





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 with their teachings to serve our people.

While we continue to live in climate emergencies and biodiversity crises, let us 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



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Key Recommendations/Actions

- Identify, strengthen and create mechanisms to support federal officials in applying the First
 Nations Climate Lens and obligations under the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (UNDA) to the design, implementation, and evaluation of federal climate
 policies and programs, including those in the 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan and the National
 Adaptation Strategy.
- 2. 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* ('Best Practices'), including adequate engagement funding, appropriate timelines, and long-term relationship-building.
- 3. Advocate for federal members of the JCCA to develop regulatory, policy, and program recommendations that uphold the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) as a minimum standard, and relevant jointly developed JCCA guidance materials, such as the Best Practices and <u>Decision-Making Guidance for federal programs to implement best practices in support of Indigenous self-determined climate leadership.</u>
- 4. Support the recommendations of the JCCA Youth Circle by committing to provide additional support for youth representatives to participate in meetings (including pre-meetings), more intergenerational connections, and deliberate space to share perspectives in a safe way.
- Continue to explore opportunities to maximize the reach and impact of the JCCA, including through the Committee's website, a commitment to the development of additional measures of success, and the creation of relevant Working Groups.



Co-Chair Summary

The ongoing reality of climate-induced impacts hit all parts of Canada in 2024, from the warmest winter season on record, a wildfire season in Western Canada that devastated the town of Jasper, to a period of sustained drought after extensive floods and landslides in parts of Newfoundland and Labrador. According to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, 2024 represented the most expensive year for weather and climate-related disasters on record at a cost of \$7 billion. These costs are calculated through insured losses of physical infrastructure, which do not include other costs that affect the very survival of First Nations, such as the impacts on harvesting and animals, or access to sacred sites and other culturally relevant contexts.

The Joint Committee on Climate Action (JCCA) met three times in 2024. These meetings continue to represent opportunities to strengthen relationships and recommit to the collective goals of advancing First Nations Climate Leadership in federal climate policy and programming. Following the completion of our five-year review in 2023, there was renewed attention to the work of the JCCA, being welcomed by AFN Newfoundland Regional Chief Brendan Mitchell at our August meeting in St. John's, and by AFN Yukon Regional Chief Kluane Adamek and Minister Steven Guilbeault at our December meeting in Ottawa. Building on this momentum, First Nations members of the JCCA remain hopeful that a meeting with the Prime Minister and National Chief will be convened soon to discuss the work of the JCCA.

The 2024 Annual Report has been streamlined to make it more accessible and to focus on key activities and takeaways. While we know significant work lies ahead, JCCA messaging and priorities have been consistent: full respect of Inherent and Treaty rights; include First Nations in national climate governance; explore innovative, self-determined funding models for First Nations-led climate action; and enable First Nations to participate as full and effective partners in all federal climate policy. Direct and meaningful engagement with First Nations rights- and title- holders is essential in this regard.

After seven years of collaboration, there has been unwavering commitment to the work of the JCCA, working in partnership to advance meaningful action on climate change. Appropriately positioning the work and impact of the JCCA is critical as we enter a new context in 2025. It is clearer than ever that the leadership of First Nations is essential in finding a path forward to a just, equitable, and resilient future for all Canadians.

JCCA Co-Chairs

Tonio Sadik, PhD - Senior Director, Environment, Lands & Water, Assembly of First Nations Vincent Ngan - Assistant Deputy Minister, Climate Change Branch, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) 2024

Alison McDermott – Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy and International Affairs Branch (ECCC) 2025



