

BOX 1: Key principles underlying this report

At the outset, the author team recognized the importance of establishing key principles to guide our work in a good way. We asked ourselves: What are the values that guide our thinking and writings about Indigenous Knowledge, expertise, wisdom, perspectives and experiences regarding climate change? What principles should guide the development and communication of our messages? Across our diverse Nations, languages and cultures as Indigenous Peoples, and informed by the teachings of our Elders and Knowledge Keepers, we identified the common principles in Table 1. These have been continually revisited to guide our work substantively and methodologically.

TABLE 1: KEY PRINCIPLES

Agency

First Nations, Inuit and Métis have agency within our societal systems and we must be able to exercise this agency as leaders and equal participants in mainstream systems. As rights- and title-holders, we play an integral role in research and climate policy decision-making. We have always held and continue to hold critical knowledge and expertise necessary for observing, understanding, assessing and responding to climate change. We are leaders in research, monitoring and developing comprehensive approaches to address climate change, despite experiencing disproportionate impacts.



Diversity

We honour and seek all opportunities to clarify and celebrate the diversity of languages, histories, governance, gender and cultures among First Nations, Inuit and Métis living in what is currently known as Canada.

Hope and love

Aligned with Indigenous Knowledge and laws, we strive to instill messages of hope and love to honour the teachings that direct us to choose life and draw on our Ancestors' strengths in support of life and future generations.



Indigenous Knowledge and lived experience

We recognize and honour the knowledge and lived experience of our Peoples, handed down over millennia, as equal to academic training. We seek every opportunity to elevate Indigenous expertise, wisdom and knowledge systems to a level equal to western science. This includes recognizing our Indigenous languages as carriers of our knowledges, and we seek every opportunity to honour, preserve, revitalize and promote Indigenous languages.

Indigenous-led approaches

We acknowledge that First Nations, Inuit and Métis are active drivers, leaders and innovators in approaches to addressing climate change.





Legacy of colonization and dispossession

The capacity of First Nations, Inuit and Métis to respond to urgent crises should be understood in the context of the ongoing impacts of colonialism, land dispossession, assimilation policies, various inequities, and chronic underfunding. We acknowledge that bold action is crucial to address justice and equity issues for First Nations, Inuit and Métis. It is also vital to provide the necessary tools and support to advance decolonization and decarbonization.

Natural Laws

We prioritize lessons from our Natural Laws, which teach us to rebalance our relationship with the Earth. Natural Law is a set of laws that originate directly from the Creator, and directly from the Land, rooted in our diverse languages, oral histories and ceremonies. These laws govern our interactions with the Land, Water and more-than-human relatives.



Relationships

We recognize that relationships are central to our systems and ways of life. While technocratic approaches are commonly used in addressing climate change, we understand that true change stems from realigning relationships and values. It is important that we realign our relationships with the Land, Water and Ice, with our more-than-human relations and each other. This realignment involves moving from values of accumulation, scarcity and competition to those of abundance, cooperation and reciprocity.

Rights-holders and Lands

First Nations, Inuit and Métis have rights and responsibilities within the context of our own systems (e.g., Indigenous laws, legal orders, legal traditions, customs, etc.). There are also complex constellations of rights expressed in mainstream systems, including provincial, territorial, federal and international laws. We acknowledge this plurality of laws to ensure that these systems are appropriately considered in all that we do. The rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis over Lands are increasingly recognized, affirming our role as decision-makers in climate change.



Self-determination and governance

While diverse, Indigenous governance systems are founded on long-standing, place-based relationships with the Land, Water and Ice, as well as with human and more-than-human relations. We honour these relationships and recognize the interconnectedness between ourselves and the Land, Water and Ice as one entity. Self-determination is our ability to freely determine our political status and pursue our economic, social and cultural development.

Urgency

We recognize that the impacts of climate change compound existing, interrelated crises, contributing to states of emergency that First Nations, Inuit and Métis face daily. These crises are wide-ranging, from failing physical infrastructure, such as clean drinking water and housing, to ongoing colonization, marginalization and racism. Urgent and significant action, with long-term considerations, is needed to address these crises.



Valuing Youth

We acknowledge the unique contributions and knowledge that Indigenous youth bring to addressing climate change. We have sought opportunities to meaningfully include them in the production of this report.