



# Executive Summary

## Background

In 2019 and 2021, First Nations leadership in BC passed resolutions calling for the development of a BC First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan (UBCIC Resolution No. 2019-02; BCAFN Resolution No. 04/2019; and FNS Resolution No. 2021.15). The FNLC was mandated to coordinate the development of this work in collaboration with First Nations in BC to ensure:

- First Nations' Title, Rights, and Treaty Rights were asserted and protected in addressing climate change.
- First Nations knowledge, laws, legal processes, and worldviews were recognized and implemented in climate planning and response.
- Effective and immediate responses to the climate emergency were identified to reduce impacts and vulnerability within and across communities.

The FNLC was instructed to also ensure that the Strategy would work to support reducing GHG emissions to 40-60% by 2030 from 2010 levels and net-zero emissions by 2050, support renewable energy and alternative energy economies, and strengthen the participation and leadership of First Nations in a green economy.

To develop the Strategy, the FNLC worked with First Nations in all regions of the province to identify community-specific challenges related to climate change and the needs and priorities for climate action. The Strategy combines input and feedback from First Nations leadership, staff, Elders, Knowledge Holders, youth, women, First Nations institutions and organizations, and climate experts and advocates.

The Strategy serves as a representation of the knowledge, histories, and experiences that have been shared but it does not represent the voice of all Indigenous Peoples.

There is more work to be done, there are more voices to be heard, there is more knowledge to be shared, and the Strategy cannot be used as a substitute for continuous and meaningful engagement with inherent Title and Rights holders directly.

The Strategy is province-wide in scope, seeking to respond to the needs and priorities of First Nations as a collective body. However, the Strategy also respects the diversity and self-determination of First Nations in BC who are invited to use the Strategy as a foundation to guide the development of their own climate responses and initiatives based on their unique needs, priorities, and processes.

## Overview

The BC First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan is grounded on a vision, five guiding principles, and four priority pathways for climate action (Figure 1.0).

The Strategy begins with a core pathway entitled **Inherent Title and Rights**. This pathway acts as an essential building block for First Nations climate action. It enables the work of all other identified pathways and is a key component to thoroughly meet the strategies and actions outlined in this document.

The other pathways identified are more specific to realize and respond to the impacts and experiences of First Nations across the province. They include:

- **Capacity and Leadership**
- **Land and Water Protection**
- **Climate Response and Preparedness.**

Each pathway is described in more detail in what follows. For more information relating to Strategy structure please see Appendix “A” – Guide to the Strategy. For a visual summary of Strategy content please see Appendix “B” – Summary Strategy Chart.

