

Indigenous Climate Change Adaptation Gathering
(February 13-14th, 2018 in Gatineau, Quebec)

Final Report

Prepared by:



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
THE FIRST NATION ADAPT PROGRAM	1
THE STORY BEHIND THE INDIGENOUS CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION GATHERING – HOW AND WHY IT WAS CREATED	1
PRE-GATHERING PLANNING AND PREPARATION	2
INDIGENOUS CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAINING	2
THE GATHERING	2
ICCAG - DAY 1 SUMMARY	2
ICCAG - DAY 2 SUMMARY	4
KEY THEMES	5
COMMUNICATION	5
TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURE	5
CAPACITY BUILDING IN FIRST NATION COMMUNITIES	6
CURRENT INFRASTRUCTURE REALITIES	6
SUSTAINABILITY MODELS	6
TECHNOLOGY IN FIRST NATION COMMUNITIES	7
EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	7
AFTER THE ICCAG - RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED	7
LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS - FROM ICCAG PARTICIPANTS	7
REFLECTIONS, LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS – FROM OKWAHO EQUAL SOURCE	8
LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS – FROM THE FIRST NATION ADAPT TEAM	8
FINAL DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	9

Introduction

This final report provides a summary of the Indigenous Climate Change Adaptation Gathering (ICCAG) held in Gatineau, Quebec from February 13-14, 2018. The report offers a wealth of knowledge and insights on best practices and challenges that were experienced. In addition, the report provides the 'behind the scenes story' of the gathering, including the planning stages leading up to the event. We are confident that this report will provide valuable data and a roadmap for the First Nation Adapt program and other federal departments interested in co-designing Indigenous-led initiatives.

The First Nation Adapt Program

The First Nation Adapt Program began in 2016. Its predecessor was called the Climate Change Adaptation Program CCAP (2008-16). The CCAP supported vulnerability assessments, adaptation planning, tools and knowledge dissemination. During 2011-16, a total of 82 distinct projects in 100 communities were funded. Southern First Nations represented 82 per cent of the total projects funded (INAC, 2017).

In 2016, INAC was tasked with building on the previous CCAP to deliver a program for First Nations communities south of the sixtieth parallel. The new INAC mandate included the responsibilities of equipping communities with detailed information on how climate change impacts will affect their infrastructure and support them in identifying cost-effective, appropriate adaptation measures and targeting communities experiencing severe and repeated climate impacts (INAC, 2017). In its current capacity, the First Nation Adapt program has provided funding to more than 54 First Nations communities across Canada since 2016.

The program works with First Nations communities to identify region and community specific climate change impacts and emergency management priorities related to sea level rise, flooding, forest fires, drought, fisheries and winter road infrastructure needs. Additional funding from the 2017 Federal Budget has provided an allocation of funds specific to First Nation Adapt Program communities at risk of flooding offering greater support and capacity in assessment and adaptation planning. The program is designed to work alongside First Nation communities as a support and in helping these communities integrate science and Indigenous knowledge on current and future climate change impact projects (INAC, 2018).

The Story Behind the Indigenous Climate Change Adaptation Gathering – How and Why it was Created

In October 2017, a series of meetings between the First Nation Adapt program and Okwaho Equal Source took place. During these preliminary meetings, both parties discussed the goals and objectives of the gathering.

Goals included:

1. The need to establish better communication and increase networking opportunities among First Nations climate change adaptation participant communities;
2. To bring Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing to the forefront of the discussion and to learn from the Indigenous climate change leaders conducting this work;
3. To demonstrate the value of investing in an Indigenous-led initiative and participating in a cultural based knowledge exchange.

The First Nation Adapt team identified the importance of making it an Indigenous-led event early in the conversations and wanted to ensure that it would be respectful and a safe space for First Nations participants to share knowledge, best practices and challenges related to their respective climate change adaptation projects. In late November the First Nation Adapt program and Okwaho Equal Source agreed to work towards creating what would become the ICCAG.

To capture the spirit and knowledge shared at the gathering, Okwaho Equal Source recommended the addition of film. Film ensures that the knowledge shared at the gathering will be captured in a visual and oral format. The addition of film provides an effective communications legacy and archival piece for the First Nation Adapt program and for participating First Nation communities and organizations. Another attribute to film is the ability to share the experience with other First Nation communities and organizations that are interested in learning more about the First Nation Adapt program.

