



2ND AFN NATIONAL CLIMATE GATHERING REPORT (2022):

*Preserving our Environment,
Lands and Water for Future Generations*



2ND AFN NATIONAL CLIMATE GATHERING REPORT (2022):

Preserving our Earth, Land and Water for Future Generations

Assembly of First Nations

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is the national, political organization of First Nations governments and their citizens, including those living on and off reserve. Every Chief in Canada is entitled to be a member of the Assembly, and the National Chief is elected by the Chiefs in Canada, who in turn are elected by their citizens. The AFN has 634 member First Nations within its Assembly. The role and function of the AFN is to serve as a nationally delegated forum for determining and harmonizing effective, collective, and co-operative measures on any subject matter that the First Nations delegate for review, study, response, or action, and to advance the aspirations of First Nations.

The AFN supports First Nations by coordinating, facilitating, and advocating for policy change, while the leaders of this change are the First Nations themselves. Chiefs, and the First Nations they represent, must be an integral part of meeting the challenge of sustainable, transformative policy change.

The AFN has been mandated by eleven climate related resolutions since 2016. Most recently, in Resolution 05/2019: Declaring a First Nations Climate Emergency, the Chiefs-in-Assembly resolve to:

1. Declare a global climate emergency.
2. Recognize that the climate crisis constitutes a state of emergency for our lands, waters, animals and peoples, and that we will accordingly utilize our local, national, and international forums and partnerships to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius.
3. Call on local, national, and international communities, governments, organizations, and movements to safeguard the inherent, Treaty and constitutionally protected rights of First Nations, respect Indigenous knowledge, and uphold Treaties and other constructive arrangements between First Nations and the Crown.
4. Direct the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to call on the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to take urgent and transformative climate action that meets the requirements outlined in the reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and Canada in a Changing Climate to reduce emissions in Canada by 60% below 2010 levels by 2030 and reach net-zero emissions by 2050.
5. Call on the AFN, with guidance from the Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment (ACE), AFN regions, First Nations Elders, Knowledge Keepers, women, youth and leadership, to develop a First Nations-led climate strategy, within six months, to achieve the objectives above and simultaneously address income inequality within First Nations as part of the mobilization for a just transition, and to host a National Gathering to advance local, domestic and international climate advocacy.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) would like to acknowledge the traditional unceded territory of the Wolastoqiyik, Mi'kmaq, and Peskotomuhkati peoples who so graciously allowed us to host this 2nd AFN National Climate Gathering ("the Gathering"), in Fredericton, New Brunswick, on September 26-29, 2022.

This meeting place is traditional home to many First Nations, and we were honoured to have had the opportunity to bring together over 500 First Nations experts, leaders, youth, men, women, gender-diverse peoples, Knowledge Keepers, academics, and professionals from coast to coast to discuss the Gathering theme: Preserving the Land, Water, and Environment for Future Generations. We were especially inspired by the leadership of St. Mary's First Nation in helping to support this event.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to Elder Dr. Maggie Paul for her moving contributions and for leading multiple ceremonies, and to Elder Ed Perley and the firekeepers for their support and dedication in maintaining a sacred fire throughout the course of the Gathering. Special thanks must be given to St. Mary's Chief Allan Polchies Jr. for both his strong leadership and great humour. We would also like to recognize the beautiful welcome by the Muskrat Singers and Dancers, as well as the closing by Sisters of the Drum.

We also want to thank Wina Sioui and John G. Paul for so adeptly facilitating the Gathering. We are extremely grateful to each of the speakers and presenters at this Gathering, each of whom shared knowledge, insights and personal experiences through their contributions and presentations.

We are especially appreciative of all who participated in this Gathering – those who joined us in person and those who joined us virtually – for their attendance, their contributions, and for the goodwill and positive energy that we were able to share as we continue to press for a safer and healthy environment – our Mother Earth. We also wish to express our gratitude to Minister Steven Guilbeault, Environment and Climate Change Canada, for his attendance and meaningful contributions to this event.

And, finally, we wish to acknowledge the guidance and support received from the Assembly of First Nations New Brunswick Office, especially Regional Chief Joanna Bernard, as well as Hunter-Courchene and Encore for their important support services at this event. And we are thankful for the critical financial contributions provided by Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and Parks Canada.

Thank you one and all.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From September 27 to 29, 2022, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) held its 2nd AFN National Climate Gathering ('the Gathering') in Fredericton, New Brunswick, on the traditional unceded territory of the Wolastoqiyik, Mi'kmaq, and Peskotomuhkati peoples. This followed the very successful inaugural AFN National Climate Gathering in March 2020, hosted in Whitehorse, Yukon on the territory of the Ta'an Kwächän and the Kwanlin Dün. Both Gatherings were in response to the 2019 First Nations-in-Assembly Resolution, *Declaration of a First Nations Climate Emergency (Resolution 05/2019)*.

The 2nd AFN National Climate Gathering was graciously opened by Chief Allan Polchies Jr. of St. Mary's First Nation, Chief Hugh Akagi of Peskotomuhkati Nation, and Elder Dr. Maggie Paul of St. Mary's First Nation. AFN Executive members, Regional Chief Joanna Bernard and Regional Chief Kluane Adamek (Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate Change, and Water Stewardship), as well as Minister Steven Guilbeault also provided opening comments. The Gathering was co-facilitated by Wina Sioui and John G. Paul.

Over 500 First Nations experts, leaders, youth, men, women, and gender-diverse peoples, Knowledge Keepers, professionals, as well as government officials from coast to coast to coast gathered in person and virtually to discuss, and provide solutions for, the most urgent issue of our time: climate change. The Gathering offered an opportunity to explore diverse solutions that First Nations are advancing in the face of rapid change at the local, regional, national, and international levels.

This second Gathering offered an opportunity to focus on the dramatic effects of climate change. Days before the Gathering, Hurricane Fiona, a large, powerful, and destructive Category 2 Hurricane raged through the Atlantic and caused many First Nations to lose power for nearly two weeks. Hurricane Fiona was the costliest and most intense tropical or post-tropical cyclone to

ever hit Canada. Fortunately, the Gathering was able to go ahead despite the devastating impacts of the hurricane only a short distance to the east. Considering this storm, the Gathering sought to draw attention to not only the affected First Nations and communities but also to demonstrate how the climate crisis is accelerating and exacerbating existing challenges facing First Nations (e.g., increased flooding, coastal soil erosion, biodiversity loss, etc.).

Due in part to travel challenges posed by Hurricane Fiona, and in an effort to reduce the carbon footprint of the Gathering, sessions were presented in an assortment of ways from plenary panels, keynote addresses and virtual presentations. Attendees had the opportunity to choose from over 38 different concurrent dialogue sessions, organized into 6 blocks, as well as a special networking opportunity and two dinner events, one of which featured Atlantic Lobster caught by First Nation fishers. This Gathering also emphasized the further development of the concept of a "First Nations Climate Lens" – a means to emphasize the inseparability of the climate crisis from the daily lived experiences of First Nations. This concept was explored during the Gathering through panels, stories, and video presentations, framing the discussions and opening space for examples and solutions to come from coast to coast to coast.



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In recognition of attendees and participants at the 2nd AFN National Climate Gathering, a tree will be planted in each participant's name. The AFN Environment, Lands & Water Branch, in partnership with the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources (UINR), will work to plant Indigenous culturally significant trees, shrubs, and medicines in Unama'ki, recognizing the cultural significance of each individual species and their contribution to maintaining and restoring Mother Earth. This work will be guided by the forestry team at UINR and the traditional teachings and knowledge of First Nation Knowledge Keepers.

Since time immemorial, First Nations have spoken about the importance of living in balance with Mother Earth. A deep connection to the Land, Water, and Environment is central to culture, language, and livelihood. This Gathering provided a unique opportunity to visibly demonstrate this interconnectedness across a broad spectrum of issues, giving space to exemplify linkages between sectors that are typically depicted as peripheral or only indirectly linked to climate action.

In recognition of First Nations' sacred responsibilities to care for and steward Mother Earth, attendees were offered digital agendas and other information to reduce waste and, in lieu of conference "swag," a contribution was made to support the planting of culturally significant trees, plants and medicines in the Atlantic Region.





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INTRODUCTION

This report, entitled the 2nd AFN National Climate Gathering Report (2022): *Preserving Our Earth, Land and Water for Future Generations* ('the Report'), reflects on the presentations, discussions, experiences, and knowledge shared at the Gathering. It aims to inform the scope and direction of First Nations climate leadership, the development and anticipated finalization of an AFN National Climate Strategy, and to set the stage for a third National Gathering in 2024.

