

Summary of Key Learnings:
***Engaging Indigenous People in Climate Change Policy – Centring
Indigenous Women’s Knowledge in Climate Policy Project (2020-2026)***

March 2026



Native Women's Association of Canada



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The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is a national Indigenous advocacy organization representing the political voices of Indigenous women in all their diversity in Canada. NWAC advocates for and works with Métis, Inuit and First Nations – on- and off-reserve, status, and non-status, disenfranchised – across Canada. NWAC works to enhance, promote and foster the social, economic, cultural, and political well-being of Indigenous women in all their diversity within their respective communities and Canadian society.

The Native Women's Association of Canada gratefully acknowledges the support, input, and contributions of all those who participated in and helped shape the *Engaging Indigenous People in Climate Change Policy* project.

Provincial and Territorial Member Associations (PTMAs)

Amautiit Nunavut Inuit Women's Association

Keepers of the Circle Ontario

Manitoba Moon Voices Inc.

Indigenous Women's Association of the Wabanaki Territories

Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women

British Columbia Native Women's Association

Workshops

NWAC extends its sincere gratitude to the Elders, guest speakers, and participants who contributed their knowledge and time through workshops and project activities throughout the six-year duration of the project (2020–2026).

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For more information on NWAC's work related to the *Engaging Indigenous People in Climate Policy* project or to reach out about any questions regarding this report, please contact: environment@nwac.ca

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Introduction

Climate change is reshaping lands, waters, and seasonal patterns from coast to coast to coast. Indigenous women in all their diversity experience these changes deeply due to their close relationships with the land, water, and community. As Knowledge Holders, caregivers, and food gatherers, Indigenous women uphold essential responsibilities that sustain family, culture, and the environment. They witness the impacts of climate change firsthand through changes to food and water systems, biodiversity, and cultural practices, affecting physical, emotional, spiritual, and community well-being. Despite this, Indigenous women's knowledge and experiences remain underrepresented in climate policy, planning, and environmental decision-making processes.

To address this gap, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) implemented the *Engaging Indigenous People in Climate Change Policy* (EIPCCP) project, funded by Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC). This report summarizes key learnings from the six-year project (2020–2026), highlighting the experiences, insights, and leadership of Indigenous women in all their diversity and their role in shaping locally relevant climate responses. NWAC worked closely with its Provincial and Territorial Member Associations (PTMAs) to ensure the project reflected local priorities, cultural teachings, and regional realities. Together, space was created for Indigenous women to share experiences, build understanding, strengthen relationships, and discuss climate responses grounded in culture, land, language, and community. The project engaged more than 2,000 Indigenous women from across Canada over the six years.

Early engagement emphasized listening and learning, while later phases focused on priorities identified by Indigenous women, including biodiversity, climate justice, Indigenous-led conservation practices, and Indigenous rights. In its final year, the project emphasized community-led, land-based learning, highlighting Indigenous women's strength and resilience through cultural practices such as cultural burning (*Good Fire*) and clam gardens (*Loxiwe*). These practices reflect intergenerational knowledge and enduring relationships with the land and waters, supporting cultural continuity in the face of climate change.

Centring Indigenous Women's Voices Through Listening and Engagement (2020–2025)

During the first five years, the EIPCCP project focused on listening to and learning from Indigenous women through national surveys, newsletters, and engagement sessions. The first two years prioritized creating space for broad conversations about climate change and its impacts, highlighting that Indigenous women in all their diversity are experiencing significant effects, including changes to food systems, water, and traditional practices, while also facing barriers to participating in climate decision-making.

Reflecting the changing climate and the needs identified through engagements, NWAC developed the EIPCCP toolkit on the [*Impacts of Climate Change on Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit, Transgender and Gender-Diverse People*](#). The toolkit continuously evolved alongside the project over the years.

Building on these early insights, the project then explored specific topics that Indigenous women in all their diversity identified as priorities, including biodiversity, climate justice, Indigenous-led conservation practices, and Indigenous rights. Across these focus areas, Indigenous women shared knowledge and lived experiences, and learned from one another, deepening their understanding of climate change. PTMAs played a key role in supporting this work through community-based research and engagements. These collaborative efforts laid the foundation for a shift toward deeper, community-led leadership and land-based learning in the project's final year.

