

First Nations-Canada Joint Committee on Climate Action

2025 Annual Report

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Elder's Prayer

Hai'Cho K'agwaadhat / Thank you, Creator, for your blessings.

We give thanks for our Knowledge Keepers, our Leaders and all who are in our JCCA circle continuing their good work for the Lands, Waters, and all that lives on this Earth.

Hai'Cho to our Ancestors past and present, our Land Protectors and Guardians for caring for these Lands since time immemorial, so that today we can live in a good way.

Let us carry on in the spirit of their teachings to serve our people.

While we continue to live in unprecedented complex times, climate emergencies and biodiversity crises, let us focus on clarity, courage, faith, and trust in the next steps as we continue to take stronger actions, stand strong in unity and in partnership.

We ask for strength to those working at the JCCA to promote our successes, advance high-level work and continue in true partnership with all levels of Government.

Together, we will forge a clear vision to eliminate systemic barriers and colonial policies, enabling self-determination for First Nations in Canada.

We pray for this work to continue so that our Leaders take concrete action.

We pray that our Leaders, the Prime Minister and the National Chief, meet to continue the support of our collective work, promoting wise examples of First Nations and federal partnerships.

Today, we ask that we do our work with a good mind, a good heart, and a good spirit.

We pray for love, courage, and commitment for all our Leaders and Decision Makers on this journey, that will impact us and all future generations to come.

Yeendoo diitr'iinin gooveenjit / for our Children tomorrow.

Mahsi' cho K'agwaadhat, jidii tthak diiyeenjit gwiinzii nahsii / Thank you, Creator, for making everything good for us.

Knowledge Keeper Lorraine Netro, Vuntut Gwitchin

Co-chairs' Message

At the end of 2024, the Joint Committee on Climate Action (JCCA) anticipated uncertainty in 2025. Members agreed that, despite the potential for significant change in Canada and abroad, the JCCA was well positioned as a forum for building and maintaining relationships. The JCCA offers stability and consistency for discussions related to the intersection of federal climate policy and First Nations' climate priorities.

The April 2025 federal election disrupted the JCCA's usual meeting schedule, but the Committee maintained momentum by resuming working group meetings later in the year and holding one plenary meeting in October at the Wabano Centre in Ottawa, attended by the new Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature, the Honourable Julie Dabrusin.

Severe weather, an extended wildfire season, and poor air quality during the summer and fall of 2025 reminded us that climate change continues to threaten the safety and wellbeing of communities across the country. First Nations experienced some of the most dramatic disruptions and losses, which are reflected in one of the case studies featured at the end of this report.

A new federal government was elected in 2025 under the direction of the Right Honourable Mark Carney, Liberal leader. Prime Minister Carney has advanced a growth agenda as a means of protecting national sovereignty in the face of significant geopolitical uncertainty. This shift has prioritized economic competitiveness, including the development of major projects, and continued to respond to climate change. Canada's climate change approach has therefore been evolving to reflect the new context, signalled by the release of an industrial-focused Climate Competitiveness Strategy as part of Budget 2025.

While First Nations have expressed frustrations with the lack of direct engagement and input on some of the government's new policy directions, the JCCA can continue to play a constructive role in guiding federal climate policy and priorities towards ethical and equitable engagement with First Nations. Advancing this work must be aligned with the *Best Practices for Federal Departments Working With First Nations on Climate Change*, and the JCCA will continue to advocate for sufficient, predictable, and sustainable funding for First Nations' climate priorities.

This 2025 Annual Report has been streamlined to reflect the year's context and its more limited meeting schedule due to the federal election; however, the content of this report and the work program for the JCCA remain a guiding vision for collaboration between First Nations and the federal government. To this end, we briefly summarize the activities advanced by the JCCA and then turn our attention towards 2026 and the opportunities to work together to enable First Nations' full and effective participation in the implementation of the Climate Competitiveness Strategy and other federal policies and programs that have climate implications.

The JCCA remains committed to working together to chart a path for the ethical engagement of First Nations and the creation of just, equitable, and resilient solutions for future generations.

