

Decolonizing Climate Policy in Canada

REPORT FROM PHASE 2 | PART 1

DECEMBER
2023



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Indigenous Climate Action (ICA) is an Indigenous-led organization guided by a diverse group of Indigenous knowledge keepers, water protectors and land defenders from communities and regions across the country. We believe that Indigenous Peoples' rights and knowledge systems are critical to developing solutions to the climate crisis and achieving climate justice.

ICA works on connecting and supporting Indigenous communities to reinforce our place as leaders driving climate change solutions for today and tomorrow. We model our work and organizational structure on systems of free, prior and informed consent and self-determination. By providing communities with knowledge and resources, we can inspire a new generation of Indigenous climate leaders building solutions centered around our inherent rights and cultures.

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Please note that this is Part 2 of 3 that make up the Final Report of ICA's Indigenous-led Climate Policy Report. The Executive Summary was published in December 2022. Please read the Executive Summary to learn more about the methods used in this research and who participated.

This release shares the first three full length chapters. The next release – coming in early 2024– will share the final three full length chapters.



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Policy is so intimate for us. We've had a very abusive relationship with policy. Since we've had this lived experience of the abuses we face through the Indian Act and different ways of colonization, that means we're actual hardcore policy experts that deserve to be in those spaces to actually make them better and less colonial. There are already experts everywhere within the territories that know what needs to be done."

Katelynn Herchak

Inuk | Tundra Biome



Introducing this Report

Over the last few years, our research team at Indigenous Climate Action (ICA) has been talking with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples across so-called Canada about climate change and climate policy. We've been reading Indigenous scholars on the subject, and our staff team has been thinking hard and talking amongst ourselves about the real, Indigenous-led climate policy and climate solutions happening, and how these can be raised up and well supported.

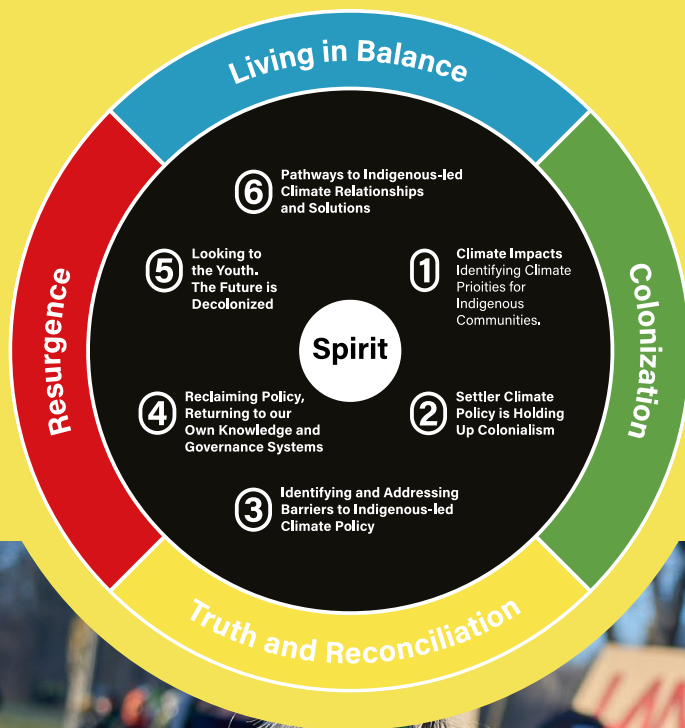
We know that settler-led climate policies are failing. We've argued that abundantly in our 2021 *Decolonizing Climate Policy Report* and *The Risks and Threats of Nature-based Climate Solutions Report*, also from 2021. They are failing to serve our communities' needs, and they are failing to address the root causes of the crisis. And they are even failing to reduce carbon pollution in any real way.

And so we are looking elsewhere for the real solutions, for transformative approaches to policy-making from the ground up, for centering our own ways relating to the land, waters, and territories. We are looking to each other as climate leaders. These conversations have gathered such a huge wealth of beautiful ideas, reflections, and insights, rooted in traditional Indigenous ecological intelligence, and we want to share it all. It is too much gorgeous material for one report, so we are sharing it in a series of three releases.

The Executive Summary of this Report was released in December 2022, explaining our motivations for the research and for centering biomes (tundra, boreal forest, grassland, temperate deciduous forest, and mountain biomes). The summary presents the methods we used, and gives an overview of the people we spoke to, and a brief summary of each of the chapters. It also presents the circle structure of this report, made up of 6 chapters centered around spirit and divided into 4 quadrants. This circular structure of the report is inspired by the many Indigenous cultures that honour the Medicine Wheel and other circular symbols.

This report you're reading now shares the Colonization and Truth & Reconciliation Quadrants and includes 3 chapters:

1. Climate Impacts – Identifying Climate Priorities for Indigenous Communities;
2. Settler climate policy is Holding up Colonialism;
3. Identifying and Addressing Barriers to Indigenous-led Climate Policy.



The final Part 3 of the report will be released in the coming months. It will include The Resurgence and Living in Balance Quadrants, with chapters:

4. Reclaiming Policy, Returning to our own Knowledge and Governance Systems,
5. Looking to the Youth. The future is Decolonized; and
6. Pathways to Indigenous-led Climate Relationships and Solutions

Since the release of the Executive Summary, our research team conducted more research to build on the powerful insights gathered through the interviews and surveys. First, we conducted a literature review on Indigenous scholarship on climate justice. Then the ICA staff sat down for a Think Tank Session for the purpose of bringing to this project their experience and knowledge.

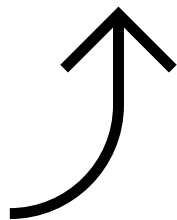
Acknowledgements: We would like to thank all the incredible people across these lands who spoke to us in the surveys and interviews. We'd like to acknowledge the Advisory Council who guided this work: Tiffany Traverse, Pam Beebe, Katherine Whitecloud, Deborah McGregor, Bryanna Brown, and Jesse Mike. We are deeply grateful.

We would like to also acknowledge the support of ICA staff who have contributed to this project over the last few years: Eriel Deranger, Jayce Chiblow, Rebecca Sinclair, Breanne Lavellee Heckert, Sarah Hanson, and the entire ICA team that has help to bring this project to life.

Thank you to the research volunteers and coordinators at Research for the Front Lines for their supportive role in preparing this report for publication: Ashley Henry, Jen Gobby, Gerda Kits, Sam Talbot, and Amy Janzwood.



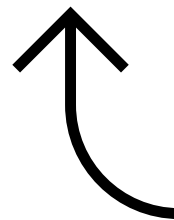
Sources of Information for Each Section of the Report



What we heard in the **interviews and surveys**



ICA **staff input** through 2 Think Tank Sessions



Literature Review of **Indigenous Scholarship** on climate justice

A Note On Biomes

As explained in the Executive Summary of this report, this research project was guided by a Council of Advisors, one from each of the five biomes in so-called Canada: tundra, boreal forest, grassland, temperate deciduous forest, and mountain biomes.

A biome is a large geographical region defined by the climate (precipitation and temperature) and the specific communities of plants, animals, and other natural entities like soils, rock, and mountains that live there.

Our inspiration to build this project around Biomes is derived from our desire to incorporate Indigenous knowledges from different lands and their human and non-human communities. This report is full of the powerful voices of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis folks from all across these 5 Biomes.

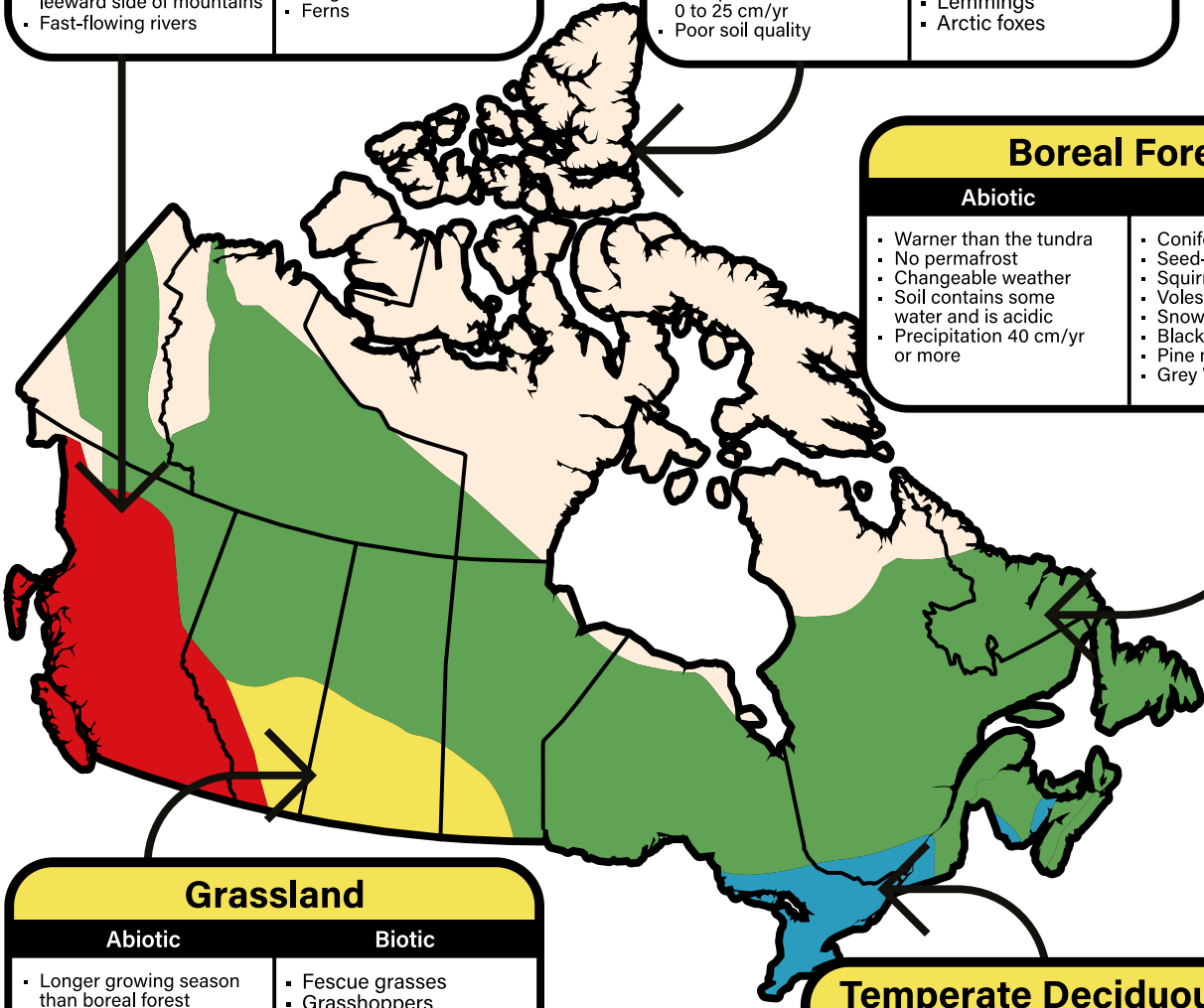
The map on the next page shows these 5 biomes.