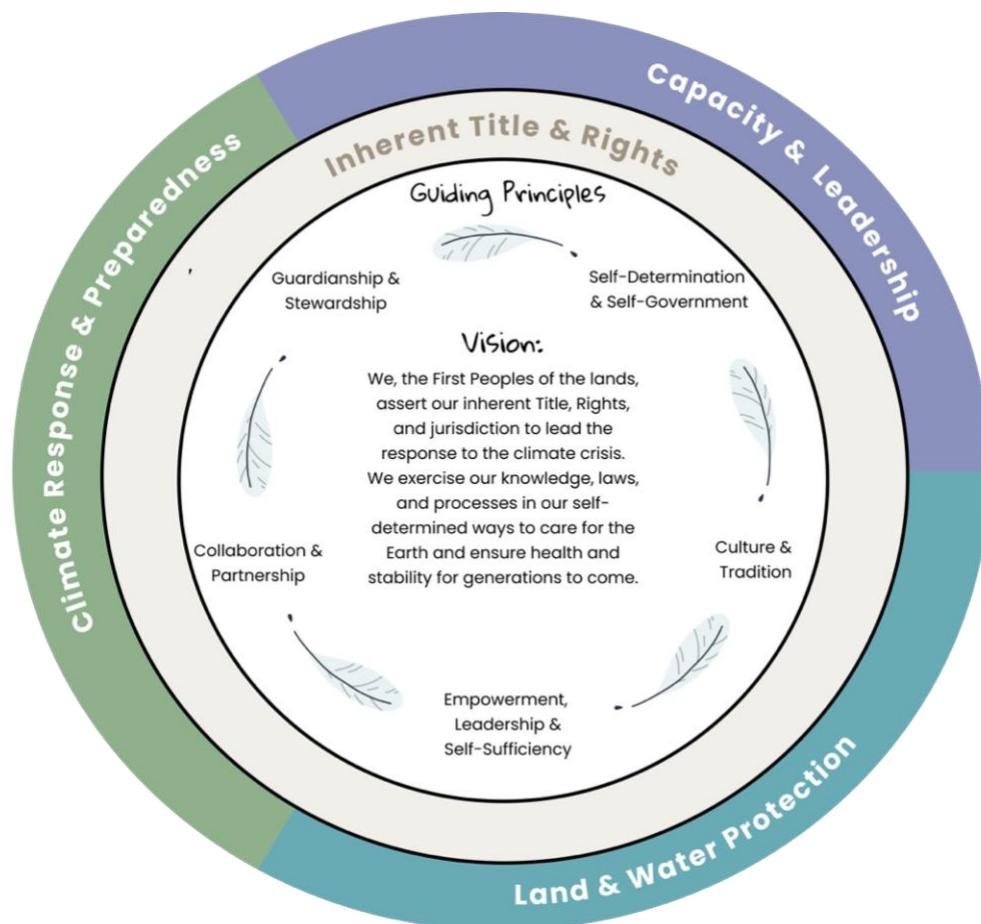


Figure 1.0: Vision, Guiding Principles, and Pathways

## PATHWAY: INHERENT TITLE AND RIGHTS

*Goal: Ensure First Nations' Title, Rights, and Treaty Rights in BC are recognized and affirmed in climate planning and response.*

As a foundation to the Strategy, it is essential that First Nations in BC are recognized in climate planning and response as inherent Title and Rights holders. The aim is to provide an opportunity to begin a new path where First Nations are treated as true and equal partners in climate planning and response. This involves ensuring:

- First Nations in BC have full enjoyment of their rights to self-determination and self-government, including their right to use their own laws, processes, language, and knowledge in climate action. This involves supporting First Nations in developing, maintaining, and implementing their own institutions, governing bodies, and political, economic, and social structures to address climate change.
- All climate-related legislation, policies, programs, and their implementation mechanisms are reviewed and aligned with the UN Declaration and the Declaration Acts. It is essential to ensure that any limitations on assertions of First Nations' jurisdiction to manage and care for their territories and resources are immediately removed.
- First Nations knowledge, laws, and languages are protected and preserved as a foundation for building resiliency and responding to the climate crisis both today and in the future. Indigenous Knowledge has the power to combat climate change but must be broadly recognized as legitimate in the same way that western science is.
- Engagement and collaboration with First Nations is strong, moving away from the “duty to consult” and focusing on creating meaningful government-to-government partnerships to co-develop climate legislation, policies, and programs, and co-managing implementation.

## PATHWAY: CAPACITY AND LEADERSHIP

*Goal: Ensure First Nations in BC are empowered and prepared with the capacity and tools needed to effectively lead the response to the climate crisis both now and in the future*

First Nations in BC are climate leaders. However, in order to guarantee continued leadership and long-term climate resiliency within communities it is essential to focus on capacity building to ensure tools are in place for Nations and community members to effectively respond to the climate crisis. The strategies and actions identified in this pathway are focused on:

- Working to identifying capacity challenges and needs for First Nations communities across the province to assess disparities, areas for collaboration, and mechanisms for capacity building.
- Strengthening knowledge and awareness within First Nations communities on climate change, including its sources, impacts, and effective response mechanisms.
- Creating adequate opportunities for climate-related training and skills development for First Nations both on and off reserve that incorporates both Indigenous Knowledge and western science. This involves preparing the future generations through sufficient advocacy and training opportunities and the facilitation of intergenerational knowledge sharing.
- Ensuring long-term and stable climate funding for First Nations communities. Specifically, by establishing a BC First Nations Climate Fund.