Current approaches to abate climate change are failing as emissions and inequalities continue to grow. It is time for the interrelationships between the three 'Cs' – colonialism, capitalism, and carbon – to be exposed, and for First Nations to take their rightful place as leaders and drivers of climate solutions. For the last three years, the AFN has been advancing the concept of a First Nations Climate Lens: a concept used to explain the unique climate risks facing First Nations, as well as the leadership that First Nations bring to the climate conversation as a result of their reciprocal relationship with the Land, Water, and Environment.

Practically, the First Nations Climate Lens includes four components that, when combined, bring into focus how First Nations solutions can re-frame the climate conversation towards transformative and systemic change:

- Natural Law
- Context
- Impacts
- Action

These four components are represented as concentric circles and further explained in Figure 1.

Through the First Nation Climate Lens, we see that the current regime of climate adaptation and mitigation solutions is overwhelmingly failing. In fact, The *United Nations Emission Gap* report (2022) projects that we might hit a global annual temperature of 2.8 degrees by 2100 unless we take transformative action to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions urgently by at least 45% by 2030. The current trajectory of global GHG emission reductions, however, is headed in the opposite direction, with an anticipated 10.6% increase by 2030 according to the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) Synthesis Report (2022).¹ It is clear, now more than ever, that a transformational shift is required to avert climate disaster.

The First Nations Climate Lens also informed the organization of the Gathering, including through the articulation of a Call for Session process that emphasized a broad and inclusive understanding of climate change, stemming

¹ For more detail, please refer to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)'s NDC Synthesis Report: <https://unfccc.int/news/climate-plans-remain-insufficient-more-ambitious-action-needed-now>

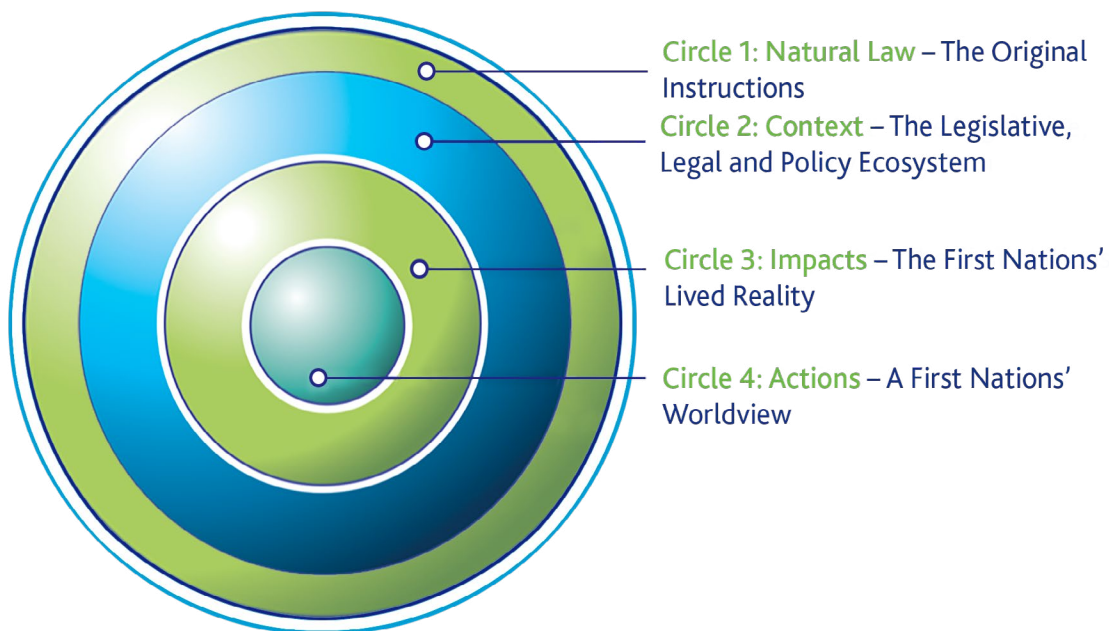


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from the recognition that dominant human values are driving a world of imbalanced relationships with the natural world. To operationalize this perspective, the Call for Sessions was purposely broad and inclusive, inviting a wide array of sessions, including oral presentations, workshops, and technical sessions, organized around key themes connected to the First Nations Climate Lens. Over 50 proposals were received and reviewed by a selection committee made up of First Nations from across the country. The vast majority of sessions were accepted and organized into the Gathering agenda.

Sessions spanned the range of realities and expertise of First Nations experience with climate impacts and actions - including accessibility and disability awareness, emergency response and management, clean energy, food security, health, youth leadership, biodiversity, and conservation - and offered a unique opportunity to consider these issues with both youth and Knowledge holders, to challenge the false dichotomy between economy and the environment.



First Nations Climate Lens.



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Box 1: First Nations Climate Lens

Circle 1: Natural Law – The Original Instructions

First Nation Knowledge Keepers have described climate change as a symptom of a greater problem: a set of human values, based on the separation of humans from the natural world, that guide a series of destructive human behaviours and activities blatantly disrespecting natural law. For them, Natural Law is a set of laws that originate directly from the Creator, based in our diverse languages, stories, and ceremonies, to govern how we must interact with the Land, Water, and more-than-human relatives to ensure balance and reciprocity.

Circle 2: Context – The Legislative, Legal and Policy Ecosystem

For First Nations, climate action is a rights- and responsibilities- based activity that occurs within a legislative, legal, and policy context. This stems from our inherent jurisdiction over our lands and territories, as well as our affirmed right to self-determination. The broader ecosystem for this includes the federal government's passing of legislation to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration), its commitment to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, as well as the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. It also includes Indigenous-specific jurisprudence and the protections afforded to First Nations by the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

Circle 3: Impacts – The First Nations' Lived Reality

In Canada, climate conversations often disregard the historical legacy of colonization, which has included relocating First Nations, forcibly removing children from their families and placing them in Residential Schools, and prohibiting the use of traditional languages and practices, among other atrocities. Climate change exacerbates many of the resulting impacts of colonization, including those relating to mental health and well-being, poverty, poor housing, food and water insecurity, and the erosion of rights, culture, and access to lands. The lived reality of First Nations needs to be understood and incorporated into analyses of the distribution and experience of climate-related impacts. In this regard, addressing the climate crisis cannot be separated from the broader project of First Nations self-determination and reconciliation.

Circle 4: Action – A First Nations' Worldview

First Nations-led solutions are multidimensional, interrelated, interconnected, and grounded in First Nations law, knowledge, language, and governance. The core of a First Nations worldview is an understanding that we are one with the land. This recognition lays the foundation for a set of legal principles and orders that, while unique to each individual First Nation, represent natural, spiritual, and environmental law. It is this sacred responsibility that continues to guide how First Nations interact with, protect, and respect Mother Earth.



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THE GATHERING

The following information provides a descriptive overview of the proceedings at the AFN's 2nd National Gathering. Any errors or omissions remain our responsibility (please let us know). However, the content (and intellectual property) of each presentation at the Gathering – most of which is available online at <http://events.afn.ca/info/NCG2022> – remains vested with its respective presenter.

Box 2: Elder Ed Perley reflecting on the Sacred Fire at Sitansisk (St. Mary's First Nation):



On September 26th, a sacred fire was lit at St. Mary's First Nation and burned continuously for four days until September 29th. This ceremony was held in part for the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and served to remember all the children and families that have been affected by residential schools. Additionally, this fire sent prayers to the community of James Smith Cree Nation as well as all of the communities affected by Hurricane Fiona. For this ceremony, firekeepers included Elder Ed Perley (Tobique First Nation), Norm Bernard (Aroostook Band of Micmacs), Scott Paul (Oromocto First Nation), Andy Solomon (Kingsclear First Nation), and Mike Solomon (Kingsclear First Nation).

Traditionally, people who gathered and visited other communities would be honoured and greeted by the sacred fire and songs. Within First Nations, sacred fires are a ceremony that brings wisdom and seeks guidance from a higher source of energy - our ancestors. The fire brings comfort, strength, and love. It also creates balance with the water. The fire is part of the four basic elements – fire, water, air, and earth. These elements not only support life but can also take life, hence, the need to properly respect them.