Jamie Lavigne,
Acting Senior Director of Environment, Waters and Justice, Assembly of First Nations

Alison McDermott,
Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) of the Strategic Policy and International Affairs Branch, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)

A – First Nations and Federal Highlights from 2025

1. Ongoing Impacts of Extreme Weather and Climate Events

In January 2026, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) confirmed that 2025 was one of the three warmest years on record.[1] Climate change events in 2025 continued to have significant impacts on First Nations, especially during the summer wildfire season. It was also the second worst wildfire season in Canadian history, with more than 6,000 wildfires in nearly every province and territory, impacting communities across the country and burning over 8.3 million hectares (83,000 square kilometers). From April onwards, the heightened risk and impacts forced evacuations of more than 85,000 people, including over 45,000 people from 73 First Nation communities[2] and numerous medical evacuees, all of whom faced the uncertainty of when they might return home. These numbers represent the lived experiences of thousands of people, including many who were forced to leave their homes, belongings, livelihoods, and pets for temporary relocations. In some instances, evacuees were brought to urban centres hundreds or thousands of kilometers from home.

In late July and early August 2025, smoke from hundreds of wildfires burning across Canada created hazy skies and poor air quality across areas of the Northwest Territories, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario, as well as the United States' Upper Midwest and Northeast regions. In mid-June 2025, a smoke plume from Canada reached Central and Southern Europe, and in August, the jet-stream carried smoke to Western Europe.[3]

Hot and dry weather well into mid-autumn in parts of the country meant an increased risk of sudden floods and landslides, while wildfires and droughts continued to impact large areas. This reality interrupted the traditional practices of First Nations across the country—for example, lack of water in some rivers impacted salmon spawning and harvesting, smoke and wildfires had negative health impacts on people, plants and animals, and land-based activities had to be cancelled in some cases because of bans on entering wooded areas. Some communities experienced restrictions in accessing potable water. First Nation advocates at the JCCA noted that food sovereignty is a concern for communities that depend on sustainable harvesting practices and rely on access to healthy lands and waters, both of which can be rendered scarce or inaccessible due to severe weather and impacts from climate change. First Nation advocates also called for urgent support for emergency management in First Nation communities.

1 https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/wmo-confirms-2025-was-one-of-warmest-years-record#:~:text=Two%20of%20these%20datasets%20ranked,years%20in%20all%20eight%20datasets.

2 https://www.canada.ca/en/public-safety-canada/news/2025/10/government-of-canada-provides-update-on-2025-wildfires-as-support-continues.html

3 https://science.nasa.gov/earth/earth-observatory/widespread-smoke-from-canadian-fires-154641/#:~:text=Smoke%20from%20hundreds%20of%20wildland,July%20and%20early%20August%202025.

2. A New Direction in Federal Economic and Climate Policy

Over the course of 2025, the Government of Canada advanced new dimensions of economic and climate policy. These included: i) the *Building Canada Act* and the Major Projects Office; ii) the Climate Competitiveness Strategy; iii) the Canada-Alberta Memorandum of Understanding, and (iv) the Red Tape Reduction Exercise.

i) Building Canada Act and the Major Projects Office (MPO)

On June 26, 2025, Bill C-5, the *One Canadian Economy Act*: *An Act to enact the Free Trade* and *Labour Mobility in Canada Act* and the *Building Canada Act* became law, twenty days after its introduction to Parliament. In August 2025, the Major Projects Office (MPO) was created to advance nation-building projects, working in partnership with federal departments, provinces, territories, Indigenous Peoples and private-sector participants. The *Building Canada Act* (BCA) and the creation of the MPO support the government's priority to advance major projects and streamline federal review and approval processes for infrastructure, energy, and natural resource development projects. Many First Nation governments and representative organizations expressed significant concern that the federal government did not seek their perspectives before passing this legislation and strongly criticized the BCA for potentially overriding environmental and Indigenous consultation processes. In response, the MPO has made efforts to engage with rights holders across the country to explain the BCA and provide information about how First Nation governments and representative organizations can be involved in major projects.

