



FOUR DIRECTIONS
MANAGEMENT SERVICES LTD.

Climate Change Adaptation and Resiliency Workshop Nechako Watershed – “The Water that Connects Us” FINAL REPORT

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The workshop discussions on climate change adaptation and resilience in the Nechako Watershed highlighted a strong, collective commitment to addressing the region's urgent climate challenges. Participants emphasized the importance of collaboration, inclusivity, and integrating Indigenous knowledge into climate action strategies. These conversations revealed a shared understanding of the interconnectedness of the region's environmental, social, and economic issues. Despite this commitment, several challenges were identified, including balancing diverse perspectives, ensuring equitable participation, and securing sustainable funding for long-term resilience.

PRIMARY OBSERVATIONS

The discussions during the workshop highlighted several key themes that are central to addressing the climate challenges facing the Nechako Watershed. These insights were drawn from rich exchanges among a diverse group of participants, including Indigenous communities, local governments, industry leaders, scientists, and community members. Together, these conversations emphasized the urgency of the climate crisis, the interconnectedness of environmental and social issues, and the necessity for a collective and coordinated response.

Commitment to Cross-Regional Collaboration and Co-Governance

A recurring theme throughout the day was the need for robust collaboration across governance levels—local, provincial, and Indigenous. Participants consistently emphasized that climate change transcends geographic and jurisdictional boundaries, and as such, solutions must be coordinated across regions and sectors. Effective governance requires more than just alignment—it requires cross-sectoral collaboration to avoid operational silos that could hinder progress.

Observation: There is strong support for establishing a co-governance framework that ensures diverse rightsholders and stakeholders have an active role in climate adaptation decisions. However, achieving this will involve navigating challenges such as aligning differing governance models and perspectives, especially when integrating Indigenous knowledge and governance structures into the conversation. Discussions will need to be guided on how to balance these perspectives and address potential power imbalances to ensure that all voices, particularly Indigenous ones, are heard equitably.

Shared Ethical Responsibility for Future Generations

A common thread that emerged was a deep, collective sense of responsibility—not only to address immediate climate impacts but also to ensure that the environment is preserved for future generations. Water, air, wildlife, and ecosystems were framed as interconnected and vital for survival, with participants emphasizing the need for long-term thinking in climate adaptation strategies.

Observation: The ethical responsibility to future generations provides a strong and motivating foundation for action. However, there is a clear challenge in balancing the urgency of immediate climate impacts with the need for long-term solutions. Ongoing discussions that maintain focus on this long-term vision while addressing the immediate and pressing needs of communities will be essential to sustaining momentum and fostering a balanced approach to climate resilience.

Ongoing Discussions on Inclusivity and Multigenerational Dialogue **Emphasis on Inclusivity and Multigenerational Dialogue**

The inclusion of a broad range of rightsholders and stakeholders was seen as essential for effective climate adaptation. This includes Indigenous communities, youth, elders, and diverse sectors such as health, forestry, and agriculture. The integration of both scientific research and traditional Indigenous knowledge was seen as vital for creating holistic solutions to climate challenges. The participation of youth was specifically emphasized for ensuring long-term continuity in climate resilience efforts, while elders were valued for their wisdom in guiding communities through change.

Observation: While there is clear consensus on the need for inclusive dialogue, challenges remain in how to integrate different knowledge systems—scientific and traditional—into the decision-making process. Ensuring that Indigenous knowledge is not only respected but actively incorporated into climate solutions will require careful attention to power dynamics and how these systems are presented in shared spaces. It will need to be ensured that knowledge-sharing is equitable, and that diverse voices are integrated meaningfully into solutions.

Local Control and Empowerment

A prominent theme was the necessity for local control in climate adaptation strategies. Participants emphasized the need to remove bureaucratic barriers and empower local communities to take charge of decision-making and resource management. Tailoring solutions to local needs, rather than relying solely on top-down strategies, was seen as crucial for ensuring that the unique challenges of each community are addressed.

