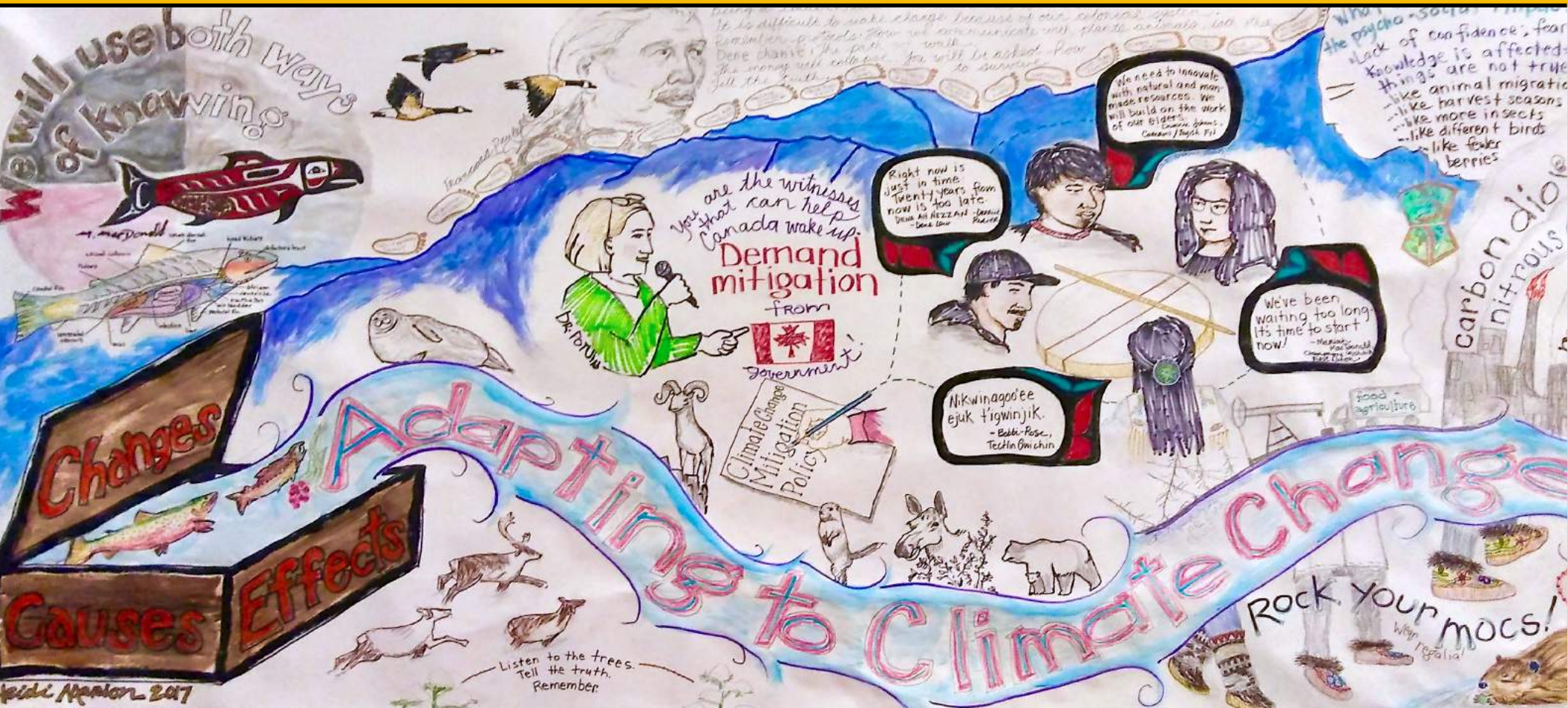




# PROTECTING | PRESERVING

The Animals, The Land, The Waters,  
Our Heritage, Our Language, and Our Culture

ASSESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AND ADAPTATION IN MAYO, YUKON  
MARCH 2019







[Pictured above]: YIC4 youth participants and community-based monitoring representatives with Keynote Speaker and Dene Elder, Francois Paulette at an evening banquet during the YIC4 training, November 29th, 2017.



This community report describes outcomes from the **Yukon Indigenous Community Climate Change Champions (YIC4) Project: Mobilizing Knowledge for Developing Indigenous Community Champions for Climate Change Adaptation in the Yukon (2017-2019)**.

This project was led by the Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research (AICBR). The AICBR works with communities to develop their own solutions to complex problems that are relevant, community-driven and sustainable. Current priorities include: *climate change adaptation, food security and food sovereignty and youth engagement and leadership*. AICBR works in participatory ways to strengthen capacity and takes a 'whole-of-community' approach, built on the principles of respect, relevance, responsibility, and reciprocity.

[WWW.AICBR.CA](http://WWW.AICBR.CA) | 867-668-3393 | 308 HANSON STREET, WHITEHORSE, YUKON

# INTRODUCTION

**Between November 2017 to March 2019**, three of our youth, Geri-Lee Buyck, Caroline Lucas and Jaret VanBibber, took part in the YIC4 training project along with 38 other Indigenous youth (aged 18-30 years) from across the territory and beyond (Northern British Columbia, Northwest Territories and Nunatsiavut).

**During Phase 1**, youth gathered in Whitehorse at the Yukon Inn for four days of training, which built the foundation of knowledge in the area of climate change from a global to local perspective. **During Phase 2**, Geri-Lee worked with AICBR to complete a community-based assessment of the needs, strengths and opportunities for action related to climate change adaptation in Mayo.

**In January 2019**, another training session was held for new and returning youth to further their knowledge in the area of climate change action and develop leadership, communication and advocacy skills which they can apply to future climate change work in their communities.