Shortly after the MPO was created, the Prime Minister announced the formation of the Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) to ensure that partnership and Indigenous economic participation are embedded in all proposed major projects. The IAC is expected to provide expert advice on policy, operational practices, and process improvements related to the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in the work of the MPO. This includes supporting how the MPO partners with Indigenous Peoples and providing advice on how best to integrate the articles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) throughout the process. By the end of 2025, eleven projects and six transformative strategies had been referred to the MPO for future considerations, summarized on the MPO website.[4] As of September 2026, seventeen projects have been referred to the MPO for consideration.

ii) Climate Competitiveness Strategy

Through Budget 2025, released November 4, 2025, the federal government announced its new Climate Competitiveness Strategy (CCS), positioning the strategy as "a chance to retool and reinvest in building Canada strong and sustainable, working closely with provinces, territories and Indigenous partners by focusing on shared economic and climate goals."[5] The federal government views climate action and economic growth as inseparable, noting the importance of mobilizing capital for clean growth. The CCS, which was developed without First Nations' input, focuses on strengthening industrial carbon pricing and providing long-term carbon price certainty,

4 https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/major-projects-office/projects/map.html

5 https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2025/11/canadas-new-climate-competitiveness-strategy.html

increasing clarity on greenhouse gas regulations, supporting clean electricity and critical minerals, and mobilizing the public and private investments needed to spur innovation through measures such as investment tax credits and sustainable finance tools.

iii) The Canada-Alberta Memorandum of Understanding

On November 27, 2025, the Governments of Canada and Alberta released a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) [6], which includes commitments to advance solutions for stronger, more effective industrial carbon pricing systems, major private sector investments in clean technologies, and responsible energy development. The MoU aims to help Canada move forward on simplifying regulatory systems, advancing carbon capture and storage, enabling transmission interties, and achieving Canada's net zero electricity goals in ways that reflect regional circumstances and interests. Canada and Alberta agreed to appoint an Implementation Committee to deliver the MoU's outcomes.[7] First Nation advocates raised ongoing concerns about next steps and the role of First Nations in these discussions. Further details of policy discussions at the JCCA are provided below in section B – JCCA Actions in 2025.

iv) Red Tape Reduction Exercise

The Red Tape Reduction Initiative was launched on July 9, 2025, tasking federal departments and agencies with regulatory responsibilities to identify what actions must be taken to reduce red tape and regulatory burden.[8] The Initiative was overseen by a newly created Red Tape Reduction Office at the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS), which provided all implicated federal organizations 60 days to respond to the initial phase of the review exercise, with Ministers reporting thereafter to the President of the Treasury Board on their organizations' progress and next steps.

The review exercise was framed as an important internal step towards modernizing the federal regulatory landscape, rather than as de-regulation. It also signalled an effort to streamline regulatory reporting processes that are outdated, burdensome, complicated, expensive, and/or duplicative, and to make it easier to access and deliver services. Further detail on discussion at the JCCA involving Red Tape Reduction are provided below.

3. International Events

The Government of Canada and numerous First Nation representatives, including a small delegation from the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), attended the 30th session of the Conference of Parties (COP 30) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in Brazil. From November 10 to 21, over 56,000 Indigenous Peoples, Party representatives, leaders, media, and civil society participated in this event.

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6 Canada-Alberta Memorandum of Understanding | Prime Minister of Canada. Canada and Alberta strike new partnership to lower emissions, unlock our natural resources, and build a stronger, more sustainable, and more competitive economy | Prime Minister of Canada

7 Ibid.

8 Government of Canada moves forward to modernize outdated regulations and reduce red tape - Canada.ca https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/news/2025/07/government-of-canada-moves-forward-to-modernize-outdated-regulations-and-reduce-red-tape.html

The AFN's participation in COP 30 aligned with the First Nations-in-Assembly Resolution 36/2023, *Urgent and Transformative Climate Action through the AFN National Climate Strategy*, and Resolution 05/2019, *Declaring a First Nations Climate Emergency*. Prior to COP 30, the AFN issued a position paper, *Centering First Nations Self-Determination in Transformative Climate Action* at COP 30. The position paper draws on three decades of mandates from First Nations-in-Assembly, beginning with the first Rio Earth Summit in 1992, to call on Canada to create space for Indigenous Peoples' governance, rights, and knowledge systems within all areas of the UNFCCC.

COP 30 was heralded as an 'Indigenous COP' by the Brazilian Presidency; however, progress on the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples within the COP as well as within COP decisions was limited. Despite mandated events and sessions with the COP Presidency, references to Indigenous Peoples were reduced or omitted from many final decision texts. The one exception was in the Just Transition negotiation, where a historic standalone paragraph recognizes the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the right to Self-Determination and to Free, Prior and Informed Consent, and the protection of Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation.

