



**CLIMATE LEADERSHIP
ACROSS INDIAN COUNTRY:
A SUMMARY OF
REGIONAL CLIMATE
CHANGE DIALOGUES**

FIRST NATIONS
DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2023, First Nations Development Institute (First Nations) announced the 25 Native community partners, including Native-led nonprofit organizations and Tribal governments, to receive \$40,000 to \$100,000 in grant support to create or advance workforce development, implement climate adaptation plans, or facilitate discussions on ways Native Nations are using Native knowledge and practices to prepare for and respond to climate change. The grants were part of First Nations' Climate Change and Environmental Justice project, created in partnership with the Bezos Earth Fund, which made it possible to implement the following grant programs to assist community partners in addressing climate change and promoting environmental justice:

- **Regional Dialogues on Climate Resiliency** supports Native-led organizations to convene Native Nations to discuss Tribal climate adaptation and the U.S. Justice40 initiative in Native communities. First Nations awarded four grants of up to \$100,000 each to projects related to the planning and hosting of regional-focused climate conversations.
- **Green Jobs in Indian Country** supports Tribes and Native-led nonprofit organizations that are in the early stages of developing and/or expanding programs that support green job development in response to climate change. First Nations awarded 10 grants averaging \$100,000 each to organizations to develop a workforce that is ready to address the ongoing and increasing effects of climate change in Native communities.
- **Climate Resiliency in Indian Country** is catalyzing a critical mass of Tribes and Native-led nonprofit organizations to conduct and operationalize climate change plans and amplify the power of Native knowledge. First Nations awarded 11 grants of up to \$100,000 each for projects related to the development or implementation of climate adaptation planning.

Building on the success of Tribes and Native-led organizations, this report elevates the regional issues and solutions on climate change continually being addressed across Indian Country and those discussed in convenings hosted by United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. (USET), Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI), Native American Fish and Wildlife Society (NAFWS), and Buffalo Nations Grasslands Alliance (BNGA) as part of the Regional Dialogues on Climate Resiliency grant program.

The report aims to bring attention to policy and funding barriers and opportunities, models, community perspectives, and practices that may be useful to Tribes and Native communities looking to create space or continue similar discussions, engaging in political advocacy efforts, and navigating municipal, state, and federal administrative routes to address impacts of climate change locally, regionally, and nationally.



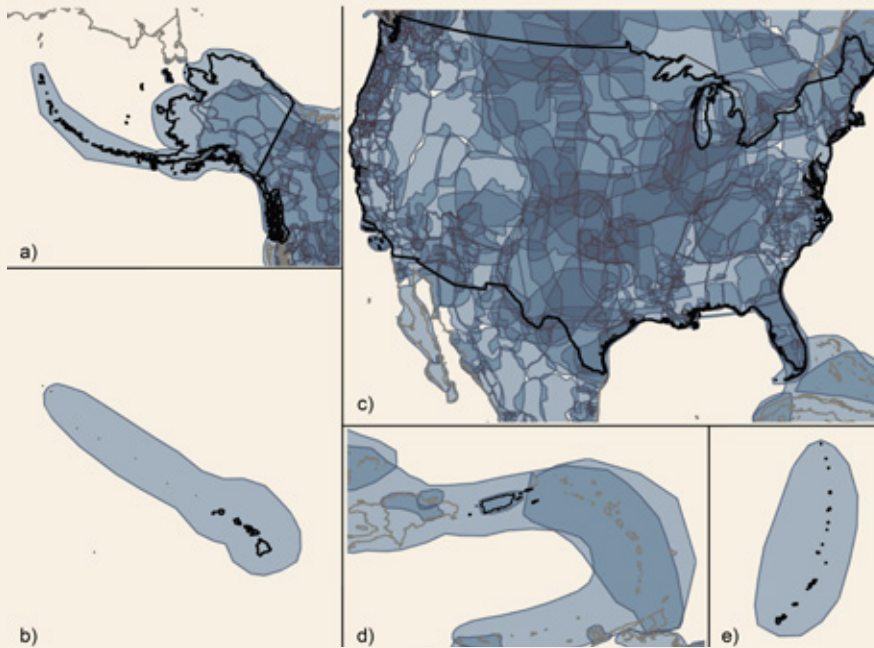
INTRODUCTION

The Native climate movement is swiftly making its way across Indian Country. Throughout all geographic regions of the country, frontline climate change impacts are already severe for Tribes and Native communities. Wildfires, flooding, water scarcity, erosion, and rising sea levels result in significant and devastating land, species, and cultural resource losses. This prompts tribal emergency response efforts and in some cases community relocation. Despite the ongoing impact of colonial systems, structures, and policies that interfere with and disrupt the ability of Native communities to adapt to climate change, community-driven initiatives are making strides to build adaptive capacity and reclaim traditional stewardship practices. With the overall goal to protect environmental, social, economic, and cultural assets, many Tribes and Native communities are leading Native knowledge-based solutions that integrate holistic relationality with the natural world, networks of expertise, and intergenerational sustainability in response to climate change.

Central to Indian Country's climate movement is kinship building. Through honoring traditional systems of gatherings, many Tribes and Native-led organizations are fostering a growing number of partnerships to address climate impacts across tribal, state, and federal jurisdictions. To support climate work that is centered around justice, regional and national tribal and Native-led organizations have been convening tribal leaders, community members, and key non-tribal partners to share resources and data, and collaboratively discuss a wide scope of climate-related challenges and opportunities.

These organizations include United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. (USET); Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI); Buffalo Nations Grasslands Alliance (BNGA); and Native American Fish and Wildlife Society (NAFWS). In response to growing impacts on tribes and tribal concerns on the climate crisis, these organizations have grown to collectively support federally and state-recognized Tribes and Alaskan Native and Native communities in protection of land, air, water, animals, and plants. To build on this work, in 2022, regional and national climate-focused convenings were hosted with Tribes in the East, Southwest, Great Lakes, Great Plains, Pacific Northwest, and Alaska. These dialogues focused on key issues of adaptive capacity, natural disaster response, biodiversity protection, wildlife conservation, sacred site and cultural resource preservation, food sovereignty, renewable energy development, just transition, economic impacts, and community health, among many other emerging priorities.

Representative Locations of Indigenous Peoples



*Fifth National Climate Assessment Chapter 16.
Tribes and Indigenous Peoples*

REGIONAL DIALOGUES AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. (USET) is an inter-tribal nonprofit organization established in 1969 serving 33 federally recognized Tribes from the Northeastern Woodlands to the Everglades and across the Gulf of Mexico. USET is dedicated to enhancing the development of Tribes, improving the capability of tribal governments, and improving the quality of life for tribal people through a variety of technical and supportive programmatic services. In 2004, USET established its Office of Environmental Resource Management (OERM) to assist member Tribes in addressing a wide range of environmental concerns, including supporting protection of human health and ecosystems, risk assessments, climate change adaptation and mitigation, providing clean and safe drinking water, cultural resource protection, traditional and conventional agriculture, and sustainable development.¹

USET MEMBER TRIBAL NATIONS

- Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians *
- Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida *
- Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians *
- Seminole Tribe of Florida *
- Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana
- Seneca Nation of Indians
- Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana
- Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe
- Penobscot Indian Nation
- Passamaquoddy Tribe
 - Pleasant Point
- Passamaquoddy Tribe
 - Indian Township
- Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians
- Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana
- Poarch Band of Creek Indians
- Narragansett Indian Tribe
- Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation
- Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah)
- Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas
- Oneida Indian Nation
- Mi'kmaq Nation
- Catawba Indian Nation
- Jena Band of Choctaw Indians
- The Mohegan Tribe
- Cayuga Nation
- Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe
- Shinnecock Indian Nation
- Pamunkey Indian Tribe
- Rappahannock Tribe
- Chickahominy Indian Tribe
- Chickahominy Indian Tribe
 - Eastern Division
- Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe
- Nansemond Indian Nation
- Monacan Indian Nation
- USET Headquarters (Nashville, TN)
- USET SPF Office (Washington, DC)

