

Partners in Learning holds back-to-back climate talks

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GRAND BEND Partners in Learning hosted a pair of back-to-back online talks Nov. 23 about the impacts of climate change – both environmental and psychological.

The first of the talks was from coastal stewardship co-ordinator with the Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation Daniela Klicper, who overviewed how Lake Huron has changed over the years and what trends can be expected to continue in the future.

Klicper began her presentation by giving a brief lesson on what climate change is and clarified the difference between weather and climate in her presentation. She said weather is the short-term, daily or weekly, differences in the temperature, moisture and wind which she described as "what usually gets talked about in line at the local coffee shop," while climate is the long-term seasonal

characteristics.

"Climate is what humans become acclimatized and accustomed to," said Klicper.

Canada is divided into 11 different climate regions, and Klicper said Southern Ontario has its own climate region (Great Lakes-St.

Lawrence Lowlands) due to the prevailing west winds and the amount of water in the area from the Great Lakes.

"Because Southern Ontario is surrounded by those large bodies of fresh water, they directly influence that climate," she said. "Part of the reason for the change in weather is the impact that climate change has on some of those normal routines that Lake Huron and the rest of the Great Lakes have on the coastline."

"Land masses heat up and cool down more quickly than water bodies do. That difference in heating and cooling along the coastline sets up what we call a 'lake breeze' during the day and an 'offshore breeze' at night," she continued.

Klicper said the trend in ice cover on the Great Lakes is

declining, which corresponds with the gradual increase in both air and water temperatures in the Great Lakes Basin.

"Projections are for wetter winters and for drier summers," said Klicper. "Nearly all communities around the Great Lakes will need to adapt to these changes in regional climate over the next century"

Klicper said the local changes will result in a "warmer, wetter and a little bit wilder" climate. The warming temperatures are consistent with global temperature increases, and they will make heat waves more likely, especially during evening hours. The changes will also impact precipitation patterns, resulting in less snow and more rain, more extreme and frequent storms and more extreme fluctuations in lake levels.

The changing climate could also cause issues for shoreline infrastructure as well as recreational activities.

"Those lower lake levels could require ports and marinas to dredge

extensively," said Klicper. "They could require the reconstruction of wharfs and harbour walls. A lot of our engineered structures are coming to that point of needing to be maintained or replaced... Near-shore rocks and shoals can pose a hazard to recreational boaters. It can cause changes to recreational fishing, and also changes to costs in shipping goods as well. There's lots of implications to think about."

Speaking about the takeaway from her presentation, Klicper said ideally people will be looking to three levels of action they can take to fight climate change. On an individual level they can make personal lifestyle choices to benefit the climate in their everyday life including their choice of clothing; travel plans and goods. They can also make choices as a community and take action with their neighbours through carpooling and sharing solar energy. On a political level,

they can vote for candidates and parties that best articulate wise actions regarding climate change.

Following the talk from Klicper, medical social worker Mickey Gurban made a presentation about the psychological effects of the climate crisis.

"The expanding research literature on climate change and mental health includes increasing evidence that extreme weather events, which are more frequent, intense and complex can trigger post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), cause major depressive disorder, anxiety, complicated grief, survivor guilt, recovery fatigue, substance abuse and suicidal ideation," said Gurban.

Gurban said Sabrina Helm of the University of Arizona found three distinct types of environmental concern: egoistic concerns which deal with what directly impacts the individual, altruistic concerns

which include concerns for humanity in general, and biospheric concerns which are concerns about nature, plants and animals.

After Gurban's overview of the psychological effects of the climate crisis, she started an open conversation with attendees about their personal feelings about climate change. One of the themes touched upon during those conversations was a feeling of guilt among older generations for not feeling the same amount of urgency in regards to the environment they may feel if they were younger.

"Try to let that guilt go a little bit if you can," said Gurban. "Don't self-judge yourself... I think we see the younger generation, and I've got grandkids in their teens now, and they're so aware of everything that's going on. I know our generation, we do our part, but maybe it doesn't bother us as much, but maybe we need to rethink that a bit."