

# Scientists Now Studying 'Climate Change Grief'

*Deep Sadness, Anxiety And Depression Can Be Lingering Effects Of 'Solastalgia' Phenomenon*

His canvases are painted from first-hand observation by a brush wielded in the outdoors and glow with the colours of the Canadian wilderness.

But British Columbia artist Dominik Modlinski doesn't take his paints into the woods much anymore. "I felt I can't go on my painting trips because everything is covered in smoke," he said. "I can't go to some areas I love to go because you can't see anything."

"I feel somebody is controlling my life and I can't do anything about it. It does affect my mood."

Mental-health researchers around the world are taking notice of what people feel when the world they've always known changes gradually or suddenly from climate change. Some call it environmental grief, some call it solastalgia — a word coined for a feeling of homesickness when home changes around you.

The American Psychological Association has released a lengthy report into solastalgia. So has the British medical journal The Lancet. Australian farmers report rising levels of depression as their drought-stricken lands blow away. An international group of climate scientists maintain a website entitled Is This How You Feel?

House of Commons committees have discussed it. Health Canada is exploring the topic. "It is gaining more traction," said researcher Katie Hayes from the University of Toronto.

In Canada, Memorial University professor Ashlee Cunsolo released a paper in 2013 on Inuit in the tiny Labrador community of Rigolet. People spoke of the sorrow they felt about being cut off from places they'd visited for



Members of the RCMP return from a boat patrol of a still flooded neighborhood in High River, Alta.. Mental health researchers are beginning to take notice of what people feel when the world they've always known changes gradually or suddenly from the effects of a shifting climate. - The Canadian Press/Jeff McIntosh

generations because of vanishing sea ice. "People talked about deep sadness," Cunsolo said. "People talked about anxiety. A lot of different words for pain. A lot of trembling in the voice. There were definitely tears. People were feeling displaced in their homes."

Sometimes it happens slowly, sometimes all at once. Hayes has been looking into the effects of the 2013 flood in High River, Alta., the sort of catastrophic event that is expected to occur more and more.

"There are still lingering effects from the flood," she said. "There's anxiety when it rains, on the anniversary, as (people) cross the bridge to go into High River."

Kids crawl into bed with mom and dad when the clouds open. People thinking about that box of Christmas decorations in the basement catch themselves when

they realize it's gone. "People would talk about the smell of musty moldiness or the sound of a generator coming on. It gets them willed up. It gets them nervous. It gets them recalling the flood, everything that they lost."

A University of Alberta study found similar effects 18 months after the wildfire in Fort McMurray, Alta., that destroyed one-tenth of the city. A survey of visitors to health-care facilities found high levels of post-traumatic stress and anxiety disorders as well as substance abuse.

"We're looking at broader psycho-social impacts, things like weakened social ties or increased addictions or even increased aggression in relation to domestic violence," said Peter Berry, science adviser at Health Canada. "Some of the impacts can take

place right away or take months or even years."

Nor are disasters the only way weather related to climate change can cause stress. "Volatility," said Ron Bonnett of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. "What we're seeing is a lot more variation than we did in the past."

Farmers can endure months without rain, then see their fields submerged in a cloudburst.

More than just a business, farms are a home and a tradition and that can raise the mental stakes, Bonnett said. "There's almost a mental block: 'What do I do next? How do I make a decision?' You're just paralyzed. All you can see is that crop lying out there that you can't get off." The words "paralyzed" and "powerless" come up often when solastalgia is discussed. Feeling there's nothing you can do is dou-

bly corrosive, said Julia Payson of the Canadian Mental Health Association in B.C.'s Okanagan region, where fires and evacuations have been a constant feature of recent summers.

"Powerlessness tells you you can't fix this and you're not going to stop feeling bad. There's no point in reaching out, in gathering with community and seeing what you can do." In fact, she said reaching out is one of the best ways of coping. "Powerlessness breeds a feeling of isolation and when we can break that down by building community, it makes a huge difference."

"We acknowledge our feelings. We know it's important to have them. We look for people to support us, we look for actions we can take to take back a feeling of control."

Great advice, said Thomas Doherty, who has a mental-health practice in Portland, Ore., that helps people feeling environmental grief. People can feel like a "climate hostage" trapped by avalanches of information with little action from their leaders. Doherty suggests finding a way to get involved and do something.