Mountain Forest

Abiotic	Biotic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temperatures vary with elevation • Cool summers • Windy conditions • Heavy precipitation on leeward side of mountains • Fast-flowing rivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marmots • Squirrels • Elk • Black and grizzly bears • Cougar • Large coniferous trees • Ferns

Tundra

Abiotic	Biotic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low temperatures for most of the year • Short growing season • Permafrost layer beneath soil • Precipitation from 0 to 25 cm/yr • Poor soil quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low diversity • Rapid-flowering plants • Mosses and lichens • Caribou • Ptarmigan • Lemmings • Arctic foxes



Boreal Forest

Abiotic	Biotic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warmer than the tundra • No permafrost • Changeable weather • Soil contains some water and is acidic • Precipitation 40 cm/yr or more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coniferous trees • Seed-eating birds • Squirrels • Voles • Snowshoe hares • Black bears • Pine martens • Grey Wolves

Grassland

Abiotic	Biotic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer growing season than boreal forest • Higher temperatures than tundra or boreal forest • Rich, fertile soil • Precipitation from 25 to 75 cm/yr 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fescue grasses • Grasshoppers • Bison • Voles and mice • Snakes • Hawks • Coyotes

Temperate Deciduous Forest

Abiotic	Biotic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer growing season than boreal forest • Higher temperatures than tundra or boreal forest • Fertile soil • Precipitation up to 100 cm/yr 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deciduous trees and other flowering plants • Tree and ground squirrels • Many insects • Shrews and mice • Deer • Black bears • Hummingbirds • Weasels

- Tundra
- Mountain Forest
- Boreal Forest
- Grassland
- Temperate Deciduous Forest



Climate Impacts

Identifying Climate Priorities for Indigenous Communities

“

Climate change effects everything because everything is connected.”

Anonymous

Lil'wat Nation | Mountain Biome



We have heard from many Indigenous communities that they have a desire to address the negative impacts of climate change. To do this effectively, our communities first need to identify the ways in which climate change is affecting us and our lands. We asked participants in our survey to describe issues that are important to them, and how they are affected by climate change. Many of the issues they named echo concerns that have been raised by Indigenous communities and advocates in climate declarations and reports for decades.¹

Experiencing the Impacts of Climate Change

We heard that Indigenous communities are experiencing the impacts of climate change in many ways.² In fact, because of our close connection to and reliance on the land, as Hetxw'ms Gyetxw from the Gitksan Nation (Mountain Biome) put it, “Indigenous communities experience the changing climate first before any other communities do.” A quarter (25%) of folks told us that they have seen changes in the weather including more storms and droughts. Many observed that the weather is becoming warmer and drier, and that the seasons are changing. Temperature measurements across so-called Canada show that we are experiencing warming at twice the global rate. Between 1948 and 1916, mean temperatures increased by 1.7°C for all of Canada and 2.3°C in the North, with the number of very hot days tripling over this period.³

-
1. See ICA’s forthcoming report: Grounding our work in what has come before: A Review of Indigenous-led Climate Declarations and Reports.
 2. Alexander, Clarence, Nora Bynum, Elizabeth Johnson, Ursula King, Tero Mustonen, Peter Neofotis, Noel Oettlé, et al. 2011. “Linking Indigenous and Scientific Knowledge of Climate Change.” *BioScience* 61 (6): 477–84. <https://doi.org/10.1525/bio.2011.61.6.10/>
 3. JF Consulting. 2020. “Métis Nation Climate Change & Health Vulnerability Assessment.” Prepared for the Métis National Council. <https://www.metisnation.ca/uploads/documents/MNCHVA%20FINAL%20Report.pdf>.
 4. Menzies, Allyson, Ella Bowles, Michelle Gallant, Heather Patterson, Cory Kozmik, Susan Chiblow, Deborah McGregor, Adam Ford, and Jesse Popp. 2022. “‘I See My Culture Starting to Disappear’: Anishinaabe Perspectives on the Socioecological Impacts of Climate Change and Future Research Needs.” *FACETS*. 7 :509–27. <https://doi.org/10.1139/facets-2021-0066>.
 5. Turner, Nancy J., and Helen Clifton. 2009. “‘It’s so Different Today’: Climate Change and Indigenous Lifestyles in British Columbia, Canada.” *Global Environmental Change, Traditional Peoples and Climate Change*, 19 (2): 180–90. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2009.01.005>.
 6. Bush, Elizabeth, and Donald S. Lemmen, eds. 2019. *Canada’s Changing Climate Report*. Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada. <https://changingclimate.ca/CCCR2019/>.

The Swinomish Indian Tribal Community in Washington State used a values- and place-based process to determine climate change priorities. As a community, they came together to identify indicators of community health. Using information about how climate change is likely to affect key food sources, they evaluated how these changes will affect the health of their community and set priorities for action.

swinomish-climate.com/community-environmental-health



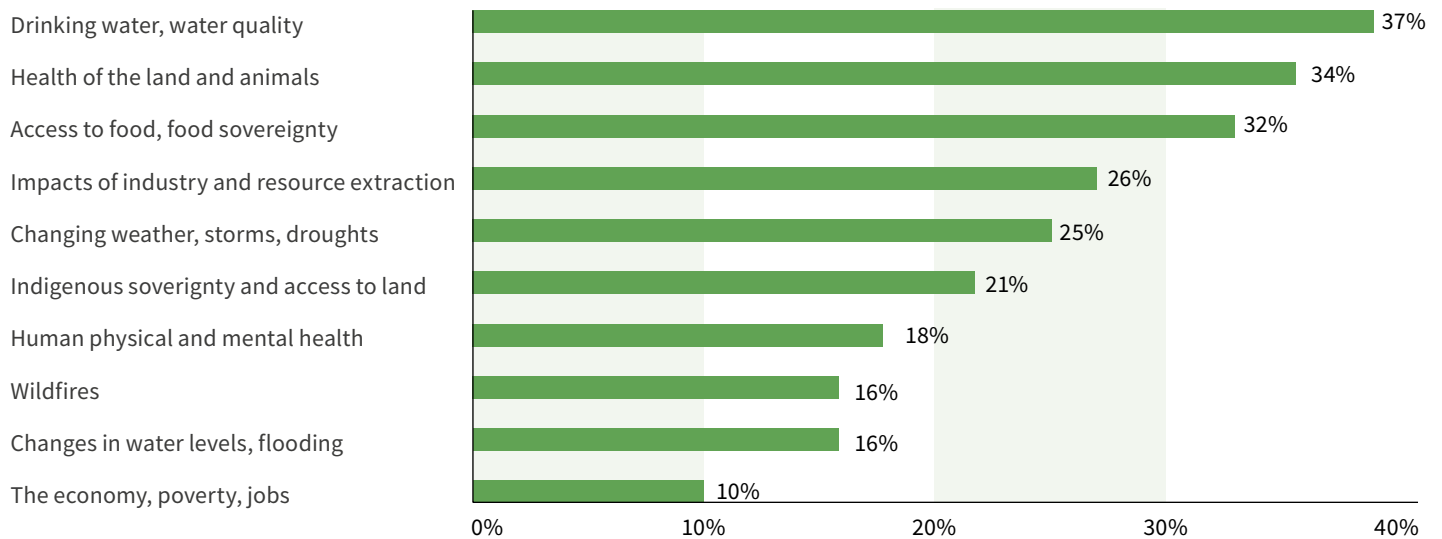


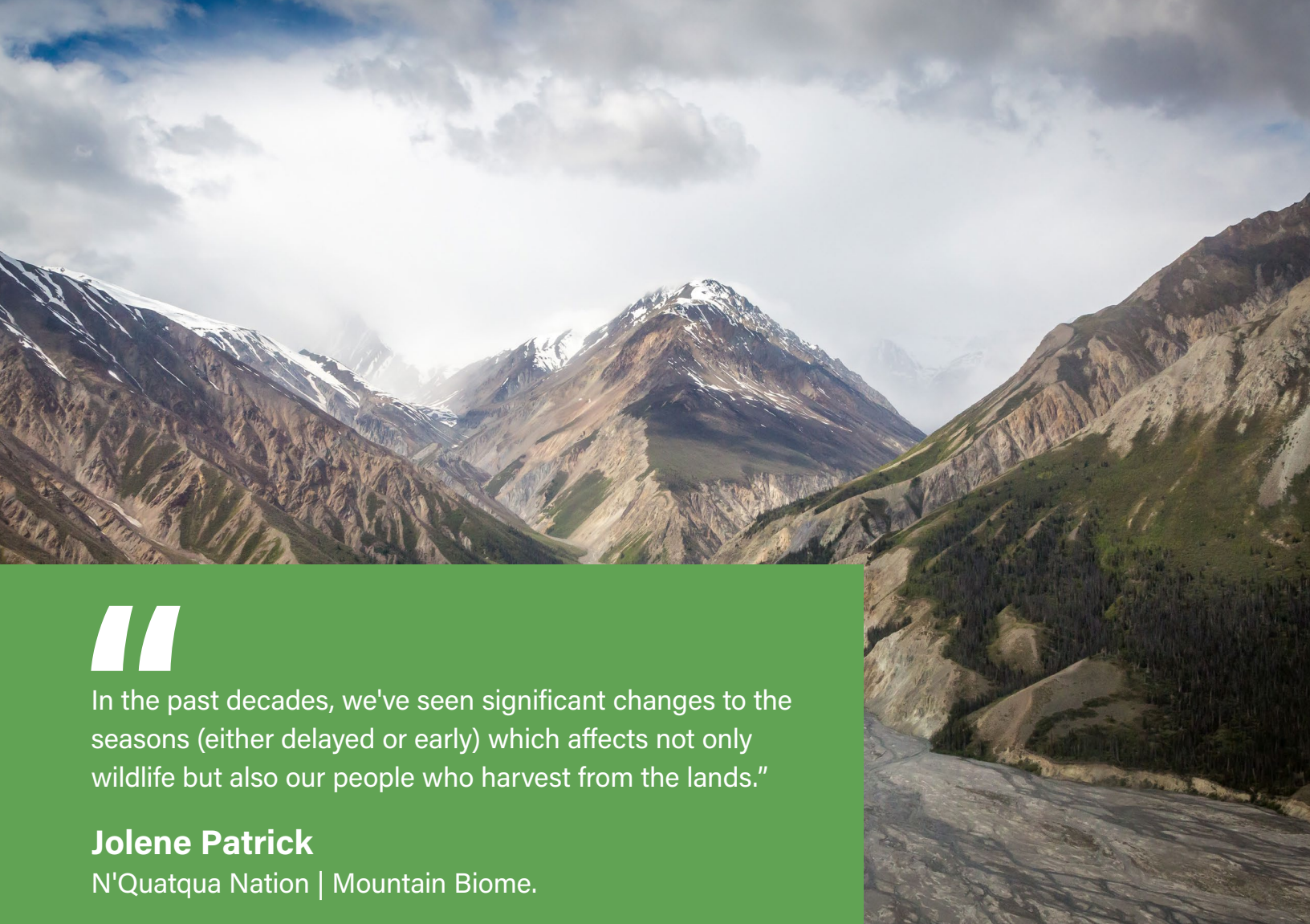
Figure 1: One of our online survey questions asked: “What, to you, are some of the important issues impacting your community? How do you feel climate change is affecting those issues?” The graph shows the percentage of folks who referred to each issue. (Total number of survey respondents: 105).

The Climate Atlas of Canada holds a massive amount of data to reinforce Indigenous communities knowledges and experiences.

climateatlas.ca/find-local-data

Explore local data for annual rainfall, number of very hot days (+30) or very cold days (-30) in your community. Was it different 60 years ago? How different will it be in another 60 years?

Consider taking the time to discuss these changes with others in your community.



“

In the past decades, we've seen significant changes to the seasons (either delayed or early) which affects not only wildlife but also our people who harvest from the lands.”

Jolene Patrick

N'Quatqua Nation | Mountain Biome.

More extreme heat⁴ events are putting Indigenous communities in danger. High temperatures are causing more severe storms and contributing to more intense and dangerous wildfires, many of which affect our communities. Shaunti Davis, Dane-zaa, Tahltan, from Blueberry River First Nations (Mountain Biome) told us that wildfires have endangered their community through the past few summers. Wildfires were identified by 16% of folks as an issue in their communities. This number is likely much higher now after this summer of 2023 that saw massive wildfires across our many territories.