Elder Ed Perley would like to thank St. Mary's First Nation for allowing this ceremony to take place in their community. He would also like to thank AFN and Larry Whiteduck for requesting this sacred fire and for understanding the importance of holding ceremony during sacred gatherings and for acknowledging and honouring our ancestors. He would also like to thank Jamie Lavigne and Zack Frawley for their respect, guidance, and support over the course of the week. Finally, Elder Ed would like to extend his thanks to the firekeepers who looked over the fire for four days and for all the leadership and members from the Gathering who visited the fire.



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PRE-GATHERING EVENTS (SEPTEMBER 26, 2022)

In advance of the official Gathering, several concurrent half-day and full-day sessions were held.

Youth Gathering

- In collaboration with the AFN National Youth Council (NYC), a preparatory Youth Gathering was held for all youth delegates attending the Gathering. Efforts were made to create a welcoming and supportive space for youth to reconnect and discuss content being presented at the Gathering, as well as to prepare for a Concurrent Session on Day 2, hosted by the NYC.
- The day began with a prayer and song by Elder Ed Perley, welcoming youth delegates to the territory and wishing them good discussions for the coming days. Having learnt from the first Youth Gathering in Whitehorse, the morning emphasized conversations between the First Nations youth in attendance, beginning with a round of introductions and welcomes from NYC Co-Chair, Rosalie Labillois.
- This was followed by an inspiring keynote presentation by Ricky-Lee Watts (Aamiitlaa), Hupačasath Nuučaanuł, focusing on the importance of being connected to breath, self, and community as climate action. He described the interconnection between First Nations with the Land and Water, calling for the reclamation of our Indigenous laws, languages, and economy to change the world. He closed by recommending that participants build relationships with each other over the course of the Gathering.

“The land is part of who we are: the health of our land is the health of our people. We are interconnected with the Land...wealth is our health.” – Ricky Lee Watts (Aamiitlaa)

- The keynote presentation was followed by a group discussion focused on sharing how each participant experienced climate impacts in their territory, the kind of climate action they are (or could be) taking, and the role of youth in climate-related decision-making processes.
- The participants spent the rest of the afternoon preparing for the Youth Reflections panel, scheduled as a concurrent session during the Gathering. To start the discussion, Rosalie presented a series of Calls-to-Action developed by the National Youth Council at the National First Nations Youth Summit on Environment and Climate Action (2019) and further refined at the first AFN National Climate Gathering (2020). The Calls-to-Action lead to a lively set of break-out sessions.
- The session closed with a song by Rosalie.





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Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

- The AFN Chronic Wasting Disease Working Group (CWD Working Group) held an in-person meeting on September 26, 2022, to continue implementing the mandate, *Resolution 58/2018: First Nations Response to Chronic Wasting Disease*, identified by the First Nations-in-Assembly. It was attended by Chiefs and technicians from across the country in accordance with guidance from the Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment ('ACE') and the Chief's Committee on Health (CCOH).
- Working Group members discussed the ongoing development of the Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Position Paper, outlining First Nations concerns and recommended responses and solutions to dealing with the spread of CWD and the potential future impacts.
- Discussions also focused on advancing a complimentary communications strategy to help raise awareness and mobilize action in combating the spread of the disease.
- An initial work plan for moving these activities forward was discussed and agreed upon.

Marine Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)

- The Marine IPCA Working Group, a sub-working group of the ACE, met for a half-day hybrid meeting, where members had the opportunity to review and discuss the AFN draft report entitled *Marine Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas: Opportunities and Recommendations for Enhancing Canada's Commitments to Reconciliation and Marine Conservation* and decide next steps in order to finalize and distribute the report.
- Attendees closed off the meeting by reviewing the 2022-2024 Marine IPCA workplan, which included planned workshops, engagements, and agreements. A closing prayer was provided by Patricia Saulis, Tobique First Nation.

Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment ('ACE')

- The ACE met in a hybrid style for an evening meeting attended by committee Chiefs, technicians, and youth to set the context for the 2nd AFN National Climate Gathering and to briefly discuss the AFN National Climate Strategy.
- ACE members heard an update on progress related to the AFN National Climate Strategy and paper outline and had an opportunity to ask questions and give feedback in advance of the Listening Session during the concurrent dialogue sessions.
- The meeting ended with an update from AFN Environment and Water Sectors and a closing prayer offered by Elder Lorraine Netro, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

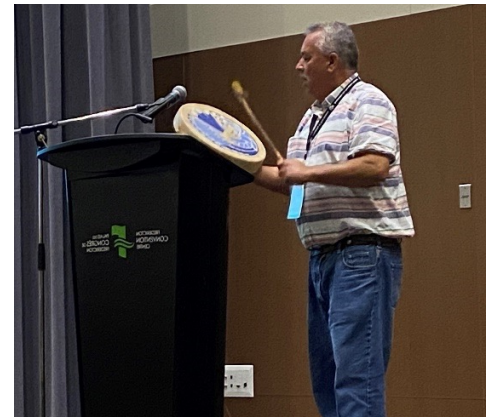


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Evening Reception

An opening reception was hosted at the Fredericton Convention Centre to welcome delegates and to acknowledge the traditional unceded territory of the Wolastoqiyik, Mi'kmaq, and Peskotomuhkati peoples on the evening prior to the official start of the Gathering. Following appropriate local protocols, led by St. Mary's First Nation Chief Allan Polchies Jr. and an opening prayer by Elder Dr. Maggie Paul, the drum group, Muskrat Singers, and Dancers from St. Mary's First Nation shared welcoming songs with the delegates present. The reception was completely full – a testament to the excitement of the Gathering!





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DAY 1: SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS (SEPTEMBER 27, 2022)

Keynotes, Plenary Panels, and Side-Sessions

Opening and Welcome Speeches

Day 1 opened with the drum group, Muskrat Singers, and Dancers from St. Mary's First Nation followed by an opening prayer offered by Elder Dr. Maggie Paul, St. Mary's First Nation.

Following the opening protocols, introductory remarks were given by several dignitaries, including a local welcome from New Brunswick Regional Chief Joanna Bernard, and hosts Chief Allan Polchies Jr. and Chief Hugh Akagi on behalf of the Wolastoqiyik, Mi'kmaq and Peskotomuhkati peoples. Special mention was also made of those affected by Hurricane Fiona, as well as those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Regional Chief Bernard highlighted the leadership of First Nations from coast to coast to coast, as well as those First Nations in New Brunswick.

“Our commitment to protect the land has no boundaries, it is our duty to secure the future for the generations and provide a voice for the Earth and the Water.”

– Chief Polchies Jr.

“The eyes are only a lens – each of you has Indigenous Knowledge and you have to put it to work.”

– Chief Akagi



Setting the Context

Yukon Regional Chief Kluane Adamek, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate Change, and Water; the Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada

In her opening comments, Regional Chief Adamek welcomed delegates and emphasized the importance of language and culture in the protection of the Land and Water. She noted that the changes that we are implementing will not be felt by us, but by the next generations, and emphasized the importance of having work grounded in traditional knowledge. She encouraged participants to spend the next days of the conference connecting and listening to one another, as we are working towards a common goal. In closing, Regional Chief Adamek urged allies to “step behind or beside” First Nations and work to balance their work with our ways of knowing and teaching.



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“We are part of the Land and Water, we are one – that is part of our worldview. Our languages are different, but our values are similar. First Nation peoples are leading the charge, not policymakers who do not understand our ways of knowing and being.” – Regional Chief Adamek.

Minister Guilbeault began by rearticulating his government’s commitment to protect 30% of Lands and Waters by 2030 in full partnership with First Nations. He continued by highlighting First Nations’ deep connection to, and understanding of Land, Water, and Environment. He asserted that First Nations leadership is essential, and that our partnership is essential to ensure that the environment remains healthy and stable. The Minister concluded his remarks by appreciating the leadership role that First Nations take and expressing his eagerness to see more examples of First Nation participation in, and operation of, climate change and mitigation projects.



Opening Keynote Address

Elder Albert Marshall, Elder/Advisor, Unama’ki Institute of Natural Resources (virtual):

Due to the impacts of Hurricane Fiona, Elder Marshall provided his keynote address virtually. He began by expressing his sincere support for holding Gatherings like this out in the East, as it is where everything begins. He described how the majority of those living in Canada have forgotten their kinship and sense of responsibility to care for the Land and Water, leading to the devastation that we see. By contrast, Elder Marshall described how First Nations have not forgotten these responsibilities, urging delegates to be vocal in expressing their strategies to reclaim, mitigate, and restore Mother Earth. He used the teaching of “Two-Eyed Seeing” to share how this work could be action-oriented, encouraging young people to seek opportunities to learn from Knowledge Keepers and turn that into action. To close, Elder Marshall outlined the integral role First Nation languages play in the fight against climate change, enabling First Nations to communicate their knowledge and wisdom to the next seven generations.