The entire training project was grounded in both **Indigenous and western scientific ways of knowing** and involved trainers and speakers from community, academic and policy levels, including Elders, scientists and other youth leaders.



*Our Elders have been telling us about “hard times coming” and that we need to be prepared.*

*This report shares our community’s story of climate change and what we learned from discussions about what it means to adapt.*

*We hope this report acts as a foundation of knowledge that may guide us in future community-based work and planning in the area of climate change.*

*An Excerpt from a letter written by the youth at the YIC4 Training 1, November 27th, 2019:*

...We have learned a lot about climate change over the past few days and we are worried about our future. We are strong and educated and we will do whatever it takes to protect our homelands as well as educate and instill our knowledge and traditional values into the next generation.

Canada is a large country with many pristine natural resources. Our lands are who we are. But we are concerned that many who make decisions for and about our lands, walk solely on concrete. Our voices matter and we want to be heard on the issues that directly impact us and our Mother, the Earth. We will no longer be silent because we have a duty as land stewards and the right to call for action on climate change mitigation and adaptation from our leaders. We have our eyes and ears open. We are the witnesses of climate change for the rest of the world because we are at the forefront of the drastic and detrimental impacts that it causes. We expect our leaders and elected representatives to do more...

Our food, biodiversity and very survival are at risk. We need to look after our lands, animals, waters, air, as well as each other in order to protect our food and water security for longterm health and wellbeing. We need to plan together for our collective futures.

Will you join us?

In respect and sincerity,

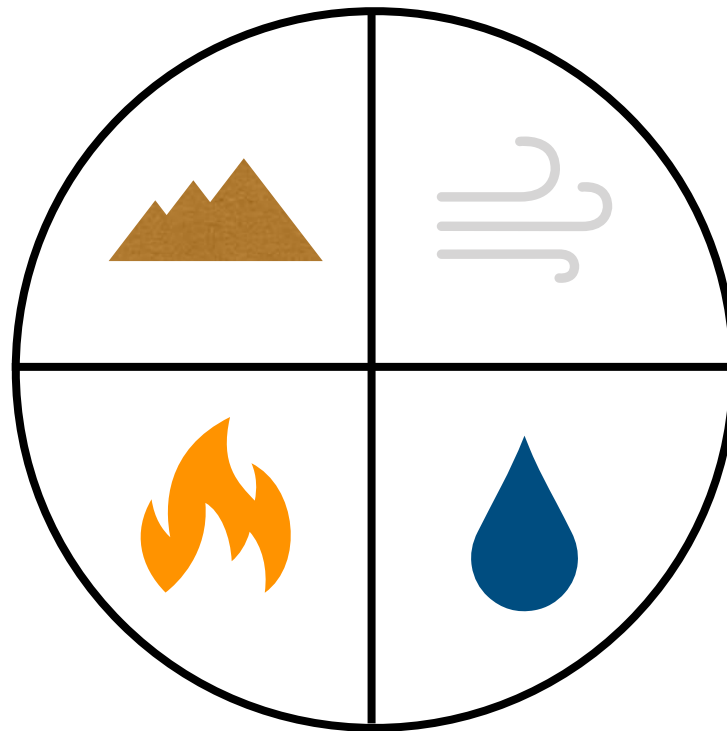
*The Youth*

*Youth are the future caretakers of this land. We must learn how to stand tall in two worlds and make decisions to protect our future. We must do this by remaining grounded in the wisdom of our Elders as well guided by western science.*

# THE FOUR ELEMENTS of CLIMATE CHANGE

## **Earth, Air, Fire, and Water**

These four elements guided us throughout the YIC4 training in understanding climate change and its impacts within our communities.



# What is a Community Assessment?

A community assessment is a process used to identify strengths, needs and challenges of a specified community.

What sorts of changes have we seen with respect to climate change?

What are we doing now to adapt to these challenges?

What more could we do to adapt to and counteract these changes?



[Pictured above]: Norma Kassi, Community-Based Researcher and Director of Indigenous Collaboration at AICBR helps YIC4 youth Geri-Lee Buyck define some of the climate change areas in Mayo to explore as part of the assessment.

A **YOUTH TOOLKIT** was developed from ideas and research questions youth came up with during Training 1; this toolkit guided us in planning *HOW* to assess our communities, *WHO* to talk to, *WHEN* it is best to complete the work, and *WHAT* questions to ask.

The toolkit is also meant to help other communities lead an assessment.

**DOWNLOAD THE TOOLKIT  
HERE:**

[www.aicbr.ca/yic4](http://www.aicbr.ca/yic4)

## *These are some of the questions we asked during our community assessment*

More questions can be found in the toolkit.

During the Mayo assessment, we talked with **eleven people**, including our Chief, some knowledgeable Elders, gardeners and farmers, a Yukon Energy representative, the women's drumming group, as well as leader of the local Streams to Sea (K-12) Program.

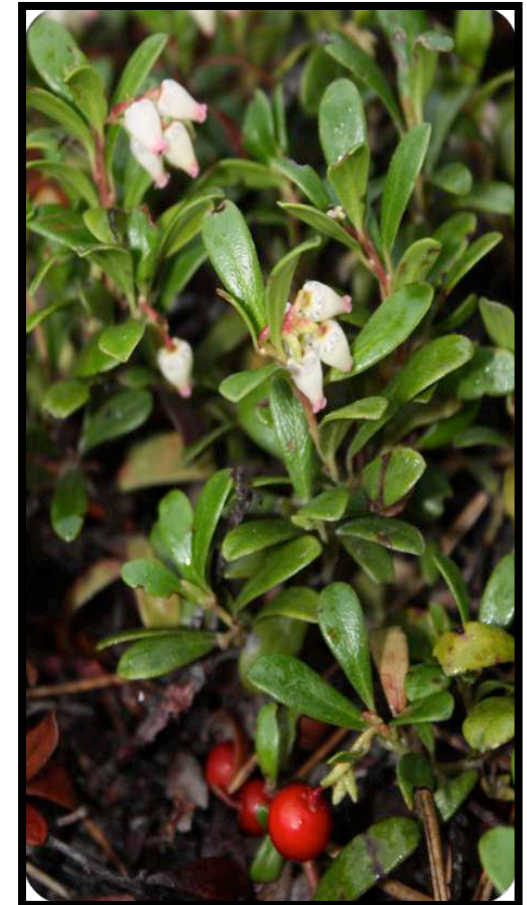
What's your message for our young people on how they must survive in the long-term future?