Sixteen percent of folks identified flooding and changing water levels as issues in their communities. Kabsennahawi David from Kanehsatake (Temperate Deciduous Biome) reported that since 2017, their community has been “affected by bad flooding three times. We are losing shoreline and areas where we can build housing.” These are becoming more common experiences for Indigenous communities leading to the loss of traditional and ceremonial lands. As climate change continues to worsen, extreme events such as wildfires, droughts, and floods are likely to continue to become more frequent and more severe.⁵

-
4. There is no standard definition of an extreme heat event, commonly known as a “heat wave.” Environment Canada (Ontario Region) defines a heat wave as “a period with more than three consecutive days of maximum temperatures at or above 32°C [90°F].”
 5. Bush, Elizabeth, and Donald S. Lemmen, eds. 2019. Canada’s Changing Climate Report. Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada. <https://changingclimate.ca/CCR2019/>.

Impacts on Water and Food

Over one-third (37%) of folks expressed concerns about drinking water and water quality. Some of their concerns included: reduced snowpack, decreased availability of freshwater, and loss of water quality (from pollution, hydro dams and more). Such changes are already being observed across so-called Canada and are predicted to worsen over time, although some changes are dependent on location (for example, annual streamflows are predicted to increase in the North but decrease in the Southern interior).⁶

Rising ocean temperatures are harming important food sources for coastal communities. Other biomes are seeing that less rain is leading to trees and other vegetation dying, and for others warmer, dry weather is negatively affecting all life forms.

Changes in water temperatures and levels have led to a significant decrease in the number of salmon returning to our rivers. Fewer salmon means less nutrients on land and harms the health of other animals and plants upstream. All this impacts food chains, causing food insecurity for those who partake in traditional hunting and gathering.

Climate change is affecting the migration patterns of animals, especially in the North. Cassidy Villeburn Buracas from K'atlo'deeche First Nation (Boreal Forest Biome) explained:

As the North warms, the land changes. Migration patterns of the caribou and the moose shift, as does the quantity and quality of fish. The caribou migrate thousands of kilometers from their calving grounds and their winter ranges, and the specific lichen they rely on to eat grows in specific conditions.

6. Bush, Elizabeth, and Donald S. Lemmen, eds. 2019. Canada's Changing Climate Report. Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada. <https://changingclimate.ca/CCCR2019/>.

We All Take Care of the Harvest (WATCH) is a network of coastal First Nations working to develop an approach to monitoring seafood and climate change that all coastal First Nations can adapt for their own purposes. The goal is to help coastal communities and their members decide if and when their seafood is safe to harvest.

fnha.ca/what-we-do/environmental-health/watch-project



“

Forests are burning and rivers and creeks almost dry up... All of these changes are affecting the health of our ecosystems and their biodiversity”

Darrell Fors

Treaty 8 Territory | Boreal Forest Biome

In the Boreal Forest Biome, the Essipit Innu First Nation formed the Caribou Collective to conserve woodland caribou habitat in their territories. Since 2015, they have worked with the Ministry of Forestry to close over 40 km of logging access roads to restore them as habitat and reduce their impact on the movement of the caribou.

collectifcaribou.ca/

“

Since I was a young girl we've hunted and berry picked on these territories, this year we haven't seen any moose or saskatoon berries in the area and more than half our hunting grounds are burnt as a result of wildfires.”

Anonymous

Lake Babine First Nation | Mountain Biome



ICA's Climate Leadership Coordinator Carole Monture (Kanienkehá:ka [Mohawk] Wolf Clan from Six Nations of the Grand River) explained that similar impacts are being observed in her homelands in the Temperate Deciduous Forest Biome:

Here at Six Nations, we've been finding winters are a lot shorter. Something my grandpa always used to say was 'a green Christmas means a fat graveyard' meaning like, when it's not snowing by Christmas, there's a lot of impacts that follow as a result. Without cold temperatures and enough snowpack, there's microbes in the soil that don't die off and this can damage crops. Pollinators don't have enough protection and insulation from the cold while overwintering etc. It's been really dry here, much less rainfall than we're used to. And then it'll be a deluge... And we've also had wildfire smoke down here from the fires in Ontario, Northern Ontario, and then Quebec, and the West as well. We have a lot of young people here, elders, people

with disabilities as well. And that's been an impact. And we're finding it's impacting our ceremonial cycle as well. Like Maple ceremony... it's not really getting cold enough for the maple trees. And then like, it's, or they're coming it's much earlier, like people are tapping, able to tap in like, February because it's so warm. From what I just talked to my grandfather about and that's all off, everything is just off.

All these climate impacts are contributing to challenges to food security and food sovereignty, identified as an issue by nearly one-third (32%) of folks. Hanna Paul of the Métis Nation of Alberta (Boreal Forest Biome) told us that "flooding and fires have devastated my community and climate change has a massive hand in that. It's impacted trap lines, hunting, and harvesting." These events make it harder for people to get out onto the land, to hunt, to pick berries, and to find medicines.

At the Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre, a fully accredited 60-bed hospital and a 20-bed extended care facility, traditional foods are offered to all patients at least once a week. All food is donated to the program by local hunters, gatherers, and outfitters. These donations include foods like moose, caribou, small game, whitefish or walleye, geese, ducks, other waterfowl, blueberries, and wild rice.

sfnha.com/client-services/meals-miichim/



Participants note that these issues affect communities' whole ways of life. Veronica Rose Waechter of Gitksan and Gitanmaax (Mountain Biome) explained that "Our communities still rely on salmon for winter foods. So, it is not only the salmon that are dying, but our culture and people with them."

Wild foods are less available, and climate change is creating new challenges for growing food as well. Jeff Cornthassel, of the Cherokee Nation (Mountain Biome), explained that climate change is impacting their community's ability to grow our traditional foods like corn, beans, and heirloom foods which are harder to grow with the changing weather patterns. All this leads to increased dependency on unhealthy, unaffordable industrially produced food.

Impacts on Health and Safety

Climate change is negatively affecting Indigenous communities' safety and ability to travel in many ways. We heard that water level changes on Georgian Bay are making crossings harder for island communities. Changing temperatures are affecting ice roads which are the only means of winter travel for some communities. Severe weather events are causing erosion and damaging roads,

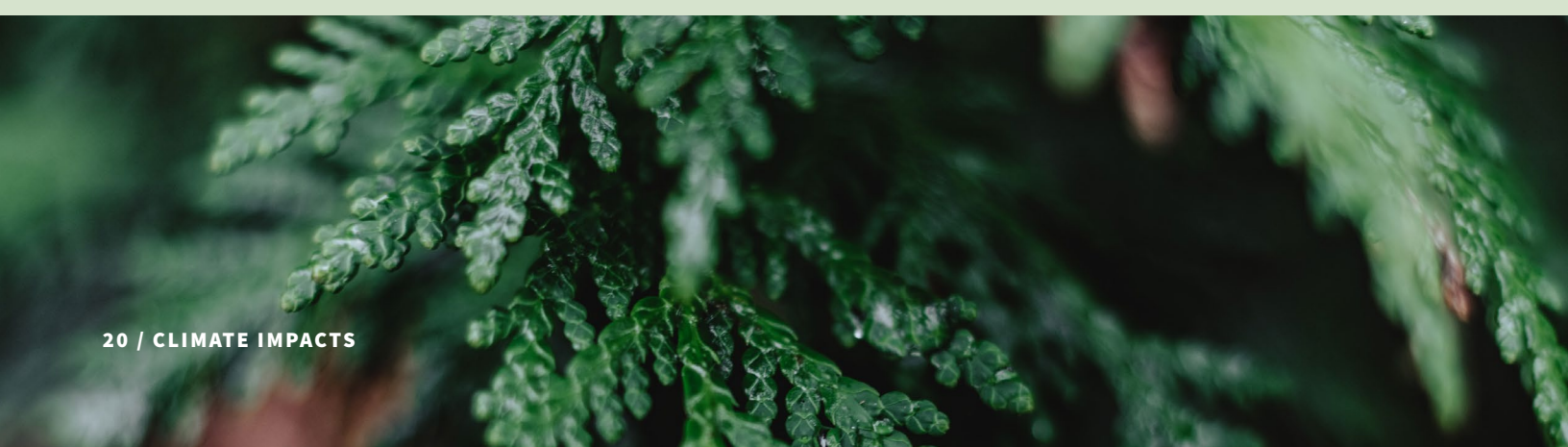
affecting roads, creating risks for community safety.

Severe storms are putting homes at risk and will only grow more severe as climate change worsens. In some coastal communities, rising sea levels are forcing entire communities to relocate to higher ground. As an anonymous Plains Cree person (Boreal Forest Biome) pointed out, "people without homes will be exposed to extremes from climate change without proper safety." These folks may have nowhere to escape the higher temperatures in the summer. They also face increased risk of injuries during the winter due to winter storms.

One person pointed out that building thriving economies – which can help rebuild our sovereign nations – will become more difficult as communities are dealing with the effects of climate change instead of being able to engage in economic activities that can help us prosper. Overall, climate change is creating issues which will decrease the ability of communities to address our needs. As one of our Advisory Council members explained, "We are caught in a reactive cycle to climate impact, there is almost no room or time to mitigate and recover."

With all these impacts, climate change is negatively affecting our communities' health. Extreme heat, forest fires, floods, drought, erosion, and other climate-related impacts are significantly affecting many communities' mental and physical and spiritual health.

Indigenous Services Canada's Climate Change and Health Adaptation Program funding has been funding community-led projects focusing on human health and climate. Find the details of dozens of projects led by Indigenous communities over the past decade at climatetelling.info/





“

As an Indigenous person I see the first-hand impacts that damaging the land has on not only our day to day lives but also our spirit.”

Jordan Brown

Inuit | Tundra Biome

Physical, mental, spiritual, economic, and ecological health are interconnected. As an anonymous Inuvialuit resident put it, “our livelihood and well-being is connected to the land's well-being.” An anonymous respondent of Ceg A Kin Nakoda Nation (Grasslands Biome) similarly wrote, “we are deeply connected to this Earth and witnessing the suffering impacts us – her trauma is our trauma which leads to a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness.” Kailey from Fisher River (Boreal Forest Biome) put it this way: “When the land is sick, we are sick.”

Everything is Connected

Many non-Indigenous accounts of climate change impacts group them by ecosystems, human health, infrastructure, economic, agriculture and other systems. However, the folks we spoke with articulated clearly that these are all interlocking and interwoven and must be understood holistically to address them effectively.

Jeff Corntassel of the Cherokee Nation (Mountain Biome) spoke to these deep interconnections:

Our medicines are harder to find, which impacts our ceremonies and health. A strong language has a correlation to strong health. If we're not getting out on the land/water and speaking the language due to climate changes, our community health suffers.

Eriel Tchekwie Deranger, ICA's Executive Director (Dënesųline from the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation [ACFN], Boreal Forest Biome), echoed these words, talking of the profound loss resulting from climate displacement.

We were evacuated for almost an entire month because of [climate change caused] forest fires. [...] We were supposed to be gathering for our cultural days together as a community, where we have people that go out and harvest animals and berries and medicines, and they teach the kids about this. It is the time for us to come together. And we not only lost that time

together, people were in a state of traumatization. And we lost an entire month of harvesting and being in community together.

With the land changing at a fast pace, communities are under pressure to reclaim cultural practices by passing down traditional knowledge and skills to the next generation. As Jayce Chiblow, ICA's Education and Training Manager (Anishinaabe from Garden River First Nation, Mixed Boreal & Deciduous Forest Biome) observed, "Species distribution is just way down. Species' health is way down. The things that we can harvest are barely edible, or they're sick or injured or diseased. [...] It makes it really difficult for youth that want to go out and learn those things."

An anonymous Inuvialuit resident (Tundra Biome) shared:

There are so many social issues, and climate change compounds all of them. I believe this because practising traditional activities, and connecting with the land and being with your family again is something that grounds us. It reminds us who we are and where we come from, bringing a sense of belonging, identity. However, with climate change, the travel paths we know, the subsistence hunting, trapping, and fishing we know, the berry-picking places, these are all changing. Suddenly what is our security, what brings us security, is changing. It is unpredictable in ways it never has been before. It is more dangerous. Increased storms, shifting seasons affecting things like ice-thickness, animals being forced into areas/habitats that they aren't usually in, etc. All of these things make practising our cultural activities harder, more expensive, more time-consuming. And overall, less and less accessible. This impacts the community/land relationship, creating more disconnect, and thus creating more social issues rooted in identity loss.