A - First Nations and Federal Climate Highlights from 2024



Figure 1: 3rd AFN National Climate Gathering Logo, prepared by Eruoma Awashish 1

1. AFN's 3rd National Climate Gathering

In the face of extreme weather and growing climate impacts facing First Nations, the AFN hosted its 3rd National Climate Gathering, attracting over 1100 registrations and bringing together over 800 First Nations experts, leaders, Elders, youth, women, 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals, and professionals in Calgary, Alberta. The Gathering, themed "Catalyzing First Nations Climate and Conservation Leadership for Transformative Change", built on the momentum of previous Gatherings, creating space for participants to share knowledge and discuss innovative solutions that First Nations are advancing in response to rapid environmental changes at local, regional, national, and international levels. It applied the First Nations Climate Lens and elements of the AFN National Climate Strategy to host some fifty concurrent sessions, five plenary discussions, and a trade show with over 30 booths. These concurrent sessions spanned the breadth of realities and expertise of First Nations, including accessibility and disability inclusion, Land and Water Guardians, emergency management, food security, biodiversity and conservation, and health. A key focus of the Gathering was on First Nations Youth, hosting a Youth Day on October 7th and featuring concurrent sessions highlighting youth-led solutions from coast-to-coast-to-coast. Representatives of the AFN, ECCC, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC), and other federal departments worked together to organize a dedicated networking session, building relationships between First Nations, philanthropic organizations, and federal government officials.

¹ Eruoma Awashish is an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw mother and artist who is committed to her nation. She works in a variety of mediums, including painting, installation, performance, video, silkscreening and traditional dance. Awashish grew up in the community of Opitciwan. She is now established in Pekuakami (Lac-Saint-Jean), and her studio is located in the Ilnu community of Mashteuiatsh. She holds an interdisciplinary Bachelor of Arts from the University of Quebec at Chicoutimi.



2. First Nations Climate Leadership Agenda

In June 2024, the First Nations Climate Leadership Agenda (FNCL Agenda) process took an important step forward, convening a meeting between First Nations Regional Leaders and four Federal Ministers to discuss First Nations' recommendations and look for further opportunities for direct discussions between First Nations and Canadian officials on the design, implementation, and monitoring of the FNCL Agenda. The First Nations-in-Assembly, through Resolution 25/2024, Advocating for an ambitious, fully funded, and implemented First Nations Climate Leadership Agenda (FNCLA), called on "...all relevant departments in the Government of Canada to commit to fully implementing and funding the recommendations identified in the [FNCLA], including regionalspecific recommendations, ensuring stable, adequate, and long-term funding for First Nations Rights, Title, and Treaty holders to implement their own climate priorities and strategies." While the potential outcome of federal decisions regarding the FNCL Agenda recommendations remains uncertain, the year also featured several steps forward in federal climate policy, including the release of the Clean Electricity Regulation/Standard, and the announcement of the updated 2035 Emissions Reduction Target: 45-50% below 2005 levels. First Nation members of the JCCA continue to emphasize that these policies must proceed in a manner that respects First Nations' rights and governance systems, particularly with respect to clean electricity, critical minerals, and major projects, and avoid climate colonization of First Nations Lands and Waters.

3. The 29th Conference of the Parties

Both First Nations and federal government representatives attended the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP29) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which took place in November 2024 in Baku, Azerbaijan. Collaboration between the AFN and ECCC, as well as other First Nation participants, helped ensure Canada's advocacy reflected Indigenous Peoples' climate leadership and needs, as part of a whole-of-society approach for effective domestic and international climate policies and action. First Nations delegates advised the federal negotiators and participated in sessions such as the Annual Knowledge Holders Gathering, the Indigenous Youth Roundtable, and the Multi-Stakeholder Open Dialogue, as well as events at the Canada Pavilion. In advance of COP29, the AFN prepared a position paper, *Embedding First Nations Climate Leadership at COP 29*.

COP29 was heralded as a 'finance COP' where countries were working to adopt a new collective quantified goal on international climate finance. Despite difficult negotiations, the final decision committed to increase public finance mobilized by developed to developing countries, from the previous goal of US\$100 billion annually to US\$300 billion annually, by 2035. The goal also created a target to secure efforts of all actors to scale up finance to developing countries from public and private sources to the amount of US\$1.3 trillion per year by 2035. Among other negotiations, COP29 reaffirmed the role of the Facilitative Working Group, which is a critical piece of the UN





climate process architecture composed of Indigenous and government representatives. COP29 also adopted a 2025-2027 work plan ("the Baku Workplan") that will advance Indigenous-State knowledge exchange, capacity-building and rights-based climate policies and action.