How do you think climate change has affected our people's health?

How are our moose and caribou populations doing? Have they changed? If so, what do you think is happening to them? If they disappear, what can we replace them with?

What kind of green energy initiatives are here? Can you tell me about the hydro dam? How many households/buildings still burn oil for heating?

What is the role of women in helping us move through these kinds of challenges?





Are we prepared for disasters (i.e. floods, fires, etc.)? Do we have plans in place? What happens if the highway gets cutoff and there is no food coming in? How can we protect ourselves? How can we use our traditional knowledge and current resources?

How is climate change affecting the land, the animals and the waterways? Which habitat areas are most vulnerable? What is the health of our waterways? How can we protect our drinking water?

Tell me about your gardening and farming initiatives. Do you sell the products? What kind of training is available?

What kind of relationship do we have with mining companies who operate on our lands?

[Pictured below, left to right]: Norma Kassi with Chief Simon Mervyn and Geri-Lee signing the Research Agreement prior to starting the community assessment.

Where do most people get their food from? Do you think there are enough moose, fish and caribou (or other traditional food species) around here to sustain our people and if so, for how long?



# CHANGES

The following section tells of some of the changes we have witnessed to our lands, waters, plants, animals, and community over the years. These changes are dramatic. It's hard to talk about them. But these changes are not new and we understand that we need to monitor them in order to be prepared.

Our Elders have been talking about the changes that are coming for a long time now. Many of these changes have been witnessed since the early 1980s and are only getting worse as time goes on. Our Ancestors and Elders looked to our Mother Earth for guidance in the past - watching the plants, following the animal cycles, praying to the Creator.

But over history, with colonial pressures, the Residential School System, our forced removal from our traditional communities and lands, along with many other influences that exist in our lives today, we have been separated from our Mother's wisdom. Our Elders are the keepers of that wisdom and now more than ever, we must pause, listen to and hear what our Mother Earth is telling us.

## *A Message to the Youth:*

*“Learn your traditional ways and practice your traditional ways. Get a hold of your drums and play the music that our Elders are willing to teach you — and sing. Be proud about who you are. You're landowners.”*



# EARTH

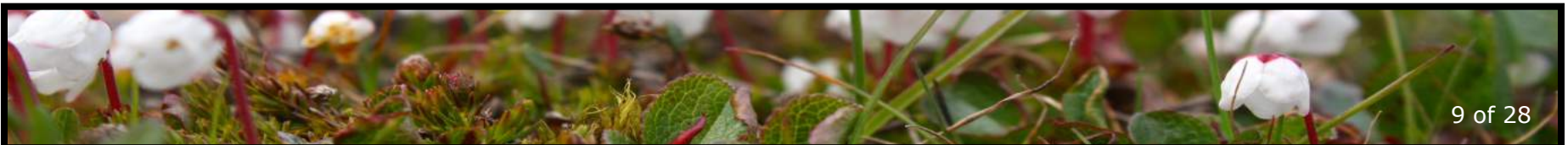
*“Our freezers are not full.”*

## *We are moose hunters:*

- \* **Our traditional hunting methods** involved moving around with the moose. We never hunted in one area for long. This is how we controlled the population and ensured the moose remained plentiful. Our Elders talk about how in the past, they used to travel over 100-miles and see over 100 moose. Now when travelling the same distance, we might only see two moose if we're lucky.
- \* **Our moose populations are declining** due to climate change and overhunting. The population of Yukon is rising and there are many outside hunters coming into our traditional hunting grounds, overhunting in only one area, which is not following the traditional way of balance with the animals and the habitat.

## *Watch the plants and the trees:*

- \* When the berry leaves begin to dry up, it means that the **earth is not getting enough water** to keep the plants alive.
- \* **Our medicines are drying up**, especially in swampy areas.
- \* **Some years there are no berries.** The [low bush] cranberries and blueberries seem to be the most affected.
- \* **Spruce trees are taking over our forests.** Poplar trees are dying off. The poplar takes up more water than the spruce and thus don't burn as much. The fact that poplar is being replaced by drier tree species, means we are at greater risk from forest fire. Poplar trees are also medicine for the lynx. The poplar stands are where they go when they are mating.





# EARTH

## *Changes on the land:*

- \* **Our wetlands are drying up and willows are taking over.** The wetlands are an important habitat for moose, especially the cows; moose need deep water to give birth in as well as protect themselves from mosquitoes.
- \* **Erosion is becoming a problem.** As permafrost thaws, it causes sloughing along our hunting and travel routes. This makes those routes unstable and potentially unusable. Glacier thaw is also causing erosion because as the mouth of the glacier recedes there is more runoff clearing into the creeks below.
- \* **Our ecosystems are all connected.** What is good for the animals, is good for us. Our animals are adapting to the habitat changes and so too must we.

