

VICC CLP Indigenous Engagement Summary Report

For the VICC CLP Steering Committee
By Alderhill Planning
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This document has been prepared for the Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Climate Leadership Planning Steering Committee and is not intended for public distribution.

Introduction

The <u>Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Climate Leadership Planning</u> (VICC CLP) Project aims to build a ten-year climate leadership plan for Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (VICC). This project looks to 2030 and beyond, aimed at reducing emissions and mitigating the effects of climate change through collaborative efforts while adapting to the changing climate by creating resilient, regenerative, inclusive, and prosperous communities and economies. Led by the VICC CLP Steering Committee, composed of a group of local government representatives, the planning process aims to draw from and build on the unique circumstances of rural, urban, and First Nations communities while thinking as a whole region.

Beginning in 2019, and having faced challenges and delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this planning process has hosted two summits for locally elected officials, staff, First Nations, and youth. Although both summits included some Indigenous involvement, the project is seeking to capture additional input from Indigenous communities in the region to better understand what climate planning and mitigation work is underway and how these communities might like to move forward with the VICC CLP planning process.

With support from the VICC CLP Steering Committee and researchers at the University of Victoria, Alderhill Planning Inc., an Indigenous-owned planning firm, was brought in to lead this engagement.

This report, prepared for the VICC CLP Steering Committee, summarises the Indigenous engagements done and provides recommendations for how this work can move forward in a good way.

Project Overview & Data Summary

Indigenous communities on Vancouver Island and the surrounding coastal communities have strong relationships and histories with the land and water. These rich cultural knowledge systems help guide their work in caring for the land and responding to the impacts of climate change.

In respect of each community's sovereignty and self determination, in acknowledgement of that many Indigenous communities are disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change, and recognizing that communities are informed by teachings of how to care for the land that go back to time immemorial, the VICC CLP Indigenous engagement set out to understand:

- How Indigenous communities in the VICC region are preparing for and adapting to the impacts of climate change;
- If there is interest in participating in this regional planning process; and
- If yes, how could the Steering Committee respectfully and relationally support current and future climate action?

The input would be woven into a shared action plan and inform the next phase of the VICC CLP process in developing the VICC Climate Action and Resilience Plan to 2030.

53 First Nations and eight Indigenous Tribal or Treaty Associations are within the VICC region. See Appendix 1 for a complete list of communities.

The following section of this report breaks down the engagements conducted by project phase, outlining what was planned and summarizing the data collected.

Phase One

Develop and launch surveys and interviews with First Nations staff and review public-facing planning documents to understand the climate challenges being faced by communities and how they are taking action to mitigate the impacts of climate change. This project phase took place in late spring and summer of 2022.

Survey & Interview Data Summary

A combination of recruitment emails and phone calls were used throughout the summer of 2022 to invite communities to provide their input via survey or interview. There was some initial interest from communities, with the invitation forwarded to various departments working on climate or resilience projects and some folks expressing interest and reaching out for more information. Unfortunately, despite early interest, no surveys or interviews were conducted due to various factors, including limited staff capacity and staff burnout following the COVID-19 pandemic, engagement fatigue, and other community priorities over the summer months.

The project team was able to have some informal communications with community staff. Although the abovestated reasons were most often shared for the community not being able to participate, some noted that taking part in this project would need support from Chief and Council; a process that can sometimes be timeconsuming and unconducive to projects with shorter timelines. Other communities shared that they chose not to participate as they do not have dedicated climate or emergency plans in place.

Indigenous Climate Related Documents

12 publicly available Comprehensive Community Plans (CCPs), climate preparedness plans, emergency plans, articles noting community-based actions, and other climate planning-related documents from Indigenous communities in the VICC region were reviewed using a content analysis framework based on the survey and interview questions.

These documents spoke to some of the individual vulnerabilities and challenges individual communities are and will face due to climate change and the strategies and tools being implemented to help mitigate these effects.

Although the impacts and challenges of climate change will be different for each community, many communities will experience similar challenges and benefit from similar actions based on their geography and cultural background. As such, summaries of the documents have been provided based on the three distinct tribal regions in the VICC region: Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Coast Salish.

