



A L D E R H I L L

Climate Adaptation Planning in the Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Region:

Indigenous Engagement Forum
Summary Report

For the VICC CLP Steering Committee

By Alderhill Planning

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Introduction

The Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Climate Leadership Planning (VICC CLP) Project aims to build a ten-year climate leadership plan for Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (VICC) that looks to 2030 and beyond, aimed at reducing emissions and mitigating the effects of climate change through collaborative efforts while adapting to the changing climate by creating resilient, regenerative, inclusive, and prosperous communities and economies. Led by the VICC CLP Steering Committee, currently composed of a group of local government representatives, the planning process aims to draw from and build on the unique circumstances of our individual communities—rural, urban and First Nations—while thinking as a whole region.

Beginning in 2019, and having faced challenges and delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this planning process has hosted two summits for locally elected officials, staff and First Nations, and youth, respectively. Although both summits included some Indigenous involvement, the project is seeking to capture additional input from Indigenous communities in the region to better understand what climate planning and mitigation work is underway and how these communities might like to move forward with the VICC CLP planning process.

The VICC Climate Leadership Planning—Indigenous Engagement Forum, held in October 2022, focused on exploring what climate work was happening in communities and what local governments and other organisations could do to support their efforts. This report provides an overview of the event and a summary of what was shared by participants.

Summary of the Day

On October 13th, 2022, the VICC CLP Steering Committee, Alderhill Planning team, and three participants came together for the VICC CLP Indigenous Engagement Forum. The virtual event was held via Zoom, from 09:30 to 12:00.

The session began with round table introductions of the Steering Committee, participants, and Alderhill Planning team. This was followed by a brief presentation that outlined the shape of the day and provided a high-level overview of the VICC CLP project, including the project missions and vision, engagements completed to date, and project goals and objectives moving forward.

With project context provided, the focus of the forum shifted to the first round of discussions focused on understanding what climate adaptation and mitigation work was currently underway in communities and any future plans or objectives that might be in place. The discussion prompts are listed below:

- What is your community doing to prepare for and adapt to the impacts of climate change?
- What would your community like to be doing to prepare for and adapt to the impacts of climate change?
- What barriers are there to Indigenous communities preparing for and adapting to the impacts of climate change?
- Does your community have any existing plans that contain a vision, goals, objectives etc. related to climate change, adaptation and/or preparation?

Across the board, participants shared that their communities are experiencing the effects of climate change. Notably, in the form of extreme weather events, changes to natural patterns and cycles, such as when foods are available for harvest and which fish and animals are present, and reduced food security, especially for traditional foods. Some communities have plans in place, while others are in the planning process; generally, any projects in place are in the early stages of implementation. Participants also noted that outside their departments' area, they needed to be made aware of the work being done in their communities.

Universally, although to varying degrees, participants noted that their remote locations impacted access to resources, creating a barrier to short and long term climate action. Challenges fell into three primary areas, including an increased dependency on higher-emitting forms of energy, heat, and transportation; the increased

cost, logistics, and emissions for transporting food, energy, and building materials to remote locations; and, in some cases, disproportionately feeling the impacts of climate change due to their location.

Despite challenges, participants noted that their communities are either actively implementing projects or in the planning phases of projects directly or tangentially related to climate change. Some examples include solar panel and heat pump installation projects, community gardens and other food security projects, natural resource management plans, and emergency preparedness.

Overall, participants spoke about how climate planning was closely related to other forms of planning and policy work within communities, which can sometimes make actions hard to identify as being specifically climate-related. In many cases, health, housing, food security, and emergency planning all have core elements rooted in climate adaptation or mitigation. However, being a broader community project, it might not be explicitly identified as climate change-related work.

Following a wellness break, the group returned to continue the discussion, this time with a focus on what, if any, support from other Indigenous communities, local governments, or NGOs would be beneficial. The prompt questions for this discussion are listed below:

- Are there any current or upcoming climate related projects that would benefit from collaborating with other Indigenous communities, local governments, or NGOs on Vancouver Island and the adjacent Coast?
- What would make it easier for your community to collaborate with other Indigenous communities, local governments, or NGOs on Vancouver Island and the adjacent Coast?
- How would your community like to collaborate with other Indigenous communities, local governments, or NGOs on Vancouver Island and the adjacent Coast?

The conversation opened with participants noting that there is interest in collaborations; however, it would be easier to do so with communities who share similar climate-related issues, concerns, and mitigation strategies. Particularly in the VICC region, where some communities are remote while others are located in or near urban centres, it is important to understand that each community faces distinct challenges. As such, it is important to be intentional with how collaboration is structured to ensure that relationships are meaningful and beneficial. Nonetheless, if this challenge is understood, and where communities share location or circumstance, participants expressed an interest in relationship building and collaboration.

Public works and emergency planning are two areas where participants identified the possibility for impactful collaboration between Indigenous communities and local governments. However, they noted that this could be challenging without support at the political level. Participants also indicated that there might be benefits to sharing data and community knowledge between other First Nations communities and local governments. This being said, more details and strong relationships would need to be in place.

The Steering Committee shared that they are actively exploring how to convene these conversations in a way that feels good for all involved—perhaps through round table groups, one for staff and the other for elected officials. Participants expressed an interest in learning more about this once some details are finalised.

The session ended with participants, Steering Committee members, and the Alderhill team being invited to share a gift that they received during the session. This was followed by closing remarks.

Next Steps

The insights shared from this forum, interviews and online survey data from those involved in Indigenous climate adaptation and mitigation working in the VICC region, and secondary research will be combined into a summary report and recommendations for the VICC CLP Steering Committee.

This information will then be combined with the existing VICC CLP research and used to inform a ten-year climate adaptation and mitigation plan for the VICC region.