*“Everything in this world is a living thing.  
We’re all connected to everything.”*

## *Shifting animal behaviour and new species:*

- \* **Moose are changing their migratory patterns.** It seems like the moose are constantly on the move and getting increasingly hard to predict. They must be disturbed by all the new sounds going on with industry and the dam. Usually, they will go up the hill in the fall and come down in the winter as well as during breeding time. Now however, sometimes they come early and other times they are late.
- \* **Deer are moving up.** We’ve started to see more deer in our territory. They were never here before.
- \* **Wolves seem to be more common in the Mayo area.** There has also been a decline in trapping, so perhaps there are more animals for them to hunt, leading to a rebound in their population. There could be other changes that are also causing their populations to rebound. Everything is connected.
- \* **There are more beaver dams in the streams and rivers** making it hard on the grayling and burbot to make it upstream.



# AIR

*Elders' dreams show hard times coming for all people:*

- \* **Our Elders receive wisdom from the Ancestors** who predicted that the future will be warmer, causing water to dry up. We are now living out the prophecies of our Ancestors.
- \* **Animals will start to move up in order to find water and colder areas.** Just like us, animals can not live without water. With the warmer weather intruding and creeks and lakes drying up, the animals will wander in search of better areas to raise their young.
- \* **All these changes mean hard times are coming for all people,** First Nations and non-First Nations.

*“They say...Big wind live in there. When you make noise, he hear you walk. So people are to be quiet, [Big Wind] said. Now they're up there disturbing it.”*

*“Big Wind” lives here:*

- \* **Our traditional lessons** say that we should not disturb nature. Especially the canyons. These are powerful places. When you walk or paddle through the canyon, you must be quiet because “Big Wind” lives there.
- \* **The Mayo Dam is disturbing ‘Big Wind’.** While we understand that the Mayo dam is considered more renewable than powering our community with diesel, there are concerns that the scale of the project has made a huge impact on key habitat areas, particularly the canyon. The dam has also restricted fishing in certain areas and has impacted hunting reach because the water is too low to travel by canoe and one must walk instead.
- \* **Moving towards mechanized energy.** In the past, our people lived more simple lives and didn't need to burn much energy. We had mostly candles or coal/oil lamps for lighting. Now, with the influx of technology, there is increased need for more mechanized forms of energy across our communities. While we understand that technology is here to stay - we can't let it overtake our traditional teachings.

# FIRE

## *Health and healing:*

- \* **Our Mother Earth is hurting and our people are hurting.** All these changes to our land affect our health and wellness. Our land is who we are as a people, so these changes not only impact our food and water security, our culture, our future, but they deeply impact our health and wellbeing. The health effects of climate change on our people are also being compounded by continuing impacts of colonialism as a result of land claims and residential schools.
- \* **We are challenged with how to deal with drugs and alcohol abuse in our community.** These issues are not our own. These come from a long history of hurt and of things imposed on our people. We are a strong people. Let nature be our healer.

*“My mom and dad told me - nature itself is the healer. It heals everything. It’s what clear your mind... You’re a pure person... Sit by the river and watch the river go by: Leaves, singing to you. Listen to the birds. It’s good life out in the bush. That’s why I like to take the young people. Live out there, eat dry meat, hunt, tell story, give them a few pointers – that’s what I like to see.”*



## *We are concerned about forest fires:*

- \* **The forest composition is changing.** As the land dries, spruce trees take over and poplars diminish, there is a greater risk of our forests burning up.



# WATER

## Importance of water:

- \* **We talk about rain but we also need to talk about groundwater.** Groundwater is important because it keeps plants, like berries, alive. Water has to come from somewhere; they say no rain, no berries but we often forget about groundwater. Groundwater provides nourishment for the earth.
- \* **Water is the most important thing.** Water affects all living things - the animals, the people, the land. Many of the changes we are seeing have to do with water. The swamps are drying up, the fish are declining, the water is changing dramatically.
- \* **We have to protect our water not only for human health but for animals as well.** We can boil our water, but the animals can not. Once our water is no good, there is no going back.

*“You know, the water is the most important thing because we survive off water. Water brings life to everything — to people, to animals, to earth, Mother Earth.*

*Water evaporates, it creates fresh air.  
Without water, we’re not going to survive  
— no way.”*

## Water is changing:

- \* **Water coming down the mountains is turning grey.** This is because there is more sediment in the water due to melting glaciers and increased groundwater leaching from the mountains.
- \* **Water level in our lakes is declining.** Lakes are becoming shallower, creeks are drying up and more trees are dying along the shorelines.
- \* **Water temperature is getting warmer.** With our lakes and creeks warming, fish will move away in search of colder waters. Many believe this is why we are seeing fewer fish in our lakes.



# WATER

## *Changing ice and snow conditions:*

- \* **The ice is thinner than in the past.** The stability of the ice is unpredictable. This affects our ability to safely travel out on the land, which impacts our traditional practices, like trapping and fishing.
- \* **The ice break up is also changing.** The ice on the lakes seems to break up more evenly across the surface rather than coming up on the shore.

## *Precipitation patterns are changing:*

- \* **We are starting to see more sporadic weather;** for example, we are experiencing more rain in the early season.

## What is Permafrost?

Permafrost is ground that remains at or below freezing (0°C) for two or more years in a row.

## *Permafrost is melting:*

- \* **Our grandparents warned us of permafrost melt;** they said that when the permafrost starts to melt, all the groundwater will drain out, the ice will be gone and that is when we're going to realize there will be no more water. They also say that the mountains will sink as the permafrost melts underneath them.

