

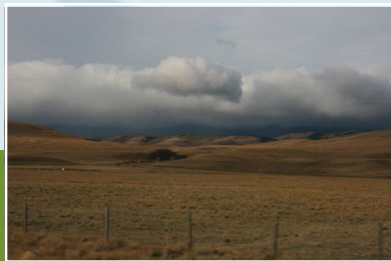
# A Blueprint for Engagement: Stakeholder Engagement Strategy for the *Adapt-action* Tool

March 2014

Prepared by Greg Chernoff



MIISTAKIS  
INSTITUTE



Prepared for:

**The Biodiversity Management and Climate Change Adaptation Project**

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## Executive Summary

This report outlines the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy for the *Adapt-action* tool, the centerpiece of the Local Adaptations sub-project of ABMI's Biodiversity Monitoring and Climate Change Adaptation project.

Through methods that may include direct communication, hosting workshops, conducting online surveys, and creating web-based discussion forums, the Miistakis Institute will engage key stakeholders from municipalities, municipal organizations, and organizations involved in climate change adaptation action planning. The objectives of engagement are to test the provisional narratives of the *Adapt-action* tool, and the conceptual design of the tool.

Stakeholder engagement work is ongoing, with anticipated completion by the end of June, 2014.

## Biodiversity Management and Climate Change Adaptation Project Background

The Biodiversity and Climate Change Adaptation Project was conceived by the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute (ABMI) in response to the need to define the scope of change required to effectively manage biodiversity under a changing climatic regime, and to support Alberta's biodiversity management system with essential knowledge and tools for successful adaptation to a changing future climate.

The rationale for this initiative rests on the importance of biodiversity to Albertans, and the complex relationship between climate and biodiversity. Biodiversity, which includes species and their ecosystems, supports the delivery of numerous ecosystem services. These include provisioning services (e.g., food, fibre, fuel, water), regulating services (e.g. water and air filtration, flood regulation), cultural services (e.g., nature recreation, wildlife viewing) and supporting services such as soil formation and wildlife habitat. Because these biodiversity related services are impacted by a changing climate, and because the relationship between climate and biodiversity is uncertain, knowledge gaps constrain effective adaptation. Proactive investments in the knowledge and tools for effective biodiversity management under a changing climate regime will deliver significant benefits to people and avoid crisis-driven interventions that are by their nature reactive, costly and often ineffective.

The goal of the *Biodiversity Management and Climate Change Adaptation* project is to develop essential knowledge and tools to support the management of Alberta's biodiversity and promote successful adaptation to a changing climate. The project is comprised of four objectives:

1. Predicting the impacts of climate change on Alberta's native species and ecosystems
2. Predicting invasive species responses to climate change
3. Assessing strategies to support climate sensitive species-at-risk
4. Developing and evaluating adaptation policy and tools to manage biodiversity in a changing climate

The *Local adaptations for biodiversity-related ecosystem services* sub-project (concisely, the *Local Adaptations* sub-project) lead by the Miistakis Institute directly supports objective 4.

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## INTRODUCTION

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This report outlines the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy for the Local Adaptations sub-project of the Biodiversity Monitoring and Climate Change Adaptation (BMCCA) Project. Stakeholder engagement is already under way and has been essential in creating several project outcomes to date; however, the bulk of engagement is planned to take place between the time of writing this report and late June 2014. Some elements of the engagement strategy are longer-term and sustained, and are expected to continue for the duration of the BMCCA Project and beyond, budget permitting.

There are clearly-defined objectives for the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy: to make the best use of local knowledge and subject matter expertise of key stakeholder groups; and to gather feedback and guidance that will be essential to the development of the *Adapt-action* tool that Miistakis is building in support of municipal climate change adaptation action planning in Alberta.

Specifically, stakeholder engagement will seek to test the four provisional narratives put forth by Miistakis in the concurrent *Navigating with Narratives* report (Greenaway, 2014), and also the conceptual design and sample components of the *Adapt-action* tool. The role of engagement at this stage will be to validate the narratives and tool designs/concepts with stakeholders, and to confirm and improve on their utility as stand-alone self-discovery tools and as tools that will inform and integrate into broader climate change adaptation action planning processes. Since the *Adapt-action* tool will be developed over the coming year, we can only currently test the concepts and design of the component tools; we anticipate a future need to also test the functionality of the *Adapt-action* tool itself, upon completion.

