

**Krysta Sutton, Dalhousie University**

**Title:** Can We Move Beyond the Status Quo ? Communicating Climate Change Adaptation in Coastal Communities

**Abstract:** Engaging community stakeholders in coastal areas about climate change adaptation is a persistent and complex challenge across coastal communities. The 2018 IPCC report on climate change indicates that rising sea levels will continue increasing the risk to the global community. The report indicates change is needed; mitigating risks most often requires collaboration between coastal residents and governing bodies. Nova Scotia is a coastal jurisdiction, a small, largely rural province of Atlantic Canada comprised of an isthmus and islands where you are never further than 60 kms from the coast. In this region, coastal residents prefer using status quo hard infrastructure to 'hold the line', despite its costs to the public or its inherent risks over nature-based risk-mitigating measures (including retreat) that would be more effective in the long-term. Case after case, these preferences are met with a lack of political will that acquiesces to demands, delaying the decisions needed to respond to events that are becoming more frequent such as mass flooding and storm surge. The Nova Scotia provincial government is currently establishing a long-awaited Coastal Protection Act to address the resistance to change with regulated set-backs and implement stricter policies for land use in vulnerable areas. Targeting individuals with messages that best fit their worldview can help remove some barriers to climate change adaptation. Climax thinking is a framework that pathologizes Western tendencies to see our current landscape as being in its ideal state, rejecting all landscape changes, including those for the public good (Sherren, in press). The framework presents potential ways to shift that paradigm by expanding the dimensionality of citizen thinking over time or space. In this study, we combine framing theory and climax thinking as leverage points for communicating climate change. Conversations with approximately 128 people in 4 control and 12 experimental online focus groups across coastal Nova Scotia are designed to test the utility of some dimensions for shifting climax thinking: self/other, past trajectory, and future trajectory. Beyond the framing discussions, focus group participants will respond to content including information on climate change and viable nature-based climate adaptation options for their specific coastal region. We will present preliminary findings on how citizens responded to the framing discussions and whether any one provided better traction than the others in receptivity to coastal adaptation options. We will talk about how these approaches may help increase resilience in coastal communities and identify any emergent lingering barriers to adaptation.