* Denotes Founding Member

ATNI MEMBER TRIBAL NATIONS

Chehalis Tribe
Chinook Tribe
Confederated Tribes of the
Colville Reservation
Confederated Tribes and Bands
of Yakama Indian Nation
Cowlitz Tribe
Duwamish Tribe
Hoh Tribe
Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe
Kalispel Tribe
Lower Elwha S’Klallam Tribe
Lummi Indian Nation
Makah Indian Nation
Muckleshoot Indian Tribe
Nisqually Tribe
Nooksack Indian Tribe
Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe
Puyallup Tribe
Quileute Tribe
Quinalt Indian Nation
Samish Indian Nation
Sauk-Suiattle Tribe
Shoalwater Bay Tribe
Skokomish Tribe
Snohomish Tribe
Snoqualmie Tribe
Spokane Tribe of Indians
Squaxin Island Tribe
Steilacoom Tribe
Stillaguamish Tribe
Suquamish Tribe
Swinomish Tribe
Tulalip Tribe
Upper Skagit Tribe
Burns-Paiute Tribe
Confederated Tribes of Coos,
Lower Umpqua & Siuslaw
Confederated Tribes of
Grand Ronde
Confederated Tribes of
Siletz Indians
Confederated Tribes of
Umatilla Indians
Confederated Tribes of
Warm Springs
(continued, next page)

As a result of continuous tribal needs assessments and collaboration between their OERM and Office of Economic Development, USET identified the need to advance conversations and create a community of knowledge on the intersections of tribal workforce development and climate change. In March 2023, USET piloted and convened the Taskforce of Workforce Development and Climate Resiliency, which brought together over 400 tribal leaders, tribal program managers, subject matter experts, federal officials, and USET organization partners during their Impact Week in Washington D.C. This conversation with USET was the first of its kind, aimed at assessing tribal needs, opportunities, and gaps in workforce development. After the Impact Week, the taskforce identified next steps: procuring data software to explore regional and state level workforce, education, and socio-economic data, and reporting the initial findings during their semi-annual meeting.

The Impact Week facilitated the establishment of partnerships with tribal and Native-led organizations, including the American Indian College Fund, Council for Tribal Employment Rights, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Tribal Employment Rights Office, 7GR Tribal Enterprise, Four Directions Development Corporation, and the American Indian Procurement Technical Assistance Center.

In Northeastern environments considered too harsh for European and American settlement like the Appalachian Mountains, Native Nations of the northeast not only survived, but also adapted and thrived. According to USET, due to the history of federal Indian policy, Native Nations of the northeast currently have significantly smaller land bases than those in the west and must work with a host of non-tribal jurisdictions to address climate impacts on natural and cultural resources beyond current reservation boundaries.² In many cases, Native Nations are not provided adequate consultation or opportunity for access, coordination, and decision-making on areas of cultural or economic significance. These barriers inhibit community-driven, meaningful, and collaborative climate adaptation planning. Tribal member small businesses and timber industries have been heavily impacted by climate change and USET member Tribes are exploring

solar, off- and onshore wind, waste-to-energy biomass, and other renewable energy developments to pursue economic and energy sovereignty goals. To help overcome some of the financial challenges Four Directions Development Corporation, a Native owned-CDFI based in Maine, has been working with Tribes, tribal organizations, and Native-owned small businesses to restore growth of the local economy.

Southeastern Tribes with coastal homelands are threatened by sea level rise and storm surge. For example, USET member Tribes, Miccosuckee and Seminole Tribes, currently face impacts of sea level rise permanently damaging the Florida coast, and threatening homes, drinking water, cultural resources, and the economy. Many coastal USET member Tribes, especially those in the Gulf of Mexico area, continue developing adaptation planning efforts for sea level rise. There has been a substantial increase in the intensity, frequency, duration, and strength of Atlantic hurricane activity with future increases projected.³ Extreme winds and storm surges, most recently from Hurricane Ian, caused extensive damage for Tribes and communities. Additionally, Southern Tribes are seeing increases in temperature during summer months coupled with humidity. These impacts are causing heat-related health impacts, particularly in elders and young people with land-based jobs. Tribes in the region are also mindful of extreme wildfire events and working toward revitalization of cultural burning practices. Expanding pests and diseases, increasing freshwater demands with saltwater intrusion, decreasing freshwater supply, wildlife biological shifts, higher incidence of Lyme disease, and effects to traditional practices and cultural identity are additional impacts noted by the Seminole Tribe of Florida's vulnerability assessment developed after attending ATNI's 2019 Tribal Climate Camp.⁴

Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians

Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) was founded in 1953 as a tribal non-profit organization, with a mission to promote tribal sovereignty and self-determination. ATNI develops and pursues regional strategies for advancing tribal interests in cultural affairs, economic development, human and social services, natural resources, tribal governance, and climate resilience. Today, ATNI represents 57

ATNI MEMBER TRIBAL NATIONS (continued)

Coquille Tribe
Cow Creek Band of Umpqua
Klamath Tribe
Blackfeet Nation
Chippewa Cree Tribe of the
Rocky Boy Reservation
Confederated Tribes of
Salish & Kootenai
Crow Tribe
Shoshone-Paiute Tribes
Summit Lake Paiute Tribe
Coeur d'Alene Tribe
Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Nez Perce Tribe
Northwestern Band of
Shoshone Nation
Hoopa Valley Tribe
Karuk Tribe
Smith River Rancheria
Yurok Tribe
Organized Village of Kasaan
Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes
Metlakatla Tribe

Northwest tribal governments from Oregon, Idaho, Washington, Southeast Alaska, Northern California, and Western Montana. In 2014, ATNI created its Climate Resilience Program. Since then, ATNI has been promoting Tribal Climate Resilience Planning among member Tribes.⁵

Between 2022-2023, ATNI hosted two regional events to advance tribal climate change policy and action. In November 2022, ATNI held a two-day National Tribal Leaders Climate Change Summit in Spokane, Washington. In June 2023, ATNI hosted a three-day Tribal Clean Energy Summit in Tulalip, Washington.

The Climate Summit engaged tribal leadership across Indian Country with 536 attendees, representing 118 Native Nations and Alaska Native communities. The Climate Summit hosted tribal leaders to share priorities and recommendations to generate goals and strategies for Tribes to navigate the cultural, economic, and social impacts of climate change. Summit participant conversations focused on the hope and vision for tribal sovereignty, climate justice, and environmental priorities; human health priorities; and messages to deliver to the White House and policy-makers on upholding federal trust responsibilities, treaty rights, tribal sovereignty, and data sovereignty.

Sessions for the Summit included: Tribes on the frontlines of climate change; a just transition and opportunities for Native Nations; climate opportunities for tribal youth professionals; tribal sovereignty and federal land co-management; and looking to the future of health priorities, policy development, and climate justice.

The Energy Summit hosted 398 participants to advance and explore tribal clean energy initiatives in the Pacific Northwest. The summit engaged tribal leaders, tribal representatives and community members, staff, youth, and non-tribal collaborators in conversation about navigating the challenges and opportunities of implementing clean energy projects. Goals for the Summit included:

- ensuring Tribes have the information, support, capacity, and resources necessary to plan for and implement tribal energy projects;
- increasing tribal awareness of opportunities and challenges faced by other Tribes in developing energy projects and working with outside partners for planning, policy development, and project implementation;
- improving project success by empowering agencies and partners to engage and consult with Tribes appropriately; and
- assessing tribal needs, interests, and priorities related to energy sovereignty, while providing listening opportunities for inter-tribal collaboration to move priorities forward.

Participants also learned about current policy, legislation, and funding, including the recent Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act.

