

# A Hot Topic Podcast: Addressing Heat Vulnerability in the Capital Regional District (CRD)

## (Episode 3) Ruth

00:04

Erica: Welcome to A Hot Topic: Addressing Heat Vulnerability in the Capital Regional District, also known as the CRD. Thank you for being here. I am your host. Erica Dolman, a researcher, equity advocate and resident of Victoria, located in the CRD in British Columbia, or BC, Canada.

Before we begin, it is important to acknowledge the land on which this podcast was recorded and produced. We as a research team, acknowledge and respect the Lək'wəŋən (Songhees and Xwsepsəm/Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək'wəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

I live and work on this unceded and stolen territory. I think of how some people may not consider their relation to the land until they experience a threat to their proximate environment, like an extreme heat event. As I work, play and live on this land, I sometimes feel struck as a white settler by how much I take from the land without considering my place on it and how to take care of it with this self-awareness and curiosity I practice being present as much as I can, approaching people and life with patience, listening, expressing gratitude for the land I live on, and other land that I do and will visit, and by engaging in efforts to integrate indigenous ways of being and knowing into my community by prioritizing relationships, having respect for all living things, understanding the cyclical nature of knowledge, and remembering the value of traditional knowledge passed down through generations. As I recently finished my master's thesis, which centered on the importance of connection between one another during extreme heat events. This project cannot be shared without an understanding, acknowledgement, and appreciation of the land on which extreme weather events occur, and the encouragement to turn to each other when the next one comes. Though this research discusses the geographical area of the CRD as its frame of reference, I want to highlight that extreme weather events are experienced worldwide because of climate change and extends and effects beyond the constraints of borders. worldwide because of climate change and extend an effect beyond the constraints of borders.

My next interview was with Ruth Waldick. Ruth is an ecologist living on Salt Spring Island in the Southern Gulf Island region of BC. There are a cluster of islands in the Strait of Georgia. Salt Spring being the largest, most populous and most frequently visited of the Southern Gulf

Islands. It is a 35-minute sailing from Swartz Bay, the ferry terminal at the tip of the Saanich Peninsula, used to travel to the mainland or to the southern Gulf Islands.

Ruth works with Transition Salt Spring as their lead scientist in the Climate Adaptation Research Lab, or CARL. Transition Salt Spring, or TSS is, quote, “a community powered non-profit focused on practical, place based solutions to the climate crisis through education, research, hands on workshops, advocacy and local rebates. TSS is building resilience and inspiring sustainable solutions for their Island's future,” Unquote. They focus on fire risk reduction and forest resilience, conservation at home and work, drinking water and watershed protection, neighborhood emergency preparedness, First Nations reconciliation, climate-smart land use, sustainable waste management, food security and agriculture, public and active transportation and organizational capacity building.

Ruth has over 25 years of experience in climate change, ecosystem management and sustainable land use planning. She supports the integration of science and community to support informed, resilient decision-making capabilities. I met Ruth at her colleague's home overlooking the Trincomali Passage between Salt Spring Island and Galliano Island. It was another warm summer's day in July 2024. The home was beautiful, with wood beamed ceilings and an open layout. There was forest surrounding the home, save for the view of the water. It was a gorgeous home, secluded in nature. There was a large garden just below the front of the house, and no other neighbors within sight of the property. I placed my recorder between Ruth and I, and we sat across from each other on the couch. We then began our interview...

04:50

Erica: Yeah. So, yeah, similar. Well, same format, essentially, but I imagine that conversation will go a little bit differently. So, in terms of just who you are and how you would like to kind of express your relationship to extreme heat, but also just what you do for work, but what you do in your community as well. It'd be great to just start off with that.

