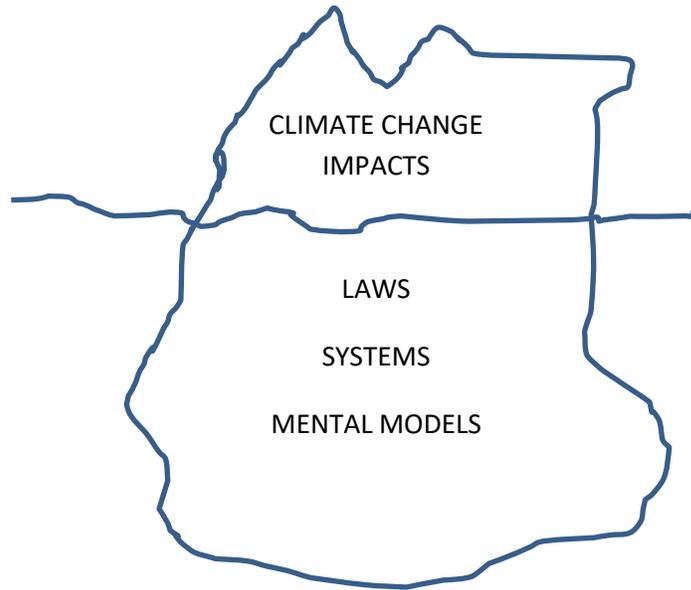


## COMOX VALLEY CLIMATE CHANGE CHRONICLE 21

### ABOUT SYSTEMS AND ICEBERGS



It seems like every evening when we turn on the news we see more and more scenes of disasters.

There are the hurricanes in the Caribbean and southern U.S.; raging forest fires in British Columbia and northern California; monsoons in India and south east Asia that have left thousands homeless. Hundreds of thousands of refugees are walking on the roads often with small children. They have abandoned their farms because their cattle are dead arid their parched land will no longer grow crops.

It seems like our living Earth is suffering from a violent fever and acting out—and that is precisely what is happening. The fever is global warming. But what we can see—the symptoms—are just “the tip of the iceberg”. The larger part below the surface is what is causing the problems. Our mental models have created the economic systems that we have protected with human laws.

So here is what we discover when we examine these fever causing symptoms in more detail.

Mental Models, sometimes referred to as “frames”, are the way we see the world and give it meaning. As Anais Ninn has noted, “We don’t see the world the way it is. We see the world the way we are.”

Despite the fact that 97% of scientists tell us that human activities are the cause of climate change, some people, including many prominent politicians (especially in the U.S.) deny this reality. But the deniers are dwindling and are the least of our problems.

Our real problem is our mental model. We see Earth as separate from us, something “out there”. So we have put in place systems and laws that meet our needs but separate us from nature. They do not meet what nature needs for its continued and healthy existence. This abuse will continue until we see ourselves as earthlings, part of the world we are abusing. This abuse is most evident in the systems and laws we have created to ensure our control.

### The Systems

When we examine our systems, particularly our economic system, we see it is based upon market fundamentalism. The economists tell us this is the foundation of what they call neo-liberalism. It is based upon the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that requires companies to continually make an annual profit of 2% or 3%. If they fail to do so the company can die. It also tends to see the resources of Earth as limitless. What we need are economic systems that exist within the “limits to growth” and create a mutually enhancing relationship between our species and Earth. (see Chronicles 13 & 14)

### Laws

We try to protect Earth by getting our governments to pass environmental laws. It doesn’t seem obvious to most people that environmental laws are not designed to protect nature. They are designed to limit the amount of damage we can do to nature. Nor do we recognize that most of the damage being done is “legal”. So we need different kinds of “laws”. We must recognize that nature, a living reality, has its own laws that have existed since time immemorial. We need to adopt the new and developing Earth Jurisprudence. (Chronicles 13 and 14)

### Moving Forward

We are the only species that has ever destroyed the environment that it needs for its continued survival. It is going to take time to change but it begins with re-thinking the way we must live in this changing world. We must change our thinking to develop a new consciousness suited to the Anthropocene and its irreversible transformations.

In a [recent article](#) Liz Hosken, Founder and Director of the Gaia Foundation in London, put the challenge this way.

*“It takes time to decolonize our minds and to experience ourselves as participants with the community of life around us, so that our actions are enhancing to all life. This does not happen through reading the plethora of information out there. It comes with rebuilding our relationship with Nature, so that we experience our reciprocal relationship from within the web of life: the living soils, home to a myriad of creatures that together nurture plant life so that we mammals can live and the birds and insects can also play their roles in weaving the web of life.”*

In the Anthropocene World we must focus not on the tip of the iceberg but on what is below the surface: our mental models that have created the systems and laws that are abusing our world. And we must do it while there are still icebergs to examine.

Mike Bell, Comox Valley Climate Change Network.