*“When you go trapping, you have to be careful before — before is nice weather, eh. But now you have to be very careful. That’s why I don’t trap anymore. Go through the ice — never know. You go through that area — how many times I’ve been through it. But I’m kind of leery; I don’t want to go take a chance because of the weather. Next minute it’s cold; the next minute it warms up and then you see water all over.”*



Despite these many changes, we are still here. Our land is who we are as a people. And as such, we are the original stewards of the land. We know what needs to be done.

**Our leaders are standing up.  
Our youth are standing up.  
Our strength is inherent in our culture, our traditions, our language.**

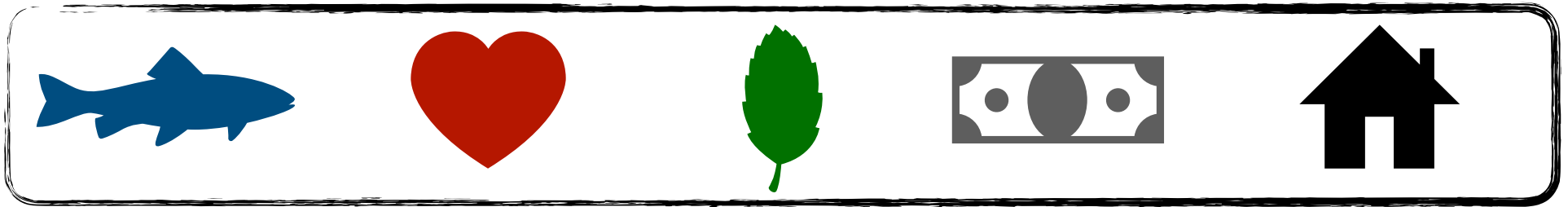
The next section of this report talks about action. It is a reflection on the areas where we are strong in counteracting and adapting to climate change already and it also provides hope and ideas for future work that could be done to preserve our future.

*“Protecting and preserving:  
Protecting the animals, the land, and  
their waters; our heritage, our  
language, our culture.”*

Once we started exploring what changes were happening in our communities related to **earth, air, fire, and water**, it became clear how interconnected and complex the issues are.

The key areas of our community which are affected most by climate change are also the key areas where efforts can be made to adapt to and counteract further climate change damage.

*These five key areas are:*



**Food & Water  
Security**

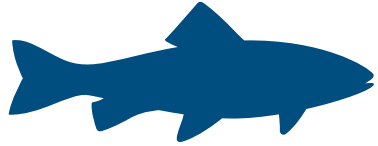
**Health, Social  
& Culture**

**Species &  
Habitat Areas**

**Economy**

**Infrastructure &  
Transportation**

Assessing what the needs and priorities are in these five areas will help us to define where future opportunities for action are.



# FOOD & WATER SECURITY

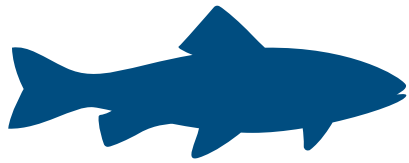
*“Look after that water. Make sure you don’t put anything in the water except your teapot and cup and your paddle and stuff like that when you go out on the lake or on the water.”*

*We need to protect the water first and foremost:*

- \* **We need to monitor our water.** With all the changes going on within our water systems it is crucial that we monitor indicators like temperature, quality as well as water level in order to ensure the right protections are in place.

*Food security is a priority:*

- \* **Prioritizing self-sufficiency and food security** - Many communities across the Yukon, including Mayo are looking towards how to become more self-sufficient and food secure for the future.
- \* **Protecting our key species** - We need to work with other governments and outside hunters to prevent overhunting of moose. We could look into establishing a land guardians program, where our people are paid to educate outsiders and help promote traditional ways of species conservation.
- \* **Emergency food planning is a must.** While traditional foods remain an important part of our diet, our diets remain largely dependent on market foods coming up one major highway. As we’ve seen in the past, when the highway closes due to floods, fires, or other climate related effects, we are cut off from vital food, goods and services. This leaves us vulnerable to food insecurity. We need to talk about establishing an emergency food plan, which includes actions towards self-sufficiency.



# FOOD & WATER SECURITY

*Increase community-wide growing and agriculture:*

- \* **We have a community garden project**, but we'd also like to promote backyard gardening, so that every household has access to their own home-grown fresh food.
- \* **Our soil is some of the best in the Yukon.** We need to monitor soil quality and learn to manage it well. Proper soil management can be a way to counteract climate change as well, because soil absorbs carbon from the atmosphere. There are ways to farm soil, such as low tillage or no tillage agriculture that minimizes soil disruption, keeping carbon 'sequestered' in the ground.

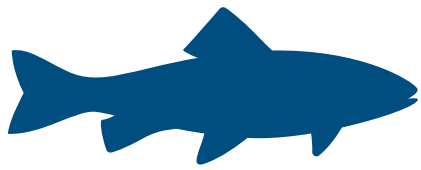
*We may need to adapt our diet:*

- \* **Some Elders are saying we might need to start eating different animals** like grouse, rabbits and bear so that our other species have a chance to bounce back.
- \* **Eating more locally grown food** will also help to decrease carbon emissions related to shipping food north, but due to the high costs of growing food in the Yukon, local food currently can't compete with cheap food grown in the south. There are opportunities to develop solutions in this area which are a win-win for farmers, consumers and the environment.

## Food Sovereignty

"As Indigenous peoples we understand that food is a gift and we have the responsibility to nurture healthy, interdependent relationships with the land, water, plants and animals that provide us with our food. This also means having the ability to respond to our own needs for safe, healthy, culturally relevant indigenous foods with the ability to make decisions over the amount and quality of food we hunt, fish, gather, grow and eat. These rights are asserted on a daily basis for the benefit of present and future generations."

