



Local Governments
for Sustainability
Les gouvernements locaux
pour le développement durable
CANADA

Indigenous Values and First Nation Leadership in Climate Action

Slide decks presented by the First
Nations Leadership Council.



'UY' SKWEYUL - IT IS A GOOD DAY

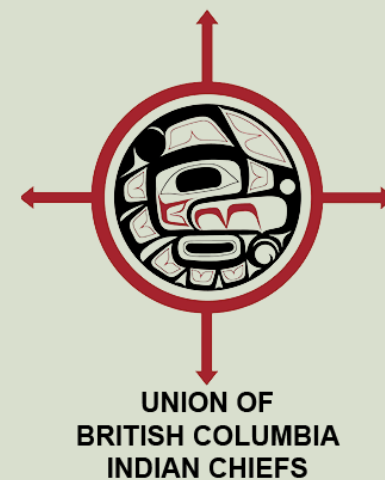
FROM PLANNING TO ACTION

**Supporting First Nations-
led Climate Action and
Leadership in BC**



First Nations Leadership Council

The FNLC, or First Nations Leadership Council, is a collaborative political partnership in British Columbia. It brings together the BC Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) to advocate for and support the interests of First Nations in the province. It is mandated to develop high-level strategies and actions to bring about unified change in government policy in a collective effort to improve the lives of all B.C. First Nations citizens.



UBCIC



Founded in 1969, UBCIC is a First Nations organization in BC dedicated to supporting the efforts of First nations to affirm and defend inherent and constitutionally protected Title and Rights, ensuring the Crown honours its obligations to respect those rights.

BCFNJC



The BCAFN is a Provincial Territorial Organization (PTO) of the Assembly of First nations (AFN), representing and advocating for the Aboriginal Title, Rights and Treaty Rights of First Nations in BC.


FNS



The FNS represents those First Nations participating in or supportive of the modern treaty negotiation process in BC, and provides a forum to address issues related to treaty negotiations as well as other issues of common concern.



Key Sectorial Areas

A photograph of a bald eagle in flight, its wings spread wide, flying over a snowy mountain range. The eagle is positioned in the upper left quadrant of the image. The background shows a vast, snow-covered landscape with evergreen trees and distant mountain peaks under a clear blue sky.

Amplifying First Nations' voices as first peoples and original caretakers of these lands

First Nations are disproportionately affected by the climate emergency. The FNLC, as mandated by and in collaboration with First Nations in BC, launched the BC First Nations Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2022.

The Strategy and Action Plan encourages First Nations communities from all regions of the province to put forward recommendations for climate action that align with First Nations' values, worldviews, and priorities.

Overview



- In 2019, Chiefs in BC mandated the FNLC to prepare a draft First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan
- The Strategy was endorsed in 2022 as a living document
- accompanied by an Executive Summary and 20 Urgent Calls for Action
- Comprehensive and province wide in scope
- Respects diversity and self-determination of First Nations, but also seeks to respond to the needs and priorities of First Nations in BC as a collective body.

Resolutions: UBCIC/No. 2022-04; BCAFN/No. 06/2022; and FNS/No. 0222.06





What is the Strategy?

As mandated by the First Nations Leadership Council's Resolutions, the strategy had to:

- Align with UN IPCC recommendations on GHG emission reductions
- Strengthen First Nations climate leadership to reduce vulnerabilities
- Seeks to address the climate crisis and its impacts on First Nations in BC
- Co-created with First Nations and grounded in Indigenous knowledge, laws, and worldviews
- Upholds self-determination and Title, Rights, and Treaty Rights

Vision

We, the first peoples of the lands, assert our inherent Title Rights, and jurisdiction to lead the response to the climate crisis. We exercise our knowledge, laws, and processes in our self-determined ways to care for the Earth and ensure health and stability for future generations.