During the project, Okwaho Equal Source worked closely with Creative Consulting, a Métis-owned film company headquartered in Kingston, Ontario. Thus, this collaboration maintained the Indigenous-led spirit behind the gathering. Throughout the gathering, the film crew captured moments of inspiration and knowledge, and the film crew also conducted one-on-one interviews with participants that volunteered their time to share their stories. The final product is a 45-minute film, which captures some of the highlights, knowledge and insights from the gathering.

Pre-Gathering Planning and Preparation

Indigenous Cultural Competency Training

In preparation for the Indigenous Climate Change Adaptation Gathering, First Nation Adapt program staff were educated in 'Indigenous relations and cultural competency,' which included learning Indigenous cultural protocols. As the ICCAG would take place in Gatineau, Quebec, which is situated on the traditional unceded lands of the Algonquin (Anishinaabe) peoples, the First Nation Adapt team received cultural awareness training in Anishinaabe protocols. This training provided an opportunity for First Nation Adapt staff to ask cultural based questions prior to the event in a safe space and to ensure that the First Nation Adapt team would be comfortable in an Indigenous-led space at the gathering

The training included:

- Proper cultural etiquette when participating in talking (sharing) circles;
- Land acknowledgement and Indigenous connections to land;
- Protocols for working with Indigenous Elders and/or Knowledge Keepers and;
- Participating in traditional cultural practices such as smudging, giving/receiving tobacco bundles, and understanding the importance of sacred objects (e.g. eagle feathers).

During the training, Okwaho Equal Source shared strategies for Indigenous engagement, including the importance of Indigenous-led initiatives and long-term relationship building. Dr. Paul Chaput of Creative Consulting made the recommendation that INAC gift tobacco to each of the ICCAG participants, to honour them for their time, participation and knowledge. This recommendation was fulfilled and well received by participants at the ICCAG.

The Gathering

On February 13th and 14th 2018, the ICCAG took place in Gatineau, Quebec. The event was attended by 34 First Nation Adapt community participants from across the country. The two-day event provided a platform for a national level dialogue on current project status and identifying better ways to communicate and share knowledge between the First Nation Adapt participant communities. Six formal presentations were given by representatives from British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Quebec. Numerous regional roundtable community building discussions took place and were audio and video recorded. The recordings were developed into a 45-minute film, which will be provided to the First Nations communities involved in the First Nation Adapt program, along with other First Nations communities interested in participating in the First Nation Adapt program.

ICCAG - Day 1 Summary

On the first day of the ICCAG, all of the participants and First Nation Adapt staff signed waivers and release forms. These forms provided information on what would be collected and for what purposes (i.e. for a final report). The release forms also asked for participant permission to audio record and video record the event. Special arrangements were made for participants if they did not want to be visually recorded.

Breakfast and networking took place between 8:00am-9:00am. After breakfast, the gathering participants were welcomed by Shyra Barberstock of Okwaho Equal Source and participants were invited to receive a gift in honour of their participation and time. These gifts contained a hand painted canoe and scented candles and soaps made with sweet grass (sweet grass is considered a traditional Indigenous 'medicine'). All of the gifts were made by Indigenous artisans: the hand painted canoes were made by Millside Ceramics (<http://millsideceramics.com>) located in Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory. The scented soaps and candles were made by Sequoia Native Handmade Organics (<https://sequoiasoaps.com>) in Kahnawake, Quebec.

Upon receiving the gifts, participants were invited to join a large talking circle. The talking circle was significant as it is a common Indigenous practice for sharing knowledge. The talking circle was chosen to start because it provides a culturally appropriate safe space and opportunity for participants to introduce themselves (including sharing their traditional Indigenous name if they have one), where they are from, and what they would like to learn and share at the gathering. The talking circle also provides a safe space for 'speaking from the heart' so that participants can feel free to share what is important to them without feeling pressured. The talking circle can be a place of profound sharing as it opens the space for storytelling and sharing traditional Indigenous knowledge.

Ojibway-Cree Elder Bernard Nelson provided a traditional opening by welcoming all of the participants to the traditional unceded territory of the Anishinaabe people and sharing a traditional prayer and song. The participants were then invited to join in the smudging ceremony.

While the smudging ceremony was occurring, Anita Walker, Manager of the Adaptation Program provided opening remarks and welcomed all of the First Nation delegates to the ICCAG. Anita's opening remarks also included a genuine invitation for all participants to learn from the experiences and knowledge shared at the gathering. In addition, tobacco was offered by Anita to all of the participants of the gathering to honour them for their journeys and their commitments to share their good words with everyone in the room. The offering of tobacco was a symbolic gesture and a sign of good intent to form long-term relationship building, friendship and reconciliation. The practice of offering tobacco is a traditional Indigenous practice that is very honorable and respectful; and, it was well received by the participants.