Case Story 1 - Ma'nsstaam (Lodgepole Pine) Project: Reclaiming Access through Biocultural Relationships of Blackfoot Keystone Species

The Ma'nsstaam (Lodgepole Pine) Project is a project led by the Piikani Consultation and Traditional Knowledge Services, in collaboration with the Årramåt Project. The Piikani Nation share a collective history of living on the Land, harvesting on the Land, and enjoying the Land. Due to colonial laws and restrictions by different layers of government, the Piikani have struggled to do this fully, and to freely access the plants and animals that have sustained their culture and heritage since time immemorial. The Lodgepole Pine, known in Blackfoot as Ma'nsstaam, is a cultural keystone species for the Piikani representing an essential role in ceremonies, family relationships, and societal gatherings. The objective of the project aims to mobilize and share, over a multi-year timeframe, Piikani knowledge of the complex biocultural relationship of a cultural keystone species that supports the wellbeing of our community. The project will support two activities, a Ma'nsstaam harvest and a ceremony to take place inside a tipi and share how lessons for Indigenous-led conservation and adaptation are informed by these reciprocal relationships. For more information, refer here: https://arramatproject.org/indigenous-led-place-based-projects/. Pictures were provided from the Piikani Consultation and Traditional Knowledge Services.







B - Solidifying First Nations Climate Leadership – JCCA Actions in 2024

Members of the JCCA continued to collaborate on a variety of climate priorities and actions throughout 2024. In the 2023 Annual Report, five priorities were set for 2024. While additional progress is needed to advance each of these priorities, key activities are summarized below:

1. Advancing First Nations Climate Leadership

The concept of First Nations Climate Leadership (FNCL) continues to be a guiding priority for the work of the JCCA. Throughout 2024, there were focused dialogues on FNCL prior to and following the third AFN National Climate Gathering, at high-level meetings to discuss the implementation of the AFN National Climate Strategy ('Climate Strategy'), and during JCCA discussions focused on the UN Declaration and UNDA within federal legislation, regulation, policy, and programs. On the Climate Strategy, the JCCA discussed the 66 strategies and actions (out of 107) that are either targeted directly at 'federal, provincial and territorial governments' or require their collaboration and partnership with First Nations. Progress to date on Climate Strategy implementation was limited, however the JCCA began an analysis of existing federal measures, current gaps, and potential opportunities to explore implementation of the Climate Strategy. Current uncertainty around the outcomes of the FNCL Agenda and the closed and lengthy process for federal policymaking remain a challenge, particularly as the federal government prepares for an election in 2025.

Similarly, the JCCA discussed how to improve federal consideration and implementation of the UN Declaration as a minimum standard, and to align this with JCCA-specific guidance, including 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. There was a step forward with the incorporation of this guidance into the Climate, Nature, and Economy Lens, however, the full potential of this tool has yet to be realized. Federal representatives acknowledge that there remain significant barriers to enabling the meaningful and respectful engagement of First Nations in climate policy and regulatory processes. For example, initial discussions on the engagement process associated with setting the 2035 Emissions Reduction Target were challenging, as First Nation members raised concerns with the absence of funding and meaningful engagement processes. This is not uncommon, as in many cases, federal departments still cannot offer adequate engagement funding, may be constrained by tight timelines and colonial processes for seeking First Nations feedback, and may lack tools and resources to support relationship-building with First Nations. Awareness of the Best Practices Guide is inconsistent between, and among, federal departments.