Stakeholder engagement may take place through workshops, direct communication with key individuals, surveys, and the establishment of a web forum as a foundation for a growing community of climate change adaptation practice in Alberta. The methods employed and effort that goes into each method will depend on which methods are deemed most effective, and on what is achievable within the limits of time and budget.

## OBJECTIVES OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

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The Stakeholder Engagement Strategy is designed to meet two principal engagement objectives; these are described below.

### Objective 1 - Testing Narratives

Miistakis has provisionally chosen four narratives as possible demonstrations of the *Adapt-action* decision support tool (Greenaway, 2014):

- Adapting to Water Scarcity;
- Adapting to Flood;
- Adapting to Extreme Storm Events; and
- Adapting to Invasives and Pests

We intend to vet the appropriateness of these narratives with key stakeholders by seeking feedback and guidance on the following questions:

***DO THE NARRATIVES RESONATE WITH THE ADAPT-ACTION TOOL’S TARGET AUDIENCE?***

Do these narratives strike a chord with the rural, agriculture-based Alberta municipalities that we are trying to reach? Are these issues that are being discussed at council meetings, community halls, grain elevators, and social gatherings?

***ARE THE NARRATIVES BASED ON FOREMOST OR IMPORTANT CLIMATE-CHANGE-RELATED CONCERNS?***

Agricultural communities in Alberta and elsewhere have been practicing climate change adaptation since long before the term existed; but recent changes to weather and climate patterns make farming an even less predictable venture, and even further decrease the chances of having a profitable season. Do the proposed narratives speak to the aspects of climate change that are most troubling to rural agricultural Alberta municipalities? Do they highlight the most significant concerns within these communities, and encourage exploration to learn more about the science and stories that can help explain the observed changes, and suggest adaptive and resilient strategies?

***DO THE NARRATIVES PRESENT PRACTICAL AND HOPEFUL ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES?***

The most successful climate change adaptation action plans will first identify and underscore adaptive and resilient actions that the community is already undertaking, and then explore opportunities to build on existing success by promoting other adaptive and resilient strategies. Do the four provisional narratives indicate adaptation strategies that are useful informative to the local community, and attainable at the level of a municipality?

## Objective 2 - Testing *Adapt-action* Tool Design

The forthcoming Miistakis Institute report *Navigating With Narratives* (Greenaway, 2014) lays out the conceptual framework for the *Adapt-action* climate change adaptation decision support tool for Alberta municipalities. The second objective of stakeholder engagement is to validate this framework by testing it with key stakeholders and incorporating feedback in the final design of the *Adapt-action* tool.

In seeking feedback and guidance from stakeholders, Miistakis will ask the following questions:

***IS ADAPT-ACTION ACCESSIBLE TO THE TARGET AUDIENCE?***

In several other reports for the Local Adaptations sub-project (Greenaway, 2014; Lee et al, 2014; Chernoff, 2013), the Miistakis Institute has underscored the dangers of presenting scientific data



about climate change and its impacts and implications in ways which are too academic, inaccessible, and alienating. These reports and other guides to climate communication (notably Pike et al, 2010) emphasize the importance of “knowing your audience”, and of tailoring tools, information, and messages around climate science to the specific audience or community one is trying to reach.

Through testing *Adapt-action* tool structure and content with stakeholders, Miistakis will ascertain if they are appropriate and well-suited to the rural, agriculture-based municipalities that are our target audience.

#### ***DOES ADAPT-ACTION PROVIDE ACCESS TO RESOURCES THAT ARE NEEDED TO SUPPORT CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION PLANNING?***

Climate change adaptation action planning is a new and growing activity in Alberta, and several Alberta municipalities have already launched initiatives and engaged in more broadly-scoped processes, which Miistakis hopes will benefit from the creation of *Adapt-action* (see below).

We intend to canvass creators of climate change adaptation action planning processes as well as municipalities or other agencies involved in or considering these processes, to help inform the development of *Adapt-action* in a way that will be of maximum possible benefit to the widest range of users.