During COP 30, the presence of political representatives from Canada and AFN was well-received. Minister Julie Dabrusin held bilateral meetings with senior diplomats, partners, and leaders and representatives of Indigenous organizations, including AFN Regional Chief (Prince Edward Island), Wendell LaBobe.[9] At the Canadian Pavilion, the AFN worked with the Inuit Circumpolar Council and others to organize an Indigenous Climate Leadership Day (November 12), which included an opening session on First Nations Climate Leadership, and a co-organized session between AFN and the BC Assembly of First Nations entitled First Nations Climate Action: Learning from our Past to Support Future Generations. Canada also endorsed Brazil's Call to Action on Integrated Fire Management and Wildfire Resilience to advance international cooperation on emergency preparedness and response.[10] COP 31 will be held in Antalya, Türkiye, with Australia serving as President of Negotiations to focus on Pacific priorities in an unprecedented joint presidency with Türkiye. A pre-COP meeting will also take place in the Pacific region.

9 More about AFN's participation can be found here: https://afn.ca/all-news/bulletins/afn-calls-for-urgent-and-transformative-climate-action-led-by-indigenous-peoples-following-cop30-un-climate-change-conference-2025/

10 https://www.canada.ca/en/services/environment/weather/climatechange/canada-international-action/un-climate-change-conference/cop30-summit/summary-outcomes.html

B – JCCA Actions in 2025

Over the past year, the JCCA continued to advance key priorities in a rapidly evolving environment. While the federal election impacted the scope of its activities, the JCCA prioritized those related to the two permanent Working Groups – focused on Policy and on Reporting and Outreach – in preparation for the in-person JCCA meeting in October 2025. The in-person meeting was the first for new federal Co-Chair, Alison McDermott, and featured an interactive discussion with Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, the Honourable Julie Dabrusin.

Reflecting on the evolving context of climate action between First Nations and the newly elected federal government, the JCCA continues to prioritize and work collectively to advance the meaningful inclusion of First Nations in federal climate policy. Here, we briefly summarize our activities in line with the priorities expressed in the 2024 Annual Report.

1. Uplift First Nations Climate Leadership in Federal Policy and Programs

First Nations Climate Leadership (FNCL) has been discussed as both a concept and a set of guiding principles for the work of the JCCA. The evolving policy environment introduced by Prime Minister Carney has created new opportunities and challenges in translating this concept into the implementation of the *Building Canada Act,* the Climate Competitiveness Strategy, the Canada-Alberta Memorandum of Understanding and the Red Tape Reduction Exercise. Informational presentations were provided in the context of the Policy Working Group and the October plenary meeting.

The attendance of Minister Dabrusin, as well as officials from the Major Projects Office (MPO) and the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS), at the October meeting provided an opportunity for First Nation advocates to raise concerns and ask questions about the inclusion of First Nations' priorities in the absence of public communication on the federal direction on climate change and regulatory review. First Nation advocates signalled the need for improved federal engagement in any new policy development, especially through respecting and implementing the *Best Practices for Federal Departments Working with First Nations on Climate Change*, and the *Decision-Making guidance for federal programs to implement best practices in support of Indigenous self-determined climate leadership*. These conversations were deepened at the JCCA's Policy Working Group meetings, where First Nation advocates continued to press for further discussions to identify opportunities to engage First Nations, and to engage early, in upcoming federal policy development.

A central focus of the October meeting was the Major Projects Office and the implementation of the BCA. A representative from the MPO team at the Privy Council Office (PCO) listened to First Nation members' questions and concerns about the implementation of the BCA, as well as the creation of the MPO and related Indigenous Advisory Council. First Nation advocates noted there was insufficient transparency in the closed process to appoint members to this Council by the Prime Minister and there was concern about the lack of representation from Denedeh and other regions. While the MPO is poised to provide $40 million over two years "to increase the

capacity of Indigenous Peoples to engage early and consistently on major projects,"[11] this amount was flagged as significantly inadequate to meet the actual consultation capacity needs of First Nation rights holders and organizations. In addition, the federal government announced an expansion of the Indigenous Loan Guarantee Program from $5 billion to $10 billion to facilitate Indigenous investments in major projects.[12] First Nations continue to advocate for investments in First Nations infrastructure projects and note that there is a risk of over-reliance on resource projects based on an industry-driven narrative that will not do enough to promote broader economic self-sufficiency, resilience and reconciliation. In addition to the discussion on the BCA, First Nation advocates also raised the importance of discussing the *Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Act*, paying close attention to the detrimental impacts that non-local contractors and labour could have on First Nation communities, particularly on women and families, and given that labour mobility is seen as an important component of the development of major projects in Canada.