Kwakwaka'wakw

The Kwakwaka'wakw Peoples are the traditional inhabitants of the coastal areas of north-eastern Vancouver Island and mainland British Columbia. Many Kwakwaka'wakw communities in the VICC region are experiencing similar effects affecting the overall biodiversity as a result of climate change, including displacement; disruption and degradation of coastal and land-based ecosystems; deforestation; water quality issues; impacts to food supply and the introduction of pests and other invasive species.

Current mitigation efforts include changing management regimes used to protect the environment and its traditional plants, while creating a system that is inclusive of Kwakwaka'wakw, and includes their input. Several communities have found community involvement to be vital to the maintenance and rehabilitation of certain ecosystems, noting that it is a beneficial tool for restoring a sense of place within communities.

Namgis First Nation has been actively working to protect their lands, waters, medicines, and traditional food systems from the effects of climate change by focusing on stewardship, resilience, inclusion, knowledge, self-reliance, and wellness. Namgis are actively developing a land use plan designed to protect and manage the integrity of the at-risk ecosystems.

Many communities have experienced displacement as a result of climate change and are working independently to rebuild and restrengthen their Nation's stewardship and cultural practices. An example of community lead stewardship is the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Guardian Watchmen Program. The Guardians play an integral role

¹ Tero Mustonen, Brie Van Dam, and Hanna Eklund, "A century of knowledge: Kwakwaka'wakw elders and environmental change," FACETS 6 (2021), doi:10.1139/facets-2021-0101.

^{2 &}quot;Implications of a Changing Climate for Food Sovereignty in Coastal British Columbia," in Conservation for the Anthropocene Ocean: Interdisciplinary Science in Support of Nature and People, ed. Philip S. Levin and Melissa R. Poe (Academic Press, 2017), dio:10.1016/B978-0-12-805375-1.00019-2.

in protecting and understanding the species in their territories, and how to better protect these ecological systems.³ While this work continues to look over the territories, the program is beginning to expand outwards to include different research projects aimed at protecting the most vulnerable and valuable wildlife against climate change for future generations.

Nuu-chah-nulth

The west coast of Vancouver Island is known for its culturally rich and ecologically significant landscapes. Since time immemorial, the Nuu-chah-nulth Peoples have been stewards of the lands and waters. Nuu-chah-nulth communities are experiencing the negative impacts of climate change, including: flooding; wildfires; extreme weather; temperature changes; impacts to coastal and land-based ecosystems; infrastructure failures; and, rising sea levels.

As many Nuu-chah-nulth communities are situated in rural areas, or along coastlines, they are vulnerable to extreme weather events, disruptions to local food sources, and the economic and logistical impacts related to climate change.⁴ Moreover, many communities lack the capacity to develop and implement mitigation strategies. Although to date, changes have been gradual, they will continue to exacerbate the longer the climate crisis remains unaddressed.

As Nuu-chah-nulth Peoples continue to work at combating climate change, several communities have been working to design strategies that can be used to protect their ecosystems and communities.

Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation, partnered with Ecotrust Canada to establish new ways to reduce the amount of fossil fuels used in transporting and constructing new building materials.⁵ Moreover, the "Qwii-qwiq-sap Standing Tree to Standing Home" program uses, designs from traditional Nuu-chah-nulth long-houses combined with local building materials to create a more energy-efficient traditional house model that will soon become the new and preferred housing option for families returning to their traditional territories.⁶

Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation is also implementing creative and holistic environmental management strategies aimed at restoring their traditional stewardship over their territories.⁷ Through collaboration with other governments, they were able to create a Climate Change Adaptation Plan for the Clayoquot Sound centred around promoting a culture of self-reliance, governance, and resilience among communities. The plan's objectives aim to:

- Maintain ecological health;
- Strengthen housing and infrastructure;
- Diversify livelihoods;
- Diversify food supplies;
- Improve health; and
- Strengthen political, social, and cultural resources.