***“Become the warriors we need to be – with knowledge, wisdom and language – not with a sword”
– Elder Albert Marshall***

Panel Presentation: Framing the First Nations Climate Lens

Skaydu.ù (Autumn Jules) (Teslin Tlingit Council and Fellow from Yukon First Nations Climate Fellowship); Dorene Bernard (Mi’kmaq Grassroots Grandmother, Water Protector, Water Walker); Justen Peters (AFN National Youth Council); Dr. Deborah McGregor (Associate Professor and Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Environmental Justice, York University); Tonio Sadik (AFN Senior Director, Environment, Lands & Water - Moderator)



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Tonio (moderator) introduced the concept of the First Nations Climate Lens and invited panelists to share examples of how they are incorporating it into practice.

Deborah discussed how current, mainstream science does not reflect First Nations knowledge systems, nor their relationships to the Land and Water. The contrast is found within First Nation knowledge systems that emphasize solutions to the environmental crisis and destruction through reliance on thousands of years of experience. This wholistic climate knowledge must be used by First Nations to decolonize climate policy.

Justen talked about his journey to re-establishing an ethic of taking care of the Land, which was his silver lining during COVID, as he was able to go out on the Land with Knowledge Keepers. He spent the summer learning about their relationships with plants and medicines, learning how humans need to pay back for all the benefits the natural world provides. He closed by recognizing that this taught him climate action begins with our relationship with the Land.

From a similar point of view, Skaydu.û offered insight into the Yukon First Nations Climate Fellowship and how they have framed the current era as one of disconnection, existing as half-people without space for spiritual and emotional health. The fellowship addresses this by emphasizing reconnection as climate action, calling for a return to self, spirit, each other, and community.

Dorene shared a presentation “*Honor those Before Us*”, describing the sacredness of Water and how the life, culture, and strength of First Nations cannot be separated from it. She told those in the audience that it is their responsibility to protect and practice our sacred teachings, which all involve Water, either through preparation or through ceremony. She finished by reminding everyone to leave what is needed for the next seven generations.

Tonio concluded the plenary session by asking the panelists about any key messages that they want participants to carry with them through the Gathering. The panelists spoke about the need to listen and be inspired by one another when it comes to climate action and reconnection. Justen and Skaydu.û encouraged reconnection to both the Land, Water, and to return to community to think about what reconnection means. Dorene further encouraged the practice and participation in water ceremonies, sharing one taught by Grandmother Josephine Mandamin-baa.

Highlights of Concurrent Sessions (#1 - #16):

Following the morning plenary activities, two blocks of Concurrent Sessions (2 hours each) were held on the afternoon of Day 1. This allowed for longer sessions and provided an opportunity to explore the scope and diversity of action that First Nations are leading to fight the climate crisis.

Given the limited scope of this report, we have tried our best to reflect the tremendous breadth and depth of the important sessions that occurred, however, we encourage readers to refer to the Online Program found at events.afn.ca where each presentation and accompanying materials are available for further review and consideration. The following sections offer key themes and highlights from the block of sessions:



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- **Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs):** Multiple sessions focused on advancing First Nations-led conservation through the use of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs). In the session “*Centering the Land Film Screenings & Discussion: Land Back, Access, and Use in the Algonquin Nation and Wabanakik*”, speakers explored the Land Back movement in action through the Algonquin Aki Sibi IPCA project, as well as experiences in Wakanaki territory to learn about challenges in accessing the Land and Water. The Algonquin Aki Sibi project presentation discussed its creation process, the importance of the location, and a vision for an Algonquin Aki Sibi Institute. Another session spoke about opportunities and pathways for IPCA planning and declaration and the crucial role that First Nations play in achieving Canada’s 2030 conservation objectives. Speakers shared updates about current IPCAs, such as Thaidene Nene and Kluskap’s Cave (Kluskapewiktut). Combined, the speakers reiterated that the act of conservation is itself a climate action.
- **Youth Voices and Advocacy:** A common theme through the Gathering was an emphasis on youth voices and advocacy. In this set of concurrent sessions, we heard from the File Hills Qu’Appelle Tribal Council, who presented their Youth Climate Advisory Council. The Advisory Council is focused on building capacity within their Member Nations’ youth (in Saskatchewan) and mobilizing climate action initiatives in cooperation with the AFN’s National Climate Strategy within their member Nations. This was followed by a panel discussion by First Nation youth discussing how Indigenous and traditional perspectives can strengthen multigenerational relationships and resilience to address the climate crisis. Another session focused on highlighting two examples of climate planning and development with First Nations youth: i) the Treaty #3 Youth Climate Strategy Development Team’s project where three communities in Treaty #3 hired a community-based youth mentor to teach youth about climate change and host workshops, and ii) the Land First Youth Initiative of Sheshegwaning First Nation, which works to get vulnerable youth involved in climate action and highlighted potential work that is planned for the future. Combined, sessions demonstrated the importance of creating space for First Nations youth in the climate conversation.
- **First Nations Climate Strategies:** In response to climate inaction, First Nations are taking steps to create their own climate strategies. First Nations in British Columbia have been leading these efforts, sharing with participants the BC First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan. The presentation discussed the Action Plan’s vision, principles and priority areas identified for climate action in BC in the short and long term, as well as the challenges and opportunities during its development. A second session focused on the AFN National Climate Strategy, providing an update on how the Climate Strategy has been developed since 2019 and providing an opportunity for participants to provide input on short, medium, and long-term First Nations-led actions. The session, *Fisheries and Climate Change: Lessons from First Nations*, picked up on this framing, showing how climate change impacts fish, fisheries, and First Nations, and highlighting the solutions that our communities have deployed to address these impacts.



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- **Indigenous Knowledge and Story Telling:** Several sessions highlighted the importance of sharing Indigenous knowledge systems, including language, culture, and spirituality, with future generations. A two-part session focused on this clearly: the first session showcased First Nations-led research on decolonizing climate policy by emphasizing community-led work to build capacity for First Nation climate leaders. The second part of the session focused on highlighting the content and art of a graphic story-book, *Stories from the Thirteen Moons*, which follows several characters over four seasons: zeegwan, neebin, daagwagin, and biboon. These 13 unique stories correspond with the 13 moons that are part of the Anishinaabe calendar; each moon integrates personal and cultural knowledge from the characters, demonstrating how climate change impacts people locally and in intergenerational interactions. Another session, “*Ga Gitigemi Gamik/ We Will Plant Lodge Project*,” began with a story about one seed, handed down from generations to Haudenosaunee Seed Keepers. Through this story, the team demonstrated the acceleration of climate action, land back, and food sovereignty with the use of one seed and Indigenous Knowledge systems.
- **Energy and Impact Assessment:** Several sessions focused on the connection between energy, impact assessment, and First Nations. In the session, *The Future of Energy in Canada*, nuclear energy representatives discussed how their industry is developing meaningful relationships with First Nations, the benefits of co-designing programs with First Nations, and how small modular reactors (SMRs) in Canada fit into reconciliation with First Nations. Audience members also had the opportunity to learn about the lifecycle of nuclear energy, sustainability, and how it impacts future generations. Another session enabled participants a look into the Haí zaqv Community Energy Plan and their community’s 10-year-path to carbon neutrality, aiming to eliminate 24,000 tonnes of GHG emissions. The session left a lasting impression about why the community works actively towards híkila qñts nála’áxv (protecting our world). Finally, a session on federal impact assessment explored the opportunities for First Nations to take the lead in identifying how climate change should be considered in project level or regional impacts assessments – assessments that will be key in supporting the clean energy transition.
- **Accessibility:** Two-concurrent series focused on the importance of considering the climate through an intersectional, health-based lens. The first session, led by Chief Byron Louis, Jamie Tonasket, Savannah Louis (virtual), and Marsha Ireland, stressed the importance of fully including First Nations persons with disabilities in the development of climate activity planning, capacity building and climate solutions – asking participants: “What would a fully accessible First Nations climate activity plan look like?” A follow-up discussion was held in the morning of the second day.

The summaries above provide a glimpse into the quality of presentations and sessions that were held on Day 1 of this Gathering. More can be found at events.afn.ca, and in the agenda at the end of this report.



