

Climate change from an Indigenous perspective event held at MoD]



Written By **Brian Lockhart**

Most people are aware of the potential of climate change on our environment, but for indigenous people, a changing climate can mean an entirely different set of issues.

This is especially true for many people living in far north areas who face a whole different set of challenges due to things like remote locations and natural events like forest fires.

Community Elder for the Dufferin County Cultural Resource Circle, Karen Vandenberg, and Skye Vandenberg, an environmental scientist, provided information at a learning session held at the Museum of Dufferin on Saturday, Mar. 25.

They spoke of the impact of climate change on Indigenous communities. They also discussed Indigenous spiritual thoughts and their connection to the environment and the human race.

Some northern communities rely on ice roads to receive supplies and infrastructure equipment, and materials. The alternative is flying in supplies which is much more expensive. With climate change, the ice roads could become unsuitable for travel.

They also spoke on things like wildfire, which can cause devastation for some communities that have restricted access to escape routes in the event of a disaster.

“We are speaking about some of the increased impacts of climate change on Indigenous communities, and why they are at a greater risk, and some of the things Indigenous communities are doing to help combat climate change,” Skye explained. “In the far north there has been a lot of change in landscape in terms of permafrost, and ice cover. In Northern Ontario there's 31 communities that are serviced by ice roads. The rest of the year they are fly-in only. The season in which that is available is getting shorter and shorter. Climate scientists estimate that 90 per cent of the ice roads will no longer be usable if there is 1.5 degree average increase in global temperatures. The roads are used by truckers to bring in food at a less expensive cost than air travel, as well as infrastructure materials to build new water systems, sewage treatment, community buildings? everything is coming in on ice roads during that short season. If that's eliminated, what's the option??”

There are several different issues that may be affected by climate change.

“Then there's water,” Karen explained. “The Indigenous people who live down in the south are more focused on keeping the water

clean ? for everybody. We have big project risks, like mega-quarries and a dumpsite, that the Indigenous people have tried to shut down.?

Protecting the environment is essential for not only Indigenous people but the population in general.

?The natural world does not need us to survive, but humans need the natural world to survive,? Karen said.