05:04

Ruth: Okay, so, I'm Ruth Waldick, and I'm here on Salt Spring Island in the Salish Sea, and I'm an ecologist and someone who has meandered a path through life that really was oriented in understanding how things could be done better, and with deep concerns about the ecosystem, the world, how things function. But I look at, you know, sort of ecosystems and natural systems and weather. And I always see this sort of the big picture. So, ecology is a very complex field, and then naturally then, as we started to understand more about climate change and the weather patterns were changing, then, of course, what I became concerned about is, what does that mean? So what? How does that affect pollinators? How is that affecting the water supply? How's it affecting these various processes? And so, I've been working on this my whole life. I mean, it's sort of the way I see things, but I think that it was starting... So, I started working at universities and do more research oriented and then at some point I thought, this is not, this is a great job, and I love teaching, but this isn't how you actually affect change. And, so, I moved into working for the federal government in Ottawa to see policy, you know, could I have an impact there? And that was around the early 2000s, 2003 or so. And at that point, what I wanted

to understand is, how can we take the things that we know? Because a lot of scientists will say we need to know more, but we actually don't need to know more. We know a lot, and what we don't understand, we don't have the data to understand, so we actually have to extrapolate from our knowledge, and do more complex problem solving. And so that's something that I wanted to do, is like take my abilities, and to go and look and understand, how can we see things differently from the way that the governments operate, and the focus, and so forth. And so, I spent some time working there and realized that the system is not set up to do that. And this problem of climate change and global warming, which is truly a driver, a massive driver, of change that is completely the opposite of what governments were set up to do. Governments were set up for stability and for control and very, you know, refined, process-oriented things, and this issue... So, ecosystems are not and neither is climate change and global shift and so, governments are failing as a result and so but, you know, I learnt a lot being there and then being in a community where we can actually enable people, empower people, to understand what their role is and how they can contribute. In order to do that, you have to understand the problem a bit more from the context of where you are and what you care about. And so that's why, to me, that working at the ground level in a community, the bottom-up approach is the only way that we're going to change and so that's what I'm focusing on here, on Salt Spring, but also across the Salish Sea. I'm working with other people like myself who try to find a way to build the resources and to help people to do the things that we'll all need to be doing.

08:49

Erica: Absolutely. So, with regard to heat domes and extreme heat events, how did the 2021 heat dome affect you? And were you on Salt Spring [Island] at the time?

09:00

Ruth: Yes, I was on Salt Spring [Island] at the time, and I remember watching the news and looking at the accumulating heat across the continent just south of us. And it was not unexpected to me what was, I think, more interesting for me and, in a surprising way, was how the international scientific community was responding to it which was sort of what, as the heat was accumulating and accumulating, which is something that everyone understood conceptually, but not that it would be happening in our lifetimes. And then seeing the severity of it, and then watching it spread and hitting all the way up into British Columbia. That to me, even in myself, I thought, I didn't think I would be seeing this until much later, you know, towards the end of my life. But here it's happening now. I wasn't really surprised, because I knew it was coming, but they, just the reaction I saw the penny drop in the international climate change research world, where people went, oh, this is bigger. This is different than what we had been talking about. So for me, that was my reaction to it. And then also, the other thing that I wanted to mention is the, you know, the other side of the heat dome is the atmospheric river, because the two things are just two sides of the same thing and it seems like something that we didn't know, but it is actually something that we should have known. It's an example of me saying we actually know a lot, and we can do things. When you look at drought, and when a drought happens, and there are a lot of people who research drought, a drought is basically an air shed that stays in an area, and it's you have heat, and then you lose the moisture in that area, and then eventually, when it shifts, that, like it's the principles of physics, so that moisture is

somewhere else, and then you get the shift, and you get heavy rainfall. So, we saw this on a massive scale. And the magnitude of these two events, was the thing that where I kind of, I kind of thought, wow, this is... it's frightening. It's actually very frightening. And the heat personally, from a personal point of view, I found the heat very, very frightening. I've been in very hot places, but I thought, this is very frightening. And am I ever glad that my house is surrounded by forest.

11:31

Erica: Absolutely. Yeah. And so, how did you respond to the heat dome of 2021, and how has your behavior changed at all since, since the last heat dome?