These convenings supported development of new partnerships for ATNI with non-governmental organizations, state agencies, tribal organizations, philanthropic foundations, and key individuals, including the Washington Department of Natural Resources, Energy Foundation, Upper Columbia United Tribes, the University of Washington's Clean Energy Institute, and Pacific Northwest National Labs.

Tribes of the Pacific Northwest rely on the region's abundant natural resources, including clean air, fresh water, and healthy forests for a host of health, economic, and cultural priorities. Warmer winters have led to reductions in snowpack volume that historically blanketed the region's mountains, increasing wildfire risk and speeding the usually slow release of water for tribal communities and soils.⁶ Warmer ocean temperatures have led to shifts in the marine ecosystem. According to ATNI, Tribes are continuing to experience climate impacts of different levels and degrees. Many member Tribes of ATNI are continuing emergency response for severe storms, flooding, erosion, drought, and snowpacks along with their impacts to cultural resources, businesses and economy, public health, transportation and access, community infrastructure, and broadband. Through their Climate Resilience Program, ATNI is working with a network of groups including the Northwest Climate Resilience Collaborative on their Tribal Coastal Resilience Portfolio to enhance Tribes' abilities to address climate risks and needs of member coastal Tribes. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) in Montana is an example of a Northwest Tribe that has developed climate change strategic plans incorporating categories of forestry, land, fish, wildlife, water, air, infrastructure, community, and culture. CSKT also hosted ATNI's 2019 Tribal Climate Camp at Flathead Lake Bio Station.

The Southwest, with one and a half million Native Americans, 182 federally recognized tribes, and many state-recognized and other non-federally recognized Tribes, has the largest population of Native peoples in the country.⁷ Tribes in the Southwest also have some of the longest continuously traceable histories of water use and adaptation in the United States.⁸ Intensifying droughts and occasional large floods, combined with critical water demands from a growing population, deteriorating infrastructure, groundwater depletion, and increased wildfires, mark major indicators of climate change for Pueblos and Tribes in the Southwest. Many Pueblos and Tribes are engaged in decades-long legal battles for federally-reserved water rights, enforcement of senior water rights, and consistent advocacy for increased coordination of water management at municipal, state, and federal levels. The shifts in water quality and quantity, increased aridification, and unpredictable levels of precipitation caused by climate change impact many species and biological processes important to Pueblo and tribal culture, economy, and health. This includes traditional farming and agricultural practices central to the cultural identity and intergenerational community health of many Tribes and Pueblos in the southwest. To address some of these issues, ATNI, in collaboration with Navajo Technical University, hosted a Tribal Climate Camp at the Ghost Ranch Education & Retreat Center in 2023. The event was designed to convene Native peoples to discuss water access, food security, and climate impacts in the region.

BNGA MEMBER NATIVE NATIONS

Blackfeet
Rocky Boys
Fort Belknap
Fort Peck
Turtle Mountain
Fort Berthold
Crow
Northern Cheyenne
Standing Rock
Cheyenne River
Lower Brule
Crow Creek
Pine Ridge
Rosebud
Yankton

Buffalo Native Grasslands Alliance

Buffalo Nations Grasslands Alliance (BNGA) is a relatively new, Native-created and -led non-profit organization formed in August 2021. BNGA envisions Native Nations uniting to ensure the diversity of life in the Northern Great Plains (NGP) flourishes for current and future generations. BNGA's mission is to ensure the 15 Native Nations in the NGP have the technical and financial resources to plan and act on their visions for the protection and restoration of their traditional lands and waters. For BNGA, this includes supporting tribal members in sustainable stewardship and connection with natural resources, grasslands, and native wildlife restoration, and fish and game departments' capacity to deliver conservation impacts at scale. BNGA is dedicated to ensuring that its goals and programs-in-development address and prioritize climate resilience.

In October 2022, BNGA hosted a gathering at the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation located in North and South Dakota. The gathering convened 35 people representing 13 Native Nations in the NGP representing diverse tribal programs, tribal organizations, and partner organizations.

The goals of the gathering included

- building a shared understanding of BNGA's vision, mission, strategies, goals, and next steps for creating a conservation trust fund;
- developing a pilot project to build the adaptive capacity of NGP Native Nations; and
- identifying opportunities available to Tribes through the Justice40 Initiative.

Tribes of the Northern and Southern Great Plains are extremely varied in their lifeways due to Tribes' unique regional adaption to the environments they live in that extend from Mexico to central Canada. Tribes in the Northern Great Plains regions have observed declines in Native tree species, trout, frogs, and mussels due to reduced streamflow and increasing water temperatures. They have also experienced changes to culturally relevant plants such as sage, cottonwoods, and cattails due to extreme heat. As noted by the BNGA, impacts of excessive heat, drought, and disappearance of Native species are continuing

to disrupt ceremonial cycles and calendars of Tribes. Along with these impacts, increased flooding, drought, and wildfire have catalyzed disaster management planning and reduced access to subsistence and traditionally harvested species and traditional medicines. Many Tribes in the Northern Great Plains are addressing climate impacts comprehensively by coordinating across all tribal departments, like the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and Blackfeet, while others like Rosebud Sioux Tribe and Sac and Fox of Missouri, focus on sector-specific plans including those related to drought contingency.¹⁰

Tribes of the Southern Great Plains regularly experience some of the most extreme weather events on the planet, including severe storms with large hail, tornadoes, blizzards, ice storms, heat waves, and drought. Many grassland ecosystems across the Great Plains, important to Tribes for cultural and economic crop production and livestock grazing, are in decline. Climate change is expected to exacerbate existing stressors threatening these resources and cause shifts in the distributions and migrations of plant and animals. BNGA, Great Plains Tribes, and the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society are engaged in advocacy on Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) to support the allocation of \$97.5 million annually to Tribes to assist with wildlife conservation.

Native American Fish and Wildlife Society

Native American Fish and Wildlife Society (NAFWS) is a national Native-led non-profit organization. For over 38 years, NAFWS has directly supported the needs of its 227 member Tribes through conferences, training, youth education, and scholarships. Additionally, they provide indirect support by offering a platform for government consultations and discussions, and by being involved in innovative projects and initiatives in Indian Country. NAFWS's mission is to assist Native American and Alaska Native Tribes with the conservation, protection, and enhancement of their fish and wildlife resources.¹¹ NAFWS has identified climate change as a national initiative with established staff positions assigned to it.

In 2023, NAFWS hosted four regional discussions focused on climate and the Justice40 Initiative. Four regional discussions took place in conjunction

NAFWS MEMBER TRIBAL NATIONS

Pacific Region Tribes

Wailacki – Round Valley
Indian Tribe
Tuolumne Me-Wuk Tribe
Swinomish Indian Tribe
Susanville Indian Rancheria
Squaxin Island Tribe
Spokane Tribe
Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe
Scotts Valley Band of
Pomo Indians of California
Redwood Valley Rancheria of
Pomo Indians
Quileute Tribe
Jamestown S'Klallam
Tribe of Washington
Hoopa Valley Tribe
Federated Indians of
Graton Rancheria
Elk Valley Rancheria
Cow Creek Band of Umpqua
Tribe of Indians
Klatsop Dehe Wintun Nation
Confederated Tribes of the
Warm Springs Reservation
Confederated Tribes of the
Umatilla Indian Reservation
Confederated Tribes of Grand
Ronde Community of Oregon
Confederated Tribes of Coos,
Lower Umpqua and
Siuslaw Indians
Confederated Salish & Kootenai
Tribes of the Flathead Nation
Cold Springs Rancheria of
Mono Indians
Coeur d'Alene Tribe
Cloverdale Rancheria of
Pomo Indians
Cedarville Rancheria
Bear River Band of the
Rohnerville Rancheria
Confederated Tribes of the
Colville Reservation

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NAFWS MEMBER TRIBAL NATIONS (continued)