- Implementing effective climate data governance and management systems within and between Indigenous communities broadly.
- Ensuring inclusive participation and empowerment for First Nations youth, women, and 2SLGBTQIA+ (Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and others) peoples in climate action.

## PATHWAY: LAND AND WATER PROTECTION

*Goal: Ensure the health, stability, and resiliency of the land, waters, and environment for generations to come.*

Climate change and human activity continue to impact the state of the lands and waters across the province. Both human and non-human beings rely on the health and stability of the land and waters. The strategies and actions identified under this pathway focus on environmental stewardship while also ensuring that First Nations in BC are enabled to uphold their responsibilities and obligations to the land, waters, and resources and to continue to protect them in perpetuity. This includes:

- Ensuring mechanisms are in place to restore the lands, waters, and ecosystems that have been impacted by human activity and climate change. This involves strengthening First Nation-led conservation efforts and implementing accountability measures for environmentally impactful human actions.
- Ensuring respect and recognition of First Nations water governance and the protection of natural water ecosystems through First Nation-led water management policies and practices.
- Prioritizing sustainable forestry management, including Old-Growth forests, in recognition of the interconnectedness and link between forest fires and increased floods, erosion, and landslides.
- Recognizing First Nations jurisdiction to access, use, and manage their territories and resources, including food and water sources and medicines, in their own self-determined ways. This involves transforming urban, industrial, and mining development processes and implementing consent-based approaches in line with the minimum standard of Free, Prior and Informed Consent.
- Strengthening and informing state-led resource management and supporting First Nations in the development and maintenance of their own laws, policies, protocols, and guidelines for land, water, air, and resources within their traditional territories.
- Developing collaborative partnerships and strengthening information sharing within and between First Nations communities, organizations, and others to collectively care for the Earth.

## PATHWAY: CLIMATE RESPONSE AND PREPAREDNESS

*Goal: Ensure First Nations in BC are effectively responding to the climate emergency and current and projected climate impacts by working to reduce GHG emissions and developing their own self-determined initiatives grounded in community-specific priorities*

This pathway is focused on working to keep global warming below 1.5°C in line with the IPCC's recommendation while also supporting First Nations in the development of their own climate responses and initiatives grounded in community-specific priorities by:

- Assessing, identifying, and meeting infrastructure needs in communities to protect community and ecosystem health, adapt to climate impacts, and reduce GHG emissions and reliance on fossil fuels.
- Establishing and/or maintaining culturally appropriate, energy-efficient, and resilient housing and buildings within First Nations communities. This involves supporting First Nations in the development of community-specific housing strategies and plans to build and manage homes and buildings and to explore sustainable and affordable clean energy options.
- Effectively responding to climate-related emergencies and associated risks and impacts by strengthening First Nation-led emergency management and preparedness mechanisms and increasing collaboration between relevant entities.
- Developing community specific climate strategies and action plans that include risk and cumulative impact assessments, monitoring of land use changes, water quality, pollution, etc. This may also involve support for First Nation-led monitoring and the establishment of data collection frameworks to create robust baseline data.
- Reducing GHG emissions through the phase out of oil and gas subsidies and increased support for First Nations to reduce their own emissions, to strengthen their mitigation efforts, and to implement nature-based solutions. This involves eliminating barriers for Nations to pursue land-based carbon offsets.
- Investing in clean energy development and ensuring that First Nations can participate in a green economy. This involves reviewing and reforming Crown policies and programs to ensure accessibility and equitable opportunities for First Nations, exploring alternatives to diesel, oil, and gas, diversifying energy sources within communities, and investing in off-grid energy sources.
- Assessing impacts of climate change on First Nations health and wellness and developing appropriate responses to ensure long-term resiliency. As an immediate action, this involves ensuring that all First Nations have long-term and reliable access to safe and clean food and water sources.
- Ensuring First Nations' economic independence through the development of source revenue, ensuring appropriate revenue-sharing, and exploring sustainable and low carbon economic development opportunities. This involves restoring the ability for First Nations to generate revenue from selling electricity through, for example, Independent Power Agreements and/or other alternatives.