11:46

Ruth: At the time, you know, I did things I think that most people would do: it was closing the windows, drawing the drapes. My first concern was probably too... I have chickens, and so my first concern is, how do I keep them from overheating? Because even in the shade there was that it was just the humidity levels were down and the temperatures were up, and this is when livestock and animals start to expire. And so, my focus went to that, and then also to I try to as much as possible, grow as much of the food that we consume as we can, and how do I maintain this? And interestingly, the other thought I had again about the forest was, am I ever glad that sometimes I'm jealous that people get more sun, but I'm not going to cut any of the trees down where I live and I think, oh, they get more sun, and they can grow more crops, and they're so lucky, and they get solar panels, which none of which works for where I am. But I thought, oh, now they're working really hard to shade everything, and I just need to figure out what are the things that I can have that will do okay with limited light. And so anyway, I had these very unusual thoughts, but the irony was that we were working to keep the house cool, and we have a lower level that is always quite cool, and we were doing quite well, but after a few days, the heat was even starting to accumulate, and my partner said, one day I walked in, I thought, oh, oh, it feels pretty good in here. We've been working really hard, and we've managed to change the conditions. And my partner said, oh, I remembered that the heat pump has a cooling setting. We just don't rely on technology. So, we were just doing things the old-fashioned way. So, has it changed anything? I guess the way that I, the concern that I had from this is, if the power had gone out, which it would be very high probability of power going out, if not because of the heat at the, you know, on the hydro side itself, just the demand that people now with electric cars on top of that, the demand on electricity being so high, then what, right? So, it's that worst case scenario. It's kind of where my mind went. What do we do about that and so forth. What a great thing they are.

14:13

Erica: Absolutely, and how has the extreme heat affected your mental, physical and emotional health and well-being or those around you?

14:29

Ruth: I think... I am not noticing much of an emotional reaction in myself. But then, as someone with a science background, that's probably just normal. But I think that what's changed in me is

this deeper understanding of what people are going to be experiencing and how much sooner it's going to be and also seeing the opportunity from a professional point of view of helping people around to understand that more. And one of the things because, you know, I am looking at the issue of fire in the Salish Sea region with a whole bunch of colleagues and practitioners, and there's a relatively short number of days, a relatively limited period where we have to focus on. And so, one of the messages I think is really important that I got from this is to tell people it's not... this is something that we can prepare for. It's a limited length of time. If we lived somewhere else, it would be much more frightening than this and here are the things we can do about it.

15:40

Erica: Yeah, definitely. So definitely, just education in order to essentially ease people's anxieties and make them feel better, really about dealing with the immediate event.

15:54

Ruth: I think a lot of it is perspective, you know, like the other thing working on fire, one of the messages, I think is really, really important for our geographic area, and even, you know, a lot of Vancouver Island is we're not mainland BC. So, people hear the news, you hear the news from the United States, hear the news from even mainland BC, and it's not the same here. So, people get panicky, and people don't necessarily respond well when they're panicky. So, I'm trying to help give perspective as much as possible. Ah, yes, but you know, we're not the mainland. We're not burning. We have more humidity. The number of days per year is this, we only expect a doubling of the number of days well, so, we might be looking at 10 days a year where we... This isn't averages, of course, but you know that, just to help people to see it as something more manageable, and it's still serious, but to help them to not feel so panicky and overwhelmed by the issue.

16:48

Erica: Yeah, absolutely. And in terms of the population of Salt Spring [Island], I mean, I'm not aware of how kind of large the unhoused community is here, but is there kind of, I mean, obviously that's a whole different approach to climate emergencies and things like that, because those people are focused on more day to day, how to live their lives, but just in terms of thinking about the perspective of people with homes and whatnot, and how that's a whole different perspective on extreme heat events and coping with those kinds of events. But is there kind of that you're aware of, like a community here that really doesn't have those resources?

17:23

Ruth: Oh, absolutely. And interestingly, I mean, I remember hearing when we had the big windstorm, I think it was, was it 2018 we had the really big windstorm, and then we had also freezing, and we lost power a lot that year, and, you know, and for various reasons. And I think the islanders really remember that and at that time, you know, it was the winter, and we have things in place already for people who are housing insecure. They go to the library, they open the library, and people can stay there when it's really cold, and the hospital has quite an open-door policy and so, and even the grocery stores, I don't think would turn people away. But what

was, I think, the most difficult, and really is what we should be thinking about, is it wasn't just the heat, in this case, it was also COVID. And so, when these things come together, then the government or, or, if it's fire, what if we have COVID and we have heat, we have fire, what? Where are they going to put their energy? And so, the thing is, we have to actually put our energy on everything but that's not necessarily a quality that governments and the coordination among different government agencies have. So, I think things start off a little clunky, although, like cooling centers, that idea was pretty immediate, because in the winter for the transient and the, you know, people that are home insecure, the idea of going for warming centers already exists. So, I think that that part was okay. But if we had had a power outage, I don't know what would have happened.