After the talking circle, Dr. Paul Chaput of Creative Consulting shared his expertise as a Métis film maker and provided tips to First Nation participants on how to be comfortable working with the film crew. In addition, the ICCAG participants were invited to approach the film crew if they were interested in providing one-on-one interviews. Jennifer Shepherd of Living Tapestries provided information on her services as a graphic recorder. A graphic recorder was hired for the two days upon the recommendation of the First Nation Adapt program for the purposes of capturing key themes in a visual format.

In the late morning, five Indigenous climate change adaptation presentations were shared with the group, which demonstrated specific Indigenous community and/or organization climate change adaptation projects. The presentations were impactful and contained insightful information and best practices, challenges, and innovation for climate change adaptation. The presentations were integrated into the two-day workshop at the request of the First Nations community/organization representatives. Presenters included:

- Randy Angus of the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI
- Angie Gillis of the Mi'kmaw Conservation Group
- Zain Nayani, a representative of Kanaka Bar Indian Band

- Andréanne Ferland of Institut de développement durable des Premières Nations du Québec et du Labrador (IDDPNQL), and
- Elmer Lickers of the Ontario First Nations Technical Services (OFNTSC).

After lunch, a representative from the Ontario Centre for Climate Impacts and Adaptation Resources provided a presentation, including resources and tools for climate change adaptation. For most of the afternoon, the ICCAG participants participated in interactive group sessions in small groups of 5-7 people. These small groups were created to ensure that all participants would have time to share their stories and to create a safe, welcoming space to connect and learn more about the other participants' projects.

For the first group session, participants chose their own groups. In the group session, the ICCAG participants shared their climate change adaptation projects, including successes, best practices and challenges. After the group activity, one project leader from each group shared key themes with everyone. These themes were captured on flipchart paper and were collected by Okwaho Equal Source so that themes could be incorporated into the final report. The key themes are summarized later in this report (see 'Key Themes'). After the group activities, Jennifer Shepherd of Living Tapestries shared the graphic recording for the day and invited the participants to come up with a name for what was captured.

The day closed with a talking circle so that ICCAG participants could share their experiences and insights from the day. Elder Bernard Nelson provided a closing prayer so that all participants could enjoy the rest of their evening with a 'good mind.'

At the end of day 1, ICCAG participants were invited to have dinner in the conference room. Traditional Indigenous foods were provided by a local Indigenous catering company. After dinner, some of the ICCAG participants volunteered to provide one-on-one film interviews with the Creative Consulting film crew.

ICCAG - Day 2 Summary

The second day of the ICCAG started with breakfast and networking in the large conference room of the Best Western Plus Gatineau-Ottawa. After breakfast, participants were invited to the sharing circle. Elder Bernard Nelson opened the circle with a traditional prayer and smudging ceremony. The participants were then invited to share their experiences from the previous day.

For the rest of the day, participants met in small groups for three group activities. The first group session explored how to sustain climate change adaptation projects in the long term, including discussing resources and support needed and steps moving forward. The second group session allowed the ICCAG participants to share their feedback on the First Nation Adapt program with First Nation Adapt representatives. The third group session involved creative problem solving – in this session, groups selected 1-2 major themes to focus on and designed creative/innovative solutions to solve the problems.

Organization by region proved to be an effective method for sharing information as there were many synergies and commonalities explored. Feedback was shared with the First Nation Adapt program that some of the regions were very excited to connect with one another because they could see opportunities to collaborate and support one another in the future. For example, the British Columbia region was larger (over 7 people). When asked if they would like to split up into two smaller groups, one of the members proudly exclaimed, "we're BC!" (meaning, we're quite happy to work together. Don't split us up!).

Having the First Nation Adapt representatives join the First Nations groups was also an effective dynamic on the second day. On the first day, relationships and trust was built with ICCAG participants, and on the second day, First Nation Adapt staff were warmly welcomed to join the group sessions. The sessions provided an opportunity for First Nation Adapt representatives to learn first-hand about the climate change adaptation projects and the experiences of the ICCAG participants in their respective regions. This was also an opportunity for relationship building between First Nation Adapt representatives and the First Nations participants.

Observing the dynamics of the groups was inspirational; one of the participants from the Ontario region openly shared that because of the ICCAG, for the first time he felt hopeful about working with the government. In fact, he shared that he had considered retiring recently but said that he may hold off on his retirement because he was now excited to work with INAC!