*(First Nations Health Council, 2009)*



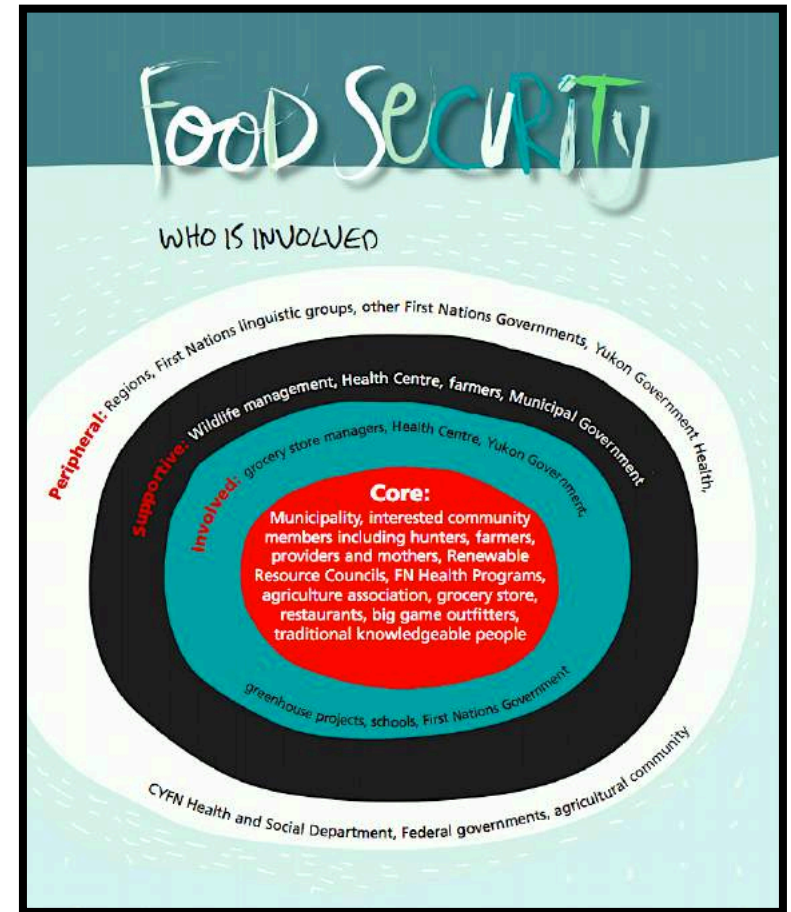
# FOOD & WATER SECURITY

*Teach our young people:*

- \* **We need to teach our young people** to grow their own food and retain their connection to the land and our traditions and culture as Northern Tutchone people. Food security and food sovereignty are about the interrelations between culture, history, environment, and health. A farmer in the area is hosting school farm tours; this is one step to passing on knowledge for promoting greater community self-sufficiency and we should promote/enable more of it.
- \* **We can't forget about what lives beneath our feet.** Understanding soil health is especially important. There is a whole ecosystem of living things in the soil. We need to protect this also.

*Willingness to work together:*

- \* **Ours is a culture of sharing.** We have incredible knowledge when it comes to food and agriculture. As a community, we are involved in many food related pursuits from hunting, gardening and modern farming. Between the First Nations and non-First Nations who live here, we can work together and share this collective knowledge with each other and other communities if they are willing to work with us; especially important is sharing knowledge with the youth, because they are the future leaders who will create a better world for the future generations.



[Pictured above]: An excerpt from the Yukon First Nations Health Promotion Spring School 2007 report which was a joint project between AICBR (then Arctic Health Research Network-Yukon), Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon College, and the University of Toronto.



# HEALTH, SOCIAL & CULTURE

## Reconnect to traditions:

- \* **Kids should be fed first.** Children are our future and they need the nourishment of our medicines, animals, birds and fish the most; in the past, children were fed first. We should bring back this tradition to honour our children and ensure they grow up strong and healthy.
- \* **Bring youth to the land and build connections.** Being out on the land is healing in more ways than one. "Nature is our healer" and we are working hard to bring our people back to the land.
- \* **There is power in our traditions.** We need to bring back our traditional values of harmony with the land and waters. We can encourage this through community harvest camps, where we can reconnect with each other and also with our Mother Earth; we do this by picking our medicines, giving thanks to the Creator and learning from our Elders about traditional teachings.

## Learn, learn, learn:

- \* **Learn your language, identity and culture. Understand the land and its teachings.**
- \* **Visit Elders.** They want to teach. Go out on the land to hear these teachings and learn from the environment. This will help us reconnect with the messages that our Mother Earth is telling us.
- \* **Get an education and learn modern and traditional ways.**
- \* **Learn about healthy living and where our food comes from.** Understanding health and its connection with our food system will help to inform more environmentally aware dietary choices. We also need to pass on skills in the kitchen and promote ancient preservation methods.

*"We have to be prepared in everything our own way, you know, and start learning. We have to learn how to help each other and not fight with each other anymore. We got to learn how to help each other like in the past. That's why we're here because of our ancestors look after each other. We got to learn to do that over again. The only place that we can do that is, you know, if we go back onto the land and start learning how to survive from our Mother Earth."*



# HEALTH, SOCIAL & CULTURE

## *Youth are the future leaders:*

- \* **We need to support our youth as they are the future leaders.** There are many challenges that the youth of today face. They are sandwiched between our historical traumas, the current hardships they face with alcohol, drugs and mental health, as well as dealing with the future challenges of climate change. These are heavy burdens to carry. We must pass on our traditions and cultural values of environmental stewardship.
- \* **We must include youth at the table** so that they can understand what the older generations have fought for under the land claims period; but we also must listen to them and help them to succeed in our modern and rapidly changing world.