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Evening Event: UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Implementation in the era of Climate Change

On the evening of September 27, members of the AFN Rights Sector organized a dinner and virtual discussion on the connection between climate change and the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The discussion highlighted the experience of Dr. Wilton Littlechild and Dr. Albert Marshall, First Nation Knowledge Keepers who have been working on the UN Declaration, Two-Eyed Seeing, and climate change for decades. Caleb Behn, Director of the Rights Sector, facilitated an interactive discussion between the two knowledge holders, including questions from the near 100 people in attendance. Key highlights of the discussion include:

- Dr. Littlechild directed participants to reflect on the severity of natural disasters around the world, calling for immediate restitution by uplifting the rights of the environment, proposing the creation of a cultural-spiritual structure, and affirming the role of Treaties, Agreements, and other constructive arrangements. He pointed to specific principles of the UN Declaration, including Articles 1, 19, 22, 25, 27, 28, and 37 among others, and highlighted the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals (especially Goal 13) and the 94 calls-to-action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRC).
- Dr. Marshall shared background on the Indigenous methodology of Two-Eyed Seeing (Etuaptmumk), urging its utility in working hand-in-hand with Western science as well as its action-oriented nature which allows the identification of a problem and proposed solutions. He agreed with Dr. Littlechild's summary of the UN Declaration principles, and recommended the addition of redress from the forced relocation and or forced disconnect of First Nations to their Land and Waters (Article 10 and 11.2)
- Both participants spoke about the importance of upholding our responsibilities, laws, and relationships with the Land, Waters, and all of Creation. Through reciprocal and spiritual relationships with the Land and Waters, First Nations can assert their rights and responsibilities to develop First Nations-led climate solutions. Language – allowing First Nations to define these solutions for themselves – was seen as a key element in guiding the design and implementation of this work.





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DAY 2: SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS (SEPTEMBER 28, 2022)

Panel Presentation: Putting the First Nations Climate Lens into Practice

Dr. Priscilla Settee (Vice Dean Indigenous Arts & Science, University of Saskatchewan) Chief Sasha Labillois (Eel River Bar First Nation); Hillary McGregor (Whitefish River First Nation); Patrick Michell, (former Chief, Kanaka Bar Band); Justice Morningstar (Indigenous Clean Energy - Moderator).

This plenary session built on the momentum from Day 1 to explore practical examples of First Nations climate leadership. Drawing lessons from the First Nations Climate Lens, Justice (moderator) invited panelists to share more about their experiences and actions on the ground.

Patrick opened with a video of the Kanaka Bar Youth Project, which highlighted the ways in which youth are being empowered (and employed) to develop Kanaka Bar's food, energy, and water security projects. He followed this with more detail on their plan for food security, which hinges on water security and how, in the event of a climate-related emergency, the community is ready to shelter in place and then begin to help its neighbours. He stressed to the audience the need to make investments today in their children and grandchildren as they will be the leaders in the fight against climate change in the future.

“First Nations are climate change leaders, let us prove that to Canada. The secret to climate change proactivity is you!” – Patrick Michell

Dr. Settee began by talking about her work at the University of Saskatchewan, which focuses on the way First Nations uphold food security in collaboration with trapping families. She raised concerns about the current capitalist economic model and its impact on northern economies and rates of employment. In response, she described how her ongoing efforts with traditional knowledge holders inform how she works with the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) and land-based peoples worldwide to prevent the loss of millions of species. One example of this was Seed Save Canada, a program that preserves traditional seeds and distributes money and seeds to women and Indigenous farmers. She closed by calling attention to the undermining of seed sovereignty in Canada, and an invitation for the next generation to lead into a better future.

Hillary described to listeners the “beaver analogy”; an analogy of how a beaver experiences a climate crisis of running water and quickly addresses it by creating a dam, which in turn creates a pond or lake that supports more life and increases biodiversity. He used this analogy to bring to life the concept of multigenerational climate resilience and how we need to carry knowledge forward and apply some of the concepts from our Elders and Knowledge Keepers. He closed by comparing today's youth to the beaver in wanting to be hands-on with implementing change and encouraging the passing down of stories and knowledge to youth so that they can implement solution in present circumstances.

“A friend said that sometimes when you are out of the room and back in the community you feel like [a] small drop in a big pond but in a room like this, you find out that there are a lot of drops that make up a big pond.” – Hilary McGregor



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Chief Labillois started off by talking about the removal of the Eel River Dam in her community. After its removal, members of Eel River Bar were involved in restoring the river and its four branches. She went on to speak about the process of monitoring fish and restoring habitats with a mindset of everything being interconnected. When asked about recommendations for water stewardship, Chief Labillois spoke about the education taking place in schools now through the Fish Friends program and the important role that youth play as environmental and water stewards, as well as efforts being made to restock and maintain fish populations in a way that honours the connectedness of all life and health of the waters.

Accept the reality of a situation and adopt a plan. It is too easy to put things on the back burner if your house is not on fire right now.” – Chief Sacha Labillois

Justice closed the session by asking panelists a two-part question: what is needed to shape the vision of the First Nations Climate Lens; and how to amplify youth voices. Patrick and Chief Labillois both agreed that we need to have optimism, that we can be the change in tomorrow, and to develop a plan in partnership with youth. Hillary echoed the point of optimism, highlighting the role of First Nations youth in climate solutions. Dr. Settee closed off the question by speaking about the need to educate people about the critical state of the environment and provide solutions, saying that youth can play an important part in this.





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Special Networking Event

Janene Yazzie (Southwest Regional Director, NDN Collective); Meaghan Calcari Campbell (Program Officer, Marine Conservation Initiative, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation); Devika Shah (Executive Director, Environment Funders Canada); Andre Vallilee (Environment Program Director, Metcalf Foundation); Graeme Reed (AFN Senior Policy Advisor, Environment, Lands & Water - Moderator)

A special networking event was moderated by Graeme with the purpose of building and facilitating space for the creation of relationships between First Nations and philanthropic organizations. A panel discussion was held in plenary and was followed by a facilitated networking session in an adjacent room.

In the plenary session, panelists opened with a description of their organization and the work they are doing. This was followed by a question on the typical funding process and their thoughts on how effective relationships between First Nations and philanthropic organizations can be facilitated. Panelists spoke about how the normal process would be solicitation based on relationship, but each stressed that there is a cultural divide when it comes to funding and applications. There was a clear commitment to demystifying the process, but also a recognition that it takes time. Janene described NDN Collective's grassroots model as a best practice, where communities define their own priorities and approach and have access to multiple pots of funding available for different needs. Andre shared some steps that the Metcalf Foundation is taking to make their funding process more accessible and reduce the administrative burden on First Nations. For effective relationships to develop, the participants recognized funding applications must have specific and measurable outcomes rather than just be trust-based.

“We work to help our people redefine relationships with resources and come from a place of power with solutions that fit our communities. Solutions are needed across the globe and will be Indigenous-led. We are changing the game and shifting power back in the hands of our people.” – Janene Yazzie

A question from the audience asked panelists what they are doing to remove barriers faced by youth, specifically, when accessing funding. From the audience, Dr. Settee suggested that a good first step is to have more Indigenous and people of colour on decision boards, as well as youth and women. Others commented on the importance of youth-led initiatives, with a final reflection from an Elder: the end goal is not to make two worlds mesh better but to hand over the funding decisions to the people who are using it. Graeme ended the networking event by thanking the panelists and inviting attendees to use the lunch hour to strike up conversations or make connections in the adjacent room.

Over the course of the lunch break, gathering participants were interested in discussing specific program ideas and getting feedback on potential funding opportunities. Key discussions included:

- Funding for youth-led programs: One participant described a youth training project they are working on with the Tsuut'ina Nation and asked for advice on funding for the program.



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- Approaches to creating effective relationships with philanthropic organizations: Many participants took advantage of the opportunity to ask questions regarding relationships with philanthropic organizations, including what works and what doesn't. Meaghan addressed challenges that come with navigating the political landscape and the lack of capacity, which leads to a bottleneck effect in funding. She pointed out that the definition of philanthropy should shift focusing on how to give back to Indigenous Peoples, rather than giving something. This small change will be key to avoiding framing philanthropy as a "handout".
- Support for front-line activists: One participant took the opportunity to express her concern for frontline activists as they never receive funding for their work and receive a lot of lateral violence that leads to burnout. She further expressed that women stand on the frontlines for their families, communities, and nations. Janene from the NDN Collective shared that as an Indigenous-led funder, she often experiences lateral violence and is called a "sellout." Janene went on to explain how NDN Collective does work in ceremony and that 70% of the organization is made up of women who have complete autonomy over the grant-making process.