Observation: While there is strong support for local control, this approach must be balanced with the broader priorities of provincial and national governments, as well as industry interests. It will be important to have discussions around how to empower local communities while ensuring that their actions are aligned with larger regional and national climate goals. This balancing act will require sensitivity to

local autonomy while also ensuring coherence in larger climate resilience strategies.

Urgency in Addressing Climate Challenges

The climate challenges facing the Nechako Watershed—such as water security, wildfire risks, and ecosystem degradation—are immediate and already being felt by communities. Participants were acutely aware of the risks posed by current forestry practices, the increasing frequency and intensity of wildfires, and the diminishing availability of water resources.

Observation: The urgency to act on these climate issues is palpable and serves as a driving force for action. However, there is also a need to ensure that this urgency does not overshadow the necessity for structured, long-term planning. Discussions must be guided to break down immediate, short-term actions in a way that is aligned with broader, long-term resilience goals. Balancing immediate response efforts with sustainable, long-term strategies will be critical for ensuring lasting success.

Need for Strategic Resources and Sustainable Funding

A consistent theme in the discussions was the need for adequate resources—both financial and human—to support climate adaptation efforts. Participants stressed that sustainable funding models are essential for local capacity-building and for empowering communities to take on leadership roles in adaptation efforts.

Observation: The need for sustainable funding reflects a deeper concern about the longevity and effectiveness of adaptation initiatives. Participants emphasized that the reliance on short-term funding cycles is insufficient for long-term climate resilience. There will be a need to help communities, rightsholders and stakeholders explore innovative funding models and strategies that ensure long-term financial sustainability, while also addressing bureaucratic barriers that can slow down resource access and distribution.

Communication, Trust, and Relationship Building

Effective communication and relationship-building were seen as essential to the success of climate adaptation efforts. Participants identified the importance of fostering open dialogue not only across sectors but also across generations and communities. Building trust, particularly between Indigenous communities, local governments, and other stakeholders, was seen as critical to ensuring the success of collaborative efforts.

Observation: Given the diversity of rightsholders and stakeholders involved, power dynamics and potential mistrust could pose challenges to effective communication. Safe and transparent spaces must be created for dialogue,

ensuring that everyone feels heard and respected. Relationship-building will be foundational to long-term collaboration, and trust will be essential in overcoming challenges and fostering equitable partnerships.

Integrating Cultural and Scientific Knowledge

The integration of cultural and scientific knowledge emerged as another key observation. Participants recognized that traditional Indigenous knowledge, honed over generations, offers invaluable insights into sustainable land stewardship and climate resilience. At the same time, scientific knowledge plays an important role in developing climate models, assessing risks, and proposing mitigation strategies.

Observation: The challenge lies in ensuring that both knowledge systems are integrated in a way that is respectful and productive. Navigating the complexities of combining these systems to create effective and culturally grounded adaptation strategies will be needed. A respectful, balanced approach will be essential to ensuring that both Indigenous and scientific perspectives are equally valued in the decision-making process.

Sustainable, Long-Term Vision for Resilience

Throughout the workshop, there was a strong emphasis on the need for a long-term vision for climate resilience. Participants spoke about the importance of sustainability, intergenerational responsibility, and adaptive strategies that can withstand future climate impacts. While immediate action is critical, there was a shared understanding that lasting change requires careful, long-term planning.

Observation: Although long-term vision is essential, it is important to ensure that short-term actions do not get overlooked. Support must be given to rightsholders and stakeholders to develop actionable, short-term steps that align with longer-term goals, ensuring that both are integrated into a cohesive strategy. This dual focus will be necessary for maintaining momentum while also laying the groundwork for enduring climate resilience.

Economic and Industrial Impacts

Finally, participants acknowledged the complex relationship between economic development and environmental protection. Transitioning industries such as forestry, agriculture, and energy toward more sustainable practices was identified as crucial for long-term climate resilience. While the shift may be challenging, it is necessary to ensure that economic activities are aligned with environmental protection goals.

