

2017 Energy Action Team Strategy Retreat



On May 26th and 27th, 2017, nearly two-dozen members of the Ecology Action Centre's Energy Action Team (EAT) came together for a strategy retreat. Our retreat was facilitated by Joanna Brenchley of Co-Lab, who helped us through our journey to vision our shared work together.

This was the first retreat in more than three years for the Energy Action Team. There have been huge changes in the policy landscape; federal and provincial governments; a new team of [four excited, capable staff](#), and an ever-evolving network of truly amazing volunteers, supporters and collaborators. The team took the time to acknowledge and explore new visions within this context that we do our work and make change possible in Nova Scotia, Atlantic Canada and beyond.



Here is a snapshot of some of the conversations, explorations and visions that came up during our retreat:



Digging Deep and Checking In

On the 26th, Emma Norton hosted the Energy Action Team for an evening of introductions, laughs and dreaming. Staff and volunteers discussed their projects and new members were introduced to the team. The food from the potluck was cause for further inspiration – if the Energy Action Team can make campaign plans as well as they can shared meals, then anything is possible.



Purpose: Collectively entering into inquiry around who the Energy Action Team is, what work we want to accomplish together, and how that work fits into our overall vision for Nova Scotia's fossil fuel free future.

Energy Action + Peace and Friendship Treaties

After opening the retreat on Saturday morning, Rebecca Moore led a deep-reaching conversation about the action we take on climate change and the justice-based transition to a fossil fuel-free energy system and how that relates to the [1752 Peace and Friendship Treaty](#) signed here in Mi'kma'ki, and other indigenous-rights based approaches to our work. We also received teachings from Kevin Christmas and Michelle Paul, who led us through an exercise exploring how Mi'kmaq-owned solutions can work in a treaty-based framework, and shared important stories of the history of the ongoing struggle to affirm treaty rights for Mi'kmaq people. During the workshop, Rebecca began to develop her idea for treaty-based energy solutions; a number of EAT members joined in learning about this framework, and discussed supporting her to further develop the exciting project idea and facilitating more learning about how we fully harmonize indigenous rights into our work.





Interactive Mapping of Our Shared Work

To attempt to find focus in our work, and better understand our common vision and direction, we mapped specific projects within our work, with respect to the **effort** we spend and the **impact** we see. This gave staff, volunteers and supporters an opportunity to discuss their projects in detail, place them in the larger context of our work, and solicit feedback and advice from the rest of the EAT. We spoke about everything from our education workshops, regulatory interventions, research and report writing, to solidarity work, grassroots mobilizing, coalition building and our work with different levels of government. We took an important moment to recognize EAC's unique role in visioning a better future, and making changes possible in our context here in Atlantic Canada.

Visioning Our Policy and Campaign Work

Our policy and project work includes national, provincial and local campaigns that employ research, report-writing, multi-media engagement, coalition building, regulatory intervention, government relations, storytelling and grassroots organizing and solidarity – all as tools in our tool chest of change. With limited resources, however, it's important to find focus and best understand what pieces of this work the EAT is uniquely positioned to do well, and what work can better be shared with other groups. During the last session of the retreat, Stephen Thomas led a fluid discussion about the EAT's policy work, and how best to frame and prioritize our action in order to be most effective and breathe the most life into our work. After a powerful conversation, and guidance from EAT members, we decided on three main themes to guide the priority decisions for our policy work:



- Advocating for **the justice-based transition**, which includes specific support for those affected first and worst by the climate crisis. This means specific solutions and support for indigenous and frontline communities, workers from transitioning industries and low- and middle-income people.
- Ensuring we are moving **toward a fossil fuel-free future**, in advocating for firm targets, and comprehensive planning for a future that prioritizes energy conservation and efficiency, ambitious greenhouse gas emission reductions and renewable energy development, and advocating for no new fossil fuel development in our carbon-constrained world.
- Maintaining roots, energy and focus **in Nova Scotia**, while recognizing our place in the regional and national political contexts and participating and learning from coalitions for change everywhere.



Nova Scotia needs to commit to **firm climate change targets** and enact legislation to reduce emissions by 50% below 1990 levels by 2030.

There's so much to look forward to

We left the retreat with hearts full of gratitude and inspiration. The staff, in particular, are so grateful to work with such an amazing, visionary group of volunteers and supporters. Many of us left with clarity on what work we can leave behind as we find focus, new campaign project ideas and a playbook for some inspiring action in the near future. These new and re-visioned projects include a broad campaign for new firm, ambitious GHG targets in Nova Scotia, 100% renewable energy planning, climate jobs roundtables, solar-powered concerts and events, and so much more. In the midst of sometimes uncertain and dark times, and in an ever-changing landscape for our work, we're laying the groundwork for truly believing in one another and achieving some amazing things together.