Highlights of Concurrent Sessions (#17- #32):

Following the plenary activities, two blocks of Concurrent Sessions were held, continuing the momentum of sharing the scope and diversity of First Nations climate action. Once again, due to space considerations, we encourage each reader to refer to the Online Program found at events.afn.ca where each presentation and accompanying materials are available for further consideration. Key highlights from each session are provided below:

- **Accessibility and First Nations Health and Wellbeing:** The connection between human and environmental health is clear. For First Nations, climate change is exacerbating food insecurity and exposure to contaminants, leading to poor health outcomes among First Nations. The session, "*The Intersectional impacts of climate change on First Nation Peoples health and well-being*" clearly explored how First Nations are disproportionately and increasingly impacted by climate change and how this has been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. The session included a framing presentation by the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Peoples followed by a moderated discussion with First Nation experts. A split session offered insight into several participatory research projects to address some of these impacts by studying the relationships between the environment and the health of First Nations through the Food, Environment, Health and Nutrition of First Nations Children and Youth (FEHNCY) study. The second part of the session offered insight into how climate change is contributing to a decrease in the availability of local wild game due to diseases such as Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). Finally, the follow-up session on accessibility and disability inclusion directed participants to help design future



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training sessions for the inclusion of First Nation persons with disabilities and persons of all abilities within climate strategies. With this information, the session proposed the development of a draft National First Nations Climate Action Tool Kit, a toolkit focused on ensuring climate decision-making is inclusive and culturally safe, that will inform the AFN National Climate Strategy.

- **Climate Adaptation and Resilience:** A few sessions highlighted the role of First Nations-led climate adaptation and resilience. Environment and Climate Change partnered with First Nations across the country to share their on-the-ground experiences of climate adaptation and engage in an interactive discussion to focus on how to further support First Nations-led adaptation projects, including in relation to the National Adaptation Strategy. Another session guided participants through a five-step adaptation framework, led by the Partnership for Indigenous Climate Change Adaptation (PICCA) team, to support First Nations in becoming climate leaders in developing local climate change adaptation projects. Combined, sessions focused on common challenges and opportunities that First Nations communities and organizations encounter in acting on climate change adaptation, including through federal support such as the Indigenous Climate Leadership Agenda.
- **Youth Leadership:** In the session, *Sharing Yukon's Reconnection Vision and Action Plan*, participants were introduced to the Yukon First Nations Fellowship, who have developed their draft 'Reconnection Vision and Action Plan'. The session laid out their philosophy that Reconnection is Climate Action and the tools of Reconnection with spirit, with self, with each other, and Earth are held in First Nations culture. The spirit of this presentation was further strengthened by an afternoon session focused on sharing reflections from the Youth Gathering, hosted by the National Youth Council. Panelists took turns sharing their answers to questions such as "what does climate action mean to you" and "what can leaders do to support First Nations youth as emerging leaders in their advocacy?" The panelists shared stories from their Elders and Knowledge Keepers back home, what meaningful engagement and climate conservation look like and shared their own words of wisdom for future generations.
- **First Nations Rights, Title and Jurisdiction:** Several sessions focused on First Nations inherent right and sacred responsibility to protect and manage their lands and waters for their people today and future generations. One session introduced obstacles facing First Nations, as well as potential solutions. Case studies, such as Kenney Dam and Nechako Reservoir, were used to highlight the growing recognition of First Nations' jurisdictions over their lands and waters and the questionable legitimacy of the sovereignty of the Canadian state. Another session, *Apaja'tunej Maqamikew: How to Achieve #Landback When Your Band, Elders, or Community are Unsupportive*, hosted by queer/trans/2-Spirit facilitators, explored the challenge of truth-telling about Land Back in the face of ignorance, bigotry, and refusal to listen, with the purpose of giving the youth a tool to (re)educate their communities about Land Back in a simple and accessible way.
- **Energy and Climate Information:** The theme of First Nations involvement in clean energy continued, as a joint session presented by Indigenous Clean Energy and the Pembina Institute discussed the current landscape of First Nation-owned clean energy projects. Participants had the opportunity to hear positive



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examples of community building, skills training and capacity building, and shared their own stories about working towards clean energy in their community. Another session, hosted by the First Nations Power Authority, provided a hands-on workshop to support First Nations in accessing data and institutional Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) knowledge. It provided participants with the ability to access emissions and industrial datasets to support rights-holders to hold industrial operators accountable and participate in the sustainability economy.

- **Nature-Based Solutions:** Sessions in this thematic area focused on highlighting the growing role of nature-based solutions (NbS). One session, *Natural Climate Solutions*, highlighted the benefits of natural climate solutions and the benefits for protection against wildfires, droughts and flooding and providing recreational spaces and the ability to create new jobs, stimulate local economies and contribute to economic recovery. The messages shared were reinforced by a session organized by the Conservation Through Reconciliation Partnership (CRP), which brought together Indigenous leaders to discuss the potential of natural climate solutions to provide sustainable financing for Indigenous-led conservation. Finally, a session shared the work being done with biodiverse tree planting regarding carbon soil monitoring and utilizing potential carbon offsets to generate revenue to support ongoing efforts of recovery and reforestation after wildfires.

Evening Event: Lobster Feast

Chief Allan Polchies Jr., St. Mary's First Nation (Emcee); Prayer by Elder Dr. Maggie Paul

A wonderful lobster dinner, supported by local St. Mary's First Nation fishers, was hosted in the main plenary room of the Fredericton Convention Centre for over 400 Gathering attendees. Participants were offered a selection of salads and sides to accompany their freshly caught Atlantic lobster served table side. While attendees enjoyed their dinner, videos from the inaugural 2020 AFN National Climate Gathering in Whitehorse, Yukon, the SevenGen 2022 Summit, among others, were played.





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DAY 3: SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS (SEPTEMBER 29, 2022)

Highlights of Concurrent Sessions (#33- #38)

The last day of the Gathering began with a final set of six Concurrent Sessions, followed by plenary activities. Due to space considerations, we encourage each reader to refer to the Online Program found at events.afn.ca where each presentation and accompanying materials are available for further consideration. Key highlights from each session are provided below:

- **First Nations Climate Leadership:** The role of First Nations climate leadership was explored in several sessions. A session, organization in partnership with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), introduced four innovative climate change initiatives by First Nations, Indigenous Clean Energy, ʔehdzo Got'ı̨n̨ Gots'ė Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board), Pays Plat First Nation and Madawaska Maliseet First Nation, working to advance projects in the areas of clean energy, health and food security and resilient infrastructure. The discussion highlighted key successes and challenges faced by the four communities and closed with a discussion with the audience to reflect on lessons learned and best practices. A second session showcased four case studies of climate leadership, shared as part of the Indigenous Perspectives series at the Canadian Climate Institute. Each panelist described their case study and the way in which First Nation researchers and Knowledge Keepers are developing their own culturally relevant climate research and policy in hopes of strengthening climate policy going forward.
- **Marine and Terrestrial Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs):** Two more sessions focused on Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs), continuing the discussion from Day 1. In the session, *Lessons from Kanaka Bar's Community Resilience Plan, IPCAs, and Resilient Housing*, Patrick Mitchell shared lessons from Kanaka Bar's experience implementing community resiliency and announcing the creation of an IPCA in the area. Another session focused on marine-specific IPCAs and the critical role they play in climate mitigation. The session provided an update on a report developed in collaboration with the Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment (ACE), which provides short- and long-term recommendations to Canada to help overcome hurdles that are preventing the wide establishment of marine IPCAs. The presentation concluded by calling on Canada to implement these recommendations as a commitment to Indigenous-led conservation.
- **Determination:** One session entitled "*Mi'kmaq Self-Determination in a Changing Climate*" focused on work being conducted by the Agriculture and Climate Branch under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The session presented work being done by the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM), which focused on climate monitoring, adaptation, agriculture and apiculture initiatives taking place over eight Mi'kmaq communities across Nova Scotia. Another session explored this concept within the context of emergency management, exploring how First Nations can rethink and revise policies for emergency management using traditional methodologies. This session brought forward the increased unpredictability and risk presented by environmental hazards and the need for community-level improvisation and increased community-level capacity.