Rooted in Capitalism and Colonialism

Anishinaabe scholar Deborah McGregor and colleagues have written about the connections between colonialism and environmental injustices including climate change.⁷ In our survey, folks stressed that the impacts of climate change add to the ongoing impacts of colonialism on our lives and lands. The impacts of climate on our water, housing, health, and access to food are worsening pre-existing crises in our communities. Colonial crises faced by First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities that were identified in our survey include biodiversity loss, settler encroachment, industrialization, and urbanization, mining and other forms of extractivism, unchecked development, clear-cutting of forests, invasive species, toxic dumps, urban sprawl, air pollution, ecosystem destruction, oil and gas production, mega projects, factory farming, privately owned lands, lands occupied by settlers, MMIWG+ and land theft.

These are described by Aleesha Jones from the Nlaka'pamux Nation (Mountain Biome) as examples of "colonial mindsets that don't consider the land as being a partner and instead an object to be exploited. This perspective is how colonizers have and continue to view Indigenous people."

Carole Monture contrasted Indigenous and settler worldviews. They said, "Our teachings encourage reciprocity with the land, only taking what you need, and wasting nothing. The current economic system is the opposite and doesn't just kill life – it depends on killing life. Climate change is a symptom of a broken system."

As Eriel Tchekwie Deranger, ICA's Executive Director puts it, "The ongoing impacts of climate change are just adding insult to injury that we're already experiencing from extractivism."

7. McGregor, Deborah, Steven Whitaker, and Mahisha Sritharan. 2020. "Indigenous Environmental Justice and Sustainability." *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability* 43: 35–40.



“

Indigenous Peoples are the original stewards. To that end, we must still be the leaders on climate policy, not a government driven by money”

Sandi Boucher

Seine River First Nation and Thunder Bay Indigenous community | Boreal Forest Biome

Interested in identifying priorities for addressing climate change in your community? The Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources has published a series of guidebooks; see for example:

Guidebook 2: Climate Change Impacts in the Community provides resources for communities to engage their members on how climate change has impacted them.

Guidebook 3: Identifying Community Sustainability and Climate Change Vulnerabilities helps communities develop a vision for a climate-resilient future.

Check out all six guidebooks, and even more resources here:

yourcier.org/iccap-toolkit/

Settler Climate Policy is Holding up Colonialism

“

Policy is not an Indigenous word. Policy usually means what a government decides to do ... rather than in conciliation with those this policy will affect”

Anonymous

Métis | Temperate Deciduous Forest Biome



Indigenous Climate Action’s online survey of Indigenous folks across so-called Canada asked: “The mainstream, colonial definition of the word policy is ‘a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by a government, party, business, or individual.’ What does the word ‘policy’ mean to you? What does it bring up for you, as an Indigenous person?”

Over 100 responses have shown that Indigenous people think of policy in many different ways. Some folks spoke of policy as rules, legislation or regulation; as the work of governments. To others, policy is more broad; a way of working or principles for how things should be done.



Policy is a set of guidelines and/or rules that have been implemented (either as a group or by a leader/s) to control how people do things, what approaches they will take and what is acceptable/not acceptable, as well as consequences for non-compliance”

Megan Dunne

Peguis and Brokenhead Ojibway | Grasslands Biome



Some folks saw policy as so formal and bureaucratic that it is inaccessible and hard to influence, which can create barriers and complications for Indigenous communities trying to decolonize their ways of working. According to an anonymous Nehiyaw from Woodland Cree First Nation (Boreal Forest Biome), “sometimes policy is a barrier to taking action, and sometimes it can support action ... or support the wrong kind of action.” And to an anonymous Neyasshiinigmiing Nishnaabekiing respondent (Temperate Deciduous Forest Biome), “policy... feels inaccessible and I know it as a tool to keep things away from Indigenous folks.”

Several people described policy as inflexible, rigid, and limiting. Policy was written in non-Indigenous languages and often enforced by non-Indigenous speaking people.

As Katherine Morrisseau, Anisinabe (Boreal Forest Biome), put it, “the word policy to me means rule, which to me means inflexible.” Emily Mask, Métis (Temperate Deciduous Forest Biome), shared that policies “don’t leave room for change in circumstance and context.”



Policy is Built on Non-Indigenous Worldviews

Kyla Pascal, of the Métis Nation of Alberta (Grasslands Biome), expressed that they “feel policies to be quite limiting,” and went on to explain that “I don't know how well the framework of policies relates to Indigenous ways of being.” Ashley Nadjiwon, ICA's Healing Walk Coordinator (Anishinaabe kwe from Wikwemikong Unceded Territory, Temperate Deciduous Forest biome) told us,

I was taught how to pray to the water, I was taught how to do water walks. I was taught how to do offerings to the animals and to talk to them, to talk to the trees. ... The animals need policy, the water needs policy, they need policy to protect them. [Humans] constantly put ourselves at the center of attention, focused on what we need but all of these ones that don't have voices, they are just left there.



“

A lot of the colonial policies are very human centric and about upholding universal human rights and freedoms to the individual. You know, some people pushing for a healthy environment. But ultimately, if we don't have species, and relationships on the land to support thriving communities, and cultures and nations, then those policies are just simply words on paper.”

Eriel Tchekwie Deranger, ICA's Executive Director

Dënesułine from the ACFN | Boreal Forest Biome

As an Indigenous person, and knowing that policies are often centered around a very Eurocentric system, I know that there is already an underlying pseudo-language barrier. This systematic way is not often how we function/our natural way of understanding. To participate in this western-science conversion, we have to learn the western-science language. And that's what I think of when I hear policy.”

Anonymous Respondent

Inuvialut Resident | Tundra Biome

”



“

[Policy is] foreign law based on foreign values.”

Maistoo'awaastan

Piikani, Niitsitapi | Grasslands Biome

Several others also described policy as tied to non-Indigenous worldviews and governance approaches.

Many spoke of the ways that policy has been used to support settler colonialism. Settler claims to these lands were based on the Doctrine of Discovery,⁸ and reinforced by the treaty-making process. The Government of Canada has violated their treaties with Indigenous Nations, showing that policies are only seen as valuable when they support settler colonialism. Indigenous laws, as described by Tanana Athabascan scholar Dian Million, directly oppose the laws and policies of settler governments because they are built on an Indigenous worldview which emphasizes responsibility and relations.”⁹

Many folks shared that Canadian “policy” has been detrimental to Indigenous communities. Canadian policies have regularly violated Aboriginal and treaty rights, and climate policy is no exception. In an analysis of Canadian climate policy, Anishinaabe scholar Graeme Reed and his co-authors found that even though Canada’s climate policy documents give verbal recognition to the rights of Indigenous Peoples, “these rights are rarely respected or safeguarded in the design or implementation of the plans.”¹⁰

“

“The word policy brings up for me what my Auntie said before, 'racist colonial policies' because even though the first policy and laws in Canada were for Indigenous Peoples, they were all trying to manipulate us and stop us from being who we are”

Veronica Rose Waechter,
Gitxsan, Gitanmaax | Mountain Biome

8. The Doctrine of Discovery is a legal and religious concept set out in a series of declarations by popes in the 15th century. These declarations (known as “papal bulls”) were used by colonizers to justify the seizure of Indigenous lands and the displacement of Indigenous people. (<https://humanrights.ca/story/doctrine-discovery>)
9. Million, Dian. 2018. “We Are the Land, and the Land Is Us: Indigenous Land, Lives and Embodied Ecologies in the Twenty-First Century.” In *Racial Ecologies*, edited by Leilani Nishime and Kim D. Hester Williams, 19–33. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
10. Reed, Graeme, Nicolas D. Brunet, Deborah McGregor, Curtis Scurr, Tonio Sadik, Jamie Lavigne, and Sheri Longboat. 2022. “Toward Indigenous Visions of Nature-Based Solutions: An Exploration into Canadian Federal Climate Policy.” *Climate Policy* 22 (4): 514–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2022.2047585>

Policy is a Tool of Settler Colonialism in So-Called Canada

Canadian policy development has too often been imposed on Indigenous Peoples. As one anonymous Anishinaabe person from the Temperate Deciduous Forest Biome stated “policy – often in Canada – is a set of unilateral rules usually developed without the participation of Indigenous Peoples, which is imposed on us. The process itself does not respect our sovereignty and ignores our right to self determination.”

Settler policy, by design, denies Indigenous sovereignty. As ICA's Engagement Manager, Jamie Bourque-Blyan (Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement, Boreal Forest Biome) explained:

I was asked recently about why it's important for Indigenous people to lobby federal policy in Canada. I found it to be a very harmful question because first of all, I don't identify as a Canadian. And it forces me to recognize a foreign sovereign as my sovereign.

ICA's Education and Training Manager, Jayce Chiblow expressed a similar feeling: “I get angry... The fact that we are always trying to get our laws recognized by the colonial systems” (Anishinaabe from Garden River First Nation, Mixed Boreal & Deciduous Forest Biome).

For Jordan Brown, Inuit (Tundra Biome), the word policy, brings up a lot of intergenerational trauma. This term in Canada's context reminds me of the power that past and current governments have held over our Indigenous people to obtain resources, land, and rights over us. These ‘policies’ put in place have often been unjust and placed in order to control our communities.

Several people pointed out that government policy can be hypocritical, and that in certain cases they do not follow their own policies, especially if those policies might hinder capitalistic goals.

As Potawatomi scholar Kyle Whyte asks:

Will this just be another situation... where a call to urgency is used to justify solutions that ultimately harm Indigenous Peoples? That's how colonial power has been wielded in the past, that is, by using real or perceived urgencies to mask or justify privilege, harm, and injustice.¹¹

Some people feel, as Gwen Bridge of Saddle Lake (Grasslands Biome) noted, that “policy is not a very useful tool for meaningful change, at least not change that addresses the needs Indigenous Peoples. Instead, we have to change the systems of governance.”



All colonial policy works in favor of the oil industries impacting generations of our Nations. Being surrounded by many industries including multiple petrochemical facilities, I feel a sense of hopelessness in my community.”

Vanessa Gray, ICA's Divestment Campaign Coordinator

Anishinaabe Kwe from the Aamjiwnaang First Nation | Temperate Deciduous Forest Biome

11. Whyte, Kyle. 2020. “Too Late for Indigenous Climate Justice: Ecological and Relational Tipping Points.” WIREs: Climate Change 11 (1): 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.603>.

Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek (Grassy Narrows First Nation) has been organizing against the mercury poisoning in their waters for over 60 years. In addition to grassroots organizing and protests, they have partnered with researchers, environmental groups, lawyers, their neighboring Nations, and regional political organizations to move forward.

Their recent achievements include securing nearly \$69 million to fund construction and programs for a treatment centre to address the long-term and intergenerational effects of mercury poisoning as well as a Mutual Cooperation Agreement with four other Nations to protect their lands and waters from mining exploration companies empowered by the Ontario government.

Learn more about their work at freegrassy.net/





“

It makes me ask why non-Indigenous people are creating policies for Indigenous Peoples.”

Anonymous Respondent

Dane-zaa, Tahltan, Blueberry River First Nation | Mountain Biome

Moreover, as respondents identified, Indigenous Peoples have systematically been excluded from policymaking (see Chapter 3).

For these reasons, Canadian policy “does not truly address our needs” points out an anonymous respondent. Instead, it “fills the pockets of those who actively gain from it.”

Policy has been used to Oppress Indigenous Law and Protocols

While colonial governments have unjustly imposed and enforced their own policies, they have also violently prevented us from making and enforcing our own decisions. As Veronica Rose Waechter (Gitksan, Gitanmaax, Mountain Biome) put it, “Canadian policy has tried to stop us from practising protocol.”