Great Plains Region Tribes

Yankton Sioux Tribe
Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe
Santee Sioux Nation
Fort Belknap Tribe
Blackfeet Nation
Fort Peck Tribes of Assiniboine Sioux Tribes
Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska
Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate of the Lake Traverse Reservation
Ponca Tribe of Nebraska
Oglala Sioux Tribe
Lower Brule Sioux Tribe
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe

Great Lakes Region Tribes

Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
Bois Forte Band of Chippewa
St. Croix Chippewa Indians
Sokaogon Chippewa Community
Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
Hannahville Indian Community of Michigan
Bay Mills Indian Community of Michigan
White Earth Nation
Upper Sioux Community
Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community of Minnesota
Red Lake Nation
Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians
Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin
Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi
Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin
Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians

Little River Band of Ottawa Indians
Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians
Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

Northeast Region Tribes

Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation
Passamaquoddy Tribe – Pleasant Point Reservation
Oneida Indian Nation
Mashantucket Pequot Tribe
Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians
Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation

Southeast Region Tribes

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo of Texas
Wichita and Affiliated Tribes
Tonkawa Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma
Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma
Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma
Prairie Band of Potawatomi Nation
Poarch Band of Creek Indians
Ottawa Tribe of Oklahoma
Osage Nation
Modoc Tribe of Oklahoma
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians
Miccosukee Indian Tribe of Florida
Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas
Kaw Nation
Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma
Iowa Tribe of Kansas & Nebraska
Fort Sill Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
Comanche Nation
Citizen Potawatomi Nation
Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma
Cherokee Nation
Catawba Indian Nation
Caddo Indian Tribe of Oklahoma
Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma

Southwest Region Tribes

Walker River Paiute Tribe
Ute Indian Tribe – Uintah & Ouray
Pueblo of Ysleta Del Sur
Big Sandy Rancheria
Manzanita Band of Kumeyaay Nation
Tohono O'odham Nation of Arizona
Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians
Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation
San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians
Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community
Ramah Navajo Chapter
Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe
Pueblo of Zuni
Pueblo of Tesuque
Pueblo of Taos
Pueblo of Santo Domingo
Pueblo of Sandia
Pueblo of San Ildefonso
Pueblo of Pojoaque
Pueblo of Nambe
Pueblo of Cochiti
Northfork Rancheria
Navajo Nation
Morongo Band of Mission Indians
Mescalero Apache Tribe
Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians
Jicarilla Apache Nation
Fort Mojave Indian Tribe of Arizona, California & Nevada
Fort Independence Indian Reservation
Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation, Nevada and Utah
Chemehuevi Indian Tribe
Bridgeport Paiute Indian Colony
Barona Band of Mission Indians
Hopi Tribe
Santa Ana Pueblo

Alaska Region Tribes

Allakaket Village
Beaver Village Council
Birch Creek Tribal Council
Chalkyitsik Village

Chevak Native Village
Clarks Point Village Council
Ekwook Village
Evansville Village (aka Bettles Field)
Galena Village aka Louden Village
Gwichyaa Zhee Gwich'in Tribal Government – Native Village of Fort Yukon (IRA)
Huslia Village
Hydaburg Cooperative Association (IRA)
Iqurmiut Traditonal Council
Kenaitze Indian Tribe (IRA)
Ketchikan Indian Community
Klawock Cooperative Association
Manokotak Village
McGrath Native Village
Mentasta Lake Traditional Council
Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government
Native Village of Deering
Native Village of Elim (IRA)
Native Village of Eyak
Native Village of False Pass
Native Village of Goodnews Bay
Native Village of Kotzebue
Native Village of Kwinhagak
Native Village of Marshall (aka Fortuna Ledge)
Native Village of Mekoryuk
Native Village of Nanwalek (aka English Bay)
Native Village of Nightmute
Native Village of Pilot Point
Native Village of Saint Michael
Native Village of Shaktoolik
Native Village of Shishmaref
Native Village of Unga
Native Village of Wales
Native Village of White Mountain
Nenana Native Association
Ninilchik Traditional Council
Nulato Tribal Council
Organized Village of Kasaan
Organized Village of Kwethluk
Pedro Bay Village
Pilot Station Traditional Village
Qagan Tayagungin Tribe of Sand Point Village
Qawalangin Tribe of Unalaska
Sitka Tribe

with NAFWS Great Lakes, Alaska, Northeast, and Great Plains regional events. The Great Lakes discussions focused on participants sharing their experiences with climate change, climate change vulnerability, and tribal capacity for adaptation. For the Alaska regional event, the NAFWS Alaska Team solicited recommendations for planning the NAFWS National conference climate change workshop. For the Northeast regional event, NAFWS, in partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), hosted a business dinner meeting at the EPA Tribal Environmental Summit in Bar Harbor, Maine. At the Great Plains Regional event, Fort Belknap Indian Community presented on the importance of grasslands in the Great Plains and shared the Tribe's Climate Adaptation Plan.

At the National Conference, NAFWS partnered with the University of Alaska at Fairbanks Climate Adaptation Science Center (AK CASC), the United States Geological Survey (USGS), and Native Movement on a half-day workshop. During the workshop participants defined tribal climate information as including harvest, daily weather observations, data, Native knowledges, and relationship with Mother Earth. The goal was to collect participants' insight regarding how to best make climate information and data meaningful, accessible, and useful to Tribes. The group shared information on specific projects, current tribal use of climate science and data, and opportunities to strengthen each other's projects.

These gatherings strengthened NAFWS partnerships with AK CASC, Great Plains CASC, Native Movement, First Nations Development Institute, ATNI Climate Change Program, Indigenous Tribal Environmental Professionals Climate Change Program, BNGA, and the NAFWS Alaska Tribal Climate Resilience liaisons.

Alaska is home to almost half of the country's federally recognized Tribes. The Arctic is warming faster than any place on the planet. With melting permafrost causing temperature dysregulation, Alaska is becoming wetter and the resulting floods, erosion, and wildfires are threatening coastal and riverine communities. With the distribution, quality, thickness, and timing of ice on the ocean, lakes, and rivers driving communities' livelihoods, almost every aspect of life for the state's 228 federally recognized Alaska Native Tribes and many other Native Alaskan communities is affected. Prominently, this has caused a shift in subsistence patterns relied on for millennia by Alaska Native communities.¹² For the many villages that already face critical food insecurity, changes to wild harvest and first food practices are continuing to significantly and adversely affect diet, nutrition, physical and behavioral health, and cultural traditions. To elevate some of these climate challenges, during their 2023 National Conference, NAFWS hosted tours highlighting Alaska Native-led natural resource and climate programs and initiatives.

The Great Lakes in the upper Midwest are a natural and cultural resource vital to many area Tribes as their language, creation stories, histories, ceremonies, and other elements of their cultural identity are tied to the lakes. This cultural landscape is experiencing warming, making the lakes more prone to poisonous algal blooms

and creating suitable habitat for invasive species.¹³ The treaty rights of many Tribes in the Great Lakes area to hunt, fish, and gather off-reservation are directly threatened by climate change. In collaboration with Native-led organizations, like NAFWS, and state educational institutions and federal agencies, the majority of Tribes in this region have proactively developed community-led strategic climate adaptation plans.

MAJOR THEMES EMERGING FROM REGIONAL DIALOGUES

Holistic Relationships

One of the main themes emerging from the regional dialogue convenings is that social, cultural, and environmental relationships are an important shared foundation to Native worldviews, identity, and practices. Underlying all human interactions with the natural world is an understanding that each and every element of nature—plants, animals, air, soil, and water—holds inherent life and sacredness deserving perpetual respect and protection. For many Tribes and Native communities, honoring these reciprocal and active relationships acknowledges a connection to past, present, and future generations of community. Many Tribes continue to maintain strong cultural affinity to their lands through unique and close-held practices of story, song, prayer, ceremony, pilgrimage, hunting, and gathering that have been practiced since their beginnings. The entirety of Native lands, including sacred sites and cultural landscapes, are central to the revitalization and continuance of Native knowledge, histories, and practices. During these convenings it was reaffirmed that protection of the ecological and spiritual relationships between Native people, communities, and the resources their lands hold is the foundation to address community health, strengthen cultural identity, and advance climate priorities.