First Nations-led efforts to advance the FNCL Agenda continued in earnest through 2024. In parallel to the work of the JCCA, a complementary engagement process has been co-led by CIRNAC and



ECCC alongside First Nation Regional Leads. Key activities in 2024 included technical meetings hosted in Ottawa (February) and Halifax (August) and a Leadership meeting (June). The Leadership meeting brought together over 30 First Nation leaders, including First Nations youth, as well as several Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries to discuss the importance of First Nations Climate Leadership across various sectors, including Lands, Waters, and Energy; Health, Wellness, and Food Security; and Resilient Infrastructure and Emergency Management. The JCCA discussed the interaction between its work and the recommendations from First Nations Regional Leads, which informed federal advice on the FNCL Agenda and a proposed path forward for consideration by senior federal decision-makers.

2. Continuing to develop First Nations-specific indicators/criteria to report on the implementation of climate-related federal funding programs and outcomes for First Nations

Following up on requests from First Nations and previous work by the JCCA, federal members presented a summary of federal climate-related funding transferred directly to First Nations recipients between fiscal years 2016-17 and 2022-23. As part of this exercise, over 22,000 transfer payments from 83 programs across 15 departments between 2016-17 and 2022-23 were reviewed, offering First Nation partners a clearer understanding of the federal funding landscape. Though the information reflected only past spending, it was helpful in providing evidence for several concerns that First Nations raised in 2017:

- · some programs are not designed in a way that enables First Nations to access funding;
- not enough funding is available for First Nations to address the gaps and challenges of the climate crisis; and
- concerns around equity in terms of which First Nations recipients are able to access federal funding flows and programs.

This information can be used to better understand gaps, opportunities, and areas for continued collaboration and improvement, including the justification for the funding requested by First Nations Regional Leads through the FNCL Agenda process. Efforts to track and gather information on the status of unsuccessful climate funding applications have been unsuccessful, as federal officials have indicated there are significant barriers to collecting this information across all climate programs. Drawing from discussions started during the five-year review, the JCCA also began initiatives to measure the performance of the JCCA, track progress, and propose solutions to address identified gaps and challenges, led by the Reporting and Outreach Working Group in 2024. Activities related to 2025 are outlined further below.



3. Strengthening intergenerational and intersectional dialogue

The JCCA continued to create spaces for the inclusion of youth voices, hosting youth sessions at each of its meetings. At the December 2024 meeting, the JCCA Youth Circle provided an update on their work to ensure a more prominent voice for youth participation in the JCCA, including the need to remove financial barriers preventing youth from fronting the costs to attend JCCA meetings. The JCCA Youth Circle developed an evergreen youth guidance document that was shared with the JCCA, understanding that it would continue to be developed with priorities for 2025. Key messages included:

- A desire for additional guidance and dialogue between JCCA meetings, including additional support for youth representatives such as pre-meetings, and daily check-ins.
- The creation of a deliberate space on the agenda to share perspectives and priorities in a safe and inclusive manner, avoiding the continued tokenization of Indigenous youth.
- A call to create more opportunities for intergenerational connections and mentorship.

Elder Lorraine Netro continued to play an important role throughout 2024 to provide direction to the JCCA by offering spiritual and cultural guidance to our members through her kind and generous leadership and the sharing of her stories and experience. Paul Pike, Cultural Outreach Officer at Qalipu First Nation, shared the history of the Mi'kmaq in Ktaqmkuk (Newfoundland) with JCCA members at the 22nd meeting in St. John's.

4. Updating and reviewing the JCCA mandate

Following a productive five-year review undertaken in 2023, JCCA members updated the 2018 Terms of Reference (ToR) to reflect the Committee's evolution, ensuring alignment with recent federal climate plans and the AFN National Climate Strategy. Key discussions focused on enhancing transparency, updating references to AFN resolutions, and clarifying the relationship between the JCCA and Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment (ACE), all while emphasizing the consensus-driven nature of our work. Members also supported maintaining the annual reports, organizing meetings outside the Ottawa region, and reinforcing the collaborative spirit of the JCCA through its circle-based discussions. The implementation of the five-year review also saw the creation of two permanent Working Groups: one focused on Reporting and Outreach; another on Policy. Each met twice in 2024, working to identify the broad scope of the Working Groups and to begin discussions in advance of the JCCA meeting in December 2024.