#### ***DOES ADAPT-ACTION FACILITATE DIFFERENT TYPES OF USERS AND USES?***

In considering how people would use the tool, *Adapt-action* is purposely conceived to serve two main purposes (Greenaway, 2014):

1. **Stand-Alone:** *Adapt-action* can be used as a stand-alone, self-discovery tool by a wide range of users in our target audience of rural, agriculture-based Alberta municipalities. Each user may choose to access the tool’s information and resources through a unique point of entry; the goal is to make it easy for users to find what they need, but to enable and encourage exploration of other resources through the use of narratives and the creation of compelling content.
2. **Supporting Resource:** *Adapt-action* can also be used as a supporting tool, and integrated into broader climate change adaptation action planning processes - whether they are currently active in Alberta or not.

Through stakeholder engagement Miistakis will seek feedback on the *Adapt-action* concept that will help guide the development of a tool and resources that are flexible enough to accommodate these different types of use and user.

It is important to note that the current scope of stakeholder engagement only allows for testing of the conceptual design of the *Adapt-action* tool and the four proposed narratives. Since the timelines and anticipated budget for stakeholder engagement are planned based on an end-of-June 2014 delivery and the completion of the *Adapt-action* tool is not anticipated until later in year 3 of the Biodiversity Monitoring and Climate Change Adaptation project, functional testing of the actual *Adapt-action* tool falls outside of the scope of this stakeholder engagement.

## TARGET STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

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A critical factor in any stakeholder engagement strategy is ensuring that the right stakeholders are identified; that the people and organizations engaged represent a sufficiently broad range of perspectives to provide the correct scope, and possess sufficient knowledge or experience to allow for meaningful guidance and feedback on the process.

Miistakis plans to engage two groups of stakeholders:

### Municipal Stakeholders

It will be essential to engage staff and council from rural agriculture-based municipalities in Alberta. Miistakis has worked with many of these municipalities in the past, and cultivated strong and mutually respectful relationships. We will draw some stakeholders from our current list of municipal contacts. We will also seek out municipalities that are presently involved in climate change adaptation action planning processes, or considering starting this process in the near future.

Along with municipal staff and council, however, it is important to engage organizations that work with municipalities or represent municipal interests at a provincial or regional scale. These may include:

- Regional economic development alliances like the SouthWest Alberta Regional Alliance;
- Provincial municipality associations, both rural (AAMDC) and urban (AUMA);
- The Municipal Climate Change Action Centre (MCCAC); and
- The Alberta Association of Agricultural Fieldmen (AAAF)

Not only do these groups represent important municipal interests and the potential to contribute valuable feedback and guidance; they also present valuable potential outreach opportunities. Through such organizations Miistakis may be able to spread the word about the *Adapt-action* tool and climate change adaptation action planning more generally.

Much of the input from municipal stakeholders is expected to serve the “Testing Narratives” objective described above, but we also expect valuable feedback on *Adapt-action* tool conceptual design.

### Climate Change Adaptation Action Planning Stakeholders

As stated above and in the *Navigating with Narratives* report (Greenaway, 2014), the second purpose of the *Adapt-action* tool is to support climate change adaptation action planning

processes. To achieve this it will be essential to engage organizations - both active and not currently active in Alberta - who have developed action planning processes or other supporting tools. These organizations will provide valuable feedback on what is required to integrate with other processes, but also serve as useful test subjects for the proposed narratives.

Miistakis has identified the following organizations as potential stakeholders:

- C3: Active in climate change adaptation action planning in Alberta.
- Columbia Basin Trust (CBT): Active in climate change adaptation action planning in Alberta.
- ICLEI: Active in climate change adaptation action planning in Alberta.
- Headwaters Economics: Works with climate change action adaptation planners to create baseline information summaries and other supporting tools.
- ClimateAccess: Collaborative initiative and online resource whose mandate is to act as a “bridge between research and action” for climate change adaptation.
- Alberta Climate Dialogue (ABCD): Edmonton-based university-community partnership with a mandate to foster dialogue and increase climate awareness and adaptive capacity.
- Climate Change Adaptation Community of Practice (CCACoP): Canadian online repository for climate change adaptation tools and resources, and home of an online forum for discussing approaches to adaptation.
- Climate Adaptation Knowledge Exchange (CAKE): US-based online repository for climate change adaptation tools and resources, and home of an online forum for discussing approaches to adaptation.

