Incidental colour

By Lilia Yumagulova

Scenario planning was one of my favourite courses as part of my undergrad engineering degree in emergency management. It was a course that unleashed the full force of worst-case scenario thinking. Imagine an extremely flammable hazmat spill event near a school, a jail and a large regional hospital. Now add an earthquake. And all of this under conditions of a pandemic. However, the course was not only about a wild flight of imagination. It was about hazard, risk and vulnerability assessments; it was about everything that came afterwards, planning, prioritizing the population groups, leveraging of resources, and minimizing the damage of cascading effects.

I did not realize it at the time, but worse-case scenario thinking would eventually become both a highly valuable planning skill and an occupational hazard. As Chris Hadfield writes in his book, *An Astronaut's Guide to Life on Earth*, "Truly being ready means understanding what could go wrong – and having a plan to deal with it." Hadfield describes the different worst-case scenario simulations (sims) that astronauts go through to forge the strongest possible armour against fear: hard-won competence. A fire on the International Space Station sim. Your own death sim. For Hadfield, this worst-case scenario planning has become a "reflexive form of metal discipline" not just professionally but in life. On Earth, when he walks into a crowded elevator or buckles his seat belt on a plane, Hadfield reflexively thinks about how he could "work the problem" and what his role would be in the case of a crisis. "Like most astronauts, I am pretty sure that I can deal with what life throws at me because I've thought about what to do if things go wrong, as well as right. That's the power of negative thinking."

Emergency management is no rocket science. But we share a lot of the same risk management principles. Long before this pandemic hit, municipalities, First Nations, and organizations across Canada were working on updating their pandemic plans. Somewhere, tucked away in a government office there is a person that has thought about the multiple scenarios that can happen to their community. Today, let us celebrate our colleagues that have been working with worst-case scenarios to prepare for a brighter, more resilient future. This is the power of walking under your own cloud.

For this special feature, we connected with HazNet contributors and volunteers - emergency management professionals from different regions, sectors, and fields - to curate a colouring book experience that offers inspirations, challenges, and honest introspections on how this whole experience has been for them. These reflections are accompanied by beautiful illustrations by Nina Chetvertneva, an artist currently based in Moscow, Russia and Carime Quezada, originally from Guadalajara, Mexico who currently lives in Vancouver and is HazNet's graphic designer.

What is truly remarkable, is the incidental nature of this "collaboration." Nina, Carime and I developed these illustrations based on different themes a few years back, long before the pandemic. Today they come to life with reflections from emergency managers from Maritimes, Quebec, Saskatchewan, and the West Coast.

This is the power of art. It brings us together, across space, time, cultures, and across the current context of disconnect and loneliness.

Get that pencil box out.

Immerse yourself into incidental colour.

What is your best-case scenario for a return to a new, better, more just 'normal'?
As a retiree, I have been less affected than many by COVID-19 and the global response. Out of the fray, and with time on my hands, I have been able to gain an objective perspective, both broadly and in considerable detail.

The takeaway: we cannot underestimate the impact on people's mental health and psychological safety. Much of the population is under tremendous stress, whether they show it or not. Much like an iceberg, we can gain a sense of the impacts, while knowing most of the damage lies below the surface.

This is a very long marathon. It's not nearly over. Recovery will be a very long process. Take care of each other. Appreciate that everyone is hurting to some degree and many are hurting a lot. Compassion should guide us all.

- Ernie MacGillivray

http://haznet.ca/road-shared-situational-awareness-disasters/
Just as autumn is a time of change, disasters are catalysts for change. When we only focus on challenges and problem-solving, it is easy to underestimate the vast potential of this moment in time. But without intention, without imagination, we risk missing the opportunities this pandemic presents.

Whenever I felt exhausted or overwhelmed this year, a powerful coping mechanism was to find a quiet moment (usually while walking my dog), step out of a problem-solving mindset, and recognize the monumental, paradigm-shifting trends in this pandemic response:

The prominence and competence of female leaders. Centering kindness and empathy at the forefront of public messaging. Openly acknowledging that the impacts of the pandemic are disproportionate across society. Recognizing and celebrating all essential workers - grocery clerks, truck drivers, farmers, and janitors - not just first responders and healthcare professionals. Appreciating how much we need each other and shining a light on the dangers of loneliness and isolation. Accepting personal responsibility for risk and understanding that everyone has a role to play. These trends are powerful steps towards embracing a whole-of-society approach to disasters and risk reduction.

Often in disaster response, we concentrate on the details of what we should have done differently and create lists of incremental improvements. This time, I hope we dare to dream bigger - to focus on transformations that will have a lasting impact on building a more disaster-resilient Canada.

-Carly Benson
During the first wave, I was working overtime, alone in my apartment with my plants as my sole companions. This spring, I observed nature burst to life between my four walls, from sprout to sprout. Between operational calls and org charts, I found time and space to take great care of these minuscule greens. Their viridescent shade could not soon enough cover my windows. A proof, maybe, that the worst is not always certain. What I do know for certain: I have never seen a command post in so small a jungle north of the 47th parallel.

- Paul-Émile Auger
http://haznet.ca寻求主动希望- thoughts-evolution-profession/
Flying home from Europe on March 17, I knew my usual self-care routines would be gone. Hikes and coffee shops were replaced with long days and Zoom meetings, rejuvenation and connection replaced with exhaustion and distancing.

But with constraints comes creativity. Returning to work after quarantine was a relief; I found self-care in my long walks to work and levity with coworkers, and with spare time precious, neglecting chores to return to nature.

Most of the time, I was forced to sit with the enormity of it all. Anger, fear, and frustration showed up to serve a message - that these circumstances require greater attention. Despite their potential for destruction, disasters are an opportunity to build resilience and challenge existing power dynamics, and can act as a catalyst to turn collective grief into collective action.

-Nicole Spence

http://haznet.ca/adopting-health-equity-lens-emergency-management/
My name is Michelle Vandevord, and I’m from Muskoday First Nation. The most important job I’ve ever had is being a Mother. I’m very fortunate to have been given three beautiful daughters, whom I love more than anything in the world. That is, until I had grandchildren...now there is love you can only appreciate once they touch your life!

I’ve enjoyed many different jobs on the reserve over the years, but none has been more important than my volunteer work. It’s who I am, and it pushes me to be the best I can be. I do it to honor my Grandmother Delilah and Mother Lillian, whom I miss dearly. They instilled in me volunteerism and a love for my community at a very early age, and for that I will be forever grateful.

When I was asked to attend a Firefighter meeting at the Fire Hall, it was an easy decision. That was 18 years ago, and as I write this, I’m wondering—where did the time go? This summer will be my 22nd year with the Muskoday Volunteer Fire Department. It’s the most important job I’ve ever had with my community.

I joined Muskoday Volunteer Fire Department because at the time, there were no women on the force. I took it as a challenge to start something new, and also to be a role model for the young girls on the reserve—especially my own daughters.

My advice for the next generation of girls who want to join a Fire Department is: Don’t give up. Work hard and earn respect. Never be afraid of the challenges, because skills will come in time and with practice. Don’t ever let anyone tell you that you can’t do it, because you can. Be a role model on and off the job.

Most importantly, don’t be scared to say when you are afraid to do something—but know your limits. It took me five years to climb a ladder and get on a roof, but eventually I did it. Be a hero in your own mind first, and then spread that spirit outward.