This conversation demonstrates the profound and enduring failure of Canadian policy to serve our communities. In face of this failure, some of the people we surveyed spoke of the need to decolonize as Indigenous Peoples and bring back the natural laws and support each other and the gifts the Creator gave to each one of us in order to survive.

Others highlighted the differences between colonial policy and Indigenous protocols. A member of the

Squamish Nation (Mountain Biome) noted that Indigenous governance systems don’t “enforce systems that restrict people in the detrimental ways colonizers do.” Jeff Corntassel (Cherokee, Mountain Biome) spoke of how “colonial governments and agencies regulate and police Indigenous lands and bodies,” meanwhile there are our “community protocols, which are grounded in respectful relations and responsibilities to those relationships that promote our health and well-being.”

To Veronica Rose Waechter, “protocol . . . is not like a policy/law that essentially restricts. Instead, protocol keeps you mindful of your agency as a person and the power each of us need to direct in a good way, for all. If we all practised protocol maybe the world would be a better place.”

Policy Can be a Tool for Change

Folks have made clear that “policy” can be a bad word in Indigenous communities. It has been used as a tool to enforce harm and continues to do so. Despite all this, while “definitely a colonial construct [policy] can be a tool for change” (Emily Mask, Métis, Temperate Deciduous Forest Biome).

All of the reflections and insights shared in the survey teach us that policy can be rigid, inaccessible and hard to change. Policy is about maintaining colonial power, furthering capitalism and controlling Indigenous



“

When I hear the word policy, I think of imposed colonial methods of control and change. I don't see interconnectedness, representation of the natural world or reciprocity when I think of policy.”

Suzanne Brant

Mohawk | Temperate Deciduous Forest Biome

“

The ‘policy’ that helps to govern the lands came from the land. It came from the land, and it didn't need to be written down because it was based on symbiotic relationships. And when you broke that order, when you broke natural law, then there were consequences that you could not run away from.”

Eriel Tchekwie Deranger,
ICA's Executive Director

Dënesųline from the Athabasca Chipewyan
First Nation (ACFN) | Boreal Forest Biome.

communities. Policy is rooted in Canada’s history of settler colonialism and often perpetuates its priorities, over those of Indigenous communities. For all these reasons and more, most of the people we surveyed have a profound distrust of policy and policymaking in Canada. This needs to be heard loud and clear by policy and decision-makers in Canada.

This section laid down a fierce and necessary critique, and it also pointed towards powerful, transformative, and beautiful ways forward; of reinstating and empowering our own ways of working together to decide on, implement and enforce our own protocols. Chapter 4 in the Resurgence Quadrant of the circle explores this in much more depth. We invite you to read more about that there and to get in touch with us to share your thoughts about policy, what it is and how it can be different.

climatepolicy@indigenousclimateaction.com.



“

Policy isn't something that someone does in a boardroom over there. It's something that the whole community is a part of developing and processing, understanding and upholding.”

Eriel Tchekwie Deranger, ICA's Executive Director

Dönesųline from the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN) | Boreal Forest Biome

Interested in identifying priorities for addressing climate change in your community? The Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources has published a series of guidebooks; see for example:

Guidebook 2: Climate Change Impacts in the Community provides resources for communities to engage their members on how climate change has impacted them.

Guidebook 3: Identifying Community Sustainability and Climate Change Vulnerabilities helps communities develop a vision for a climate-resilient future.

Check out all six guidebooks, and even more resources here:

yourcier.org/iccap-toolkit/

A Note To Settler Policy Makers

For the last few decades, there has been a concerted effort to find ways to include Indigenous Peoples, our rights and values into colonial policies and structures. In other words, there has been a movement to Indigenize current colonial systems. For example, in 2016, the City of Vancouver committed to working with Indigenous peoples on climate policies. While Indigenous representation and revitalization of Indigenous systems is being recognized within colonial systems, little has substantially changed with respect to who assumes and holds powers over our lands and territories and ultimately our lives.

Indigenization that does not involve fair power sharing is tokenism and causes harm.

In short, there has been a lot of successful effort in Indigenizing colonial policies and systems but we need to move beyond this and work towards decolonizing these structures. Indigenizing fails short of systematic change, but rather maintains the status quo and centering of colonial structures and simply includes Indigenous perspectives and ways of being.

Decolonization on the other hand involves the dismantling or undoing of colonial systems, including ideologies and power structures that have historically oppressed and suppressed Indigenous Peoples. This will require challenging the broader processes and systems of power that have oppressed Indigenous Peoples and actively working towards undoing the legacy of colonialism, including economic exploitation, extractivism, cultural assimilation, and political domination. While systems are being undone, there needs to be space and resources for the creation of something new that doesn't centre colonial systems but rather looks at the ancient wisdom held by our communities.

We have no interest in being further absorbed into colonial systems but want the opportunity to strengthen our own existing structures.

In order to truly support the self-determination and sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples we need to find ways to decouple Indigenous systems from colonial systems and restore and reclaim existing Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of being to guide our own "policy".



Identifying and Addressing Barriers to Indigenous-led Climate Policy

“

I have been disconnected from my culture, community, and family by colonial policy. But I have spent the past 10 years reconnecting in a slow process.”

Anonymous Respondent

Métis Nation of Alberta | Boreal Forest Biome

“

I have been disconnected from my culture, community, and family by colonial policy. But I have spent the past 10 years reconnecting in a slow process.”

Anonymous Respondent

Métis Nation of Alberta | Boreal Forest Biome

This chapter outlines the barriers to Indigenous-led solutions for climate policy and living in balance with the natural world. We identify them so that they can be overcome. These barriers were named in Indigenous Climate Action’s survey of Indigenous folks across so-called Canada as well as interviews with Indigenous youth.

We heard three main sets of barriers to Indigenous-led solutions for climate policy:

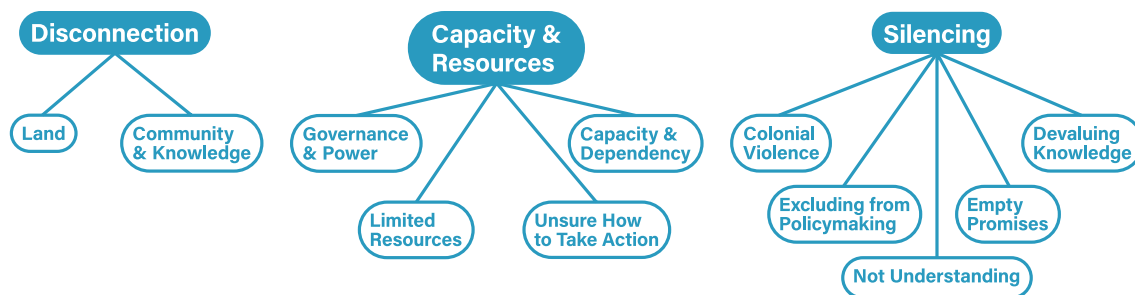
1. Being disconnected from land, communities, and traditional teachings and knowledge;
2. Settlers (and settler institutions) ignoring, devaluing, or trying to silence Indigenous voices; and
3. Living within settler colonial capitalism, and what that means for capacity and resources.

All of these challenges mean that although our participants expressed a desire to take action on climate change, some are not sure if they have the power to make a difference or how to do so.

Colonialism causes Disconnection

Disconnected from the Land

As Muscogee scholar Daniel Wildcat writes, “The incredibly high cost of this climate change to our Mother Earth must be understood as related to humankind’s development of societies and cultures disconnected in fundamental ways from the landscapes and seascapes, the places where they are situated.”¹²



These are interconnected challenges caused by colonial systems and rules.

12. Wildcat, Daniel R. 2009. Red Alert!: Saving the Planet with Indigenous Knowledge, pg 61. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing.



We do have power, if we assert it. We have to enact it, we have to demand that our rights, our inherent rights, and laws that govern our people be upheld.”

Eriel Tchekwie Deranger

Dënesųliné from the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN) | Boreal Forest Biome

Many Indigenous-led solutions for climate policy or Indigenous traditional protocols require access and use of our traditional territories. Indigenous communities have always lived in close connection to the land. However, colonialism has disrupted this.

Indigenous Peoples have been displaced by colonialism. Many respondents spoke about the impacts of colonial systems in disrupting their connection to the land. As Suzanne Brant (Mohawk, Temperate Deciduous Forest Biome) said, “We were moved from our ancestral lands and placed on a reserve.” The reserve system has meant that First Nations across so-called Canada have been separated from their traditional territories, often put on small plots of land away from quality water sources, with lower quality soil for growing and less forest cover.

For Métis peoples, the colonial scrip system has limited access to land. Beginning in 1870, the settler Canadian government issued documents (scrip) to Métis people redeemable for land or money. Scrip was often given in exchange for land rights. This scheme effectively extinguished Métis title to land.¹³ As Jeff Baker (Métis/ apihtawikosisan from Saskatchewan, Grasslands Biome) described, “Being Métis, my ancestors all sold their scrip to speculators, so I am essentially landless.”

Settler governments today have continued to restrict access to traditional territories. As Robert Maytwayashing

(Anishinaabae, Boreal Forest Biome) told us, “Our land has been taken over by private interests, and they don’t allow us access. Government has also restricted our access to crown lands by selling it off.”

Land has also been restricted through the settler creation of so-called conservation areas. For example, in Treaty 8 Territory,

The Alberta provincial government has created many ‘Conservation’ hunting sites on traditional lands next to reserves and Metis settlements within Treaty 8 Territory. The province regulates access and use. Most of these sites are walk-in only, and anyone can hunt on them. The use of the land should be co-managed with Indigenous governance and stewardship (Darrell Fors, Treaty 8, Boreal Forest Biome).

Darrell Fors went on to explain:

Some areas are also gated by private land ‘owners’ and logging/oil companies. Industrial areas that are accessible, like clear cuts, where blueberries grow, are being sprayed by unhealthy chemicals to increase the chances of the planted tree species to grow for lumber.

Settler governments have also mismanaged land and resources. This directly impacts traditional harvesting and kin relations with animals. As Jayce Chiblow, ICA’s

13. Robinson, Amanda. “Métis Scrip in Canada.” In The Canadian Encyclopedia, November 6, 2018. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/metis-scrip-in-canada>.

Education and Training Manager (Anishinaabe from Garden River First Nation, Mixed Boreal & Deciduous Forest Biome) recalls,

When I was younger and trying to go out and learn on the land, we were trying to trap some beavers, and some other animals, but they're all gone. They're gone. They're moving north, or they're not there because the government has mismanaged our lands and territories and our relatives in general. [...] They've already clear-cut the entire area. And there's literally just rows of trees, and then they spray it with aerial herbicide spraying. [...] They are mismanaging our relatives, and it's impacting our relationship with our relatives.

Rules made by settler governments limit interactions and relations with the land. For example, an anonymous respondent living in the Temperate Deciduous Forest Biome told us, "Hunting and fishing are prohibited by laws, community and local laws prevent you from building a home or going where you would like as well."

Another anonymous respondent similarly said, "We cannot harvest cultural logs except through [the] provincially regulated permit process. We cannot access some streams or culturally significant places because of being privatized or else provincially or federally quarantined for specific use."

Increasing recreational settler land use often comes at the cost of traditional access. As Dana Strong (Anishinabe of Wauzhushk Onigum, Boreal Forest Biome) expressed, "In my original homeland in Treaty 3, it's saturated with 'cabin country'. That is a barrier."

Due to colonization, many Indigenous people now live far away from their home territories. It takes resources to spend time on their territories. As one participant (Temperate Deciduous Forest Biome) described, barriers to accessing traditional territory include having limited access to a vehicle or costs associated with travel, and taking time off work.

Another anonymous respondent (Tundra Biome) described similar challenges:

Going to Nunavut and Nova Scotia is too expensive. Where I live in Calgary, a lower socioeconomic community, I don't have access to land, trees, or water. When I want access to land, I physically have to leave my community to access it [and go] into the richer areas of Calgary that have walking lanes, parks, trees etc.