18:59

Erica: True, and that's an extremely important thing to think about in terms of rural locations. Yeah. So, what are some of the barriers you experienced during the heat dome of 2021, or the barriers that you know that others had experienced being on Salt Spring [Island]?

19:19

Ruth: I think that communication was terrible. I think that what, and that's related to this, that, you know, we do have this emergency pod program that is unique to Salt Spring [Island] and maybe some other Gulf Islands have it, I'm not sure, but it's tried to connect people in a in a neighborhood, so to speak, so that people know if you have an elderly person, or somebody has, like, a neighbor with farm and livestock or whatever, you know, and you know, who's got a who's got a generator and who's got a chainsaw, and so that's a really great program. And I'm not sure how it kicked in at that time, because there were just so many other things going on that governments were stretched with. But we do have these mechanisms that would allow us to respond, but we don't have the leadership or sort of an automatic response that we go into that isn't very put out the emergency. But COVID went on for years, and the heat dome is a short thing, but we can't, you know, all we have right now is right now what do we do, because this just happened. And so, if something is layered on top of something else, like you have COVID on top of that, then there is no real mechanism to deal with that. And so, what I saw is that communication and just getting the word out or knowing even how to... what the next steps were, how we should be talking about it, or bring people together to talk about it. It didn't really happen. Maybe it would have without COVID. I'm not sure. It might not have.

20:53

Erica: Yeah, yeah. It's interesting to think about, well again, how everything is interdependent and interconnected, but how having the layers of COVID and this event at the same time, further makes things more complex. What resources or tools did you use to cope with the extreme heat, and what if any government resources did you use at the time, or that you knew again, of others that they used?

21:21

Ruth: Did I... I think, myself, we really withdrew to the neighborhood and just checking in with our neighbors to see who needed what. So, we really kind of withdrew. There wasn't

government... I didn't use any government services. I'm not sure who might have we don't have. We don't even have transit in our neighborhood. And we have a one-way in. So, if there was fires, or, you know, hydro line, like during the windstorm, hydro lines fell down, there was no way in, no way out, until that got dealt with. And if we were a lower priority than somewhere else, then we have to make do. So, our neighborhood of, you know, I don't know, like 150 households, including some farms, everyone just sort of checks in with each other. So, that's the interesting thing about rural communities, is it is, even without the emergency, I think the emergency pod system, that program that I mentioned is a really great one, and I think we could do a lot more with that, but the community, naturally, in rural areas, people know each other, and they say, oh, I wonder if Joe is okay. Joe's 92 years old. She's on her own. She's at the top of a crest. She doesn't have, you know, air conditioning and so just that automatic kind of relational thing.

22:35

Erica: Yeah, no, that definitely is something that you think about smaller communities and rural communities. That is, yeah, a common characteristic of these places. How would you say extreme heat has changed your community? If it has at all?

22:51

Ruth: I don't know that I see the changes, but I am sure that all of our livestock farmers and produce farmers have come up with very strategic ways of dealing with heat. So, it's one thing is, I know everyone was thinking a lot about drought and water having irrigation water and water availability in soil conditions, but the issue of heat's different. It's another dimension. So, I'm sure that there's a huge amount of progress and modifications that people have done for that. I know some of my neighbors who just are growing on their own, you know, area, they've started putting up shade cloths and doing all kinds of things. So, I think that a lot of people have developed adaptations. And I suspect that the government agencies or local governments are spending a lot of time talking about heat cooling centers. How would we deal with this? What's the role of the Health Authority? Do we have enough resources? So, I think although we didn't have a plan necessarily, then I think maybe these kinds of conversations are going on. I presume they are.

23:58

Erica: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, hopefully.

Ruth: I hope they are.

Erica: Yeah, yeah. So, how could, how do you think municipal, provincial and federal government and service providers could better communicate with the community about extreme heat events or other, I guess, resources and avenues that could be used to better communicate with the community?