First Nation members of the JCCA sought additional information on how the Red Tape Reduction Exercise might intersect with potential updates and revisions to climate and environment-related regulations and how this could impact First Nations.

The Climate Competitiveness Strategy (CCS) was released in November though Budget 2025, after the JCCA's October plenary meeting. At the December 2025 JCCA Policy working group meeting, Federal representatives provided a presentation on the broad parameters of the CCS. In response, First Nation advocates raised that they felt that the federal strategy was developed behind closed doors, that it lacks adequate First Nations' input, and that it undermines federal reconciliation and climate commitments. Concerns were also expressed that the federal government's focus on economic outcomes could weaken adherence to binding emissions reduction targets. It was re-iterated that First Nations must be positioned as climate leaders. First Nation representatives also continued to seek federal support for the AFN's National Climate Strategy[13] and are awaiting a decision regarding funding for the First Nations Climate Leadership Agenda.

In the design and implementation of the federal government's signature climate and economic initiatives in 2025, the AFN noted that both were significant failed opportunities for the government to engage with First Nations according to the principles set out in the JCCA's Best Practices Guide (mentioned above). Through the JCCA, efforts will continue in seeking an understanding of opportunities to engage First Nations in the implementation of the broader federal climate approach, including the CCS, and for opportunities in the federal budget process to seek sufficient, predictable, and sustainable funding for First Nations' climate priorities.

In December 2025, following Canada's signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Alberta, which, amongst other measures, includes reference to the development of a new pipeline to deliver oil to Pacific ports, the First Nations-in-Assembly passed Resolution 33/2025, *Affirming the Oil Tanker Moratorium Act and Supporting Coastal First Nations Rejection of any Proposed Pipeline from Alberta to British Columbia's Northwest Coast,* calling for

11 Prime Minister Carney announces first projects to be reviewed by the new Major Projects Office | Prime Minister of Canada

12 Ibid.

13 https://afn.bynder.com/m/77556e1d9da51db7/original/2023-Climate-Strategy-Report.pdf

the immediate withdrawal of the MoU, and expressing full support for First Nations on the B.C. coast who strongly oppose the initiative. The resolution also urges Canada, Alberta, and B.C. to recognize the climate emergency and uphold the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The evolving context of federal climate policy created uncertainty as to how First Nations' full and effective participation can be fully operationalized. The JCCA will consider strategic opportunities and discussions to raise the profile of First Nations' priorities within this evolving federal context to help ensure that First Nations Climate Leadership is upheld in federal climate policy and programs.

2. Monitor Progress and Deliver Results for First Nations

In 2025, members of the Reporting and Outreach Working Group continued to work on an indicator exercise to gauge the JCCA's progress in delivering on the goals that it had set for itself in previous years. The starting point of the indicators exercise was to consider where the First Nations-Canada partnership on climate change would be without the JCCA forum to support it. The Working Group determined that the exercise should include three components: output measurements, awareness measurements, and a participant survey. For the latter, Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) developed a survey to measure the success of the program that funds the JCCA and other distinctions-based climate tables. A soft launch of the survey occurred at the JCCA Meeting in October. Receiving responses from 34 members, the results were very positive, citing strong value for the relationships established at the JCCA (97%) and appreciation for the uniqueness of the co-learning space (94%). The survey will be further refined and used by CIRNAC for program renewal purposes.

The ongoing evaluation of the JCCA and its effectiveness as a technical body is important to strengthen collaboration and encourage meaningful engagement with First Nations. The Reporting and Outreach Working Group will continue to develop tools to monitor progress of the JCCA's goals.

3. Strengthen Dialogue Through Long-Term Relationship Building

Faced with a change in government mandates in 2025 and a new federal approach to addressing climate change policy and programming, the JCCA was forced to confront its future, and in doing so, to consider the value of the Committee in nurturing long-term relationships between First Nation advocates and federal partners in bringing First Nations' climate change priorities to the attention of federal decision makers. The JCCA's role as a unique 'collaborative table' was strongly emphasized, and as soon as it became possible, the Working Groups resumed their respective schedules of meeting every two months to ensure action on JCCA priority issues between plenary sessions. The Policy Working Group provided a ready forum to quickly seek information about the new federal government's direction on climate change and its approach to reconciliation.