Climate Adaptation Tools: Cultural Practices, Traditional Knowledge, and Strategies

A second major theme is the continuation of cultural practices and Native knowledge as key adaptation tools. Many cultural practices contribute to Native communities' adaptive capacity to respond to climate impacts. Strategies include cultural burning to prevent wildfires and sustain biodiversity, clam bed restoration to address food security and carbon sequestration, and dryland farming to conserve water resources. These are some examples of ingenious Native adaptive strategies that are practiced in response to changing environmental conditions. Tribes and Native communities have developed these knowledges and strategies over thousands of years resulting in the wealth of place-based expertise held and practiced today. Tribes and Native communities across Indian Country are continuing to enhance and, in some cases, revive the use of these knowledges and practices in response to the changing climate. Native contributions to Western scientific methods is well documented, yet the climate movement has only recently begun to acknowledge the importance of Native

knowledge. Due to the limited visibility, Tribes and Native communities must navigate many complex political, administrative, and funding challenges to ensure Native knowledges, practices, and data are protected and appropriately incorporated into tribal and non-tribal environmental and land management initiatives, particularly those related to climate change.

Kinship and Social Systems

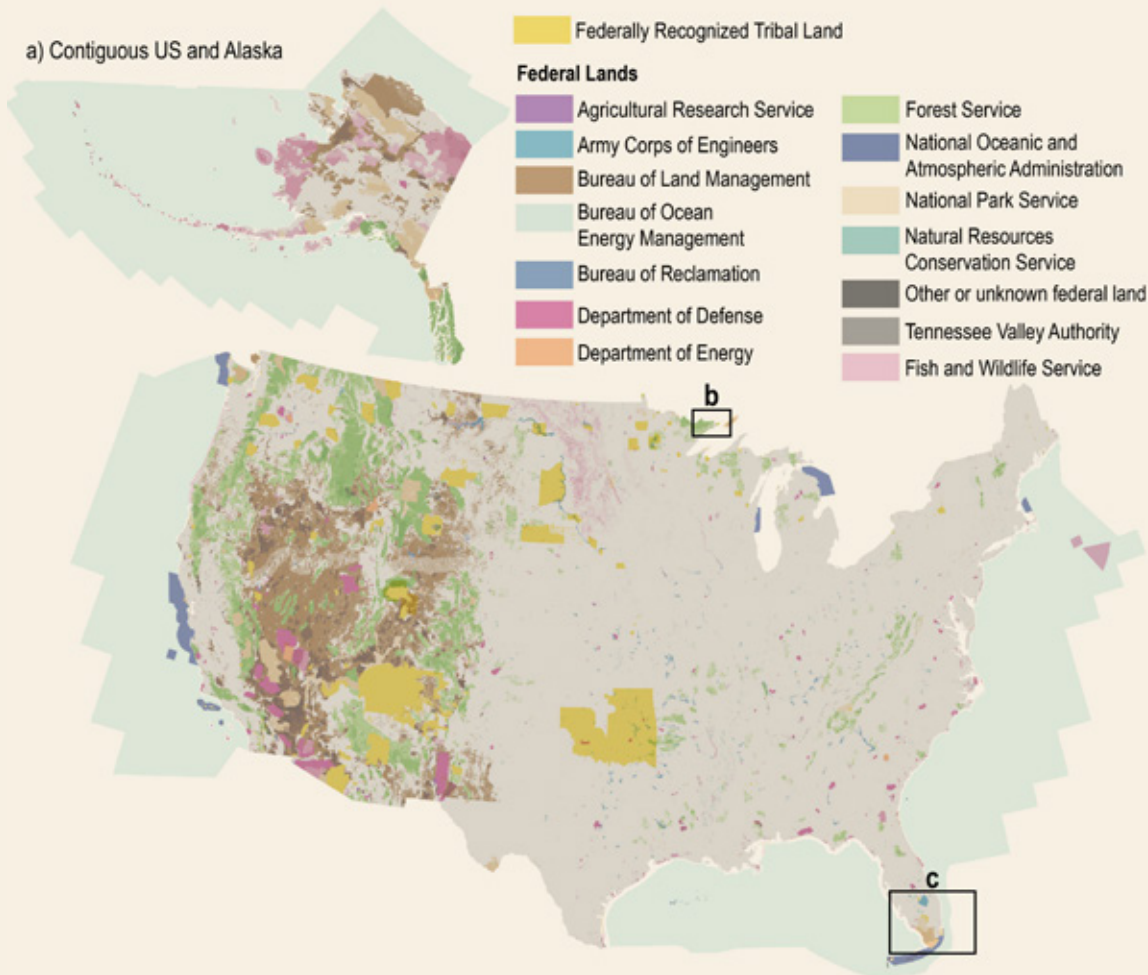
Over hundreds of generations, Native people have developed strong social systems within and between communities as a means for continued survival in everchanging environments. These social systems and their values emphasize kinship for the purpose of orienting community members to effectively steward the natural world. Tribes and Native communities across the Nation continue to honor family systems, clan memberships, social governance bodies (e.g., councils), ceremonial gatherings, and cultural activity calendars that strengthen individual and collective roles, protocol, and responsibilities. While they primarily provide a basic human need—belonging—they are also particularly important in times of emergency or crisis, often designating management and support in response to major life events like birth, funerals, and illness. Networks of sharing knowledge and trading goods between Tribes and Native communities have been essential for survival and adaptive capacity. For example, many ancestral Southwest Tribes developed and maintain sophisticated networks of trading knowledge, textiles, ceremonial items, seeds, foods, minerals, and many other items to sustain a healthy community, environment, and inter-tribal relations. Today, descendants of those communities, through the Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance’s Indigenous Seed Keepers Network, are reviving ancestral trade networks of diversified seed, including drought-resilient varieties, and strategies to advance food sovereignty in the face of climate change. Many other Tribes are continuing a legacy of kinship building and partnerships of mutual support and solidarity across Indian Country.

Colonization Impedes Climate Change Adaptation

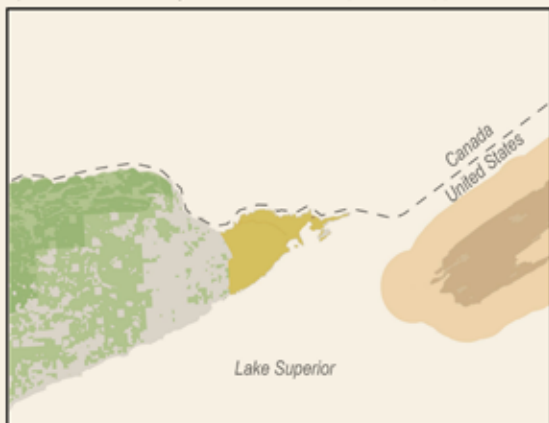
A last major theme is acknowledgement that colonization—through an ongoing series of policies, systems, and structures, attempting to sever the close connection within and between Native peoples, communities, and their lands—has made Tribes both more vulnerable to climate change, and has limited Native communities’ ability to adapt to climate change. The Removal and Allotment and Assimilation eras of federal Indian policy in the 19th century have severely hindered tribal ability to adapt to climate change. Tribal land bases being reduced through containment on reservation systems and later being parceled into individual tribal members and surplus land sold for non-Indian settlement resulted in a loss of over two-thirds of reservation lands and nearly 99% of historical lands throughout the United States and created a complexity of jurisdictions neighboring tribal lands.¹⁴ This also forced tribal sedentary conditions through the creation of reservations and structural assimilation of community members to individualized lifestyles, and led to a devastating loss of tribal land management authority.¹⁵ Research shows that land dispossession and forced sedentary living to specific jurisdictions created the groundwork for contemporary conditions in which Native peoples in the United States today face greater

vulnerabilities to their health and food security, lack access to culturally appropriate education, and have heightened exposures to contaminants.¹⁶ Multiple considerations, such as whether Tribes have corporate status, federal recognition, jurisdictional and land management authority, and water rights, among others, affect how tribal communities develop and implement climate adaptation endeavors.