Observation: Bridging the gap between ecological concerns and economic realities will require careful navigation. Discussions will need to be guided toward solutions

that respect both environmental integrity and the economic livelihoods of communities. This will involve finding ways to transition industries to more sustainable practices without undermining regional economies.

POST-SESSION FEEDBACK

Several important points emerged during the workshop discussions that could enhance the effectiveness of climate adaptation efforts in the Nechako Watershed. Participants highlighted the need to address key areas to strengthen collaboration and inclusivity:

- **Building Trust and Relationships:**
 - Many participants emphasized the importance of focusing on long-term relationship-building between stakeholders. Trust-building, especially between Indigenous communities, local governments, and other groups, was seen as essential for successful climate adaptation. The feedback stressed that it's not just about bringing people into the room, but about fostering genuine partnerships and collaboration.
- **Capacity and Funding Concerns:**
 - A key challenge raised was the overlap of goals among various groups, which sometimes creates difficulties in securing adequate funding and resources. Instead of competition, participants advocated for more cooperative efforts to align stakeholders and resources more effectively.
- **Increased First Nations Participation:**
 - There was a strong call for broader First Nations involvement, with some participants suggesting that a member from the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) could sit on the committee to ensure diverse perspectives are represented.
- **Increasing Relevance of NWR to First Nations:**
 - Participants emphasized the need to make the Nechako Watershed Restoration (NWR) efforts more relevant to First Nations communities. Ensuring their engagement and actively including their input in decision-making processes is crucial for the success of climate adaptation planning.
- **Integration of Knowledge Systems:**
 - A strong focus was placed on improving the integration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Western scientific knowledge. Participants stressed that both knowledge systems should be respected and actively incorporated into decision-making, creating more holistic and culturally grounded adaptation strategies.
- **Long-Term Planning Focus:**
 - The feedback underscored the importance of adopting a long-term, seven-generation approach to planning. This ensures that the decisions made today will support a sustainable future for generations to come. While immediate action on climate change is critical, maintaining a long-term vision is essential for achieving lasting climate resilience.

- **Youth Engagement:**
 - There was a strong call for greater youth involvement in climate resilience efforts. Including youth is essential to ensuring that climate adaptation work continues across generations, with the next generation actively engaged in finding and implementing solutions.

“COLLABORATION AS THE NEW MISSION STATEMENT”: THE IMPORTANCE OF FIRST NATIONS PARTICIPATION

First Nations participation is essential for the success of climate adaptation efforts in the Nechako Watershed. Meaningful engagement requires more than just inclusion; it involves building trust and ensuring that Indigenous communities see tangible benefits from their involvement. Challenges such as capacity limitations, funding constraints, and diverse community needs must be addressed to foster effective partnerships. Practical solutions could include offering a seat on the committee for a BCAFN representative and sending the report to First Nations for feedback on further involvement.

To enhance the relevance of the Nechako Watershed Resilience (NWR) initiative, it's crucial to tailor efforts to the specific cultural, environmental, and socio-economic contexts of First Nations communities. Building relationships over time and creating spaces for shared decision-making will strengthen partnerships and empower communities to lead climate resilience efforts.

POSSIBLE STEPS FORWARD

Based on the key themes and findings from the workshop discussions, here are some possible steps forward to ensure continued progress on climate change adaptation and resilience efforts in the Nechako Watershed:

1. Advocate for Policy Change and Support Green Energy Transitions

- **Action:** Advocate for local, provincial, and national policy changes that prioritize green energy solutions, climate-resilient infrastructure, and sustainable agricultural practices. This includes promoting policies that support the transition to renewable energy sources, low-carbon solutions, and investments in sustainable resource management that align with climate adaptation goals.
- **Outcome:** Systemic changes in policies that promote climate resilience and the transition to a low-carbon economy. By aligning policy at all levels with the goals of climate adaptation, these efforts will create a more supportive environment for sustainable practices and green energy transitions.