“

As Gitksan people, we access it [traditional territory] as we please, however, disenfranchisement and lack of jobs and funds do prevent many from reaching their own territories that require a lot of distance, resources, and time to access.”

Hetxw'ms Gyetxw

Gitksan Nation | Mountain Biome



“

Our ways of being have value. Residential schools and colonialism have tried to tell us that we have no place and no value in these structures.”

Eriel Tchekwie Deranger

Dënesųliné from the ACFN | Boreal Forest Biome

Disconnected from community and traditional knowledge

Many folks described feeling disconnected from their communities, culture, traditional knowledge, and languages.

A legacy of colonialism is feelings of shame. Many respondents identified feelings of shame around culture, teachings, and traditional knowledge. As an anonymous respondent (Grasslands Biome) told us, “My family was ashamed of our heritage and lost touch with our culture.”

Similarly, Eriel Tchekwie Deranger expressed,

A lot of our people – particularly the people that we have in a lot of our leadership roles – have a lot of shame in the teachings that we have instilled, and they keep it just in our communities because [they believe] it doesn't have a place outside of the walls of our communities. And I think that's a common feeling.¹⁴

Genocidal systems like the Indian Residential School

System have limited access to traditional teachings. As Gwen Bridge from the Saddle Lake Cree Nation (Grasslands Biome) said, “I grew up off-reserve, but my mom and her sisters and brothers know some things, but it's all so limited because of their residential school experiences.”

This echoes what Hanna Paul (Métis Nation of Alberta, Beaver First Nation, Boreal Forest Biome) told us: “Most [of my] knowledge is from Métis Elders but not my own Elders. I learn from books but not from my own Kokum as she does not have a wide extent of knowledge of the land due to mission schools and being taken from her mother.”

Physical distance to the land (also mentioned above) is another barrier to accessing traditional knowledge and teachings. As Sandi Boucher (Seine River First Nation and Thunder Bay Indigenous community, Boreal Forest Biome) shared:

I was not raised in the community, so I do not have access to that ancestral knowledge. Thanks to colonization, my Mother was also taught not to pass on

14. One of our Advisory Council members noted while reading this section that many of us experience intergenerational fear of violence that may be aimed at us for practicing our culture. Our ancestors faced so much violence for this and this fear stays with us still.



“

Many Elders have passed, taking the knowledge and teachings.”

Jolene Patrick

N'Quatqua First Nation | Mountain Biome

anything to do with our teachings. I did not come to my knowledge until much later in life.

Connecting to traditional knowledge is not easy. As Kyla Pascal (Métis Nation of Alberta, Grasslands Biome) described:

I have to do some labour in order to connect with elders and knowledge-keepers in my community. My family also works to ensure I am connected with my cultural practices, but they are getting older, and access to these practices and some of the land we use for harvesting is not as easily accessible.

Time is running out for Elders to pass on their knowledge. Respondents expressed concern that “Elders and family members keep dying. Many, like me, know little of our Indigenous language” (Darrell Fors, Treaty 8, Boreal Forest Biome).¹⁵

15. It's important to note that First Nations, Inuit and Metis people have a significantly lower life expectancy than settlers in so-called Canada. See more here: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-003-x/2019012/article/00001-eng.htm>

“

Often I hear the argument that ‘nobody is stopping Indigenous people from talking,’ but these are the same people that refuse to listen or to believe that Indigenous voices hold validity. If you speak over Indigenous voices, you're silencing them. If you're ignoring Indigenous voices, you're silencing them. If you fail to have Indigenous voices at ‘the table,’ you are silencing them. Plain and simple.”

Aleesha Jones

Nlaka'pamux Nation | Mountain Biome

"I believe Canada ATTEMPTS to silence us. We are not silenced."

Sandi Boucher

Seine River First Nation and Thunder Bay
Indigenous Community | Boreal Forest Biome

”



Silencing our Voices

When we asked if Indigenous Peoples have been silenced in so-called Canada, we heard a resounding yes. Folks described the many ways settlers and settler institutions ignore, devalue, or try to silence Indigenous voices. This has been especially true for Indigenous women, land and water defenders, and northern and remote communities.

Folks also identified more explicit efforts by settlers and settler institutions to devalue or try to silence Indigenous voices. We divided these into 5 categories:

- Ongoing colonial violence
- Devaluing our knowledge
- Excluding from settler policymaking
- Hearing but not understanding or accepting
- Lip service and empty promises

Ongoing Colonial Violence

As respondents made clear, colonialism and ongoing colonial violence silence Indigenous voices. As Veronica Rose Waechter (Gitxsan, Gitanmaax, Mountain Biome) described:

I believe that these historical acts of genocide by the canadian government were done out of fear of the power of Indigenous voices, and with that, instilling fear in our own ability to speak out. This has inter-generationally affected our standing in places of power, including as teachers, within politics, and in any leadership.

Colonial laws have intergenerational effects on Indigenous communities. As Darrell Fors (Treaty 8, Boreal Forest Biome) described:

Assimilated and acculturated Indigenous voices perpetuate the colonial cycle as our relations follow the Indian Act Policies and Colonial Mind Sets. Traditional ceremonial ways of knowing and living can be silenced



“

We are severely colonized. Who remembers how to just BE on this Earth without harm?”

Anonymous respondent

and oppressed by this collateral violence and colonial system.

The implications of colonization and acts of genocide have had far reaching impacts on the futures that Indigenous Peoples can envision. As Veronica Rose Waechter reflected, “importantly [acts of genocide] have affected our ability to dream. To be able to see a better life for each other, to be able to speak our truths.”¹⁶

Colonial violence takes many forms including, as anonymous respondent (Ceg A Kin Nakoda Nation, Grasslands Biome) lists: “brutal policing, fines, arrests, assaults, media blackouts or, worse, stories that spin in favour of industry/government.” An anonymous

respondent living in the Mountain Biome echoed this latter point, identifying “Social media blackouts and erasure of climate justice-related news media are another example of silencing Indigenous vocalizations on climate action.”

Participants also named tactics of intimidation and retaliation that stop people from speaking up. An anonymous respondent (Mountain Biome) shared:

If you don't have a large organization to represent you to keep your identity safe while talking about the hard stuff, [there is a] 200% chance the government will commence a personal attack until you stop. I've witnessed it many times.

16. When reading this, one of our Advisory Council members noted that addictions, brought on in response to generations of colonialism, can block our ability to connect with Spirit and this too can hinder our ability to envision other futures.



“

We understand our land and are learning and adapting with it constantly, we understand how climate change is affecting our land and ourselves. It's the communicating with western scientists, it's the writing policies, it's the scientific methodologies that impede meaningful collaboration.”

Anonymous respondent

Tundra Biome

Devaluing our knowledge

The above quote echoes Anishinaabe scholar Deborah McGregor, who writes, “Indigenous Peoples have been responding to change for centuries; there is a wealth of experience for how to respond and survive such changes. These experiences and stories are not recognized as valid knowledge.”¹⁷

Settler academic and technological knowledge have consistently been given more importance in climate policymaking. This was something many participants emphasized. For example, Kyla Pascal said, “I feel Traditional Ecological Knowledge/Indigenous knowledge is treated lesser than ‘Western’ knowledges in climate conversations.”

Others similarly expressed an overreliance on Western science and expertise. As one anonymous participant (Temperate Deciduous Forest Biome) responded, settlers often forget “Indigenous Peoples are also experts in our relationship with Land and Natural world.” Another anonymous respondent in the same biome similarly said, “Our voices are being drowned out by so-called “experts” from think tanks, universities, and government.”

Far from Indigenous knowledge and perspectives being welcomed, respondents identified systemic barriers such as learning how to navigate settler (climate) policy spaces in order to share their knowledge. This prevents meaningful participation. Indeed, as an anonymous respondent (Tundra Biome) described “I feel like to be taken seriously in climate change talks, we have to sound

17. Deranger, Eriel Tchekwie, Rebecca Sinclair, Beze Gray, Deborah McGregor, and Jen Gobby. (2022). “Decolonizing Climate Research and Policy: Making Space to Tell Our Own Stories, in Our Own Ways.” *Community Development Journal* 57(1): 15. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsab050>.

“

We are ignored as uncivilized in climate change discussions. Traditional knowledge is still seen as subpar to western science (white supremacy).”

Sandi Boucher

Seine River First Nation and Thunder Bay Indigenous community | Boreal Forest Biome



“Colonizers will talk over us on any given point”

Anonymous Respondent
Mountain Biome

a certain way, behave a certain way, and that takes away from addressing the issue first and foremost.”

Other challenges reflect the importance and diversity of Indigenous languages and the limits of the English language. As Jamie Bourque-Blyan (ICA’s Engagement Manager, Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement, Boreal Forest Biome) shared, “My kokum always spoke to me in Nehiyawewin, and even though I speak in English, I struggle with that even though it’s my first language, because I don’t think in English – my thought process is in Nehiyawewin.” And as Eriel Tchekwie Deranger added, “We might be able to have a handle on the English language, but the ways in which we understand words, and their deeper meanings, is very diverse.”

The devaluing of Indigenous knowledge also extends to education. For example, Jordan Brown (Inuit, Tundra Biome) has identified, “Those in charge of our educational system are withholding teaching our Indigenous heritage and the impact climate change has on our livelihood.”

These exclusions also occur in the media. As Megan Dunne (Peguis and Brokenhead Ojibway Nations, Boreal Forest Biome) put it, “Social media and the media at large ignores our stance and serves to protect the colonist (capitalist, for profit) narrative.”

Exclusion from settler policymaking

As Secwepemc scholar Julian Brave NoiseCat writes, “Industrialism and colonialism have combined to produce climate change. Yet to date, climate action has largely failed to address colonialism and excluded Indigenous Peoples.”¹⁸

Our respondents discussed the many experiences with exclusion in settler climate policymaking. This starts with how climate change is understood. As Katherine Morrisseau (Anishinabe, Boreal Forest Biome) expressed, “We aren’t sitting at the table with those who are defining what and how climate change is defined and managed.” This exclusion is a form of silencing.

Participants also identified a lack of access to decision-makers. As an anonymous respondent told us: “I have actively sought information and have taken courses, but do not have a way to communicate with policymakers that really are dedicated to making a difference.”

This lack of access is especially acute for northern and remote communities. As an anonymous respondent (Grasslands Biome) told us: “Many First Nation communities, particularly remote northern First Nations in Saskatchewan, are at the forefront of climate change, and their opinion and participation is not being considered when it comes to climate change policy.”

18. NoiseCat, Julian Brave. 2016. “Slaying the Carbon-Consuming Colonial Hydra: Indigenous Contributions to Climate Action.” *Development* 59(3): 199. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41301-017-0099-4>.



We are not included in any form of policy development; our knowledge and historical perspectives are absent. Legislative policies are developed and approved before any form of meaningful engagement is ever done with Indigenous Peoples. It is always after the fact. This is not 'reconciliation' that so-called Canada boasts about. This is shameful, disrespectful, and ignores the true intent of treaty!

Melanie Dene
Mikisew Cree First Nation
Boreal Forest Biome

We are actively excluded from the decision-making table. I feel like I get silenced all the time.

Jacob Crane
Tsuut'ina Nation
Mountain Biome

The places we defend are often remote, so people don't see us in action. We need our voices amplified, and instead, they are being dampened.¹⁹

Anonymous Respondent
Ceg A Kin Nakoda Nation
Grasslands Biome

19. An Advisory Council member noted that lateral violence within and across our communities and movements can also lead to the silencing of our voices.



Hearing but Not Understanding or Accepting

There has been growing attention from settlers to Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and expertise in climate action. However, settler listeners often do not grasp what Indigenous Peoples are trying to convey. As an anonymous participant described:

I feel like there is an intention to give more attention to us today by settlers than ever before, and I see our beliefs and concerns being held and supported by settlers and settler governments, but it still seems there is a language barrier to be overcome.