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CLOSING KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Elder Lorraine Netro, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

Elder Netro delivered a rousing and powerful keynote address. She began her story by grounding her experience in her upbringing out on the land in Old Crow, Yukon. Using this story, she discussed how Gwitchin spiritual connection to the land, water, and animals nurtured their existence and connected this to the ways her community has adapted to the extreme impacts of climate change, such as the shift of the migratory pattern of caribou. The Vuntut Gwitchin were the first First Nation government to declare a state of climate emergency, using this momentum to introduce new projects to reduce their dependency on diesel. The Sree Vyaa Solar Project has reduced diesel usage by over one hundred and ninety thousand litres per year, taking the equivalent of 140 cars off the road. She used this example, as well as their work on biomass and culture camps, to invite participants into the conversation by demonstrating that if a small government can take these steps, any government (and all the participants) can do it as well! Elder Netro closed by lifting up all the young leaders in the room and encouraging the rest of us to trust the youth to develop solutions for future generations.





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Panel Presentation: Learning from International Examples

Crystal Martin-Lapenskie (Inuk, Consultant, International Circumpolar Council); Eriel Deranger (Executive Director, Indigenous Climate Action); Quinn Buchwald (Policy Lead, National Congress of American Indians); Dr. Michael Charles (Cornell Provost's New Faculty Fellow and Visiting Assistant Professor); Ricky-Lee Watts (Hupačasath Nuučaanūt - Moderator)

Ricky-Lee opened the panel by asking panelists to introduce themselves and share the connections between local, regional, and international issues and more about their current participation.

Eriel opened the discussion by sharing how Indigenous Climate Action (ICA) works to shed light on the influence of colonialism and industrial development in climate policy. She shared how the development of the UN Declaration in 2007 included questioning why Indigenous rights were different from human rights, but by 2015, these rights were included in the Paris (Climate) Agreement. First Nations have been in the halls of the UN and advancing rights every single day, highlighting the importance of language and culture for the survival of our lands, waters, and territories.

“We are still fighting in the hallways; we have no seat at the table, but we go and we fight”
– Eriel Deranger

Quinn noted that Indigenous Peoples engage in international work every day: we engage with each other, nation-to-nation, and with governments. He echoed other comments that the UN has never been an Indigenous space, but it has real-world consequences for Indigenous Peoples. A unified voice is important when it comes to international events such as a Conference of the Parties (COP) or the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.



Michael explained that his work has always included youth delegations – they bring a different energy and value as they do not yet have negative experiences with the processes and therefore do not get stuck in the “rut” that others sometimes fall into. Through the incorporation of song, prayer, and the use of medicines, youth are creating a tangible shift and visibility across all spaces and offering new ways to adapt to emerging climate realities.

To finish the panel, Crystal offered an Inuit perspective. She spoke about the different structure in governance and noted that land claim organizations are non-governmental and self-governing. She continued to speak about the Inuit approach being grounded in grass roots, community-driven and with community consultations. Lastly, she closed off by reminding the audience that from an Indigenous view, all our regions are interconnected.

Ricky-Lee closed the session by thanking all the panelists for their insightful contributions to the discussion and emphasized the great significance of having youth participation and voices in all conversations and projects as they are the leaders of tomorrow.



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Closing Plenary

The Gathering ended with closing remarks from Regional Chief Bernard, Tonio Sadik, and Chief Polchies Jr., sharing with participants the significance of the Gathering and appreciating all the contributions that representatives brought. It then transitioned into a song from Sisters of the Drum before a prayer by Elder Dr. Maggie Paul.

Elder Dr. Maggie Paul changed up the approach to closing the Gathering. She requested that all participants get up from their seat and join hands with each other to make a giant circle. She then described how this song, the Traveling Song, was meant to help representative return to their home fires in a good way. As the song started, she invited the circle to join while inviting everyone to rotate in an impromptu round dance. This highlighted the importance of unity in the development of climate solutions, showing practically how we need each other to work together in order to develop solutions to preserve our Land, Water, and Environment for future generations. It also highlighted the importance of closing in ceremony, a theme explored below.





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Offsite Activity: Kehkimin Wolastoqey Language Immersion School, St. Mary's First Nation

Following the close of the final session, attendees had the opportunity to sign up for a site visit and tour of the Kehkimin Wolastoqey Language Immersion School. Opening in September 2022, the school and staff shared the goal of passing on the Wolastoqey language and culture to the younger generations. Currently, there are no Wolastoqey immersion schools, so the language is at risk of extinction. Almost all fluent Wolastoqey speakers are 65 years and older, so there is only a short window of time to involve fluent speakers in the revitalization of our language. Attendees were able to visit the Immersion School and hear about these experiences firsthand.





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CONCLUSION: LESSONS LEARNED

The 2nd AFN National Climate Gathering (“the Gathering”) was designed to continue the development of the First Nations Climate Lens, creating space for First Nations rights, governance, and knowledge systems in the climate discussion. The range of keynotes, plenary panels, and concurrent sessions exemplified the First Nations Climate Lens, showing how First Nations are active, climate leaders. Sessions overwhelmingly discussed the unique and sacred connection First Nations have with the Land, Water, and Environment, demonstrating how our teachings and traditions have enabled us to live holistically with all of Creation since time immemorial, and how these teachings are central to our collective survival amidst the climate crisis.

These sessions stand in stark contrast to the ways in which Canada, the provinces and territories, and businesses are addressing the climate crisis. Instead of an overreliance on technology and markets, the presenters emphasized how climate solutions must be rooted in an understanding of natural law and a recognition that we must restore balance to our relationships with the Land, Water, and more-than-humans. Sessions that ranged from accessibility, health and well-being, traditional storytelling, agriculture, emergency management, fisheries, marine and terrestrial conservation, and environmental health (among many others), showed the diversity of First Nation solutions to the climate crisis. This diversity aligns well with the First Nation Climate Lens as it emphasizes the inseparability of this crisis from the daily lives of First Nations. In recognizing this, the following themes stand out as important lessons learned from this Gathering:

- **Climate Action is Grounded in Ceremony:** Since time immemorial, First Nations have used ceremony to pass our knowledge systems down from generation to generation. The act of ceremony is an act of acknowledgement of our sacred obligations to the Land and Water, and a recommitment to acting in a good way in all that we do. The Gathering operationalized this act by centering ceremony in all elements of the discussion, including the opening and closing, as well as the lighting of a sacred fire. The sacred fire was lit and burned continuously for four days to honour the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, the lives lost on James Smith Cree Nation, and all those affected by Hurricane Fiona. Speakers regularly share the importance of ceremony in a wide number of sessions, sharing how the act of ceremony (and the participation in it) is, in itself, climate action. The use of stories, offerings to the Land and Water, songs and dance, as well as the preservation of language and teachings were all examples of how First Nations are grounding their work within ceremony. The introduction of this component grounds our conversations in the ‘original instructions’ provided to First Nations by the Creator and is key to addressing the imbalanced relationship that humans have the Land and Water.
- **Land, Water, and Environment are inseparable from humans:** First Nations have always had a cultural, spiritual, physical, and emotional connection to Mother Earth – the land, water, fire, and air that make up our planet. Throughout the Gathering – in plenary panels, concurrent sessions, and keynotes – First Nations participants clearly articulated this connection: First Nations are the Land and Water, and the Land and Water are us. This unique and reciprocal relationship was discussed in a variety of forums,



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showing how these knowledge systems have been passed down through generations in the form of natural law, language preservation, marine and terrestrial knowledge and the intersection of climate change and community well-being. The fight against climate change must be one that is centred on this mutual, inseparable, and reciprocal relationship with all elements.

- **Centering Youth Voices:** The importance of centering youth in the protection and preservation of Mother Earth was a key priority arising from the first National Climate Gathering in Whitehorse. We built on this priority, framing the entire Gathering on the concept of *Preserving the Land, Water, and Environment for Future Generations*. This emphasis on future generations permeated all elements of the Gathering, including the Youth Gathering and concurrent sessions, where stories, projects, and solutions were shared by First Nation youth. They discussed the changes that could be seen from coast to coast to coast, and shared examples of how the youth are becoming leaders of the future by learning and sharing their languages, hunting and gathering techniques, integrating their knowledge systems with western science to foster new climate solutions and advocating for our deep connection to Mother Earth.
- **Gathering as a Climate Action:** The lessons of the first and second AFN National Climate Gathering are clear: First Nations require their own space to describe the problems and solutions related to climate change. The creation of our ‘own space’ is consistent with how First Nations have come together for generations, holding specific locations as places of Gathering where families, clans, or Nations can come together to share knowledge, stories, and traditional foods, or to conduct political and legal business, often for the protection and stewardship of the Land, Water, and more-than-humans. This act of gathering was an important mechanism to share tactics and strategies, working collaboratively for the betterment of all. The Gatherings, therefore, have been acts of climate action, building a network of motivated First Nations to lead the charge against the climate crisis.