24:21

Ruth: Well, I don't know. If we go to the worst-case scenario and the power goes off, then certainly your cell phone, your emergency signaling thing, is not really going to be very helpful. And it's not very helpful anyway. I mean, I received an email the other day, okay, the heat's, yes, you know it was, I can't remember who the, it was an emergency services of some kind send us a notice out that we're having a heat event. But we already know. So, that kind of stuff's not really helpful. What's helpful is that they have something so therefore you can hear your options, but, and they do suggest some things that you can do but if the systems are down then that's not the way to communicate, then if, then you have to rely on the neighbourhood, you know, the connections between people. So, I think, what I really would love to see is these neighbourhood programs be supported. So, the emergency pod program is really revolved mostly around fire and the loss of electricity during the winter months during the cold. But it could. So, as a result, we have people who have, that are trained on how to use walkie-talkies, and to communicate back into a central coordinating officer who checks in and if we have a fire, you know what to do because we have our little neighbourhood plan that people are aware of. I think that kind of program could be put in place so that even if the power goes out and there is no direct communication, we could rely on that. I think to some extent the community tends to do that on its own, but it would be better if people were more trained, or they had more resources to help them with doing things like that. I think we're pretty low on the priority list because I remember after, so we'd had, in 2018 we had that huge windstorm that affected Southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, and I think parts of Vancouver area were affected and then you fast forward a few, like a couple of months and then we had a lot of snow and then the power went out again and I recall that there was some people on Salt Spring and probably other Gulf Islands that went 4 weeks, around 4 weeks before there power was put back on and it was cold. And of course, then I heard the head, one of the people who is from the CRD talking about emergency planning for this region, being interviewed on the Victoria CBC Radio and I remember distinctly what he said. He was asked about the rural communities and the islands, and he said, well, to be honest, they are the most well-prepared of any community and they will be the last to get attention and I'm paraphrasing, but, basically what I heard is, oh we better be ready cause it's only after they take care of the population centres they're going to come to us so, but it's nice to know they think we're pretty capable. So, I think we're pretty low on the list.

Erica: Yeah.

Ruth: For when something like that is going to happen.

27:23

Erica: Yeah, that's interesting to think of how, they, you know, it's like almost this idea of like, you signed up for it, you're living rurally, like you kind of have to kind of adapt and figure out because you're far away from the resources that are in urban centres or whatever it is. And yeah, it's interesting to think of the difference there. What kind of community support or what types of community support do you think that would be useful during extreme heat events? I know you discussed a lot of checking in that's kind of integral to living in a rural community. Are there any other community support things?



27:57

Ruth: Well, to go back to your question about people who are housing insecure, I mean, so that might mean that you don't have housing. That could also mean that you're living in housing that doesn't really offer you any kind of solution like maybe you're living somewhere you have no access to a forest, you're not near any bodies of water, you're really exposed to the heat. But there are no buses, and you don't have any means for getting around to cooling centres so I think that there is a need for, sitting down and coming up with a coordinated plan that has kind of a checklist of who are the various demographics on our island? Where are they? What do we need to have so that these people actually can get the support? Because it's easy to say oh, you should go into, you know, you should go into the hospital or the library for a cooling centre but how do you get there? If it's going to take you 2 and a half 3 hours to walk there in the heat that is. And for people, depending on their condition, it's not feasible and it's not even advisable really for people to do that. So, I think we have, there's a lot of thinking that needs to be done because we have such limited resources. And again, so to go back to the emergency pod program, if they were, this might be a good example, if we had resources in a neighbourhood and you know that you have these kind of people living around you and you have these resources instead of us just opening up our freezers and letting people come live in our houses that are, you know, that are, at our own means (?). Like, we actually should create something that could facilitate a neighborhood to do this successfully.

29:48

Erica: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. So, is there anything else that I should have asked about but didn't, or any other, excuse me, further comments, or anything else you think that's relevant to the experience of extreme heat in Salt Spring and in rural areas?