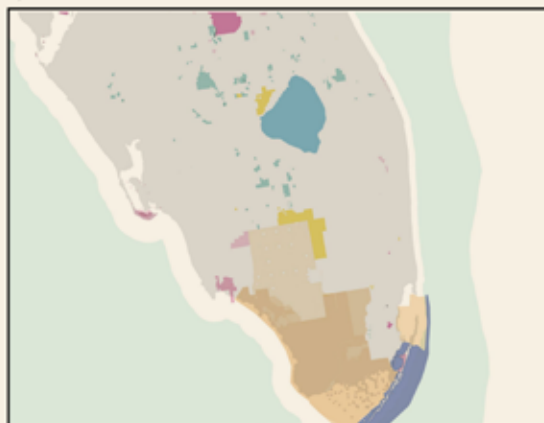
The Complexity of Land Tenure for Indigenous People



b) Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa



c) Miccosukee Tribe of Indians and Seminole Tribe of Florida



SUMMARY OF CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS ACROSS INDIAN COUNTRY

In November 2023, the U.S. Global Change Research Program published the fifth National Climate Assessment (NCA) that will serve as the nation's most comprehensive and current climate report. Contributions were made by 13 federal agencies and hundreds of scientists, public health officials, impacted community representatives, and others, including Tribes and Native Peoples.

The impacts of climate change are extremely complex and varied according to many factors like geographic location, regional topography, and latitude. Across all regions Tribes and Native communities face shared direct impacts to resources, which in turn, continues to impact community health, economies, cultural preservation and revitalization, and governance. The following provides an overview of these shared direct and indirect impacts discussed during ATNI's, BNGA's, NAFWS's, and USET's regional dialogue convenings.

Air

Over the last two decades, each region of the country experienced an overall warming, with the largest changes happening in the western half of the United States where average temperature increased by more than 1.5°F.¹⁷ As one result of this shift, recent record-setting years are projected to become more common in the near future with cold waves becoming less intense and heat waves more intense.¹⁸ The climate effects on air quality are not expected to occur uniformly across all locations, but unless counteracting efforts to improve air quality are implemented, climate change will worsen existing air pollution levels across the country.¹⁹ Tribes experience disproportionate impacts from poor air quality, including smoke/fine particulates, heat, and humidity, all of which

“Climate change continues to negatively affect the livelihoods, health, and cultural practices of Indigenous peoples, as well as the ecological resilience of their territories. Self-determination is key to implementing effective resilience strategies that meet the needs of Indigenous communities. Indigenous Peoples are leading climate adaptation and mitigation actions guided by Indigenous Knowledge and values.”

– Fifth National
Climate Assessment
Chapter 16. Tribes and
Indigenous Peoples

can be connected to climate change. Many Native people are land-based workers who also participate in other cultural and community activities outside. This includes farming, ranching, gardening, hunting, fishing, gathering, harvesting food, and holding ceremony. Rising temperatures, aridity, humidity, and poor air quality can put these people at risk of heat stroke or air quality-related health problems.

Water

The world's oceans have absorbed 93% of the excess heat from human-induced warming since the mid-20th century and are currently absorbing more than a quarter of the carbon dioxide emitted to the atmosphere annually, making the oceans warmer and more acidic.²⁰ Annual precipitation, since the beginning of the last century, has increased across most of the northern and eastern United States and decreased across much of the southern and western United States.²¹ Climate change is negatively impacting water quality, increasing ocean acidification, increasing drought, negatively impacting water and food security, causing coastal inundation, and, in places, increasing river flooding events. Some Native coastal communities are being forced to relocate to higher ground after experiencing more extreme storm surges, flooding, and sea level rise, which impacts cultural integrity and access to vital resources. The water scarcity conditions, especially those in the southwest region, set the stage for historically unique political and economic considerations, needs, and battles, including those involving ongoing tribal water rights negotiations and adjudication, water quantity and urban sprawl, and the major updates to tribal water infrastructure needed as a result of legacy federal underinvestment.

Biodiversity

Climate change combined with other stressors is overwhelming the capacity of ecosystems to self-regulate and buffer the impacts from extreme events like fires, floods, and droughts. Across the nation, terrestrial, freshwater, and marine organisms are adapting to climate change by altering individual characteristics, timing of biological events and activities, and transitioning to different geographic ranges. However, some species are unable to adapt and are experiencing a decline in population or even extinction. For example, sockeye salmon, a species of invaluable cultural importance to many Columbia River Tribes, are migrating earlier every year to spawn.²²

Climate change contributes to the spread of invasive species both within the U.S. and worldwide with invasive species being one of the leading drivers of biodiversity loss that impacts Tribes across regions. Many Tribes retain treaty rights to hunt, fish, and gather off reservation; these treaty rights are also directly threatened by climate change and its effects.

Governance

Although all Tribes and Native communities are unique in how they experience and adapt to climate change, many similar challenges—in areas of health and healthcare, cultural preservation and revitalization, economic development, and governance—exist. Due to historic and current policy barriers, Tribes are limited in their governance, management, and decision-making over lands and natural resources. This impedes tribal ability to implement climate initiatives that may build adaptive capacity or prevent impacts to other key areas of nation building including community health and culture.

Health

Existing health disparities across Indian Country, including disproportionately higher rates of asthma, cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer’s disease, diabetes, and obesity have direct linkages to increased vulnerability to climate change impacts, including changes in the pollen season and allergenicity, air quality, and extreme weather events.²³ The rampant emergence of COVID-19 and concurrent impacts of the climate crisis have been devastating public health threats for Tribes and Native communities. Legacy federal underinvestment in tribal water and sanitation, healthcare facilities, broadband, tribal workforce, and other infrastructure deficiencies contribute to the compounding public health impacts experienced by Native communities. Although climate change and COVID-19 have amplified health disparities and contributing stressors, many Native communities are continuing to strategically address the root causes of both pandemic and climate-related health impacts to build capacity and address prevention.

Culture

Climate change not only affects the health and economies of Native communities but also impacts cultural traditions and practices. In particular, the vulnerability of Native languages around the world is heightened due, in large part, to their relationship with the environment. The changing environment coupled with policy barriers continues to result in severe impacts to traditional cultural activities, the presence of culturally important plant and animal species, and the ability of Native

INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS

“While Tribes cannot be thought of as one monolithic group, diverse Indigenous persons are in dialogue about synergies that exist among their worldviews. Numerous Indigenous persons have articulated that their worldviews understand all things as an interconnected whole.”