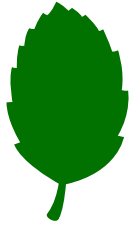
## *Working together:*

- \* **We are “big-hearted people”.** We are willing to share our culture and traditional ways if people are willing to listen.
- \* **We need to work with our governments -** territorial, municipal, federal, and Indigenous.

## *Honour women:*

- \* **More women are stepping up into positions of leadership** and that is making change.
- \* **Women are the caregivers and life-givers.** Their role is to protect. We need to honour them in this role and keep them safe.

[Pictured left]: CBC reporter Dave Croft interviews Geri-Lee and other YIC4 youth about the changes they have witnessed in their communities.  
(First training session, November 2017)



# SPECIES & HABITAT AREAS

## *We are stewards of the land:*

- \* **We need to foster our traditional role as land stewards.** There are opportunities to develop programs which facilitate Indigenous land conservation, stewardship and development of other economic and cultural activities for our people. There is a movement across Canada to establish Indigenous-led Guardians programs which put Indigenous people in the drivers seat for management of lands and establishment of economic activities which pertain to our lands. We want stewards/guardians to be the ears for our past and current Elders' wisdom, to watch over our key species, help manage our lands, and work with governments and with other First Nations communities.
- \* **Use traditional knowledge as a means for wildlife preservation.**

## *Ecosystem education:*

- \* **We need to educate our people on ecosystems** - this includes pasture and rangeland management, how to look after our soil and understand the life that is beneath our feet.
- \* **We need to learn about permafrost** and how it is affecting our plants, animals and the quality of our water.

## *Monitoring:*

- \* **We need to monitor land erosion patterns and water changes.**

*“As First Nations, we know where we can harvest an animal and we know where to leave them alone. That’s how we learn to preserve our wildlife. Like, we don’t fish in one area too much. If I got one net here one year for salmon and if I catch lots there, or don’t catch lots there — if I don’t catch any there, I leave my net there until I catch one. Sometimes I move my net. That’s the kind of stuff we have to learn to do.”*





# INFRASTRUCTURE & TRANSPORTATION

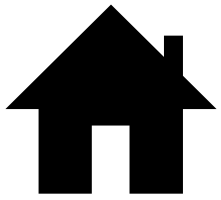
## *Movement towards greener energy systems:*

- \* **The Mayo Hydro Plant provides energy to the community and surrounding area.** Many in our community have raised concerns about the impacts that this project has had on the community and the environment. For example, the dam had led to low water in the river, which in turn impacts people's ability to access traditional fishing and hunting grounds via canoe; others feel that the cost of electricity is still high despite the change towards a more renewable energy source.
- \* **Some residents including our First Nation office have installed solar panels** as a move towards more renewable, green energy systems. Ideally, more community members would have solar panels and they could sell excess energy to a central grid, thus reducing the cost of the system overall.

## *Emergency and evacuation planning:*

- \* **We understand that we are vulnerable with only one way in and out of Mayo** so we need to pay close attention to evacuation planning if a disaster hits.
- \* **We also need to educate our community about evacuation preparedness.** It was suggested that a meeting be hosted to take an inventory of our emergency resources and collective means of transportation (i.e. who has boats, trucks, etc. which can be used to ensure everyone a safe passage out). This community meeting could also be an opportunity for education and for building on our emergency plan.
- \* **Related to this, we also need to prioritize emergency food planning,** since our food system is heavily reliant on one highway; if the food trucks don't come, we need to figure out a way to feed the community.



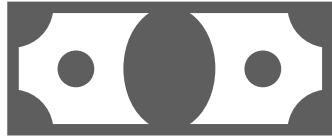


# INFRASTRUCTURE & TRANSPORTATION

*Improve local food storage options:*

- \* **The main bottlenecks in local farming infrastructure are** the lack of cold storage (including freezers) and access to a year-round abattoir for inspecting meat and poultry.
- \* **If there was a walk-in community freezer and cold storage facility** this would decrease the cost of purchasing single farm units and allow for more growers to feed into one shared system. It was suggested that this could be established as a partnership between NND government and independent farmers as there is funding available for communities to use towards developing agricultural infrastructure (i.e. Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) program). By having one shared space for cold storage, more small scale producers could access it and thus lower costs to better serve the community with local food.
- \* **There is a mobile abattoir in the Yukon but it is limited in its ability to meet the need of farmers** in the communities (outside of Whitehorse). Increasing ability to have meat locally inspected (through a federally inspected abattoir) would allow for producers to sell their meat at grocery stores.





# ECONOMY

*Solar systems are a viable green energy alternative:*

- \* **If more community members (with south facing roofs) had solar panels** on their homes, they could sell the power that is generated by the panel to a central grid (a.k.a. "grid-tie") and invest in central battery storage options. For those in our community living far from an established power pole, solar panel systems are a cheap and clean alternative to a diesel generator.
- \* **Hydro should become a secondary source of energy for powering the community.**
- \* **Especially in the agricultural sector, there is a real need to move into renewable energy** as infrastructure, like cold storage, is very energy intensive. So as the North looks to increase its self-sufficiency, the demand for more local storage and processing options will increase and we will need to adapt quickly in order to counteract energy intensity of these systems.
- \* **Our Elders have been warning us for many years that oil prices will be sky high in the future.** We are already seeing prices rising and our systems need to adapt to cleaner, more long-term energy solutions.