Together, these interconnected and interrelated pathways form the BC First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan, a comprehensive plan to meet climate adaptation, mitigation, and resilience-building needs based on First Nations knowledge and goals across the province.

## Implementation

The Strategy is designed to be a living and flexible document for use and implementation in different contexts. It is meant to set a foundation for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals and communities to work with one another to respond to the climate crisis. It is intended as a means for collective advocacy on climate change while respecting the autonomy and self-determination of each Nation to address climate change on their own terms and through their own processes.

The Strategy is also intended to be used by different actors and read by different audiences. Climate change intersects with many different sectors; considering the scale of the climate crisis we are experiencing, we each have a role to play. Implementation may be led by First Nations leadership, communities, and organizations. It

may also be led by local, provincial, and federal Crown governments, institutions, and entities in the private sector.

To strengthen implementation, the Strategy assigns a priority level for the identified climate strategies and actions. These are prioritized as either **immediate** or **ongoing**. Where possible, the Strategy also provides recommendations, calling on specific entities to lead implementation. These entities include: First Nation governments (both Band and hereditary leadership systems), First Nations communities, organizations (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous), the First Nations Leadership Council, institutions (such as educational institutions and school districts), Crown governments (which for the purposes of the Strategy includes federal and provincial governments *and* municipal governments and regional districts), entities in the private sector, and others.

Further discussions, collaboration, and the development of meaningful and true partnerships will be required in order to thoroughly implement the Strategy. To begin the implementation process, the following actions are recommended:

- The FNLC shall continue to engage with First Nations in BC to discuss implementation of the Strategy. This includes holding an all-Chiefs meeting to develop an implementation plan based on discussed priorities.
- The FNLC shall present the Strategy to the provincial and federal governments and other relevant partners to communicate key climate priorities for First Nations in BC.
- First Nations in BC, with the support of the FNLC and the provincial and federal governments, may adapt the Strategy based on their own needs and priorities through community-specific climate strategies and action plans.
- The provincial and federal governments shall provide sufficient resources for implementation of the Strategy in line with Article 39 of the UN Declaration and to provide an annual BC First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan Accountability Report to First Nations in BC and the FNLC.
- Finally, all entities shall work to implement the Strategy's 20 Urgent Calls for Climate Action.



# 20 Urgent Calls for Climate Action

“ We need a genuine, progressive movement that truly understands and fully acknowledges that we are in the midst of a *climate crisis*. It’s having devastating effects on our communities, on our people, and *communities are burning to the ground*. How many more communities have to be incinerated before governments will begin to move beyond good intentions and rhetoric? ”

*Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Union of BC Indian Chiefs*

1

In response to the current climate emergency, strengthen provincial and federal climate measures to **meet the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s recommendations** to limit human-caused global warming to 1.5°C and support First Nations to prepare for current and future climate impacts.

2

**Review and reform all provincial and federal climate-related legislation, regulations, policies, programs, and engagement frameworks** to address barriers, impacts, and limitations on the assertion of First Nations’ Title, Rights, Treaty Rights, and inherent jurisdiction in climate planning and response. This involves the recognition and use of First Nations laws and legal processes and their ability to uphold their responsibilities to the land, waters, and environment.

3

Work collaboratively to **build long-term climate capacity** within First Nations communities to effectively respond to the climate emergency. This involves immediately establishing a BC First Nations Climate Council to lead implementation of the Strategy, conducting a provincial First Nations climate capacity assessment to assess disparities and challenges, and increasing Crown government investments specific to First Nations capacity building.

4

Create a **BC First Nations Climate Fund** with initial investments as outlined in the Strategy.

5

Support the creation of **climate-related positions** (such as climate change coordinators) **and programming** (Indigenous Guardians, fisheries authorities, water monitoring programs) within First Nations communities. This involves supporting interested First Nations in the development and implementation of climate data frameworks and the generation of their own baseline data.

6

Strengthen the **incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge** in climate change initiatives. Ensure engagement with Elders and/or Knowledge Holders in all state-led climate discussions and response initiatives, support and facilitate intergenerational knowledge sharing with First Nations youth, and support the creation of Nation-specific climate glossaries inclusive of traditional language(s) and teachings.