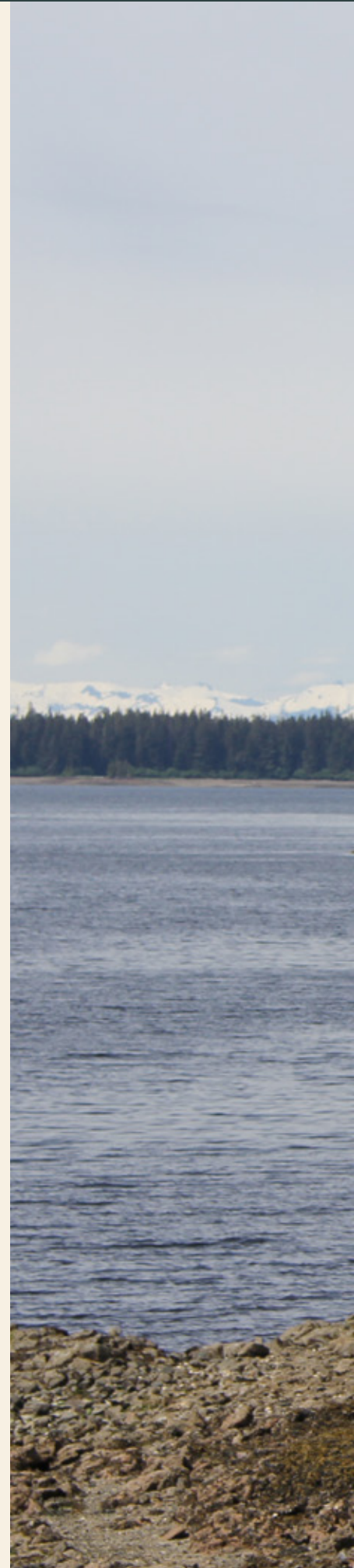
– Status of Tribes and Climate Change Working Group (STACCWG)
Status of Tribes and Climate Change Report

peoples to access natural and cultural resources. All these factors pose a threat to the acquisition, use, and revitalization of Native languages. As language shapes all worldviews, many Native communities have also reflected on their unique and complex experiences of climate change not being meaningfully understood or accounted for due to language and cultural barriers in tribal climate justice advocacy dialogues. Many Tribes continue to reiterate that protection of tribal understandings and language are essential for productive conversations on climate justice.

Land

For some Tribes, climate change impacts on community infrastructure is an existential threat forcing Tribes to pursue protection-in-place measures, moving infrastructure to different locations, and relocation. Many Tribes, especially those in Alaska Native villages or along the Pacific or Atlantic coastlines, are forced to consider relocation and displacement due to permafrost thaw, coastal erosion, and rising sea levels.

In November 2022, the Biden Harris Administration announced the launch of the nation's first "Voluntary Community-Driven Relocation Program," which provided \$115 million in competitive grants for only 11 Tribes. The program makes available two types of grants for severely impacted communities to implement relocation and managed retreat projects, and planning grants for communities to evaluate climate threats and mitigation strategies. Of the 11 Tribes, five are located within 100 miles of each other around Washington State's Olympic Peninsula experiencing inland flooding and coastal surges.²⁴ In 2022, the Newtok Village of Alaska, located on the Ninglick River, received a federal relocation grant through President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act. The village is experiencing extreme riverbank erosion due to degrading permafrost and increased intensity of ocean storms. Mertarvik, the new village site, is where the people of Newtok must relocate.²⁵ Tribes navigating the creation and implementation of relocation plans currently face overwhelming challenges in navigating the process with severely insufficient federal funding and are working hard to prevent exacerbating existing tribal disparities and injustice. According to a series of tribal listening sessions by the Department of the Interior, at least \$6.2 billion is needed nationwide over the next 50 years for these initiatives.²⁶





FUNDING BARRIERS, AND OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Barriers

- Despite federal trust and treaty obligations, Native Nations continue to experience limited access to competitive funding for climate change resiliency projects. Funding remains inaccessible to Native Nations with limited staffing capacity, regardless of significant climate change impacts and concerns.
- Federal natural and cultural resource funding can be very sector-, species-, or place-specific, whereas Native Nations are concerned about the health of whole communities and environments.
- Many Native Nations are forced to pursue multiple grants and search for piecemeal funding from different sources with varying objectives and timelines in order to address larger climate change impacts on their homelands and communities.²⁷
- Availability of federal funding for climate change adaptation is subject to congressional and administrative political power shifts. The inconsistency makes long-term and sustainable climate change adaptation plans, which are critical to tribal climate adaptation, difficult to enact.
- Funding opportunities for long-term climate change adaptation are limited. Although there have been recent advances, including the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, often tribal climate change resilience funding remains “project-based” and unsustainable for long-term climate change adaptation plan implementation with time horizons usually being one to two years.
- Nationwide, at least \$6.2 billion is needed over the next 50 years to protect, replace, and move existing tribal infrastructure. This amount includes at least \$175 million needed annually nationwide over the next 10 years.²⁸
- It can be challenging for Tribes to find the capacity to conduct climate planning with existing staff and resources, and grant requirements can create a heavy burden on smaller tribal administrations.
- Federal grants with cost-share requirements create barriers for Tribes. For example, Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Assistance Programs require 10% cost-share, which makes them inaccessible for most Alaska Native Communities.²⁹
- There is currently no specific federal funding for Tribes to address climate impacts on cultural resources, traditional cultural properties, and sacred sites.
- Most federal funding only supports the planning stage of climate adaptation, and most tribal entities have invested in a climate adaptation plan in some form. There is a growing need for funding to support the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation stages of adaptation.

Opportunities and Recommendations

- National climate policy must include an adequate revenue-raising mechanism to finance the costly adaptation, mitigation, and disaster response and recovery efforts necessary to address the disproportionate impact on Tribes.
- There is need to remove cost-share from tribal climate change-related grants that meet needs-based requirements, and federal funding made available for Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness, Assistance for Local Emergency Response Training, Hazardous Materials Instructor Training, Supplemental Public Sector Training, and Community Safety.³⁰
- Federal agencies should improve interagency coordination on climate adaptation funding goals, provide technical assistance for funding applications, and remove bureaucratic barriers to accessing assistance, in consultation with Tribes.
- Increased federal funding mechanisms reflective of the unique needs of Tribes, including resources for workforce development, capacity building, and implementation of climate adaptation projects, need to be explored and implemented. Examples are the EPA's General Assistance Program and the BIA's Tribal Resilience Program to fund full- and part-time positions for tribal climate change coordinators.
- Collaborations and partnerships with outside entities can lead to the co-production of relevant and important information. Strong relationships and trust are necessary to form the basis for relationships between Native Nations, governments, staff, inter-tribal organizations, and other existing networks.
- Specific funding should be allocated to Tribes to avoid competition from non-tribal applicants, as well as simplification of funding applications and technical assistance throughout the application process.
- Funding that supports integrating tribal workforce development and supporting tribal colleges and universities can lead to greater climate responsiveness and creation of pathways to train future generations of climate experts.
- Tribes need flexible long-term assurance with multi-year grant programs and projects that carry sizeable operational costs, including for climate adaptation and mitigation projects, projects to update or convert existing infrastructure, and those related to clean power and renewable energy generation.
- Tribes must be made eligible for existing and future federal natural resource funding programs for which states are eligible, but from which Tribes are currently excluded.
- The United States must establish conservation law enforcement funding within the BIA Division of Natural Resources at \$30 million annually and increase Conservation Law Enforcement Officers funding annually such that the funding amount keeps up with inflation and demand.³¹
- The Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) should be supported to include a minimum of \$97.5 million for each fiscal year to be dedicated to Tribes to assist with wildlife conservation, or any other fiscal avenue that will be used for recovering fish and wildlife species and preventing them from becoming endangered.³²
- The North American Grasslands Conservation Act should be supported to create a flexible and innovative grant program for voluntary, incentive-based conservation and restoration of North American grasslands.³³

- The Historic Preservation Enhancement Act should be supported to provide permanent authorization to the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) and double its deposits to \$300 million each fiscal year. The HPF, in part, provides funding to Tribal Historic Preservation Offices to conserve important tribal cultural and historic resources.
- Funding opportunities should be increased to support the transfer of Native knowledge and cultural practices to youth and the revitalization of Native languages.