Four Pathways

- Inherent Title and Rights
- Capacity and Leadership
- Land and Water Protection
- Climate Response and Preparedness





BC First Nations Climate Leadership Agenda

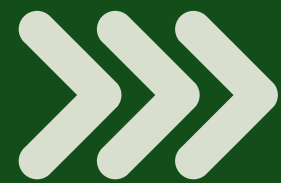


Urgent Need for Action

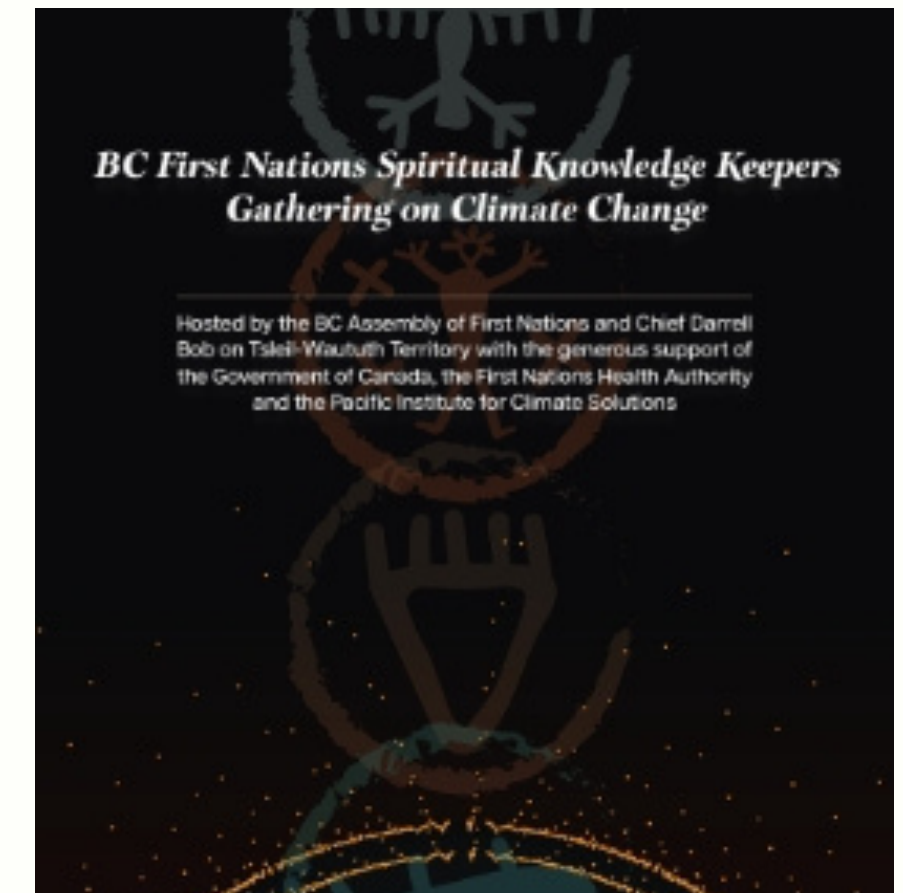


- 2023 was the worst wildfire year in BC's history. In 2024, BC has continued to experience significant climate change impacts, particularly wildfires, floods, and droughts.
- The total economic costs associated with the 2021 heat dome, floods, wildfires and landslides were estimated between \$10.6 to \$17.1 billion.
- The interconnected climate and biodiversity crises pose a dire threat to the survival, culture and ways of life of First Nations.
- The climate crisis is outpacing B.C.'s and Canada's ability to adapt. This crisis is exponentially affecting First Nations and their territories.
- There is an inherent disconnect between colonial climate policy and First Nations Worldviews.





Building on Past Climate Work





Paddling Forward with One Heart and One Mind

- Built on the BC First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan and other foundational First Nations climate engagement and work.
- Reflects localized needs & priorities elevated to the provincial scale
- Developed to enable transformational change in the federal system to:
 - Empower First Nations' meaningful involvement in national climate governance; and
 - Uphold First Nations' self-determination and inherent rights and foster community-based climate leadership.