This barrier reflects different worldviews. As an anonymous respondent (Ceg A Kin Nakoda Nation, Grasslands Biome) identified, “The colonial worldview that sees the Earth as a source of resources to be

exploited doesn't invite alternate perspectives, so even if we do sit at a table, it is to discuss their agenda, not the needs of this Earth or our peoples.”

For these reasons, settler policy makers either cannot understand or refuse to accept Indigenous-led climate solutions require. As Michael Cheena of the Moose Cree First Nation (Boreal Forest Biome) described: “The white man's political process, judicial system, bureaucratic structure and economic logic will never understand or accept our custodianship concept over ancestral lands.”

An anonymous respondent of Keeseekoose First Nation (Grasslands Biome) stated similarly, “The climate crisis is rooted in capitalism – and the Indigenous perspective is not aligned with this. Therefore, the Indigenous Peoples’ solutions are ignored in favour of solutions that benefit the consumption-focused basis of our economy.”

“

[We are] Silenced, tokenized, misrepresented, and packaged to an audience to be seen in a certain way that serves the government's goals.”

Anonymous Respondent,

Ceg A Kin Nakoda Nation | Grasslands Biome

Lastly, settler governments appropriate and tokenize Indigenous Peoples and knowledges to suit their purposes. As Hanna Paul of the Métis Nation of Alberta and Beaver First Nation (Boreal Forest Biome) described:

Indigenous Peoples' collective intellectual property are often co-opted while Indigenous Peoples are continuously disenfranchised. Often in western capitalist countries, Indigenous ideas are only deemed valuable if they can be commercialized/fit into the framework of western science. Western positivism and academic elitism perpetuate the issues of climate change.

Lip Service and Empty Promises

There is a longstanding gap between promises from settler governments and meaningful action. As Darrell Fors (Treaty 8, Boreal Forest Biome) described:

The government systems of collaboration have heard Indigenous heartfelt stories and pleas; unfortunately, little integration or interpretation of them has resulted in a true diverse partnership that includes collective Indigenous wisdoms and sovereign will.

Similarly, Ellen Gabriel (Kanien'keháka, Temperate Deciduous Forest Biome) observed,

I've been at the UN for a long time, and I don't see any benefits coming to my community, even after all that we've done – from the Royal Commission [on Aboriginal Peoples] to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission – that the work that we did benefited my community at all.

Many also believe these empty promises are intentional. Karlene Leroux of Barren Lands First Nation (Boreal Forest Biome) said:

I believe that the Canadian government blatantly ignores Indigenous calls for action. They will address issues publicly through the media, but never actually put pen to paper [...]. They'll continue to shake hands with large corporations while making promises they never keep.

“

[W]e are being silenced by receiving empty promises.”

Anonymous Respondent,
Dane-zaa, Tahltan, Blueberry River
First Nations | Mountain Biome



Colonial Constraints on Capacity and Resources

Many people identified the struggles of living within settler colonial capitalism as a barrier to effective climate organizing. This happens in many ways, including colonially-imposed weaknesses in governance, limited capacities and dependencies within Indigenous communities, and limited access to resources.

Governance and Power

Settler governments have weakened our Indigenous governance systems by imposing colonial forms of governance and restricting traditional practices. As Cassidy Villeburn Buracas from the K'atlo'deeche First Nation (Boreal Forest Biome) told us, "The Indian Act, Residential Schools, MMIW2S+,²⁰ and other forms of genocide have eroded traditional governmental structures of many Indigenous Peoples, and replaced it with a chief and council system that emulates first-past-the-post style politics of Britain."

Several respondents expressed frustration with the barriers this poses to effective climate action. For example, traditional governments are denied access to decision-making tables which limits their options. As Ellen Gabriel described, "Canada and Quebec only recognize band councils, not traditional governments, like the Haudenosaunee. We have to fight these issues in court, so it's costly, whereas colonial governments have endless amounts of resources."

Several respondents described corruption and a lack of trust in the colonially-imposed Chief and Council (C&C) system that lead to inaction. For example, Maistoo'awaastan (Piikani, Niitsitapi, Grasslands

Biome) expressed: "Our chief is a tool of the Liberal & Conservative government and who silences those who speak out against him. It is like a dictatorship, the stories I hear from back home sadden my spirit.²¹ All information going out and in is controlled by the C&C."

As an anonymous participant told us, internal divisions may also prevent Nations from speaking out strongly and with a united voice: "Often our Nations' voice is weakened against the voices of contradicting interests among our own families, or between our neighbouring Nations, or other settler private interest groups."

In addition to colonially-imposed governance systems, Nations also are constrained by capitalist incentives that limit their ability to take more transformative action. For example, in an interview, Breanne Lavallee Heckert (Métis, Grasslands Biome) noted that the Manitoba Métis Federation currently supports pipeline and hydro projects:²²

Imagine the Manitoba Métis Federation were to implement something like [Indigenous climate policy], I think it would be really, really transformative for my nation. But at the same time, the Manitoba Métis Federation is a corporate body and, at the end of the day, has investments and portfolios that need to have profit margins. And so that's really limiting.

Power is not only imposed by colonial governments, but by industry as well:

I feel that the position of the oil and gas industry lobby (which profit from pumping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere) as buddy-buddy with provincial and federal governments as the biggest impediment here. Indigenous Peoples are the last line of defense in protecting the land, water, and air for our future generations, so you can bet that these corporate forces will be doing all they can to discredit our movements (Jeff Baker, Métis, Grasslands Biome).

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20. Missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, and non-binary people.
 21. An Advisory Council member pointed out that this kind of dynamic is another manifestation of intergenerational trauma whereby residential schools sought to destroy familial relations.
 22. An Advisory Council member shared that this is the case in her region as well where "oil and gas fund most bands... even going so far as to fishing out money for protected cultural areas. It's everywhere, and makes me worried about future land grabbing."



The systems that are in place do not allow us to build our capacity as Indigenous people, and so it is hard for us to take the time to be engaged in such important matters. We have to be focused on issues of basic needs like survival and healing from trauma. I think that our cultures have a lot to add to addressing the issues of climate change, but our resources and time is limited, and our voices do not get heard.”

Suzanne Brant

Mohawk | Temperate Deciduous Forest Biome

Capacity and dependency

The structures of settler colonialism and capitalism in Canada pose other kinds of constraints to Indigenous communities as well, by limiting internal capacities and imposing dependencies on settler systems.

The challenges of simply existing within unjust systems of settler colonialism tend to draw our communities’ attention away from addressing climate change. They also force communities to become dependent on settler systems for survival. For example, as Ginnifer Menominee of Wasauksing First Nation in the Boreal Forest Biome told us:

We’re so connected into settler towns that we don’t actually have our own system of taking care of ourselves. And I find that it really bothers me, [...], we don’t even have health care systems on our territory, you know, we have to wait 20 minutes for an ambulance to come in, and in that 20 minutes somebody could die. And so having the ability to take care of our land, take care of ourselves, and be interconnected with our land, and being able to be healthy from the land itself, I think is so needed.

These dependencies happen with food as well: “To feed ourselves, we need to protect the habitats of the deer, protect the waters of the fish, those are things that we eat anyways. But really, we rely on the grocery store” (Ellen

Gabriel, Kanien’keháka, Temperate Deciduous Forest Biome). Ginnifer Menominee added, echoing an Elder, these dependencies “don’t make us thrive, they don’t make our spirits thrive, either.”

These dependencies also extend to energy. For example, Sharon Baptiste of the Poundmaker Cree Nation (Grasslands Biome) expressed frustration with having to rely on SaskPower²³ for electricity:

The power goes out here a lot too. Saskpower can just shut it off anytime they want. And then there are people on breathing machines and different types of machines that they depend on to live and then they’ll just shut the power off, like, shut it off for 15 minutes, half hour, sometimes for four hours, even in the wintertime. So we have to keep our vehicles plugged in and in good running order so we can go sit in our vehicles and warm up if the power goes out. They have total control. We don’t.

As SaskPower runs primarily on fossil (‘natural’) gas, this forces communities to directly contribute to climate change, as much as they would prefer not to.

When our communities try to build internal capacity, it can be an uphill climb.²⁴ As Ginnifer Menominee described:

Indian Affairs is always like, ‘you need to pump out nurses, you need to pump out social workers, you

23. SaskPower is Saskatchewan’s provincially-owned utility that has a monopoly on generation.

24. An Advisory Council member noted that this kind of uphill climb is made evident in Alberta’s recent moratorium on renewable energy development. For more, see: <https://thenarwhal.ca/alberta-moratorium-renewables/>

“

This is going to be expensive. Money is a barrier – our communities are dealing with so many different crises. This is just another thing that they will have to do.”

Jayce Chiblow, ICA's Education and Training Manager

Anishinaabe from Garden River First Nation | Mixed Boreal & Deciduous Forest Biome

need to pump out because there's a shortage of this and that in your communities', but I'm like, they never stay. You know, we do invest in our kids and our youth. But, you know, there are other opportunities, [but] that's not going to necessarily mean that they're going to have a thriving livelihood on reserve. So how do we keep all of our human resources?

Limited Resources and High Costs

These challenges are especially important because speaking up and defending the land takes so many resources – including money and time. As an example of what it can cost to take action, Eriel Tchekwie Deranger described a time when her Nation created a water management plan for the Lower Athabasca Watershed: “Our proposal was \$20 million. And that was 10 years ago, for one nation, one watershed plan. Imagine what it would take for us to develop a land- and rights-based management plans for the entire country, for every single nation.”

However, Indigenous communities have limited access to the necessary resources. As an anonymous participant from the Boreal Forest Biome expressed:

I think that a lot of ‘voice’ is given in the form of monetary support, and Indigenous Peoples’ initiatives are very often self-funded because they don’t always

conform with colonial policy, and so are ineligible for funding. So Indigenous people wanting to do things our way don’t get as far as they could with more support (monetary and otherwise).

Furthermore, the money and time that are available are desperately needed for many priorities. As Robert Maytwayashing (Bear Clan Anishinaabe, Boreal Forest Biome) described:

In First Nation communities, leaderships spend 99% of their time running around putting fire out. It is crisis management. The resourcing to look at, say, even a recyclable programme in the communities, there's no resourcing for stuff like that. Because of that, there's very little, if anything that's happening in any of our communities with respect to those types of initiatives to try and address climate change.

Still, as Eriel Tchekwie Deranger expressed, there is an urgent need for change and for settler governments to take responsibility:

We need this desperately because the systems and structures that we have been held to – colonial structures – have gotten us into this mess, and it's time for something different. [...] The government should be paying for this. And they should not be determining what our budgets are, we should be determining what it's going to cost for us.



In 2023, the Elizabeth Métis Settlement completed a Climate Risk and Resilience Assessment with \$80,000 in funding from the Government of Alberta. The assessment incorporated traditional knowledge and lived experiences of climate impacts through community consultation and engagement, as well as Western science.

To learn more visit: mccac.ca/project-showcase/elizabeth-metis-settlement-climate-risk-and-resilience-assessment/

Looking for funding for Indigenous-led climate action?

The Indigenous Climate Hub maintains a list of current funding opportunities. Visit: indigenousclimatehub.ca/funding/

The federal government's Indigenous-led Natural Climate Solutions (ILNCS) supports First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nations, communities, and organizations to undertake ecological restoration, improved land management, and conservation activities. These projects sequester carbon and also aim to support biodiversity and community well-being.

To see a map and summary of funded initiatives, visit: canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/environmental-funding/programs/indigenous-led-natural-climate-solutions/map.html

Unsure How to Take Action on Climate

All of these challenges together mean that although our participants expressed a desire to take action on climate change, some are not sure if they have the power to make a difference or how to do so. Many also fear violence and exclusion that may be brought on by leading their own climate work.

Some participants told us that they do not know what structures are in place and how to get involved. We asked survey participants whether their community has consultation protocols for matters that affect them, such as climate policy. Only 1 in 5 (20 respondents) said that their community did not have such protocols, while 2 in 5 (40 respondents) were unsure. About 1 in 4 (28 respondents) said that they were aware of a consultation policy or protocol in place for their community.