After the group sessions, Shyra Barberstock of Okwaho Equal Source delivered a keynote talk on purpose driven networking: how to become a 'thought-leader' and build your network. This talk provided tips on how to effectively network through purpose-driven interactions and the power of collaboration and partnerships. The keynote was followed by a short presentation by Jennifer Shepherd of Living Tapestries describing the graphic recording for that day.

To close the gathering, participants were invited to join the sharing circle to share any last insights and feedback from the whole event. Although many participants were tired after the two full-days, the circle was very energetic and impactful, and a lot of heartfelt messages were shared. Overall, participants provided positive messages with those around the circle, including messages about the importance of coming together as a community, supporting one another, about hope (that had arisen from relationship-building at the ICCAG), and how the story of what happened at the ICCAG now needed to be shared. Acknowledgement and thanks were given by the participants to Elder Bernard Nelson, the organizers (Okwaho Equal Source), the First Nation Adapt program, and to Creative Consulting for capturing the gathering on film.

Elder Bernard Nelson closed the circle with a traditional prayer and a hugging circle. This special closing allowed everyone – ICCAG participants, First Nation Adapt program staff, Okwaho Equal source staff, and the Creative Consulting team to close the circle as friends, family, and most importantly, community.

Key themes

In this section, the main key themes from the group sessions are summarized. The key themes include: 1) Communication, 2) Traditional Knowledge and Culture, 3) Capacity-building in First Nation Communities, 4) Current Infrastructure Realities, 5) Sustainability Models, 6) Technology in First Nation Communities, and, 7) Education and Skills Development.

Communication

Overall, the most prevalent theme was the need for value-added communications strategies and a collective interest by the First Nation communities to increase networking opportunities and share knowledge.

Numerous recommendations were offered on how to increase local, regional and national Indigenous climate change awareness. A focus on sharing 'real time' information and the suggestion of an 'app' or dedicated social media plan and external website specific to the First Nation Adapt program was also discussed. The communication theme also sparked discussion on ways to increase community engagement efforts. An emphasis on the establishment of a First Nation community-based climate change network or local Indigenous-led chapters was a topic of great interest by many. Communication barriers were also discussed more so on how to resolve known and existing barriers in First Nations communities in general. Of notable interest, participants observed and shared similar stories of communication breakdown at the political level and socio-economic issues that negatively impact their respective communities. Many participants agreed, that the need for dedicated communications plans that are inclusive of community-based initiatives such as climate change projects would enhance awareness at the community and regional levels.

Traditional Knowledge and Culture

The recognition and inclusion of traditional knowledge and ways of knowing into climate change strategies was another significant theme brought forward. Participants acknowledged that the cultural and spiritual connections and linkages to the land are valued

and command the same respect as scientific findings. Further, participants recognized Elders and Knowledge Keepers of holding great influence in not only culture and its protection and preservation but as timekeepers that could provide context to historic ecosystems and attest to the imbalances and changes impacting the land. Community-based cultural education and traditional learning programs were identified as many participants believed that an integral part to the protection of the land was to connect with the land through cultural identity, more specific, learning the language and traditional practices. Another related topic was the creation of a regional based traditional knowledge exchange that could bring together youth and elders from neighbouring communities to live on the land, listen to the stories of the land and encourage youth to explore ways they can preserve and protect their traditional territories and prevent further harmful impacts brought on by climate change.

Capacity Building in First Nation Communities

Interwoven in the discussions was the need for increased capacity on First Nations, specific to the First Nation Adapt program was the need for a dedicated climate change coordinator, technicians and specialists and emergency management personnel. Participants recognized that historically, there are many problems with recruiting and retention of qualified staff in First Nations. Attracting new talent in the technical fields is what many participants expressed as “difficult to achieve to say the very least.” Participants identified with having to hire outside ‘consultants’ to conduct the work and that this hiring practice comes with its challenges, namely it is not financially practical or feasible for long-term climate change projections. An emphasis on finding a qualified community member(s) to lead climate change initiatives is preferred and that this investment in human capital would:

1. Improve community-based climate change project objectives
2. Provide employment and skills development opportunities for a First Nation
3. Increases First Nations service offerings to include climate change and environmental adaptation education programs and local service delivery projects
4. Enhance communications and related awareness information to the community and act as a climate change advisory service for First Nations communities, organizations, and traditional territories

Current Infrastructure Realities

Another predominant theme was the need for up-to-date infrastructure to meet the increasing demands on First Nations directly affected by climate change events. Vulnerability studies and infrastructure assessments were identified by many as a good starting point to understand the current realities and situation of their First Nation and traditional territories. Participants acknowledged that the lack of adequate funding to address existing infrastructure problems has caused great hardship and burden for many First Nations. Understanding the shared frustrations, participants focused on ways they have adapted to their situations and found meaningful ways to forge ahead.