5. Enhancing transparency and broadening the reach of the JCCA

After several years of collaborative work, the JCCA officially launched the JCCA Website, housed on the AFN's main website. The website features four sections: What We Do; First Nations in a Changing Climate; Membership & Governance; and Working Together. It will become an important repository of Annual Reports and other relevant JCCA information, as well as a forum for those interested in our work and discussion.

Case Story 2 - Save Lives! Help Build an Accessibility/Disability Climate Action Tool Kit

At the 3rd National Climate Gathering, representatives of the Assembly of First Nations hosted a dedicated session to support the creation of a First Nations Accessibility/ Disability Climate Action Toolkit. The presentation first outlined the reality of First Nation persons-with-disabilities, often among the most-at-risk populations, as particularly vulnerable to climate impacts and often left-out of decision-making and emergency preparedness. Based on this reality, the session then transitioned into a working session where First Nations persons of all abilities and all participants worked together to scope a one-of-a-kind toolkit to assist emergency and climate responders and First Nations in creating effective accessible policies and implementing inclusive strategies. The toolkit, designed by First Nations for First Nations, represents a key strategy to support First Nation persons-with-disabilities, and will be coordinated with the implementation of the First Nations Climate Action Toolkit described in the AFN National Climate Strategy.





C - Our Path Forward in 2025

Given the urgency of climate action and the mandates of the First Nations-in-Assembly and the newly-elected federal government which recognizes the unprecedented challenge of climate change and vital work to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, there is a need for continued progress in 2025 and beyond. There are opportunities for sustained, impactful action on climate change and further strengthening of the Committee's effectiveness and relevance. Looking forward, the following priorities have been identified for 2025.

1. Uplift First Nations Climate Leadership in federal policy and programs

FNCL has been discussed as both a concept and a set of guiding principles for the work of the JCCA. Translating the FNCL concept into tangible changes in federal climate policies remains a key challenge and area of focus, in alignment with our ongoing efforts to mainstream the JCCA's Best Practices Guide. In 2025, the JCCA will prioritize the following actions:

- Focus on advancing FNCL and continue to explore mechanisms to support federal officials in applying the First Nations Climate Lens to the design, implementation, and evaluation of federal climate policies and programs.
- Identify potential opportunities to consider the FNCL Agenda recommendations that First Nations submitted to Canada in 2024, once further clarity from Canada is provided.
- Advocate for federal departments to engage meaningfully with the strategies and actions contained within the AFN National Climate Strategy and regional First Nations' climate strategies in order to inform federal actions and advance positive outcomes for First Nations.
- Continue to explore the implications and mechanisms for advancing the implementation of UNDA 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 broader federal climate policy and programs.



2. Monitor progress and deliver results for First Nations

There has been a great ambition for this area of work, recognizing the importance of measuring progress in how the federal government implements its climate policies and programs and the outcomes for First Nations. In 2025, the JCCA plans to make a concerted effort to advance the following:

- Develop indicators to measure the success of the JCCA, drawing on the outcomes of the five-year review.
- Develop monitoring practices for the implementation of the <u>Decision-Making Guidance for</u> federal programs to implement best practices in support of <u>Indigenous self-determined</u> climate leadership, and where necessary, make improvements or additional policy documents to mainstream these practices in all federal departments.
- 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. Strengthen dialogue through long-term relationship-building

The thoughtful and ongoing engagement of youth, women, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, gender-diverse, and other intersectional identities in the JCCA's work continues to be critical. To support this, and to continue investing in relationships between members of the JCCA, the following action areas have been identified:

- Explore opportunities to re-introduce training on <u>Ethical Space</u>, especially for new representatives, and introduce new approaches to working together in culturally appropriate and safe ways.
- Leverage the 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, 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 Nations youth,
 representatives of ECCC's Environment and Climate Change Youth Council and other
 regional youth advocates.