7

Continue to **empower and prepare First Nations youth** for projected climate impacts through training, mentorship, and advocacy opportunities. Increase representation of First Nations youth in state-led climate discussions and response initiatives, including the development of programs, projects, and policies.

8

Establish a **regional network and discussion forum for First Nations on climate change** to provide mutual support between Nations, create space for climate discussions and information sharing, and help to develop regional and provincial climate alliances. This involves hosting an annual BC First Nations Climate Gathering.

9

**Identify areas and critical wildlife habitats requiring immediate restoration and protection** due to resource extraction (logging, mining) agriculture, other urban/industrial development, and climate change. Support **First Nation-led conservation and protection** efforts in this regard, including the designation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas, which can act as carbon sinks, and establish preventative measures such as **laws or policies at the Nation level** enforcing cleanup and remediation of disturbed lands and waters.

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**Transform resource extraction (logging, mining) and other urban/industrial development processes and tenure systems** to ensure:

- FPIC is obtained from all First Nations whose territories (lands, waters, environments, and all beings) may be impacted by a proposed project.
- FPIC is fully informed through honest, transparent, and independent representations of all projected impacts, including those compounded as a result of climate change.
- Early and ongoing engagement throughout the entire scope of a project with early and sufficient notice to review data and information received as well as the ability for First Nation-led assessments and research on a particular issue.
- Appropriate integration of First Nations knowledge and laws into project work, including permitting and decision-making.

11

**Protect Old Growth forests**, in recognition of their role as carbon sinks, in water retention, species protection and survival, human health, and combating climate change. Prohibit logging in floodplains and critical areas of watersheds to prevent droughts, floods, and landslides.

12

**Conduct a BC First Nations Infrastructure Assessment** to identify and meet infrastructure needs (transportation and communications networks, emergency response, housing and buildings, climate data, water treatment and distribution systems, waste handling and storage) to effectively adapt and build

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communities that are resilient to climate impacts. Explore opportunities for green infrastructure development to help reduce GHG emissions.



Develop long-term strategies, policies, and implementation tools to enhance **community-led food and food sovereignty systems**, which include the development of food waste management systems to help reduce carbon emissions and ecological footprints.

14

**Ensure recovery and restoration of wild salmon stocks** to secure First Nations' cultural connection and access to traditional food sources for current and future generations.

15

Support First Nations in **assessing, quantifying, and reducing their GHG emissions** to inform decision-making, develop offset and/or mitigation measures, and explore economic investments.

16

Immediately **strengthen emergency management, response, and recovery systems** within and between First Nations communities by:

- Ensuring emergency management legislation, policies, and programs, such as BC's *Emergency Management Act*, respond to the current climate emergency and are aligned with the UN Declaration and the Declaration Acts.
- Assessing capacity of First Nations communities to respond to climate-related emergencies and implement critical supports needed. This may involve Identifying and implementing critical supports and infrastructure needed in order to reduce risks and vulnerabilities, supporting fire response positions, implementing traditional fire management systems, and more.
- Developing a BC First Nations Regional Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction aligned with the 2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction and the UN Declaration.
- Supporting actions already undertaken by the First Nations Leadership Council and the First Nations Emergency Services Society to implement the Tripartite Emergency Management Memorandum of Understanding.

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Support First Nations in developing their own **Nation-specific climate-related strategies and action plans** based on their own needs, priorities, and self-determined processes. This includes energy-efficiency strategies, risk assessments, GHG emission reduction plans, heritage protection plans, and/or monitoring and data collection frameworks.

18

Support First Nations to rapidly transition to reliable and affordable renewable, non-combustible and/or low carbon energy sources by establishing Indigenous utilities, diversifying clean energy sources, aligning legislation, regulations, policies and programs with the UN Declaration and Declaration Acts, and increasing Crown government support and investments.

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Support First Nations in developing **environmentally sustainable and low carbon economic development projects and opportunities**.

20

IMMEDIATELY ensure that all First Nations in BC have **long-term and reliable access to clean and safe food and water sources** both in their homes and within their territories.