These figures do not mean participants were not paying attention to such issues. For example, as one participant responded, “I am not sure if we have a policy in place or not, but we are certainly aware of the problem” (Jeff Baker, Métis, Grasslands Biome).

For some, lack of access to power is the sticking point: “I do not know how to participate in climate action other than voting in elections which is a broken system anyway” (Emily Akerman, Georgian Bay Metis, Temperate Deciduous Forest Biome). Kusemaat-Shirley Williams of the Lummi Nation (Mountain Biome) similarly told us: “As

an elder said, Truth and Reconciliation is great, but we still are not the decision-makers.”

Other participants feel that they do not have enough knowledge to make a difference. As April Star Francois Madden of the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (Boreal Forest Biome) said, “I don’t know if I possess enough knowledge to back my opinions.” Similarly, Karlene Leroux from the Barren Lands First Nation (Boreal Forest Biome) told us: “I wouldn’t know where to begin, who to speak with, or how to speak on specific issues.”

Nevertheless, people desire to take action: “I don’t know how it would get started, but I’d be happy to help as I’m passionate about the environment” (Torrie Nicholas, Splatsin from the Mountain Biome). And as an anonymous respondent (Ceg A Kin Nakoda Nation, Grasslands Biome) reflected: “I don’t see myself as someone who knows traditional protocols enough to represent my nation. But I do see climate policy as critical and I am an activist for climate justice.”

“

The Canadian government provides a false sense of understanding and control over the environment. We are supposed to trust that the colonial regime is looking out for our best interest and their imposed legal systems are not racist. If we were to back up our rights with our culture and our own teachings with our own level of policy, I think it might make for a less bleak outlook for young people moving forward...when we are able to clearly reinstate who we are and what we stand for, I really have hope for young people to find another way through all of this.”

Vanessa Gray, ICA's Divestment Campaign Coordinator

Anishinaabe Kwe from the Aamjiwnaang First Nation | Temperate Deciduous Forest Biome

Interested in addressing the impacts of climate change in your community? The Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources has published a series of guidebooks in partnership with Sioux Valley Dakota Nation in Manitoba and Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation, Deschambault Lake Community, in Saskatchewan. See, for example:

Guidebook 4: Identifying Solutions provides resources for developing solutions for adapting to climate change as a community.

Guidebook 5: Taking Adaptive Action helps with adaptation planning to avoid, minimize, and/or adapt to climate-induced impacts.

Check out all six guidebooks, and even more resources here:
yourcier.org/iccap-toolkit/





Conclusion

This report has focused mostly on how colonization is negatively affecting Indigenous communities by causing climate change that affects us, and by limiting our capacities to take action. But by naming these issues, we also begin to see hints of how our communities can, and are creating change.

We heard from many people who generously shared their observations with us that climate change is having negative impacts on our communities. It is changing our weather and seasons, causing destructive events like wildfires and floods, affecting plants and animals, and damaging our health. We heard the pain of those who are directly affected by these changes, and who grieve the impacts on our lands and relatives.

As Indigenous Peoples, we also understand that all these impacts are connected. Our foods, our ceremonies, our medicines, the ways we teach our young people – all of these are intertwined and therefore they are all affected by climate change.

So many of our participants also told us of how climate change is not something that “just happens:” it is caused by and rooted in colonial, capitalist mindsets and systems. We heard that the root cause of climate change is the colonial mindset that the land is something to be used and exploited rather than, as in our understandings, a partner and a Mother. Though this might seem to make the problem even more discouraging, understanding the

root causes that lie behind climate change means that change is possible, and that our ways hold answers.

At the same time, we heard that a colonial approach to policy and policymaking is making it difficult for our communities to take action on these issues. Many told us that they see policy as inflexible, limiting, something that is not accessible to Indigenous Peoples because it is done in a way that does not align with our worldviews. Others told us that policy is actively harmful because it is used to exclude and oppress Indigenous Peoples. People spoke of a desire to respect natural law and return to Indigenous protocols that establish right relationships with the land and each other.

We also heard of other ways in which colonialism presents barriers to our communities when it comes to taking action. Some of our participants – though not all – told us that they experience disconnection from land, community, and culture as a result of colonialism. These impacts can make it hard for us to learn our traditional ways and speak confidently from our knowledges as Indigenous Peoples.

When we do speak out, we are sometimes not heard. Colonial systems do their best to suppress, ignore, exclude, and silence us. They limit our access to power and to the time, energy, and money needed to take action. Naming all of these things is difficult. But over and over in our conversations, we also heard signs of hope.



Throughout the report, we have shared examples of ways that communities are already taking action to address the negative impacts of climate change and, even more importantly, address the colonial systems and structures that are causing it. In the next and final report in this series (Part 3), we will share the powerful stories and visions of what else is possible – how climate policies can be founded in ceremony, in Natural Law, and our Nations’ own unique governance systems. We will center the voices of the youth who are leading this fight and charting new ground. We will lay out a wealth of beautiful climate solutions already being enacted across the country, in both rural and urban communities, as First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples are reclaiming our own systems and forging old and new ways of living in balance with the Land and with each other.



Other Forms of Climate Policy are Possible and Already Happening

(A Look Ahead to Part 3, The Third and Final Part of This Report)

We want to end Part 2 of the report on an uplifting, inspiring, and empowering note. So we include a glimpse of the ideas and voices that will be shared in the next and final part of the report, coming soon.

“I can look at policy in both ways. You can see it from the negative point of view – like as the very thing that pretty much brought us down. But also you could look at it another way and change it where we take back that power and make it into policy? Yes, I look at policy and I don't like that word. But I'm also like, we are totally going to be able to take it as our own and make it our own thing. We're gonna change policy to make it something that Indigenous People and people in general aren't scared of”

Jewel Davies

Carcross and Tagish Nations
Tundra Biome

“Policy is so intimate for us. We've had a very abusive relationship with policy. Since we've had this lived experience of the abuses we face through the Indian Act and different ways of colonization, that means we're actual hardcore policy experts that deserve to be in those spaces to actually make them better and less colonial. There are already experts everywhere within the territories that know what needs to be done”

Katelynn Herchak

Inuk
Tundra Biome

“We had policy within our ceremonies. We had policies in our day to day life. They were brought out from watching our natural world and looking at creation. We had original instructions given to us. How do we follow those now? How do we maintain that in a colonial state? I think it's really going back to listening to land, listening to our youth. Listening to our Elders. Where are they trying to take us? The land is telling us a whole bunch of things. Kids are telling us a whole bunch of things. Our Elders are telling us a whole bunch of things that are happening right now... We have these protocols for everything that we do in our lives, through day to day, work, through ceremony, through birth to death. We have these policies of how we are going to walk through life”

Ginnifer Menominee

Wasauksing First Nation
Temperate Deciduous Forest Biome

“I believe in all aspects of traditional teachings being tied to the land. Indigenous Peoples are the land. We are extensions of our territories and so climate policies would actually hold weight if they were specific to the land's needs, based on the people's knowledge of the territories. This would appear as community-led initiatives, Indigenous-led projects, and upholding Indigenous land sovereignty”

Hanna Paul

Métis Nation of Alberta and Beaver First Nation
Boreal Forest Biome



Please note that this is Part Two of Three Releases that make up the Final Report of ICA's Indigenous-led Climate Policy Report.

The Executive Summary was published in December 2022. Please read the Executive Summary to learn more about the methods used in this research and who participated.

This release shares the first three full length chapters.

The next release – coming in early 2024 – will share the final three chapters.



Some Resources for Further Learning

If you would like to learn more about climate change and climate justice from an Indigenous lens, here are some resources to check out.

Potawatomi scholar Kyle Whyte has put together an amazing list of resources related to Indigenous Peoples and climate justice. It can be found here: kylewhyte.seas.umich.edu/climate-justice/

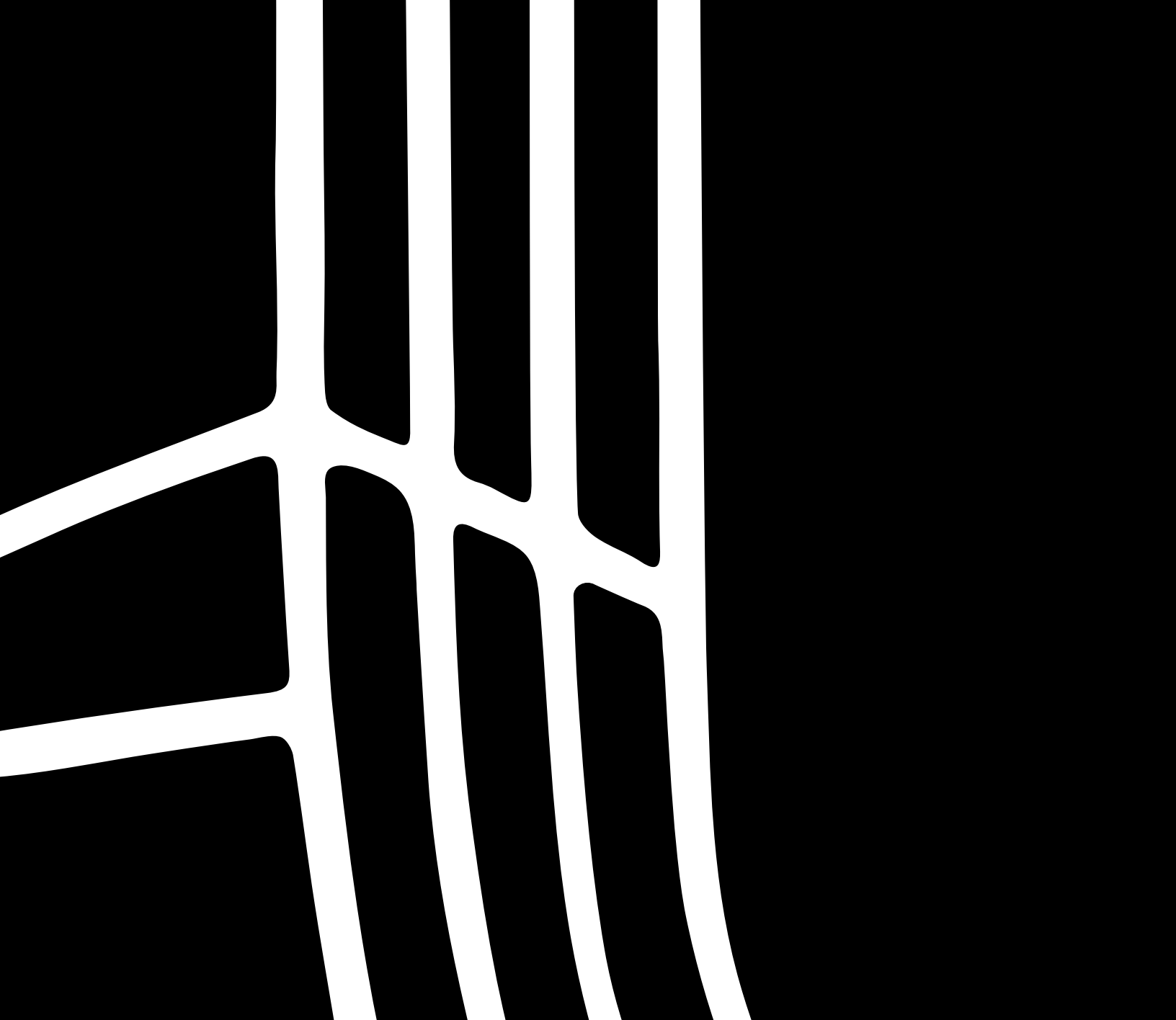
All of ICA's publications and reports can be found here: indigenousclimateaction.com/publications. You can also watch a series of webinars that ICA hosted about decolonizing climate action here.

The Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, and Métis National Council all have resources available on climate change.



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