POLICY BARRIERS, AND OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Barriers

- Tribes experience limited jurisdiction, decision-making authority, and access to traditional territory or places of cultural significance, which makes preservation of traditional cultural practices and comprehensive climate adaptation planning difficult.
- Tribal perspectives are underrepresented in federal climate change programs and initiatives. Many federal resource policies and mitigation efforts may not adequately consider potential impacts on treaty and reserved rights, reservation lands, ancestral territories, usual or accustomed areas, sacred sites, and cultural landscapes.
- There is a need for formal recognition within all federal agencies working with Tribes on the value of Native knowledge as contributing to the scientific, technical, social, and economic advancements of the nation and to our collective understanding of the environment. Guidance across agencies should be developed in consultation with Tribes on the sharing, application, and continuation of Native knowledge, and appropriate levels of funding allocated to Tribes.
- Tribes forced to consider relocation, manage retreat, and protection-in-place measures currently have limited options, frameworks, governance mechanisms, technical support and federal funding.
- Ecosystems and climatic regions are fragmented by multiple jurisdictions, and Tribes are often challenged in working with state, municipal, and non-tribal federal jurisdictions to address climate change impacts to interconnected natural, cultural, and economic resources.
- Recent court decisions have prevented and challenged the decision of Tribes who have tried to pursue placing lands into trust to provide community safety from sea level rise and to provide access to tribal species of cultural importance whose ranges or migrations have shifted.
- Polarization of many topics poses federal, and especially state, regulatory, and policy barriers to tribal

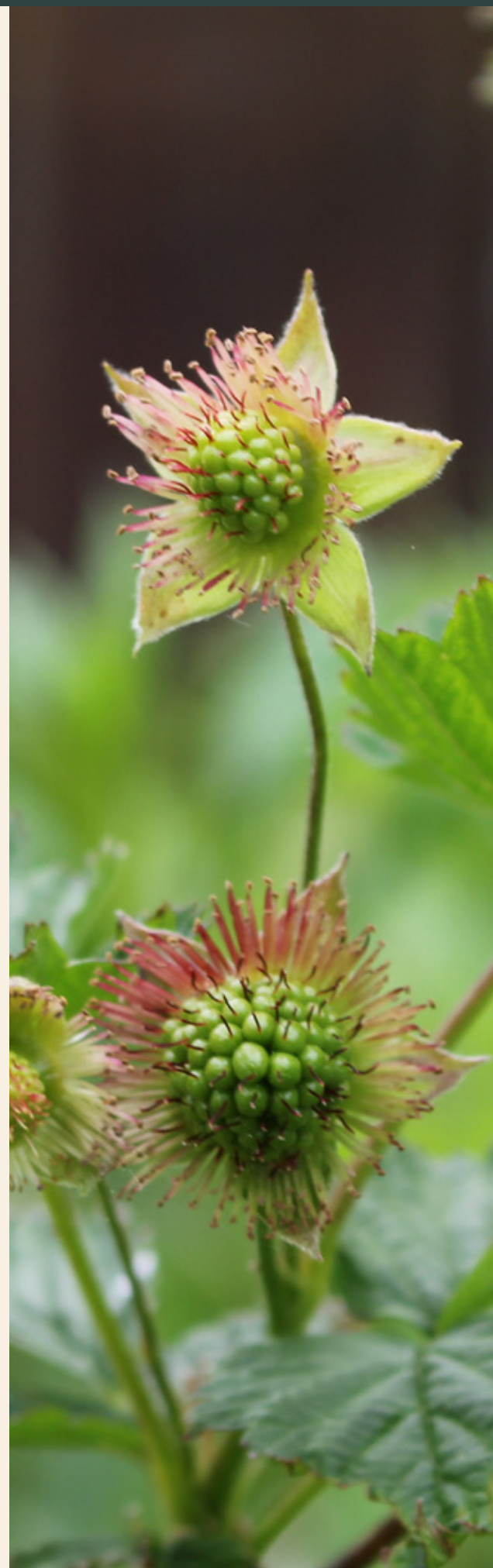
parity in the deployment and maintenance of tribal clean energy goals and projects.

- Tribes are expected to rapidly understand mass amounts of complex policy, funding programs, developing sciences and technologies, and planning and implementation of projects while also creating tribal laws to manage climate change adaptation and clean energy projects.
- Tribal communities are inadequately supported in policy, funding, and frameworks to transition away from the fossil fuel economy to more diversified economies.
- Federal climate change policies rarely consider the multiple dimensions of tribal community health, including the cultural, mental, physical, emotional, and behavioral impacts experienced by Tribes in response to severe climate change impacts.
- Federal addresses of tribal climate impacts and recovery generally employ a top-down approach, instead of supporting climate change adaptation planning at the community level through community-led decision-making, training, and capacity building. Although free, prior and informed consent is designed to protect Native peoples' rights, lands, resources, and cultures, institutions have found various loopholes to avoid a productive dialogue or honor the decision to withhold consent.

Opportunities and Recommendations

- A number of factors compel the federal government to address the severe and disproportionate impact that climate change will have on Native communities. At the heart of this obligation is the trust responsibility, which requires the federal government to protect tribal land and resources. Moreover, many aspects of tribal culture—for example, subsistence practices and water rights for tribal lands—have long been recognized and protected by treaties, statutes, and judicial decisions.
- All federal agencies, taskforces, and partner organizations should comply with and implement all executive memos, executive orders, and secretarial orders related to partnering with Tribes as Sovereign Nations, as co-decision makers regarding all policy, regulations, and laws related to climate change on or off each nation's respected reservations, ceded lands, and usual or accustomed areas.
- Federal actions should position Tribes for economic leadership in policies fostering the transition to carbon neutrality, and resolve legacy environmental justice compensation issues related to ongoing fossil fuel and historic nuclear development.
- Native knowledges, sciences, and data must be acknowledged, respected, and promoted in federal policies and programs related to climate change, with the free, prior, and informed consent of Tribes and Native communities.
- Tribes must have fair and equitable representation on all federal climate committees, working groups, and initiatives in which states, local governments, and other stakeholders are represented.³⁴

- The federal government should establish a high-level interagency tribal government task force to examine and propose solutions to close gaps across federal agency relationships and programs with Tribes, and to develop, recommend, and implement tribal-specific solutions that enable agencies to support and foster tribal climate resilient planning and investment.³⁵
- Land-management and administrative decision-making should involve consultation with Tribes early and often, co-production of actionable science, and the incorporation of local knowledge. Tribes should be supported in implementing tribally led planning and solutions, partnerships, and cooperative efforts.
- Special measures at the municipal, state, and federal levels need to be taken to provide tribal member access to and management of off-reservation areas to promote the retention of culturally valued species.
- Non-tribal policy and funding institutions should provide funding and technical assistance to Tribes and Native communities that request support in developing tribally sanctioned, community-driven data to address tribal climate change impacts. The data should be built centering tribal needs, concerns, and perspectives, and involve tribal collaboration.
- Federal research and implementation by and with Tribes should be supported that specifically incorporates Native knowledges into health and mental health treatments, intervention activities, and programs in response to climate change impacts.
- A growing number of Tribes, tribal consortiums, and Native communities have advanced and adopted laws and policies to recognize nature as a living entity with inherent rights to exist, regenerate, evolve, and restore. The federal government should support the rights of nature and these efforts of Tribes to recognize, implement, and enforce these rights within tribal law and governance.



CONCLUSION

From coast to coast, Tribes and Native communities are continuing a long legacy of building strategies, technologies, and relationships to adapt to the changing environment. As the environment changes and Tribes navigate political and economic landscapes, they remain steadfast in their commitment to protect resources that have sustained communities since time immemorial. The social and cultural cohesion within and between Native communities provides a foundation for the momentous efforts being led today by ATNI, BNGA, NAFWS, and USET around building community capacity and strengthening shared networks for expertise and advocacy. Tribes across Indian Country not only are leading projects that benefit their communities but also are quickly becoming recognized at the national and global level as climate leaders striving toward justice that benefits all of humanity and our shared environment. ***As global populations seek insights to cope with ongoing impacts of climate change, there will be a continual need to support Tribes and Native communities at all levels to ensure the health of a world that we can all celebrate and honor for generations to come.***

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