4. Improve communication and broaden the reach of the JCCA

The public release of the JCCA website was an important step in enhancing the accessibility of this Committee's work. There is a new opportunity in 2025 to leverage this and improve the communication and reach of the JCCA through the following:

- Increase visitor traffic to the JCCA website and support improved access to relevant JCCA documents and discussions through targeted communication efforts to boost the profile of JCCA and its key products (such as Annual Reports).
- Equip First Nations with the information they need to contribute to, benefit from, and participate as full and effective partners in Canada's climate action.
- Explore ways to involve regional First Nations along with provincial and territorial partners, where possible, in discussions on shared priorities, to better address the circumstances and priorities of First Nations.
- Develop guidance to support accessible discussions on relevant climate policies and actions.

D - Conclusion

Throughout 2024, First Nations advocates and federal representatives worked together to support the advancement of First Nations Climate Leadership in federal policy and programs. The relationships developed through the JCCA helped move this work in a positive direction, despite ongoing systemic barriers. Ongoing support for the JCCA would ensure that the cooperation fostered by this forum continues to germinate, and that First Nations and federal representatives advance transformative climate action consistent with the First Nations Climate Lens.

Looking ahead to 2025, the JCCA reaffirms its commitment to supporting First Nations-led climate solutions, working to prevent the most catastrophic and costly impacts of climate change on First Nations, and moving towards a new model of partnership where First Nations' worldviews and teachings inform climate decision-making. First Nations are the eyes on the ground across Canada, especially in remote and non-urban areas, and have extensive knowledge of the land, waters, and more-than-human relatives in these areas. This awareness and knowledge positions First Nations to be at the forefront of addressing climate change impacts and solutions.

To continue advancing this work, First Nations remain hopeful about the possibility of a meeting between the National Chief and Prime Minister, and the focus this would bring to the complex challenges that the climate crisis presents to First Nations and all Canadians.



Annex 1 – Glossary & Definitions

AFN - Assembly of First Nations

CIRNAC - Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada

COP - Conference of Parties

ECCC - Environment and Climate Change Canada

FNCL - First Nations Climate Leadership

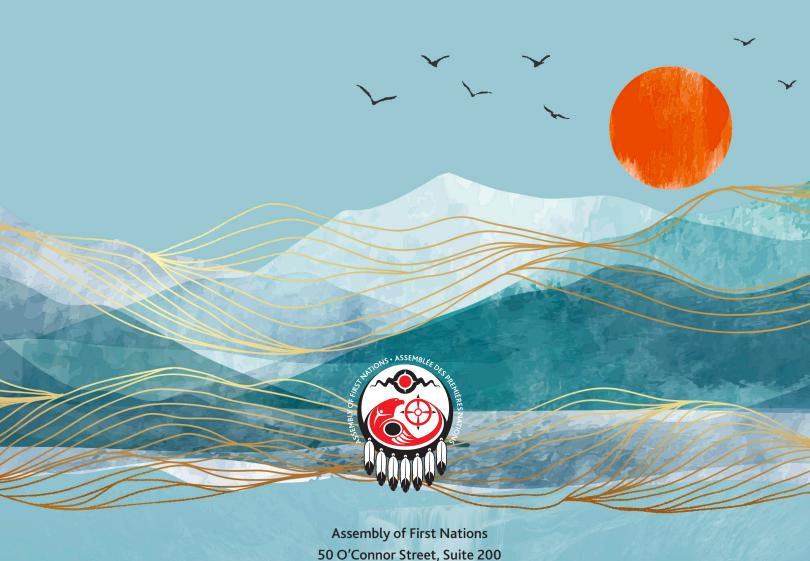
FNCLA - First Nations Climate Leadership Agenda

JCCA - Joint Committee on Climate Action

Parties – Countries that have ratified a UN agreement or convention, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, are called "Parties"

UNDA – United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act

UN Declaration - United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples



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