2. Create a Regional Climate Adaptation Action Plan

- **Action:** Develop a region-wide, comprehensive climate adaptation action plan that integrates both scientific research and traditional Indigenous knowledge. This plan should be informed by local and regional climate data, the perspectives of Indigenous communities, and the insights from community-level adaptation

strategies. It should address key climate vulnerabilities such as water security, wildfire risk, ecosystem degradation, and extreme weather events.

- **Outcome:** A unified, long-term strategy that addresses the region's most pressing climate challenges. By combining diverse knowledge systems, this action plan will ensure that climate adaptation is responsive to the unique needs of the Nechako Watershed. It will also provide clear guidance on how to mitigate and adapt to emerging climate risks and ensure the resilience of both natural and human systems.

3. Develop a Climate Resilience Education and Awareness Program

- **Action:** Launch a climate resilience education initiative that engages a wide range of community members, including youth, elders, industry professionals, and local leaders, in the science and practical aspects of climate adaptation. This program should include workshops, training sessions, and educational campaigns designed to raise awareness about the impacts of climate change and the actions individuals and communities can take to build resilience.
- **Outcome:** Increased public awareness and a more informed community that understands the challenges posed by climate change and the steps needed to adapt. This initiative will foster local expertise, create a shared understanding of the importance of climate resilience, and inspire collective action towards protecting the watershed for future generations.

4. Develop Climate-Resilient Infrastructure and Wildfire Prevention Strategies

- **Action:** Implement infrastructure adaptation strategies that focus on improving the resilience of critical infrastructure (e.g., roads, water systems, energy networks) to climate change impacts. This includes prioritizing measures to prevent and mitigate wildfire risks, such as creating defensible space around communities and investing in wildfire-proof building techniques, as well as flood protection strategies for vulnerable areas.
- **Outcome:** Reduced vulnerability of communities and infrastructure to climate-driven disasters such as wildfires and floods. The adoption of climate-resilient infrastructure will ensure that vital systems can continue to function during extreme weather events, thereby safeguarding community well-being and reducing recovery times after disasters.

5. Empower Local Communities and Strengthen Capacity

- **Action:** Invest in capacity-building initiatives that empower local communities, particularly Indigenous communities, to lead and manage climate resilience efforts. This includes providing training and resources to community leaders, Indigenous knowledge holders, youth, and local organizations. Programs should focus on enhancing leadership skills, building technical knowledge in areas such as climate science and environmental monitoring, and fostering a strong sense of ownership over local adaptation efforts.

- **Outcome:** Strengthened local knowledge and skills that ensure communities are capable of driving their own adaptation efforts. By increasing local capacity, this initiative will help communities become more self-reliant, reduce dependence on external resources, and increase their ability to respond to climate challenges effectively and sustainably.

6. Establish a Co-Governance and Collaborative Decision-Making Framework

- **Action:** Develop and implement a comprehensive co-governance model that actively involves all key rightsholders and stakeholders, including Indigenous communities, local governments, industries, scientists, and community groups. This model should prioritize inclusion, transparency, and respect for Indigenous rights and governance structures, ensuring meaningful participation at every stage of climate adaptation planning and decision-making processes.
- **Outcome:** Foster a collaborative decision-making process where diverse voices are heard and respected. This will avoid siloed approaches, break down barriers between sectors, and ensure that climate adaptation strategies reflect the needs and priorities of all communities. The model will promote shared responsibility and create a unified framework for resource management that benefits all stakeholders.

7. Foster Intergenerational Knowledge Exchange and Relationship Building

- **Action:** Facilitate regular dialogues and collaborative workshops between youth and elders, Indigenous knowledge holders, scientists, and other community members to exchange traditional knowledge, scientific insights, and climate adaptation strategies. These intergenerational knowledge exchanges should prioritize reciprocal learning and respect for all forms of knowledge.
- **Outcome:** Stronger intergenerational connections that bridge the gap between traditional Indigenous knowledge and Western science. These relationships will foster mutual respect and understanding, ensuring that climate resilience efforts are informed by diverse perspectives. The exchange of knowledge will strengthen the continuity of adaptation strategies, ensuring they are grounded in both tradition and innovation.