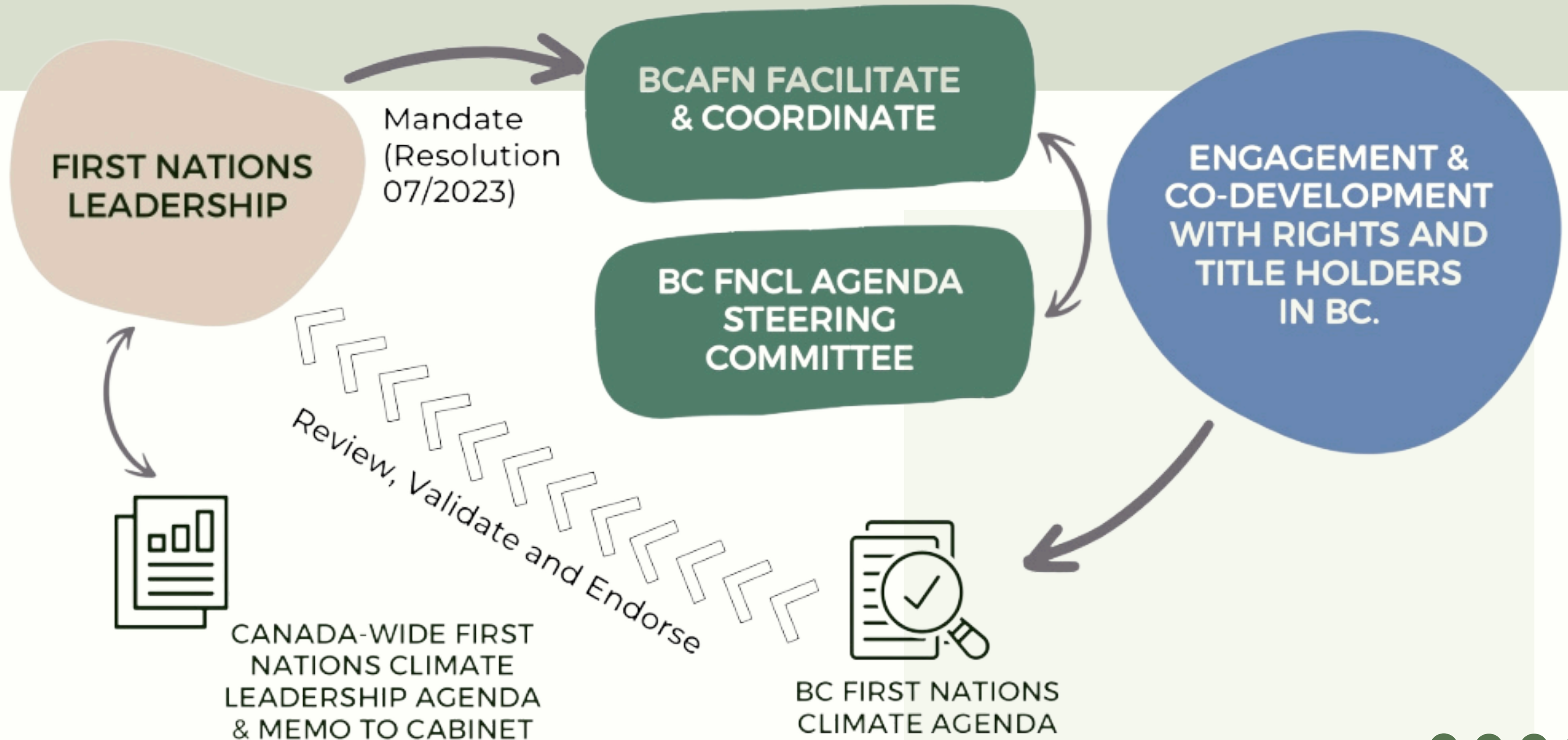
It is essential to ground the BC FNCL Agenda work and the implementation of the BC First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan in Ceremony and with guidance from the Knowledge Keepers.

“We have to continue this dialogue without creating more silos. We have to do ceremony. More ceremony, less silos. We must each do our own work so that we can work together. I am able to dream again.”