Through working on the Biodiversity Monitoring and Climate Change Adaptation project and attending conferences, meetings, and workshops, Miistakis staff members have met representatives of all of the above organizations, and plan to use these connections as part of the stakeholder engagement strategy.

## PLANNED ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY AND TIMELINES

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Miistakis plans to implement the stakeholder engagement strategy through the following activities. Anticipated timelines and/or delivery dates are included.

### Direct Communication

Owing to their familiarity with the subject or unique knowledge or expertise, it is advantageous to

speak directly with some individuals as part of the stakeholder engagement process. We are developing a list of key stakeholders, and will add to it as appropriate and as time and resources allow.

Miistakis will have one-on-one conversations with these individuals, either via telephone or in-person meetings. In most cases these will be arranged for the specific purpose of engaging stakeholders and testing narratives and *Adapt-action* tools and concepts; but in some cases they may also be opportunistic, such as taking advantage of attending the same meeting.

This engagement is ongoing, and will continue throughout the duration of the Biodiversity Monitoring and Climate change Adaptation project, with focus on the next several months (until June 2014).

## Workshops

As one of the principal instruments of stakeholder engagement, Miistakis proposes to hold two separate workshops: one for each of the target groups listed above (municipal stakeholders, and climate change adaptation action planning stakeholders). The goal of the workshops is to engage stakeholders who are active or interested in climate change adaptation action planning or municipal planning more broadly, to demonstrate both narratives and *Adapt-action* tool concepts in a group setting, and to facilitate discussion and gather feedback and recommendations on tool refinement, as in previous sections of this report.

The workshops will take place in Calgary or another location that is central to attendees. Anticipated dates for both workshops are mid-May 2014.

## Surveys

On-line surveys are an efficient means of reaching a broader audience - both in terms of interest and geography - than one might reasonably expect to attract to a workshop. The Miistakis Institute has considerable in-house expertise in the design, implementation, and analysis on on-line surveys. If required and if budget permits, we could conduct a survey or surveys based on similar topics to those discussed at the workshops, only perhaps more general and self-directed.

There is likely potential to administer surveys through networks maintained by some of the stakeholder organizations listed above - for example, the AAMDC, AUMA, MCCAC, CCACoP, CAKE, etc. This approach would allow for the survey to reach a large potential audience, while maintaining focus on target stakeholder groups and subject-matter experts.

Surveys could potentially be administered in May and early June, with results analyzed in mid-to-late June 2014.

## Web Forum

This is peripheral to the main objectives of stakeholder engagement, but there may be value in creating an internet-based forum for the discussion of *Adapt-action*, other adaptation tools, and climate change adaptation action planning in Alberta more generally.

Climate change adaptation and action planning is in its infancy in Alberta. The Biodiversity Monitoring and Climate Change Adaptation project, and the Local Adaptations sub-project particularly, may represent an opportunity to coalesce some of these burgeoning efforts and activities across the province, and begin to build a provincial community of practice.

The Biodiversity Monitoring and Climate Change Adaptation project might consider launching an “*Adapt-action* blog”, possibly through the blogging capacity already afforded by the ABMI BMCCA project web site. The blog could publish bi-weekly posts related to climate change adaptation action planning in Alberta, the development or use of the *Adapt-action* tool, or municipal climate-change-related news and events. All stakeholders from the engagement process could be invited to join the blog as commenters, and even encouraged to contribute occasional posts.

Currently, there are insufficient resources to take on this component of engagement. However, if through the engagement process there appears to be value in this forum as an engagement and outreach tool, the potential exists to seek additional funds to support this.

As this is not currently a part of the engagement strategy, there is currently no timeline for implementing a web forum component. If this is pursued, an ongoing but moderate level of effort would be required to maintain the blog after initial setup.

Each component of the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy is scalable and subject to change depending on allocation of sub-project resources. Regardless of scale and scope of engagement work, all strategy components will be completed by the end of June 2014.

## CONCLUSION

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The Stakeholder Engagement Strategy described in this report will allow Miistakis to test the narratives and conceptual design of the *Adapt-action* tool with the most important audiences: the municipal officials and employees, climate change adaptation action planning practitioners, and local farmers and landowners who are the anticipated users of the tool.

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