8. Implement Ecosystem Restoration, Conservation Projects, and Sustainable Resource Management

- **Action:** Prioritize and fund ecosystem restoration and conservation projects focused on enhancing biodiversity, restoring critical habitats (such as salmon streams), and protecting vital ecosystems that support water security, wildlife, and community well-being. Simultaneously, promote sustainable resource management practices in industries such as forestry, agriculture, and fisheries to ensure they align with climate adaptation goals.
- **Outcome:** Improved ecological health and the restoration of key habitats in the Nechako Watershed, which will enhance the region's resilience to climate change impacts. These efforts will also support long-term environmental stewardship by

ensuring that industries operating within the watershed contribute to climate resilience through sustainable practices.

9. Monitor, Evaluate, and Adapt the Climate Adaptation Strategy

- **Action:** Develop and implement a robust system for monitoring, evaluating, and adapting the climate adaptation strategy over time. This system should incorporate feedback loops that allow for the continuous assessment of progress, effectiveness, and emerging needs. Adaptation strategies should remain flexible and dynamic, adjusting to new climate data, community input, and evolving conditions.
- **Outcome:** An adaptive management approach that allows for real-time course correction based on lessons learned and emerging climate risks. This will ensure that the climate adaptation strategy remains relevant and effective over the long term, while being responsive to the changing needs of the community.

10. Secure Sustainable Funding and Remove Bureaucratic Barriers

- **Action:** Establish long-term, sustainable funding mechanisms that support grassroots climate adaptation projects and local resilience initiatives. These funding mechanisms should be accessible, transparent, and designed to provide continuous support for projects that align with regional climate adaptation priorities. Additionally, streamline regulatory processes and remove bureaucratic barriers that hinder local communities' ability to make decisions and access necessary resources.
- **Outcome:** A system that provides consistent and reliable funding for climate adaptation efforts, ensuring the long-term success of community-driven projects. By removing bureaucratic obstacles, communities will be empowered to make timely decisions and implement solutions that are directly relevant to their needs, without being delayed by complex administrative processes.

11. Strengthen Communication, Partnerships, and Industry Collaboration

- **Action:** Establish regular communication channels and collaborative forums for dialogue between all relevant stakeholders, including local governments, Indigenous communities, industries, scientists, and other organizations. Foster partnerships with the private sector to embed climate adaptation into economic activities, such as sustainable resource extraction, tourism, and energy production.
- **Outcome:** Improved transparency, trust, and alignment across sectors, ensuring that all stakeholders are working toward common climate resilience goals. These partnerships will also enable the private sector to contribute resources, innovation, and expertise to support climate adaptation efforts, helping to reduce vulnerabilities and enhance sustainability.

12. Strengthen Regional Emergency Preparedness and Climate Resilience Plans

- **Action:** Enhance regional emergency preparedness and climate resilience plans, ensuring that communities are well-equipped to handle climate-driven disasters such as wildfires, floods, and droughts. These plans should include clear guidelines for coordination across sectors, as well as strategies for vulnerable populations, such as Indigenous communities and rural areas.
- **Outcome:** Increased community resilience to climate-driven disasters through better preparedness, response, and recovery strategies. Strengthening emergency plans will ensure that communities can respond effectively to climate shocks, minimizing harm and ensuring quick recovery.

CONCLUSION

Moving forward, it is essential to foster trust, empower local communities, and maintain a focus on both immediate actions and long-term solutions. The success of climate adaptation in the Nechako Watershed will depend on navigating complex dynamics, ensuring all rightsholders and stakeholders are engaged, and aligning efforts toward a resilient, adaptable, and sustainable future. Achieving this vision will require sustained collaboration, strategic resource allocation, and ongoing capacity-building. Through these collective efforts, the region can not only respond effectively to climate impacts but also protect its natural resources for generations to come.