Objectives that will be maintained with guidance from the following recommendations:

- Reforming fishery planning;
- Upgrading key assets for storm surges, flooding, rain, wind and wind throw;
- Undertaking risk reduction initiatives;
- Explore closed contaminant & multi-trophic aquaculture;

- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.

^{3 &}quot;Return to the Homelands: Establishing the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Guardian Watchmen Program," Coast Funds, last modified November 2022, https://coastfunds.ca/stories/return-to-the-homelands-establishing-the-gwasala-nakwaxdaxw-guardian-watchmen-program/.

⁴ Ditidaht First Nation, Ditidaht Community Plan, (2017), https://www.nitinaht.com/wp-content/uploads/DCP-20170818-updated-2018-03-28-complete2.pdf.

⁵ Climate Change Adaptation in Clayoquot Sound: Ahousaht, Hesquiaht, and Tla-o-qui-aht Community-based Climate Change Adaptation Plan, (2011), http://www.cakex.org/sites/default/files/project/documents/ClayoquotClimAdapt%20-%20Phase%20II%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf.

- Update emergency preparedness planning; and
- Coordinate early warning systems with the government.

Ahousaht First Nation has found the application of Indigenous languages and place names to be significant in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. Land-based Indigenous planning knowledge comes from understanding the land and each of its complex systems which change gradually over time. In many cases, this knowledge is shared orally through Indigenous languages, making language preservation, and by proxy the preservation of culture, teachings, and governance, integral to ongoing climate mitigation work. The Ahousaht First Nation believes language to be at the heart of stewardship and self-determination.

"Ahousaht's land use vision demonstrates how integrating Indigenous place names into planning processes can provide critical biological and cultural details to inform policy and management regimes and better understand the impacts of climate change."

Coast Salish

The Coast Salish Peoples, located on the southeast coast of Vancouver Island and the mainland, are deeply connected to their lands, waters, and territories. Some Coast Salish communities traced their climate vulnerability to the history of Western colonization, which resulted in socioeconomic vulnerabilities, restricted access to financial resources, and Indigenous communities being forced to settle in remote environmentally compromised regions. In light of these, communities have identified environmental stewardship as essential for mitigating the long-term effects of climate change and promoting Indigenous self-governance over their lands and resources.¹⁰

Climate change poses a threat to Coast Salish communities negatively affecting aquatic and land-based ecosystems and reducing biodiversity. These impact crucial natural resources that are pivotal to Coast Salish ways of life. Invasive species are slowly becoming prevalent in certain regions, such as the Songhees Nation, impacting their traditional harvesting sites and patterns. Despite the climate vulnerabilities, Coast Salish Peoples continue to adapt and thrive. Despite the climate vulnerabilities and patterns.

Homalco First Nation, in collaboration with the Naut'sa mawt Tribal Council, has implemented a community energy plan which aims to promote efficient energy consumption and savings through new efficiency standards in its communities' public buildings and shared spaces.¹³ Additionally, in response to wildfires, Homalco First Nation has launched a FireSmart Program under their Emergency Preparedness Strategy that identifies several ways to reduce the risk of wildfires in their communities, and a plan for responding in case of an emergency.¹⁴

Under the direction of Tla'amin Nation, a climate-health assessment to identify various priority risks to the environment and community health has been created to plan for the current and future impacts of climate change. The assessment has an emphasis on engaging youth in conversations around climate change, and encouraging them to participate in land-based initiatives aimed at protecting the environment.

⁸ Climate Change Adaptation in Clayoquot Sound: Ahousaht, Hesquiaht, and Tla-o-qui-aht Community-based Climate Change Adaptation Plan, (2011), http://www.cakex.org/sites/default/files/project/documents/ClayoquotClimAdapt%20-%20Phase%20II%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf.

⁹ Tara Atleo, "?uyaasiła¾ Naas, or Something Happened to the Weather," Canadian Climate Institute, last modified June 21, 2022, https://climateinstitute.ca/publications/something-happened-to-the-weather/.

