



## Interview with Bethany Daman Communications Manager for Climate Action Team *August, 2023*

**CCEDNet: How does the Climate Action Team engage people from across different generations in addressing the climate crisis? What impact have these initiatives had?**

*Bethany Daman (BD):* Until this year, the number of organizers involved in the Climate Action Team has been relatively small as we worked to shape the coalition. We did not have any funding for staff to dedicate to volunteer management which meant fewer people getting involved than we wanted. It also meant our range of different generations involved was much smaller than we wanted.

Fast forward to 2023, we now have a volunteer coordinator for our newly launched Consider Climate, Manitoba campaign. This means so many more people, from across so many more generations are involved in helping us show Manitoba's provincial government that it is critical for climate to be considered in all decisions they are making. Our team is so much stronger because of the voices and generational knowledge these volunteers are bringing with them.

At our campaign launch this July, attendees ranged from elementary school age to seniors - all concerned about climate change. We had four speakers who shared why they believe climate action is so important: a youth, a soon-to-be parent, a grandparent, and a retired nurse. Each person's story was able to connect and resonate with people differently, and the feedback we received about the intentional intergenerational involvement was that it really helped people feel connected. There was less "oh, this movement isn't for me," but rather "I see that other people like me are involved, there must be a space for me too."

Although people's personal experiences with extreme weather events caused by climate change may be different, no one is immune to respiratory challenges from wildfire smoke, heat related illnesses, droughts that affect crop conditions, and flash flooding that not only has infrastructure costs but can also take lives.

Volunteer submissions have been coming in almost daily from people across generations who want to get involved in the Consider Climate campaign because they recognize that climate change is something that's not only affecting them, but also something that's affecting future generations they care about deeply. Grandparents are constantly sharing with us that they're getting involved because they're concerned about their grandchildren's future.

We're already seeing the impacts of this intergenerational involvement, the Consider Climate campaign is by far the most impactful campaign we've ever worked on - and it's only just begun.

**CCEDNet: Why is intergenerational solidarity important when it comes to climate action and climate justice?**

*BD:* Manitoba's Climate Action Team was formed in 2018 when five environmental and policy organizations in the province came together to form a coalition with the intention of making climate action more of a priority for our provincial government. At this time, I was our youngest member at 24 years old. Most of the other people on our team came to the table with years of experience in developing policy frameworks, communications and media relations strategies, and community engagement plans. With minimal experience in the field myself, there was room for me to learn so much from the older people on our team. After working years (for some decades) on climate related projects, the first-hand knowledge these people had to share has been so significant in the work I'm doing. Their stories of "back when we did something similar" provide more insight and knowledge into current projects than any university course could offer. I'm forever grateful for all they've taught me, and hope to pass this knowledge on to future generations as well.

**CCEDNet: As both a theory and practice, community economic development (CED) understands community economies to be sites of social transformation; by bringing local economies under community control, we can help build communities that are more sustainable, more inclusive, and more in charge of their own futures.**

**How might intergenerational initiatives for climate action utilize community economies to advance their goals?**

*BD:* Local, community-led economies play a significant role in emission reduction. These economies are supported by people across generations, but often understood in a unique way by older generations because many of them grew up knowing only that. They can teach younger generations what worked well, and what could've been different. For example, most seniors understand eating locally and seasonally better than anyone because that's the food that was available to them growing up.

**CCEDNet: What do young people stand to gain from engaging in climate action alongside folks from older generations? And vice versa: what kind of internal transformations**

**might older folks experience when they organize alongside younger people? And, on a more macro level, how might intergenerational climate action transform entire communities?**

*BD:* Older generations have a wealth of experience when it comes to community engagement, they've lived with and alongside humans much longer than younger generations. Although it is often young people that are "inspiring" older generations to get involved in climate action (due largely to the fact that young people will experience the effects of climate change most), our older volunteers are often able to take engagement with people from their own generation further because they have so much to relate to each other about. Without the involvement of people across generations, we risk missing out on connecting with people who want to be part of this work.

Intergenerational climate action gives people an incredible opportunity to work with those they may not otherwise get the opportunity to work with. Seniors are engaging with university students when volunteering at events, grandkids are having heartfelt conversations with their grandparents about their futures, and parents are making voting decisions based on what they think is best for their kids' future.

***CCEDNet:* What advice would you give to organizations or individuals who want to mobilize people from different generations to work toward climate action/ justice together?**

*BD:* It's so important to give everyone you're working with space to be heard, and space to voice what they need to make their volunteer experience a positive one. For example, a lot of the people who are engaging with our Consider Climate campaign from older generations aren't active on social media so we need to find alternative ways to keep them informed about the work we're doing. Likewise, many people from younger generations don't have the same amount of time to commit to volunteering as someone who is retired so we need to ensure we're not asking too much from them.

Everyone is coming into the climate movement with their own unique experience, and as an organization working to help Manitobans from various generations get involved in climate action it is critically important that we listen to their unique experiences and adapt volunteer opportunities so everyone can be involved.