a one-dimensional thing: it's more complicated," Comeau told *EcoA Tips*. "The sweet spot seems to be a healthy dose of skepticism to drive engagement, coupled with trust in processes to deliver on environmental and policy outcomes."

Engaging women on climate: Climate Access sought the opinion of leading experts on how to engage women on climate change. Key takeaways included: women are more worried and sensitive about the issue and, possibly, more persuadable than men. When speaking to mothers, touching on possible impacts on children can motivate action. Use plain language that reflects your audiences' lived experience rather than dwelling too much on policy details. Women of colour are leaders in the climate movement, though underrepresented in the media; so, fund and amplify their work. If you can, go beyond marketing campaigns: create space for conversations. Finally, speak to values and shared identities of women who are active on environmental issues (e.g. love for nature, collective power) — skipping outdated notions of women informed by *gender essentialism*.

Green and renewable winning, nuclear divisive: In a July poll, Angus Reid found that 54% of respondents (70%, excluding people who vote for the Conservative Party of Canada) believed alternative energy sources should be the federal government's top energy priority. Nonetheless, 34% of respondents (compared to 53% of CPC voters) thought fossil fuels should be given equal priority, alongside renewables. When asked about their top two priorities, 49% said renewables were number one versus 47% who said environmental protection. Only 26% listed economic growth among their top two priorities. Nuclear power, meanwhile, remains a divisive issue: 51% would invest in it; 49% would not.

Oil workers ready for just transition: Iron & Earth (the worker-led non-profit group) and Abacus Data polled 300 workers in the oil and gas sector and found that 90% believe they could transition to a job in green energy with 12 months or less of training. Their main concerns were the cost and time commitment of retraining, and, among older workers, being left behind late in their careers. These fears could be addressed, Iron & Earth argues, by a solid government plan with a re-skilling program and other supports.



Persuasion of love: This seal persuaded its partner and pups to accept the science on climate change, and swim to the beach, ditching the Sea-Doo. Photo credit: [Pascal Muerthofer](#)

Love conquers climate inaction: As noted in Tip 2, above, research shows that people take cues from others on how to behave and what to believe. Yale Climate Relationships investigated how norming works in the context of intimate relationships to see how friends, family, and romantic partners can influence people's romantic opinions and behaviours more than strangers. They asked 758 romantic couples about their climate-change beliefs and behaviours and found that intimate partners often disagree. Their findings, however, indicate that these partners are powerful messengers for climate-action, able to shift the opinion of intimates: call it pillow-suasion.

Additional polls:

- [Angus Reid: Support for Line 5 in Ontario, Michigan, Quebec](#)
- [Nanos: Jobs, Environment behind COVID among top concerns](#)

Cool uses of EcoA **(*New regular feature*)**

Readers have asked for examples of EcoA research being translated into action — and we liked that tip! So, *le voici*: a new section at your service. Erick Lachapelle's February analytical brief on blame showed that a majority of respondents to a national survey last fall believed Canada was a global leader in addressing climate change, though Canada is, in fact, among the world's greatest climate laggards. This finding prompted Tessa Soltendieck and the climate team at Environmental Defence to engage their supporters on [why Canada is lagging behind and how we could do better](#). This reality check prompts readers not only to reflect on the nature of our climate *laggardship* and what we need to change, but also engages them on how they, themselves, can take action.

EcoA News

Survey postponed: EcoAnalytics is postponing two surveys. The timing of Environics' large national survey will be set in mid August, once we know the federal election dates, to ensure the 2,250 respondents are not polled in a cacophony of political messaging. Similarly, a survey conducted by Marjolaine Martel-Morin for a new round of values and behaviour analysis will now go ahead after the summer break, at time to be agreed with participating groups, when more are able to benefit.

Free data for emerging talent: Our [EcoA Bursary](#), which offers a free annual subscription to three up-and-coming environmental leaders and researchers, now has a rolling deadline. Please share the link and spread the word, helping us recruit people who stand to benefit most from access to our data, analysis, and knowledge translation.

Webinar featuring new research partners: Later this summer you'll be invited to a webinar to get to know some of our serious new talent. This includes David Tindall, Professor of Sociology, University of British Columbia, who studies contention over environmental issues, such as forestry, wilderness preservation, and climate change; Lori Thorlakson, Professor of Political Science, University of Alberta, who focuses on comparative federalism, parties, and party competition; and Melanee Thomas, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Guelph, whose research looks at how Canadians think about themselves in politics and how this is structured by gender, sexism, and racism. These new partners join our Quebec-based researchers, including Marjolaine Martel-Morin, a doctoral candidate supervised by Dr. Erick Lachapelle, the Université de Montréal Associate Professor of Political Science.

Comin' up

August

- 9** Deadline for comments on draft outline of national survey questionnaire
- 11** Environics shares draft questionnaire with Questionnaire
- 18** Deadline for Members' feedback on draft questionnaire
- 20** Reach decision on when to field national survey
- 23, week of** Finalize questionnaire, translate, program

September

- 7, week of** Earliest possible report on Environics national survey
- To be decided** Possible meetings for EcoA Members

October

- 4** EcoA *Tips* Newsletter #6
- TBD** Didactic meetings for EcoA Members, cont. (dates)

Did you like this newsletter?

If so, what's most useful, or likeable? If not, what's missing? Submit your feedback, and suggestions for future issues and *EcoA Research Nutshells* through this quick [survey](#).

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