Knowledge Keepers' Mandate

1. Restore First Nations responsibility for the Land through self-determination, jurisdiction and self-governance.
2. Revitalize and exercise language, culture and Ceremony and share our worldview for the benefit of all beings.
3. Revitalize and strengthen Sacred and Natural Law.
4. Validate Traditional/Indigenous Knowledge.
5. Recognize that Climate Change is the inevitable result of the disconnect from the teachings of Natural Law.
6. Promote healing, starting with individuals.
7. Respect women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples. What is happening to them is tied to what is happening to the Land.
8. Promote safety, connection and belonging for men so that they can continue to contribute to healthy systems.
9. Make decisions with Seven Generations in mind. Create a paradigm shift that re-establishes ecosystems' inherent value, not their value as resources.
10. Protect the Waters and the salmon.
11. Rebuild relationships with each other and the Land.
12. Prioritize the education of our youth; break intergenerational cycles and remind them of their purpose.
13. Our Nations must stop working in silos.
14. People of all four directions must take ownership and responsibility for their actions and work with First Nations to create a new path forward in relationship with Mother Earth.

BC FNLC Agenda Process



Engagement

- Virtual Kick-Off and Engagement Session on the Co-development of the BC FNCL Agenda
- General and Youth Climate Action Survey
- BCAFN has hosted eight In-Person Regional Engagement Sessions in Prince George, Fort St John, Kamloops, Cranbrook, Haida Gwaii, Terrace, Chilliwack and Campbell River
- Meetings with First Nation Organizations, Networks and Modern Treaty Nations
- Virtual Update & Engagement Session
- Update Presentation at the BCAFN Assembly on October 8
- Hosted Chiefs & Leadership Engagement Session on October 21.
- BC FNCL Agenda report was formally endorsed by the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly via Resolution 05/2025