The JCCA continues to be a collaborative space to foster long-term relationship building. Concerns with the direction of federal climate policy, and the inability to turn these relationships into policy direction, may require a strategic evaluation of how First Nation advocates and federal partners can work together in this context.

4. Improve Communication and Broaden the Reach of the JCCA

In August, the JCCA released its seventh Annual Report on its public facing website, highlighting key activities taken in 2024 to advance First Nations' priorities in federal climate policy and programs. The committee also updated and released its *Best Practices for Federal Departments Working with First Nations on Climate Change*. This stand-alone document, jointly developed by First Nation advocates and federal members of the JCCA, contains best practices for meaningful engagement with First Nations and for program design and implementation. This update was promoted on both the AFN and the federal government's social media platforms to raise awareness, share information, and to broaden the reach of the JCCA. In the future, the Committee will update its website on a semi-annual basis to share its products and updates on activities. A substantial website update is planned for Spring 2026.

C – Our Path Forward in 2026

Looking ahead to 2026, the JCCA is focused on advancing priorities that move beyond planning towards measurable implementation and outcomes. Building on the actions and lessons of previous years, this section outlines the priority areas that will guide work in 2026.

These priorities are intended to support First Nations' self-determined climate action and to reinforce federal accountability.

1. Explore options for monitoring progress and advancing implementation of First Nations' climate strategies and the First Nations Climate Leadership Agenda.

In 2026, the JCCA will prioritize the following actions:

Advocate for federal departments to engage meaningfully with the measures and actions contained within the AFN National Climate Strategy and regional First Nations' climate strategies to inform federal actions and advance positive outcomes for First Nations.

Continue to explore the implications and mechanisms for advancing the implementation of Canada's UN Declaration legislation in the JCCA's work, including through the development of additional products to support the design, implementation, and evaluation of federal clean growth and climate change policies and programs.

Identify and jointly develop recommendations for how to operationalize changes to the partnership between First Nations and the federal government on climate issues and consider how these changes can influence and enhance broader federal climate policy and programs.

Develop monitoring practices for the implementation of the Decision-Making Guidance for federal programs to implement best practices in support of Indigenous self-determined climate leadership, and where necessary, make improvements or additional policy documents to mainstream these practices in all federal departments.

2. Analyze the impacts of federal budget reductions on First Nations' climate programming and jointly develop creative approaches to implement shared priorities.

In 2026, the JCCA will prioritize the following actions:

Review federal sunsetting programs and reductions resulting from the Comprehensive Expenditure Review to determine impacts on First Nations.

Consider the joint development of new funding proposals, in alignment with the National Climate Strategy and the First Nations Climate Leadership Agenda regional recommendations.

Continue to explore alternate sources of climate-related programming data, including interviews with First Nation recipients, to analyze First Nations' outcomes within these programs.

3. Explore opportunities for the full and effective engagement of First Nations and their priorities within the federal climate approach, including the Climate Competitiveness Strategy (CCS) and other relevant climate priorities.

In 2026, the JCCA will prioritize the following actions:

Focus on advancing First Nations Climate Leadership (FNCL) and continue to explore opportunities to identify, strengthen, and create mechanisms to support federal officials in applying the First Nations Climate Lens and to meet obligations under Canada's *UN Declaration Act* in the design, implementation, and evaluation of federal climate policies and programs, including the CCS.

Encourage federal departments to develop policy guidance to enable the alignment of future engagement processes with the *Best Practices for Federal Departments Working with First Nations on Climate Change*, including adequate engagement funding, appropriate timelines, and long-term relationship-building.

4. Continue to strengthen JCCA relationships and build intergenerational and intersectional dialogue.

In 2026, the JCCA will prioritize the following actions:

Re-introduce training on Ethical Space,[14] especially for new representatives, and introduce new approaches to working together in culturally appropriate and safe ways.

Leverage the JCCA's permanent Working Groups to establish closer working relationships between JCCA members, as well as to bring relevant federal officials into the conversation.