*Working together:*

- \* **As a community we recognize the need to work with industry so that we can ensure protections are in place for our environment.** We know that we can't stop progress and that technology is here to stay, but we can continue to ensure that our traditional values guide us in our decision-making and are passed down to the next generation. We have fought hard to protect our land and our rights. It is oftentimes a tiresome fight. We don't want industry that is destructive to the point that we can not use the land. We need to pay particular attention to protecting fish and critical wildlife habitats.
- \* **We can work within our government to promote land stewardship.**

*Education is key:*

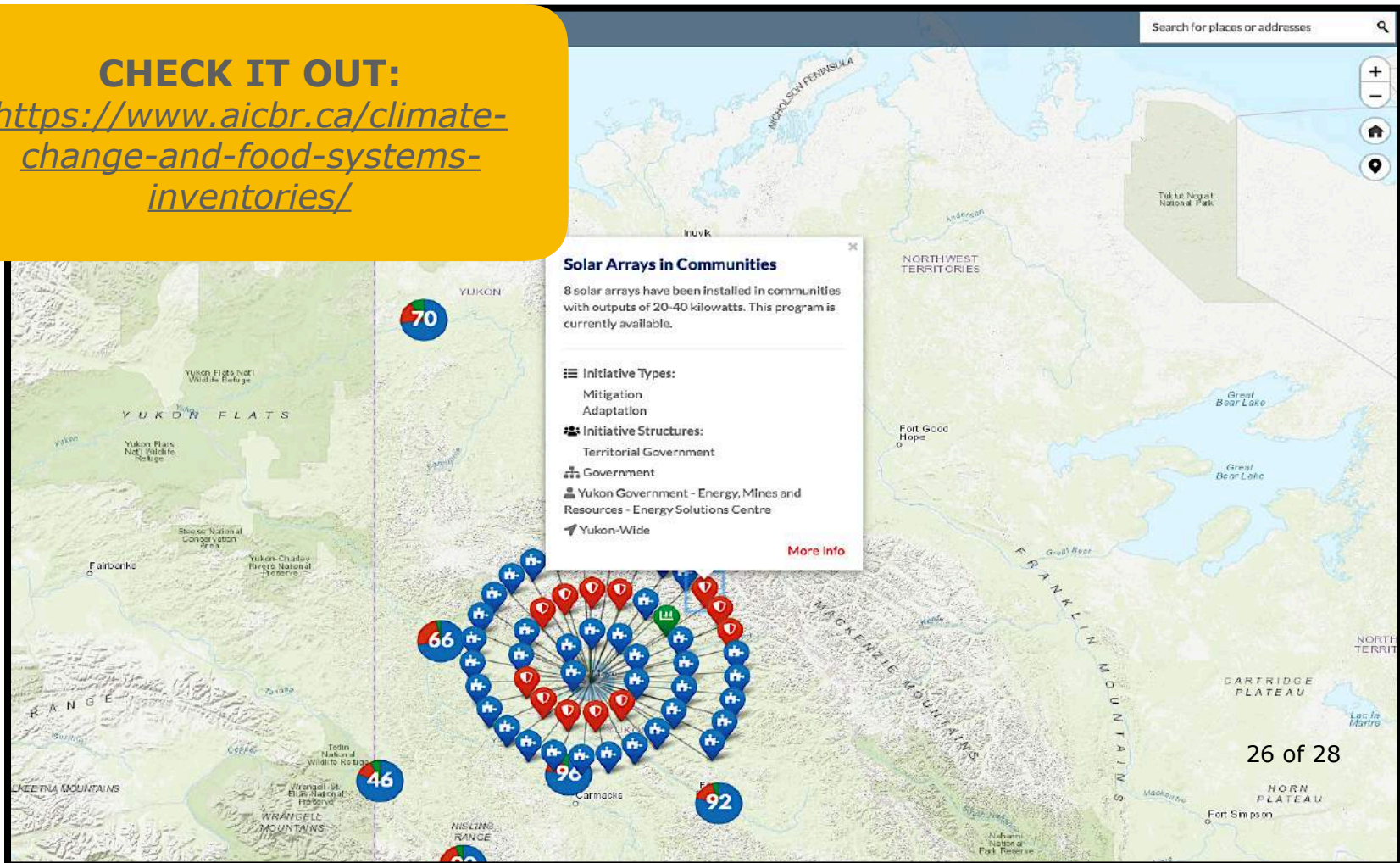
- \* **Education is key for our young people.** Education starts at home, it involves Elders and it involves modern ways of learning in school. We need to educate our young people to be economically minded but environmentally grounded.

# Mapping Climate Change & Food Systems

Also part of the YIC4 project is the development of two mapping tools which show the number of climate change and food systems initiatives across Yukon communities (and beyond). The map contains detailed information about each initiative and allows the user to filter and search by community and project type. These maps help us to get a better picture of our current strengths and allow us to learn from and be inspired by other communities.

## CHECK IT OUT:

<https://www.aicbr.ca/climate-change-and-food-systems-inventories/>



# A MESSAGE

## FROM OUR YOUTH

*“Young people are at the forefront of having to endure and deal with the impacts of climate change. We recognize that we have a key role, as we try to walk in two worlds (living in these modern times while trying to sustain our traditional ways) to become further educated and empowered to voice and create positive change for our land and people. AICBR’s team has created and given youth the space to build upon skills, learn from academics of western science, and reconnect with our traditional teachings with the strong presence of Elders guidance.*

*They’ve given us the confidence to go back to our community and be leaders of becoming strong stewards of the land. I hold my hands up to our Ancestors, Elders past, present, and future leaders, our non-Indigenous allies and especially our youth that understand the worth of fighting the good fight for the land with love and strength.*  
*Mussi cho”*

- Geri-Lee Buyck, reflecting on the lessons she gained from participating in the project

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*Photo credits: Tookie Mercredi, Molly Pratt and Kelly Pickerill*

*Cover art: Heidi Marion (with youth contributing artists, Dominic Johns and Mariah MacDonald)*

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