¹⁰ Esquimalt Nation, Esquimalt Nation Comprehensive Community Plan, (2020), https://www.esquimaltnation.ca/app/webroot/uploads/Esquimalt_Nation_CCP_2020_1_of_4.pdf.

¹¹ Reona Oda et al., "Using Situated Knowledge and Remote Sensing to Assess Climate Change Vulnerability for Coastal Ecosystems of High Cultural Importance," Western CEDAR, last modified 2016, https://cedar.www.edu/ssec/2016ssec/climate_change_ocean_acidification/42/.

¹² Pacific Salmon Foundation, Impacts of Climate Change on Shorelines, People, and Salmon: Nature-Based Approaches for Ecosystem Health, (2021), https://salmonwatersheds.ca/libraryfiles/lib_500.pdf.

¹³ Homalco First Nation, Homalco First Nation All-Hazards Emergency Management Plan, (2020), https://www.homalco.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Homalco-Emergency-Management-Plan-Ver-1.4-March-31-2020.pdf.

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Tla'amin Nation, Tla'amin Watershed Protection Plan, (2021), https://www.tlaaminnation.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/TLAAMIN-WATERSHED-PLAN_MAR-30-2021-FINAL.pdf.

¹⁶ Ibid

Phase Two

Facilitate a half day-day virtual forum with First Nations staff to explore if and how the VICC CLP Steering Committee could support the work already taking place in communities. This project phase took place in the fall of 2022.

The half-day virtual VICC Climate Leadership Planning—Indigenous Engagement Forum was held in October 2022 and focused on exploring what climate work was happening in Indigenous communities in the VICC region, and what local governments and other organizations could do to support their efforts. Attended by three participants, who were members of staff working for First Nations on Vancouver Island, the session began with a round of introduction, followed by a high-level overview of the VICC CLP project, including engagements completed to date.

Discussion throughout the forum centred on two key areas. Firstly, understanding the climate adaptation and mitigation work underway in communities and future plans or objectives that might be in place; and secondly, what, if any, support from other Indigenous communities, local governments, or NGOs would be beneficial to support climate work in communities.

During the first discussion, participants shared that their communities are experiencing the effects of climate change. Notably, extreme weather events, changes to natural patterns and cycles, such as when foods are available for harvest and which fish and animals are present, and reduced food security, especially for traditional foods. Participants noted that some communities have climate plans in place, while others are in the planning process; generally, any projects underway are in the early stages of implementation. Participants also noted that outside their department areas, they needed to be made aware of the work being done in their communities.

Universally, although to varying degrees, participants noted that their remote locations impacted access to resources, creating a barrier to short and long-term climate action. Challenges fell into three primary areas:

- An increased dependency on higher-emitting forms of energy, heat, and transportation;
- The increased cost, logistics, and emissions for transporting food, energy, and building materials to remote locations; and
- In some cases, disproportionately feeling the impacts of climate change due to their location.

Despite challenges, participants noted that their communities are either actively implementing projects or in the planning phases of projects directly or tangentially related to climate change. Overall, participants shared that climate planning was closely related to other forms of planning and policy work within communities; sometimes making actions hard to identify as specifically climate-related.

In the second discussion, participants noted that there is interest in collaborations, however, it would be easier to do so with communities that share similar climate-related issues, concerns, and mitigation strategies. Particularly in the VICC region where some communities are remote while others are located in or near urban centres, it is important to understand that each community faces distinct challenges. As such, it is crucial to be intentional with how collaboration is structured to ensure that relationships are meaningful and beneficial.

Public works and emergency planning are two areas where participants identified the possibility for impactful collaboration between Indigenous communities and local governments. However, they noted that this could be challenging without support at a political level. Participants also indicated that there might be benefits to sharing data and community knowledge between First Nations communities and local governments. This being said, more details and strong relationships would need to be in place before sharing or collaboration.

The forum ended with the Steering Committee sharing that they are actively exploring how to convene these conversations in a way that feels good for all involved. Participants expressed an interest in learning more about this once some details are finalized.