Strengthening NWAC–PTMAs Collaboration Through Community-Led Climate Action Grounded in Land and Language (2025–2026)

Insights gathered from the first five years shaped the project's direction toward deeper, locally driven initiatives in its final year, emphasizing land-based learning and the practical application of Indigenous Knowledge. Building on

feedback from engagement sessions and webinars held between 2020 and 2025, the EIPCCP project focused on locally driven activities that highlighted culture, ceremony, and connection to the land, while supporting Indigenous women in all their diversity to strengthen their knowledge, practical skills, and engagement in climate action.

NWAC worked closely with PTMAs from across the country to support community-led environmental workshops. Within the broad theme of climate change, each PTMA took full leadership, designing and leading two workshops (virtual, in-person, or hybrid) on topics grounded in local priorities and knowledge, including the impacts of climate change on land and water and their connections to the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of Indigenous women. They managed all aspects of the workshops, including participant registration and coordination with local Elders, facilitators, notetakers, venues, and caterers, as appropriate for in-person gatherings. These workshops fostered community connection, knowledge sharing, and capacity building, strengthening local engagement with cultural and environmental knowledge.

Through these workshops, Indigenous women from coast to coast to coast shared strikingly similar experiences of climate change disrupting daily life, cultural practices, and community well-being. Across discussions, water was a central theme and was described as a living relative, reflecting the deep connection between environmental health and cultural identity. Participants spoke of grief, anxiety, and concern for future generations related to the ongoing harm to land and water, the disruption of cultural practices, and the uncertainty these changes create for the future. They also emphasized resilience and solutions rooted in Indigenous Knowledge, calling for Indigenous-led, culturally grounded climate action that honours traditional wisdom and protects the future.

Supporting these grassroots efforts, NWAC hosted two national virtual workshops in fall 2025, bringing together Indigenous women in all their diversity from coast to coast to coast. The first workshop focused on climate activism and environmental justice, equipping participants with strategies and inspiration to take action within their communities. The second highlighted Indigenous languages and place names in ecological knowledge, which serve as a form of climate memory, preserving knowledge of how species and places were historically used and understood. Together, these sessions encouraged participants to see themselves as guardians of the land and demonstrated that even small, achievable actions can make a meaningful difference in addressing climate change.

Additionally, the EIPCCP toolkit, *The Strength and Resilience of Indigenous Women to Climate Change: Cultural Burns and Clam Gardens* [create as a hyperlink], available on the NWAC website, was updated to highlight the role of Indigenous women in two land-based practices: cultural burning (Good Fire) and clam gardens (Loxiwe). These practices reflect intergenerational knowledge and care for the land and waters, and the update emphasizes how Indigenous women have traditionally participated in, or are increasingly engaging with, these practices to help sustain the land and sacred Traditional Knowledge. Social media campaigns further highlighted key climate moments and the contributions of Indigenous women nationally.

Conclusion

The EIPCCP project demonstrates that meaningful, sustained, and respectful engagement with Indigenous women in all their diversity is essential for effective climate policy, planning, and action. Over six years, the project created spaces for Indigenous women to share knowledge, lived experiences, and priorities, revealing the profound ways climate change affects lands, waters, food systems, and cultural practices, while also highlighting gaps in representation within decision-making processes. Collaboration with NWAC's PTMAs ensured that activities were community-led, regionally grounded, and responsive to local priorities, bridging national climate discussions with grassroots knowledge and lived experience.

Land-based learning and cultural practices, including cultural burning (*Good Fire*) and clam gardens (*Loxiwe*), highlight the continuing relationships Indigenous women uphold with the land and waters, demonstrating how these connections support biodiversity, environmental stewardship, and cultural continuity. By centring Indigenous women's voices, knowledge, and leadership, the project highlights the importance of integrating Indigenous perspectives into climate policy, planning, and programming at all levels.

The relationships, insights, and tools developed through the EIPCCP project lay a strong foundation for ongoing dialogue, collaboration, and learning. Future climate initiatives can build on these lessons by prioritizing the voices of Indigenous women in all their diversity, fostering intergenerational knowledge transfer, and supporting land- and culture-based approaches that strengthen community resilience, safeguard ecosystems, and ensure that climate action reflects Indigenous leadership, priorities, and ways of knowing. By placing the knowledge of Indigenous women in all their diversity at the center, climate action can become more just, sustainable, and grounded in the wisdom of the land and its people.



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