Another noteworthy point was a discussion relating to economic development, partnership exploration and infrastructure investment opportunities that could positively impact the First Nation community. Lastly, participants described a need for a dedicated space for their First Nation to position itself as a leader in climate change adaptation initiatives. This discussion resulted in shared similar ideas relating to the importance of a dedicated space, including securing Indigenous talent and creating the tools necessary to create potential climate-change-inspired businesses in their communities.

Sustainability Models

Participants heard the term ‘sustainable and sustainability’ throughout the two-day event. Presenters explained their projects and related sustainability models that are currently operating to varying degrees of success. However, participants acknowledged that in many cases projects that lose their funding are no longer sustainable and that it was “important to find economically viable ways to keep projects alive.” An emphasis was placed on economic development as a great solution to this problem and that First Nations

must also look outside the normal government funding channels and explore business development opportunities. Economic Development was identified as being critical to improving the quality of life and conditions of First Nations. Further, the incorporation of proven sustainable models was identified by participants as a best practice that could be used to fund small and large-scale climate change initiatives.

Technology in First Nation Communities

The predominant use of technology in First Nation climate change initiatives was recognized by participants as imperative to accurate data collection. Further, a related theme emerged in relation to First Nations acquiring technology and the skilled talent. Participants agreed that the more a community could engage its youth and get them involved in climate change tech and community-based climate change initiatives, the better. Participants shared their thoughts on youth and community engagement with many expressing the opportunities for youth involvement being inspirational and motivational for both youth and project stakeholders. This led to a discussion on the creation of Indigenous youth technology summer camps and programs aimed at showcasing technology and introducing them to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) disciplines at an early age. Further discussion on the challenges of using technology included the costs associated technology, accessibility of technology and qualified technicians, permits and legalities, and weather.

Education and Skills Development

Education and skills development were prevalent topics of discussion among the groups during both days. The importance of having a post-secondary institution and/or apprenticeship training facility in a First Nation or within close proximity to the First Nation that offers Indigenous-led courses and programs in in-demand fields was important. Many of the participants acknowledged that a contributing factor to why young people leave their community is due to the lack of jobs. One participant explained, "lack of job opportunities in our First Nation is a major factor in young talent leaving home for urban centres for post-secondary education, employment opportunities and overall better quality of life." Participants see technology-based credentials and job creation as the key to the success of their communities. Participants are actively pursuing potential partnerships with local institutes, colleges and universities that offer certifications, diplomas and degrees in areas such as GIS, LiDAR, and other technologies. Further to this point, First Nations participants are establishing partnerships with Canadian technology firms and collaborating on many fronts aimed at elevating the technical capabilities and capacity needs of the First Nation.

Another related topic was the need for awareness and learning opportunities at the community level. Many participants felt that the reason why their community leadership and community membership are not invested in climate change is due to limited knowledge on the subject of climate change and the relational effects it has on the community and the land.

After the ICCAG - recommendations and lessons learned

Lessons and Recommendations - from ICCAG Participants

The prominent key themes have been shared in this final report. However, during the event additional feedback was shared, which can provide the foundation for steps moving forward post-ICCAG. One of the main feedback points made was the request for an online platform to share information on First Nation climate change adaptation projects as they unfold. Having an online platform would provide First Nation Adapt participating communities and organizations with a 'one-stop-shop' for resources, contact information (e.g. helpful contact information for contact in government and complementary support organizations for climate change), and a place to connect (virtually) with other First Nation Adapt participating communities for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and for learning about best practices. This feedback has been helpful to the First Nation Adapt program and to Okwaho

Equal Source and plans for the development of a dedicated online interactive website portal for the First Nation Adapt program, is underway.

Reflections, Lessons and Recommendations – from Okwaho Equal Source

As an Indigenous-owned and operated consultancy, it was an honour to design, coordinate and facilitate the Indigenous climate change adaptation gathering. As a company, we did our best to have every aspect of the gathering be Indigenous-led. For example, our staff at the gathering included two Haudenosaunee facilitators from Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory and an Anishinaabe facilitator from Kebaowk First Nation in Kipawa, Quebec. Our film crew was Métis-led. The sound company hired for the event was owned by a Mi'kmaq entrepreneur. And, the catering company for the dinner was Indigenous owned.