30:04

Ruth: Yes, I think the one thing that really strikes me as being a critical part of this conversation is this direct conflict between people's fear of fire and their response to that, and then this issue of heat, which I would say, slash drought, and people's response to fires, to get rid of trees and to clear trees and expose areas so that they won't have a fire coming up to their house and they can protect themselves. So, people look at forests and they say, this is a fire hazard, and I need to get rid of it. But if you get rid of that, then you increase evaporative losses from the soil. You reduce the ability of the soil to absorb water when the water does come, the heat can accumulate more, and it just exacerbates the problem. So, what nobody's talking about is this conflict, the parent conflict, and this need for us to balance all these various kinds of extreme weather. So, this is a typical kind of government response, which is, we know what to do when we have a fire. We know what to do when we have, you know, well, maybe we soon will know what to do if we have a severe heat event. But is what you're doing going to compound another problem, because we have many different types of extreme weather events that we have.

The other thing that I wanted to mention is we're talking about, you know, people in communities, but this comes back to the ecologist in me, this year has been the most devastating, like, if you want to talk about emotion with me, I'm quite devastated this year

because the pollinators are gone. All right, we see so few bumblebees and Mason bees and butterflies. There are so few of them. And I don't know what's whether they cooked, they froze, they drowned, because we've had all these various year after year events like this. And so maybe you say, well, who cares? But when my tomatoes are coming, you can see the effect when I look at my tomato plants, my tomato plants usually, if I've got six flowers on one stock, and I have six little tomatoes forming, I have two. And so, if we think about, you know, we can't just think about people. We have to think about the farmers who are going to start to fail. If there are not pollinators, then the farmers are in trouble, and we're in trouble with food, so we need and so this actually, everything's connected. So, this comes back to the forest. So, what am I doing? Well, what I'm doing is I am, oh, I am taking woody materials that we all try to remove because we don't like fire, and I'm piling them up in my yard to create bumblebee nesting habitats and but I also, as a researcher, I'm looking at ways to do that where there it's not a fuel, it's actually a habitat, and I can do it in a way where I'm increasing the moisture holding capacity of that particular little patch of so-called debris that I'm putting there. So, I'm trying to find a way to do that. And the more we lose forests, the more we're exacerbating the problem of food insecurity. And then we're having, going to increase our evaporative losses, our drought. We have this idea that we keep, we should have a treatment, we raise the water table, of you know, of lakes, so that we have more of a reservoir for our water demands. But that water during a heat event is evaporating, but the water that's in the ground that actually flows very slowly through, subsurface lateral flows, that water will slowly make its way to that lake, if it's allowed to, and then it's not evaporating. So, we have everything is connected, and what's missing is this conversation about, if we do this, is it going to solve multiple problems? Because that's what we need to do now. We need to think, and not in reacting to something, but we need to think, how do we look at all the various problems, and what is the one? What is the way that we can look at all of them at the same time? Because we don't have much time, we don't have much money, we don't have much resources. And anyway, so that's the other conversation that I think that we should be having, that I'm not hearing happen.

34:38

Erica: Yeah, absolutely. And just think, thinking of, okay, it's hot, and then you get an email from Environment Canada saying two days later, after it's already been extremely hot, okay, it's hot. And then everyone's like, okay, now what is that the green light for what? And what does that mean, right? So, it's just everything, yeah, definitely looking to community is much more effective, and thinking about things in terms of the interconnectedness of it and not maybe looking at government for help in these situations.

35:07

Ruth: Yes, that's right, and is that is, as Jon mentioned, that the people who, when you're in a city, you say, what is my MLA? Where's my counselor? What is the mayor? What is whoever? What is the health authority doing for me? And because you don't have any agency, but when you're in a rural community and something happens, you have more agency, because, as Jon said, you know your place more, you know and you can think about the things, oh, if this happens, the heat comes in, and I don't have any things to block the heat coming in my windows, the sunlight coming in my windows, I need to do something there. And then you can

think, start to think about things strategically, in terms of how your place is affected. And no two places are the same, which is different than in a city where you might be in a condominium, you might be in a high rise, you might be, you know, living in a suburbia or whatever.

36:11

Erica: Yeah, yeah. And then, of course, though I feel like the responses have to be definitely different. And just thinking about apartments and things like that in the city, and just living in that kind of setting and just being like, okay, what can, MLA, mayor help me? Help me? I'm or, like, for example, personally, being a renter, I'm thinking, it's hot in here. That's not my problem, or that's not my fault necessarily. But at the same time, well, I do have the, you know, ability, in terms of able-bodiedness and to actually go and leave my apartment and go to the beach if I can. But of course, not everybody has that. And yeah, just thinking about how, in kind of a city, it feels like, okay, everyone else, like government help me here, but it might not actually be the best resource.