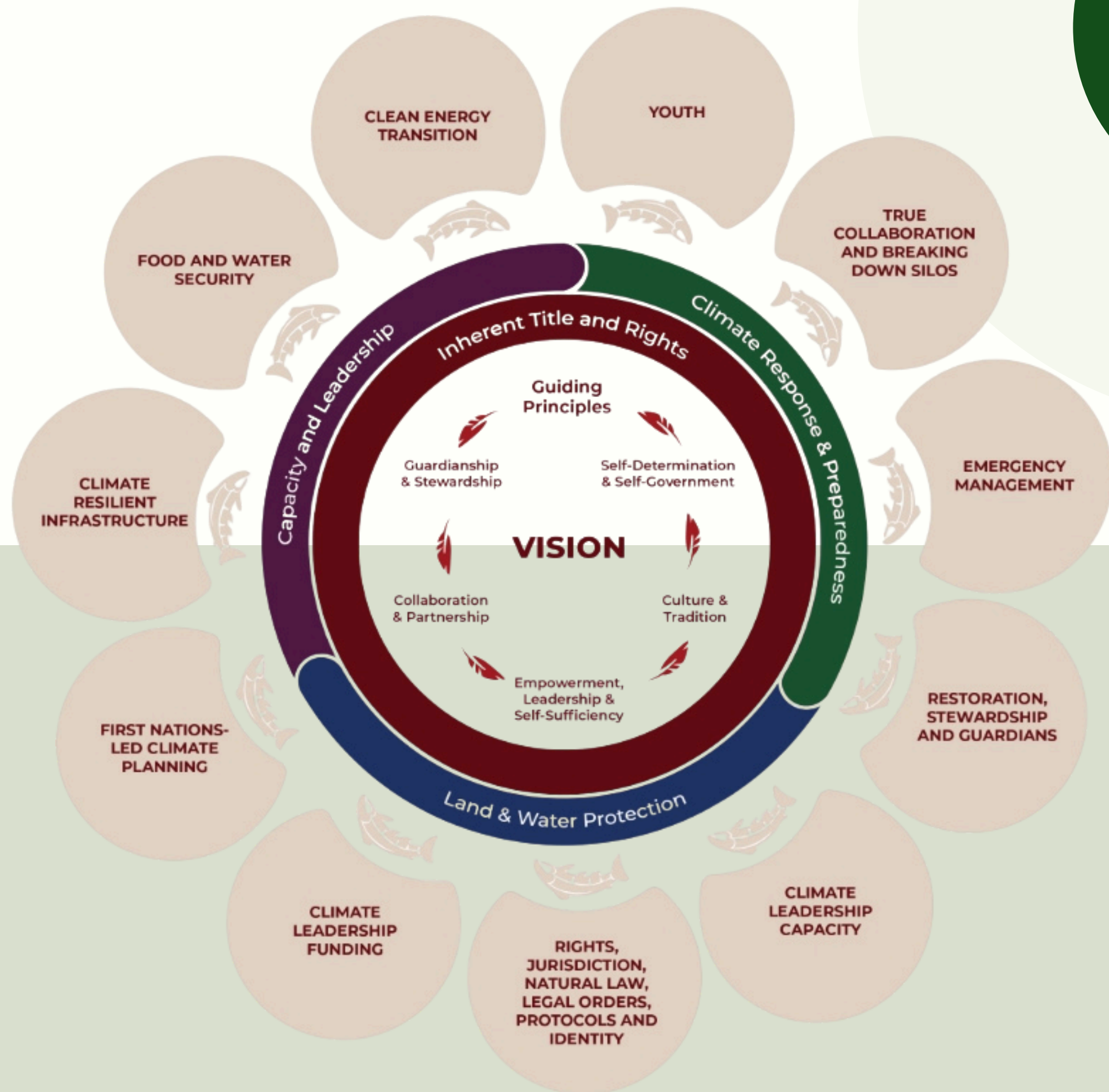


Unique Opportunity for Action



- With the UN Declaration legislation adopted at a federal and provincial level, there is a unique opportunity in BC and Canada to strategically and cooperatively work together.
- We heard over and over, “WE WANT ACTION.”
- The BC FNCL Agenda's high-level recommendations are presented as a web of interconnected recommendations to enable transformational change.





Reflections and Lessons Learned

- Short timelines and lack of sufficient budget for engagement. Important for the government to go to the 204 Nations and build meaningful relationships.
- Issues with lack of transparency and misalignment with the colonial ways of working.
- The immense complexity of the federal machinery.
- Lack of a clear path to full implementation. Accountability mechanisms?
- Transformational change requires a long-term commitment beyond the political agendas and election cycles.





We Mirror What We See

- Climate anxiety is real. Healing and ceremony are essential. “The health of the land is a reflection of the health of the people.”
- There is a lack of urgent climate action by crown governments. We need self-determined solutions that are grounded the are feasible and action.
- Two eyed seeing and bridging the gap between colonial policy and First Nation worldviews.
- Breaking silos and working together is essential.
- Important to look at First Nations climate action and environmental justice from a different lens.
- Relationships are central to climate action.

Implementation Efforts



Underpinning FNLC’s
climate work:



FNLC current
projects:



Potential FNLC future
project:



- True collaboration and breaking silos
- Rights, jurisdiction, natural law, legal orders, protocol and identity



- Climate governance model, including climate funding (nearly complete)
- Climate capacity assessment (May 2025)
- First Nations-led Climate Action Planning Toolkit/Guide (currently scoping)
- First Nations Climate Action Curriculum(starting spring 2025)