Determine new modalities of work to engage with decision-makers within the federal government, including central agencies, as well as within the AFN and in regions and communities.

Build on the recommendations from the JCCA Youth Circle and seek new opportunities to develop resources and support for enhanced engagement with First Nation youth, youth representatives from ECCC and other regional youth advocates.

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14 Ethical Space is an equity-based approach to weaving Indigenous and Western knowledge systems, which was coined by Elder Dr. Reg Crowshoe. It is a space where each knowledge system is intrinsically valued and provides an open, safe, and fertile ground to design, develop, and work together in harmony.

https://afn.ca/environment/environmental-protection-climate-action/joint-committee-on-climate-action/working-together/



Conclusion

Over 2025, the JCCA worked to position itself as an established, solid, and value-added forum for navigating the changing political landscapes and evolving climate policy approaches, while continuing to further relationships between First Nation advocates and federal officials. The JCCA's typical cycle of activity was altered by the May 2025 federal election and change in federal leadership. Despite this, the JCCA ramped up its activity in the second half of 2025, and held a successful plenary meeting in October, where First Nation climate advocates had the opportunity to speak directly with the Honourable Julie Dabrusin, the new Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature. The message from First Nation advocates was clear: That there are significant concerns and questions about the new federal approach to developing industrial climate policy as reflected by the Climate Competitiveness Strategy, which was developed without direct prior engagement and consultation with First Nations. First Nation advocates also raised concerns about the federal government's commitment to implement the recommendations contained within the First Nations Climate Leadership Agenda (FNCLA), which to date has received no response, and the federal government has not defined how it will include the FNCLA in future climate policy. In 2026, the JCCA aspires to work on these concerns, seek answers about sustainable and adequate federal funding for First Nations climate leadership, develop strategies to navigate the changing government decision-making process, and encourage improved federal efforts to implement engagement principles outlined in the JCCA Best Practices Guidance document and commitments under the *United Nations Declaration Act*.



The path for 2026 is clear: To affirm the JCCA's role as an ongoing and unique forum where First Nation advocates and federal officials convene to discuss the inclusion of First Nations in federal climate policy and programming.

Case Stories

Case Story 1 – 2025 Manitoba Wildfires and Emergency Management

In the spring and summer of 2025, northern Manitoba experienced one of its most severe wildfire seasons in recent years, driven by extreme heat, prolonged drought, and early-season fire activity linked to accelerating climate change. Nationally, Canada recorded its second-worst wildfire season on record, with over 8.9 million hectares burned across more than 6,000 fires.[15]

First Nations across Manitoba, including Pimickikamak Cree Nation, Mathias Colomb Cree Nation, and Cross Lake, faced repeated evacuation threats, with thousands displaced as fire destroyed homes, infrastructure, and ecosystems. First Nations are disproportionately affected by wildfire evacuations, often representing a significant share of evacuees during natural disasters due to location, infrastructure gaps, and systemic inequities.

The 2025 Manitoba wildfires exposed persistent gaps in emergency management systems. First Nations leadership and local responders were required to act rapidly with limited to no resources while navigating federal and provincial jurisdictions. Ongoing challenges related to coordination, infrastructure capacity, and direct ongoing funding in First Nations emergency management highlight the critical need for long-term investments that uphold First Nations jurisdiction.

15 https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/top-ten-weather-stories/2025.html?



Case Story 2 – Reflections from Youth at AFN's 3rd Climate Gathering

In October 2024, the Assembly of First Nations hosted a Youth Gathering at the 3rd National Climate Gathering to create space for First Nations youth to speak directly about climate change and their priorities for action. The Gathering brought youth together as leaders, knowledge holders, and advocates for their Nations.

Youth participants spoke about the impacts they are experiencing in their territories. They shared concerns about the impacts of wildfires, flooding, unsafe drinking water, food insecurity, and the loss of access to traditional harvesting areas. Many described how climate change affects their ability to connect with the land, Elders, cultural identity, and community when displaced by natural disasters.

Other key concerns highlighted barriers to progress, including short-term and proposal-based funding mechanisms, limited support for youth capacity, and a lack of federal follow-through. They called for sustained, flexible investments that enable long-term planning, meaningful engagement, youth-led initiatives, structured roles in governance processes, and land-based climate solutions.

The full discussion is summarized in the report, Youth Gathering Summary Report, published in mid-2025.