37:00

Ruth: You just reminded me of something when I was doing my PhD, I was living in Hamilton. Now, boy, it gets hot in Hamilton, and I had this tiny, little one room place that faced directly south, and it was actually a great little place. I really loved it. And I remember one summer, all of a sudden, I was dying. I opened the door to my apartment, and it was like an oven at 500 degrees. Poof! It would hit me, and I couldn't figure out what it was. Then I realized, oh, they cut the tree down outside my window. And of course, I didn't have, it wasn't even my It wasn't even the manager of my building. It was the neighbor cut their tree down, a big, beautiful, deciduous tree that was providing huge shading. They cut that down, and I was baking in my place. So, sometimes, even if everyone's doing the right thing, you don't have control over, and which is why the over the looking at the big picture and saying, If this happens, then what are some unintended consequences before anyway, so governments really are not in a position to manage that kind of complexity yet.

38:07

Erica: Yeah, yeah, absolutely, yeah. Is there anything else that you'd like to add in terms of your experience as an ecologist and or anything else that you feel is relevant in terms of kind of sharing your thoughts on extreme heat events and what to do?

38:25

Ruth: Well, I think that I really look as a scientist, and, you know, hearing people talking about humans, are emotional beings, and so they respond really in the urgency of a moment, and what is the way to use the energy that comes out around these to get people to shift their mindsets and maybe feel, you know, to come back what I'm saying, feel more empowered, less terrified, and more confident in, oh, I can do, I can do this. And that is something that, certainly, as someone with a science background, I don't know how to do, but I think that's something that, you know, I'd be very interested to think about and learn more about how that can happen.

39:14

Erica: Yeah, absolutely, yeah. I know. I just said earlier that I'm kind of like, well, it's hot. I'm hearing it's not my problem. But at the same time, you know, it does feel definitely like it's I should be able to do something about this, and I and I hope that I should, can do something about this in and have my community kind of surrounding me and to support each other. So, some things I have done is, you know, stay at friends' houses that are cooler things like this, but that's, again, not an option for everybody, right? So, yeah, things are definitely particular to a rural setting, it's just also it's almost a very different thing in terms of talking about a city versus living in a rural area.

35:15

Ruth: Yeah and doing something now versus doing what one day I'm gonna do. Yeah, it's like, what do I do and how can I do it now?

35:23

Erica: Yeah, absolutely, yeah. Well, great. Is that everything you feel like is relevant?

Ruth: Yeah.

Erica: Okay, okay, thank you so much. I feel like you answered the question so succinctly. And yeah, it's just so interesting to hear the different perspectives from everybody, yeah, thank you.

Ruth's experience was balanced between her perspective as an ecologist and scientist and as a resident of a rural island in the CRD throughout the interview. She argues that the scientific community already knows so much, and it's what we do with that knowledge that is imperative in adapting to climate change. She talks about the unique nature of living in a rural and isolated environment, and how this requires adaptation efforts that are specific to the region and different to those used in an urban setting.

Prior to the heat dome, Salt Spring Island has had emergency efforts in place, such as the Emergency Pod program to alert residents of hazards such as power outages or fires and to provide them with the resources they may need in the event of an emergency. Due to their rural nature, residents are quite well prepared, as they know their place more astutely, this can lead to a sense of empowerment and confidence that can help in adapting to climate change. Ruth's delicate balance of being an ecologist and a resident of Salt Spring brings forth a dynamic experience of the heat dome and a perspective that is vital to understanding how to better prepare the CRD for these conditions. As the CRD includes the southern Gulf Islands and a portion of Vancouver Island, it has an ecosystem with unique experiences and needs in response to coping with extreme weather events and other effects of climate change. It got me thinking, how can urban environments learn or adapt measures taken in a more rural setting during extreme heat events, what has worked and what hasn't? What are the specific needs of an urban environment versus rural in response to the effects of climate change? How can we work together across disciplines and lived experiences to adapt together.

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