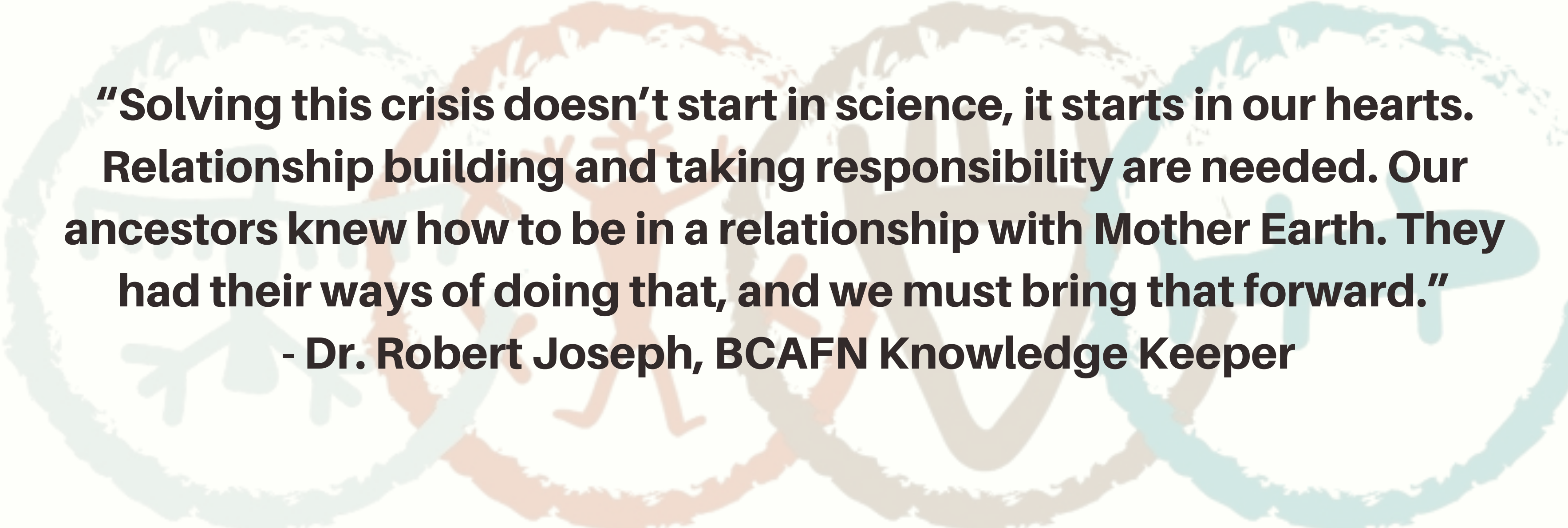
- Youth (starting summer 2025)

Climate Capacity Assessment

- **Working with Coastal First Nations – Great Bear Initiative (CFN-GBI) and Pinna Sustainability**
- **Focused on assessing disparities among communities in their capacity to respond to the climate crisis and participate in provincial climate change decision-making.**
- **Identify needs, barriers, and challenges that limit the implementation of self-determined climate change actions.**
- **Key activities include Research, a Survey, Engagement, Analysis and Final Report**

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





“Solving this crisis doesn’t start in science, it starts in our hearts. Relationship building and taking responsibility are needed. Our ancestors knew how to be in a relationship with Mother Earth. They had their ways of doing that, and we must bring that forward.”

- Dr. Robert Joseph, BCAFN Knowledge Keeper

HUY CH Q'U

Harmony Bjarnason
Climate and Environment Policy Analyst, FNS
hbjarnason@fns.bc.ca

Patricia Rojas
Policy Analyst and Regional Climate Change Coordinator, BCAFN
Patricia.rojas@bcafn.ca

Kristi Denby
Climate and Environment Policy Analyst, BCAFN
Kristi.denby@bcafn.ca

Cameron Spooner
Climate Policy Analyst, UBCIC
Cameron@ubcic.bc.ca

Katisha Paul
UBCIC Youth Rep
youthrep@ubcic.bc.ca



Additional Resources

Indigenous Values and First Nation Leadership in Climate Action

The following resources complement the information shared in the “Indigenous Values and First Nation Leadership in Climate Action” presentation. This was part of a four-part presentation series developed for the Coastal Climate Resilience Collaborative, a project that is supported by Natural Resources Canada’s Climate-Resilient Coastal Communities Program.

[BC First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan](#) 

[The BC First Nations Climate Leadership Agenda](#) 

[First Nations Leadership Council](#) 

[BC First Nations Low-Carbon Transportation Project](#) 

[Building Climate Resilience from Indigenous Perspectives](#) 

[Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction by First Nations in BC](#) 

[BC First Nation Spiritual Knowledge Keepers Gathering](#) 