Phase Three

Translate the data collected throughout engagements into a shared action plan, which will inform the next phase of the VICC CLP process and help to develop the Climate Leadership Plan.

In light of the low engagement throughout this project, there is insufficient information to compile into an action plan that meaningfully incorporates Indigenous voices and accurately speaks to the experiences of Indigenous communities in the VICC region. As such, Phase Three of this project has pivoted.

The upcoming Indigenous Climate Resilience Forum from March 1 to 3, 2023 will host regional Indigenous-led conversations around climate risk and resilience. As part of the larger Indigenous climate engagement work being done by the BC Climate Action Secretariat, these sessions may provide insights into the climate risks and adaptation efforts of Indigenous communities in the VICC region. Alderhill will share the outcomes of the ICR Forum with the VICC CLP Steering Committee, including a summary of the applicable regional climate risk and resilience discussions.

Recommendations

As Alderhill is unable to provide an action plan that meaningfully incorporates Indigenous voices, the focus of this project has shifted to providing the VICC CLP Steering Committee with recommendations. Provided below and in light of the feedback received from communities and similar Indigenous climate work happening in BC, these recommendations can continue this work in a good way while ensuring that Indigenous voices and experiences are centred and respected.

Recommendation 1:

Build on existing First Nation - Local Government relationships to advance climate leadership on the Coast

Across the VICC region, there are areas where First Nations and local governments already have collaborative relationships and, in some cases, have already begun work on climate change adaptation and mitigation projects. Providing support to strengthen and catalyze pre-existing relationships is a good starting point for the VICC CLP Steering Committee to support these communities to work together on climate planning and action while creating their own relationships and networks, which can be woven back into the broader work.

Regional districts working with modern Treaty Nations are great examples of where First Nations and local governments have good existing relationships or are actively collaborating on climate-related projects. Other examples include areas where community-to-community forums, partnerships, and joint initiatives have created a foundation of mutual trust, shared visioning, and collaborative action. Below is a list of local governments, or groups with strong local government representation, within the VICC region that have good relationships with neighbouring First Nations:

- Alberni Clayoquot Regional District, with Huu-ay-aht, Yuulu?il?ath, Uchucklesaht and Toquaht;
- qathet Regional District with Tla'amin Nation;
- Capital Regional District, First Nations Relations Committee;
- Baynes Sound Lambert Channel Ecosystem Forum, with K'ómoks and Qualicum First Nations; and
- Shishalh Nation and Sunshine Coast Regional District Shared Decision-Making.

Recommendation 2:

Promote opportunities to strengthen relationships and networks that bring First Nations and Local Governments together for climate planning and action

Throughout BC, there are many diverse initiatives, engagements, and events underway around climate planning, action and adaptation. Some of these are broad, focusing on climate change and its many facets, while others are situated within a specific industry or topic area that examines climate change as it affects that

particular field, such as food security, forestry, or oceans..

By being aware of the broader work happening throughout the province, VICC CLP Steering Committee can circulate information about these events as opportunities for relationship building and collaboration and consider how the networks that are emerging can support VICC CLP goals. Reviewing the outcomes or goals of completed work also provides the Steering Committee with additional insights and context around the challenges and areas of focus for Indigenous communities within the province.

Find out what's happening, take part or encourage participation:

BC Indigenous Climate Resilience Forum

The Indigenous Climate Resilience Form is a free, three-day virtual event designed to inform, connect, and support Indigenous communities across the province in climate adaptation and resilience. Taking place from March 1 to 3, 2023, this year's theme is Climate Risk and Resilience.

The Forum consists of presentations, workshops, story-sharing, engagement from the new B.C. Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness, opportunities to network, a cross-ministry open house for climate-related discussions, and a keynote address by Ta'Kaiya Blaney. Click here to find out more.

Indigenous Climate Adaptation Pilot Project

Led by the Indigenous Climate Adaptation Working Group (ICAWG) this pilot project, currently under development and set to launch in 2023, will consist of a province-wide network that links Indigenous climate adaptation efforts and creates a community for ideation, information sharing, and support. More information on this work is pending, <u>click here</u> to find out more about ICAWG and the folks leading this initiative.