He has another prescription: get outside. "It is part of the coping. It gets you in touch with life, with things that are larger than you."

But until things change, get used to solastalgia, said Modlinski. "As an artist who paints the Canadian North, I have witnessed the creeping climate change that is happening. The emotional environmental grief I feel will be a widespread anxiety. It's going to happen. I don't think our health system is even prepared to deal with it." - The Canadian Press

# 2019 Will Be Year Of Weed-Infused Treats

TORONTO: Gingerbread men are a seasonal staple but the spiced treats by Vanessa Labrecque in the new year will be special: They'll be infused with cannabis.

The avid baker says she'll be whipping up a batch of herb-spiked cookies for a special Christmas edition of her cooking-with-cannabis class in honour of Canada's first festive season post-legalization.

The popular cookie is a good candidate for such non-traditional experimentation, she says, because they are relatively easy to make and the myriad of spices help mask the flavour of weed.

"It's a traditional thing and people like making them because you can decorate them," adds Labrecque, who co-runs the Cannabis Cooking Company in downtown Toronto.

Gingerbread cookies can also be customized to an individual's weed tolerance, she adds.



Yannick Craigwell shows off some of his edible marijuana treats in Vancouver. The Canadian Press/Jonathan Hayward

The advent of legal recreational marijuana is tempting more and more people to try the drug by incorporating it into their food, say Labrecque and others who have noticed a spike in queries about how to make so-called edibles.

Ontario cookbook author Pat Crocker says eating weed is a healthier option than smoking weed, which can expose the throat

and lungs to the same harmful effects of smoking tobacco.

She and Ellen Novack released a cannabis-themed book "Healing Cannabis Edibles" in late September just before legalization. Although it's only found in small independent bookstores and at wellness conventions, she says interest among retailers and buyers is so strong "it just sells

itself." "One little corner store here in Neustadt, Ont., (a village of 400 souls, has sold 30 copies," says Crocker, who also sells the book online. "It makes you think twice about your neighbours. What's behind all those hedges?" she says laughing.

Crocker's recipes focus on nibbles that highlight weed's purported therapeutic properties to ease pain, sleep difficulty and inflammation. She started cooking with cannabis in August 2017 to help her husband cope with back pain. A year later, she says he's replaced the opioids he once took with a medical cannabis strain high in a much-touted compound known as cannabidiol, or CBD.

Cooking with cannabis is a multi-step process that involves sourcing the specific strain that promises the sedative effect you're after, preparing the cannabis through a process called decarboxylation in which heat is used to activate key compounds,

and then using the weed to infuse a fat to be used in the recipe — such as olive oil or butter.

Crocker prefers to prepare dishes that can be easily portioned, relying on muffin tins, ice cream scoops, measuring cups and rulers to keep servings consistent.

"You want to be precise, you don't want any surprises," says Crocker, whose book includes a chart that shows how much cannabis at various THC percentages to use with the fat carrier. "I've seen people make soups and stews and whole chickens. How do you know what each person is getting? It's really difficult."

When serving new users, she suggests erring on the side of caution by serving edibles that fall below her recommended limit of 10 milligrams of THC per serving — "start low and go slow" is the cannabis mantra she echoes for edible newbies. Those who are unsure should consult a health-care professional.

The difficulty with edibles is that it can take hours for the impact to be felt, adds cannabis expert Jeff Danzer, known professionally as Jeff the 420 Chef.

As a result, some people might be tempted to have a second or even a third serving, says the L.A. chef. "It's a longer-lasting high, it's a creeper of a high depending on how you do it," says Danzer, a caterer and instructor. He also limits meals to 10 mg of edible THC and describes his approach as "layered microdosing." "We'll start out with something that's maybe 3 mg .. by the time you're done with the meal you've got 10 mg."

Some dishes, like his watermelon gazpacho, demand individual dosing: "Every single watermelon gazpacho gets five drops of canna-oil and I'm very meticulous about that," explains Danzer, who details his technique in the book, "The 420 Gourmet."

Labrecque says she's been inundated with cooks wanting to use cannabis since she began offering weekly classes Oct. 26.

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