The 2nd AFN National Climate Gathering was another important step in advancing First Nations Climate Leadership, providing valuable insight for the development of the AFN National Climate Strategy. At the same time, it was also a wonderful opportunity to gather, laugh, and hold space with one another after a challenging couple of years. Years that have included the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the growing number of unmarked graves found at former Indian Residential Schools (or institutions of assimilation and genocide), and the growing number of extreme weather events, such as Hurricane Fiona.

Amid all these intersecting crises, the Gathering provided a space for First Nations to take their rightful place as climate leaders, sharing climate solutions on their terms and in their languages. We are incredibly privileged to have shared these four days with all the Gathering participants, learning from all your inspirational work in your Lands, Waters, and Territories. As we turn our attention to the next National Climate Gathering, we will further refine the First Nations Climate Lens and the AFN National Climate Strategy in partnership with the Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment (‘ACE’), as well as First Nations experts, leaders, youth, men, women, gender-diverse folks, Knowledge Keepers, academics, and professionals from coast to coast to coast.

We are sincerely thankful for all that was shared with us.



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ANNEX 1: CLIMATE GATHERING AGENDA

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2022

TIME	ACTIVITY
5:00 p.m.	Registration <i>Fredericton Convention Centre Foyer</i>
7:00 p.m.	Welcome Reception <i>Pointe Sainte-Anne A Ballroom</i>

DAY 1 – TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2022

TIME	ACTIVITY
7:30 a.m.	Registration <i>Fredericton Convention Centre Foyer</i>
7:30 a.m.	Hot Breakfast <i>Pointe Sainte-Anne Ballroom Atrium</i>
9:00 a.m.	Opening Ceremonies, Protocols and Welcoming Remarks <i>Pointe Sainte-Anne BCD Ballroom</i>
9:30 a.m.	Address from AFN National Chief RoseAnne Archibald (TBC)
9:40 a.m.	Opening Remarks
10:30 a.m.	Keynote Address by Knowledge Keeper Albert Marshall
11:00 a.m.	Panel Presentation: Framing the First Nations Climate Lens
12:00 p.m.	Lunch <i>Point Sainte-Anne Ballroom Atrium</i>
1:00 p.m.	Introduction to Concurrent Sessions <i>Pointe Sainte-Anne BCD Ballroom</i>



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DAY 1 – TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2022

TIME	ACTIVITY
3:15 p.m.	Wellness Break <i>Pointe Sainte-Anne Ballroom Atrium/Gallery Passage (Lower Level)</i>
3:30 p.m.	<p>Concurrent Sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Action Solutions on Accessibility and Disability Inclusion (Part 1 – Social Determinants and the Climate Crisis) <i>Simultaneous Interpretation and ASL/LSQ Available</i> • A Journey to H'íkíłaxsi Q̄ñts N'ála'áx'v (Protect Our World) <i>Simultaneous Interpretation Available</i> • Climate Planning with First Nations Youth: Lessons from Treaty 3's Youth Climate Strategy Development and the Land First Youth Initiative • Centering the Land: Fitzpatrick Island Land Back to the Algonquin Nation & Land, Medicine and Healing • AFN National Climate Strategy • Traditional First Nations Agriculture and Ga Gitigemi Gamik/ We Will Plant Lodge Project • Advancing First Nations Leadership in Nature-Based Carbon Projects • How Indigenous Water Treatment Operators are Key in Preserving Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Language, Culture and Spirituality
5:30 p.m.	End of Day 1



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DAY 2 – WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28 2022

TIME	ACTIVITY
8:00 a.m.	Registration <i>Fredericton Convention Centre Foyer</i>
8:00 a.m.	Hot Breakfast <i>Pointe Sainte-Anne Ballroom Atrium</i>
9:00 a.m.	Recap of Day 1 / Overview of Day 2 <i>Pointe Sainte-Anne BCD Ballroom</i>
9:05 a.m.	Plenary Presentation: Putting the First Nations Climate Lens into Practice
10:15 a.m.	Wellness Break <i>Pointe Sainte-Anne Ballroom Atrium</i>
10:45 a.m.	Special Networking Event with Potential Funders <i>Pointe Sainte-Anne BCD Ballroom</i>
12:00 p.m.	Lunch <i>Pointe Sainte-Anne Ballroom Atrium</i>
1:00 p.m.	Introduction to Concurrent Sessions <i>Pointe Sainte-Anne BCD Ballroom</i>
1:15 p.m.	Concurrent Sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Action Solutions on Accessibility and Disability Inclusion (Part 2 – Development of a National First Nations Climate Action ToolKit for the Inclusion of Persons of all Abilities) <i>Simultaneous Interpretation and ASL/LSQ Available</i> • Advancing First Nations Rights, Title and Jurisdiction over Lands and Water <i>Simultaneous Interpretation Available</i> • Natural Climate Solutions • First Nations Food, Environment, Health and Nutrition & Wildlife Health and Chronic Wasting Disease • Sharing Yukon’s Reconnection Vision and Action Plan • Advancing Indigenous Climate Leadership in Canada • First Nations Facing Flooding in Canada • Data Sciences, Emissions, and Putting the “I” in ESG
TIME	ACTIVITY
3:15 p.m.	Wellness Break <i>Pointe Sainte-Anne Ballroom Atrium/Gallery Passage (Lower Level)</i>



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DAY 2 – WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28 2022

3:45 p.m.	<p>Concurrent Sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflections from the Youth Gathering <i>Simultaneous Interpretation and ASL/LSQ Available</i> • Greenhouse Gas Reduction at Scale Through Indigenous Clean Energy Projects: Indigenous Clean Energy’s (ICE) Programs and Just Climate Programming for Communities & Diesel Reduction Policy and Progress in Remote First Nations <i>Simultaneous Interpretation Available</i> • The Intersectional Impacts of Climate Change and COVID-19 on First Nations Peoples’ Health and Well-Being • Indigenous-Led Conservation and Indigenous Carbon Rights: Opportunities, Challenges and a Vision for the Future • Biodiverse Tree Planting, Carbon Sequestration and Wildfire Climate Adaptation Work in Fire Damaged Forests of the Interior Plateau of British Columbia & Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) Elders and Healthy Forests • Climate Leadership in First Nation Communities Deciding on Adaptation Priorities Using a Five-Step Adaptation Framework • Apaja’tunej Maqamikew: How to Achieve #LandBack When Your Band, Elders, or Community are Unsupportive • Adapting to Climate Change: A Sharing Circle
5:45 p.m.	Closing Plenary
6:00 p.m.	Dinner and Film Event
10:00 p.m.	End of Day 2



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DAY 3 – THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29 2022

TIME	ACTIVITY
8:00 a.m.	Registration <i>Fredericton Convention Centre Foyer</i>
7:45 a.m.	Hot Breakfast <i>Pointe Sainte-Anne Ballroom Atrium</i>
8:45 a.m.	Recap of Day 2 - Overview of Day 3 <i>Pointe Sainte-Anne BCD Ballroom</i>
9:00 a.m.	Concurrent Sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mi'kmaw Self-determination in a Changing Climate <i>Simultaneous Interpretation and ASL/LSQ Available</i> • Marine Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area: Opportunities and Recommendations for Realizing Canada's Commitments to Reconciliation and Marine Conservation <i>Simultaneous Interpretation Available</i> • Honouring Indigenous Climate Leadership • Lessons from Kanaka Bar's Community Resilience Plan, Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA), and Resilient Housing • Indigenous-Federal Partnerships on Climate Change • Building Sustainable Resilience: Emergency Preparedness and Adaptation
10:30 a.m.	Wellness Break <i>Pointe Saint-Anne Ballroom Atrium</i>
11:00 a.m.	Keynote Address <i>Pointe Sainte-Anne BCD Ballroom</i>
11:30 a.m.	Panel Presentation: Learning from International Examples <i>Pointe Sainte-Anne BCD Ballroom</i>
12:30 p.m.	Lunch <i>Pointe Sainte-Anne Ballroom Atrium</i>
1:30 p.m.	Closing Remarks and Protocols
3:00 p.m.	Optional off-site activity (TBC)
5:00 p.m.	End of 2022 National Climate Gathering