BC Disaster and Climate Risk and Resilience Assessment (DCRRA)

The Province is currently undergoing a Disaster and Climate Risk and Resilience Assessment, of which Indigenous engagement is a significant component. The two aforementioned initiatives are outcomes of this ongoing work, and further projects are anticipated. More information on the current assessment is pending, click here to find out more about the preliminary strategic climate risk assessment conducted by the Climate Action Secretariat in 2019.

Find out what's happened, learn about it and distribute relevant information:

- FNLC BC First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan
- 2022 Indigenous Climate Resilience Forum Summary Report
- <u>Indigenous Climate Resilience in British Columbia: A Summary Report of Engagement and Research between January and April 2022</u>. This report is in the final phases of development and will be posted online soon
- <u>2022 BC Flood Indigenous Engagement Intentions Paper</u>. The completed BC Flood Strategy is expected to be realised in 2023.
- Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy Actions for 2022-2025.

Recommendation 3:

Ensure that Indigenous voices are informing VICC CLP leadership on strategy and approach

Try to recruit Indigenous folks to the VICC CLP Steering Committee so that local Indigenous voices can inform VICC CLP leadership. Ideally, these folks should represent the three tribal regions in the VICC region

Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Coast Salish.

It would also be beneficial for the VICC CLP Steering Committee to build relationships with existing Indigenous-led or focused groups working to support climate change mitigation and resilience efforts across the province. Connections with these groups could help the Steering Committee get oriented to the work underway, inform future collaborations, and synchronize efforts. Below are some groups currently working in this space:

- First Nations Home Energy Save Advisory
- Indigenous Clean Energy, ICE Network
- Indigenous Climate Adaptations Working Group (ICAWG)
- First Nations Remote Community Energy Strategy Working Group
- Indigenous Coastal Climate Coalition

Appendix

Appendix 1: First Nations Communities in the VICC Region

Ahousaht First Nation 'Namgis First Nation

Cowichan Nation Alliance Snaw-naw-as (Nanoose First Nation)

Cowichan Tribes Nanwakolas Council

Da'naxda'xw/Awaetlala First Nation (formerly Tanakteuk

Indian Band)

Nuchatlaht First Nation

Ditidaht First Nation

Dzawada'enuxw First Nation (formerly Tsawataineuk Indian

Band

Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council

Pacheedaht First Nation

Naut'sa mawt Tribal Council (Alliance Tribal Council)

Ehattesaht First Nation Pauquachin First Nation

Esquimalt Nation Penelakut Tribe

Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations Qualicum First Nation

Gwawaenuk Tribe Quatsino First Nation

Halalt First Nation Scia'new First Nation (Beecher Bay)

Hesquiaht First Nation shíshálh Nation (Sechelt First Nation)

Homalco (Xwemalhkwu) First Nation Snuneymuxw First Nation

Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group Songhees Nation

Hupacasath First Nation Stz'uminus First Nation (Chemainus)

Huu-ay-aht First Nations Te'mexw Treaty Association

Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k:tles7et'h' First Nations (Kyuquot)

Tla'amin Nation (formerly Sliammon First Nation)

Klahoose First Nation Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations (formerly Clayoquot)

K'ómoks First Nation Tlatlasikwala First Nation

Kwakiutl District Council Tlowitsis Nation

Kwakiutl First Nation Toquaht Nation

Kwiakah First Nations Tsartlip First Nation

Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis First Nation Tsawout First Nation

Ts'uubaa-asatx Nation (formerly Lake Cowichan First Nation) Tseshaht First Nation (cı̈šaa?ath̩)

Lax Kw'alaams Band Tseycum First Nation

First Nations of Maa-nulth Treaty Society

T'Sou-ke Nation

Malahat First Nations Uchucklesaht Tribe

Mamalilikulla First Nation Yuulu?il?atḥ (Ucluelet First Nation)

Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation We Wai Kai Nation (Cape Mudge Indian Band)

Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw Tribal Council Wei Wai Kum First Nation