

## How To Stop Worrying and Fight Climate Change

I'd lay bets that just the mention of "climate change" makes most of you want to turn the page or run for the hills. "It's too depressing," I can hear you say, "It's too alarming. And besides, what can I do about it? The problem is just too big for me to make a difference, right?"

Well, stick with me, because the story I'm about to tell, just might prove you wrong.

The story begins ten years ago, when I was researching a film about the impact of climate change on the world's oceans called, *The Changing Sea*. One of my interviews was with a Halifax oceanographer, and what he told me then has stayed with me ever since: "Mark my words," he said. "Within a decade, the top news stories, worldwide, will be about the global climate."

Turns, out he was right.

Week after week, Winnipeg has been trapped under a dome of blistering heat and smothered in the smoke of forest fires. And if you add in catastrophic floods, it's been much the same in the rest of the world.

In short, it's been the worst climate year on record, and on August 11, 2021, the International Panel on Climate Change released its sixth and most damning assessment report in 30 years. Climate change is now "inevitable" and a 1.5 degrees temperature increase, globally, is a done deal.

And yet despite what I know and the predictions I've heard, I still find myself shocked by the extreme weather conditions we've been experiencing. The question is - why am I shocked? I've researched climate change, spoken to dozens of climate scientists, and in some small way, have even helped sound the alarm.

Perhaps it's because predictions don't hit you in quite the same way reality does. Until climate change indisputably arrives on your doorstep, some part of you continues to believe that it won't happen here.

The fact that we can't ignore it or pretend it isn't happening anymore, could be a very good thing, according to geographer and environmental scientist, Ian Mauro, executive director of the Prairie Climate Center. In fact, Mauro believes that it could be the golden opportunity we've been waiting for. "The climate catalyst has finally arrived," he told me the other day. "Things are now so bad that people will react."

Mauro, like many of the climate scientists I've met, is an optimist, and the website he and his team have created is testimony to that. So, on days when I'm feeling depressed about our governments' glacially slow response to climate change, I fire up my computer, visit the center's website and remind myself that there are hundreds of people out there – farmers,

indigenous leaders, city officials and yes, even one time oil producers - who are already acting to slow the rate of climate change.

In fact, the Prairie Climate Center has been inspiring people to find creative ways to respond to the crisis for close to a decade. And their online Climate Atlas of Canada is designed to inform Canadians about the future impact of climate change in communities across the country and provide them with the tools they need to address it.

So, if the climate crisis leaves you feeling helpless, take a look at a couple of the videos Mauro has produced. Videos featuring people like Montana First Nations' member, Vickie Wetchie, general manager of Green Arrow, a solar energy company initiated when the Alberta tribe's oil resources dried up. Or listen to Troy Stozek and Don McIntyre, Manitoba cattle ranchers who are "farming carbon" using a rotational grazing system that protects the grass, feeds the soil and allows it to capture and store more carbon.

Each story is inspiring, and God knows, between the pandemic and the climate crisis, we could use a little inspiration these days.

And strangely enough, even the pandemic is a source of inspiration for Mauro, because as frightening and horrific as it's been, it's taught us something vitally important. We can change and change quickly, and not just in the way we socially interact. As Mauro points out, our entire economy was completely restructured, virtually overnight, to keep people safe. And if we can do that to slow down a disease, we can do it to save the planet.

So, what do you do while you're waiting for the switch from a carbon-based economy to a sustainable one? Well, you can write your government representatives, and tell them to get a move on. And in the upcoming election, choose a candidate that puts climate action at the top of their "to-do" list.

You might even consider getting involved at the local level, in projects designed to make your community more climate resilient – from tree planting and community food gardens to active transportation.

I can tell you, firsthand, that it does make a difference. After years making and watching films about climate change that seemed to fall on deaf ears, I decided to get involved locally. And believe me, local action doesn't just build community resilience. It builds a sense of resilience in yourself.

So don't run for the hills at the mention of climate change. Do what hundreds of other ordinary Canadians are doing. Stop worrying, put on your big kid pants and do something now, no matter how big or small, to slow the rate of climate change. That way, when your grandkids ask what you did to avert the crisis, you'll actually have an answer

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