On a professional and personal level, we appreciated the openness, warmth and progressive nature of the First Nation Adapt team members that we had the opportunity to develop a relationship with during the development of the ICCAG. We are pleased to share that it was the First Nation Adapt team that first requested an Indigenous facilitator for the gathering, understanding that Indigenous-led was the best way to create a culturally appropriate and safe space for their First Nation Adapt participants. It has truly been a pleasure working with the First Nation Adapt team. And, it was an honour to meet and be in the presence of so many impactful Indigenous climate change leaders. Although the two days were quite busy, we had the opportunity to have several meaningful discussions and felt like we became part of a new community.

From this experience, we feel that the 'best practices' include having an Indigenous climate change gathering that is Indigenous-led. This allowed for cultural competency training for INAC staff and for Indigenous methodologies (i.e., such as talking circles, knowledge sharing and storytelling) to be integrated. Film was also an effective way to capture the stories and 'spirit' of the gathering.

One of the shortcomings of the event was a miscommunication regarding the French translation services. Okwaho Equal Source had originally planned to have French/English translator present, however, a miscommunication with the sound company resulted in having a translation booth, without a translator. This is a 'lesson learned' for the next event. As a company, we recognize the importance of the inclusion of bilingual translation services and we will insure that these services are available at the next event where there are both English and Francophone participants.

Overall, the Okwaho Equal Source team felt inspired by the ICCAG and we look forward to being part of the next steps to bring participating First Nation Adapt communities and organizations together virtually, on the upcoming online platform. In addition, we look forward to sharing the final report and film with the communities that participated with the ICCAG.

Lessons and Recommendations – from the First Nation Adapt team

The First Nation Adapt team was honoured to fund and participate in this gathering. It was very important from the beginning of the planning phases of the gathering that it be Indigenous-led and centered on the goal of bringing communities together to facilitate networking and discuss shared experiences around climate change adaptation planning. The First Nation Adapt team has taken the feedback received through both formal and informal discussions to heart and is working to improve opportunities for communities to learn from one another's experiences. Specifically, the program is working with Okwaho and the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER) to develop an online platform that will serve as a knowledge repository on First Nations climate change adaptation resources and initiatives and promote the sharing of ideas from community to community across Canada. The program is continuing to fund innovative projects that engage cohorts from across First Nations communities to become aware of and play an active role in coming up with culturally and geographically appropriate climate change adaptation solutions. The

exchange of knowledge between Elders and youth is of particular importance because it serves to inform the leaders of tomorrow with valuable information about the way things were before the climate changes that are being experienced today were commonplace. First Nations communities across Canada are clearly leading the way and acting as trailblazers in the field of climate change adaptation and it has been a pleasure and an honour to hear stories and feedback from participants at the gathering. We are already looking forward to next year's gathering.

Final Discussion and Recommendations

The ICCAG was a special event that created a strong sense of community and family among the members. For this reason, we hope to see more ICCAG gatherings for future cohorts of First Nation Adapt program projects.

Another opportunity that could be explored is having a larger symposium which integrates First Nation Adapt program 'cohorts' from previous years. This symposium could be scaled up as a national initiative, where several communities and organizations could present their projects and connect with climate change experts, researchers, and support organizations and academic institutions. As events such as the ICCAG are effective at finding synergies and identifying key themes, another opportunity would be to follow up with specific regions and have focused design-thinking/open innovation/'hackathon' events to tackle specific issues that are shared by several First Nation communities in those regions.

In closing, the ICCAG was an impactful event and there are several opportunities and spin-offs that could occur as a result of the event. By bringing together Indigenous climate change leaders it has provided rich opportunities for further relationship building and knowledge sharing; and it demonstrates the resilience, creativity, innovation and sophistication of Indigenous communities and organizations to adapt to climate change.

Chi Miigwech (thank you) to the First Nation communities and organizations that travelled near and far to Ottawa/Gatineau for the ICCAG. Thank you also to the First Nation Adapt team for providing the resources to make this happen.



Contact Information:

Okwaho Equal Source Inc.
683 York Rd., PO Box 164
Tyendinga Mohawk Territory, ON
K0K 3A0

Website: <https://okwaho.com>
Tel: (613) 243-9777
Email: admin@okwaho.com