

# Indigenous Climate Action



ENVIRONMENTAL  
SOLUTIONS  
INITIATIVE

# What's in this module?

## Activities

- 1 video
- 1 reading
- 4 activities
- 1 optional project

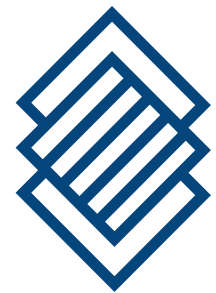
## **Key Resources**

- [Indigenous Peoples and Climate Justice \(Video\)](#)
- [Indigenous Leadership for Transformative Climate Action \(Article\)](#)

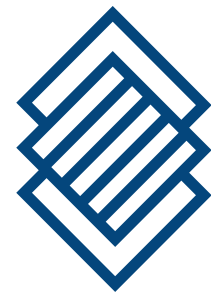
## Contents

This module discusses climate justice, climate change, Indigenous practices, and the fight for climate equity. The module focuses on a case study of the Metlakatla Indian Community of Alaska's climate action and adaptations.

# Agenda and Learning Objectives



**Examine** the relationship between colonialism and climate change



**Learn** about indigenous participation in international climate mitigation efforts



**Research** indigenous-led efforts to mitigate and prevent climate change

**Warm up:**

# **How is climate change an issue of colonialism for indigenous people?**

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Turn to a partner or small group and discuss any thoughts and feelings invoked by this question. Write them down to revisit it later.

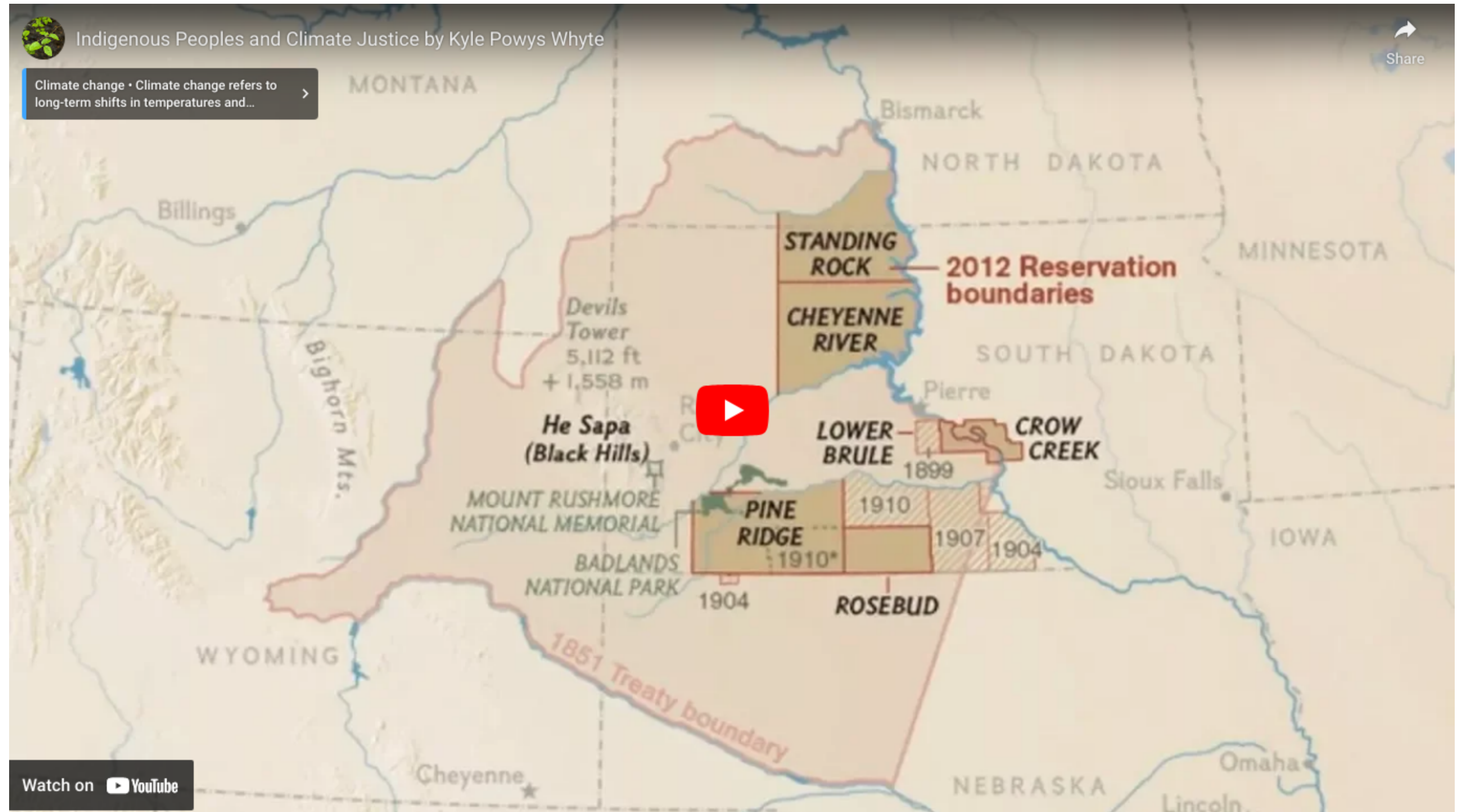


# Activity

## 1

Watch this video lecture on Indigenous Peoples and Climate Justice by Kyle Powys Whyte

[More about Kyle Whyte](#)



# Discussion: Climate Change and Colonialism

Revisit the prompt, "How is climate change an issue of colonialism for indigenous people?" What have you learned after watching the video? Has your response changed?



# Indigenous Participation in Climate Change Conferences

Indigenous leaders have been present at world climate change conferences since they began in 1979. The official negotiating body of indigenous peoples, the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC), was formed in 2008, but indigenous voices did not begin to be heard until the adoption of the Facilitative Working Group of Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples' Platform (LCIPP) workplan by COP21 in 2015. This workplan recognized the importance of indigenous knowledge and practices in climate change policies and actions.

Although progress has been made, there is still a significant lack of including indigenous input towards developing solutions and recognition of indigenous people as most impacted by climate change at these conferences

***Why isn't Indigenous presence at climate conferences enough? How can these challenges be addressed beyond one conference?***

# Reflecting on COP27

"We were clear with our expectations: the rights of Indigenous Peoples must be mainstreamed across all agenda items, and we must see those who have caused the climate crisis be accountable for fixing it.... Yet instead of delivering on the bold promises, COP27 has otherwise come to an end with the feeling of apathy and disappointment...by false solutions... that delay real reductions, replicate new forms of climate colonialism, and fall short of 1.5. Weak or absent language on human rights, the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the rights of Persons with Disabilities in many agenda items, means that this COP has compromised on the uncompromisable...." 9

-**Skw'akw'as Dunstan-Moore** at the Closing Plenary of the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27)

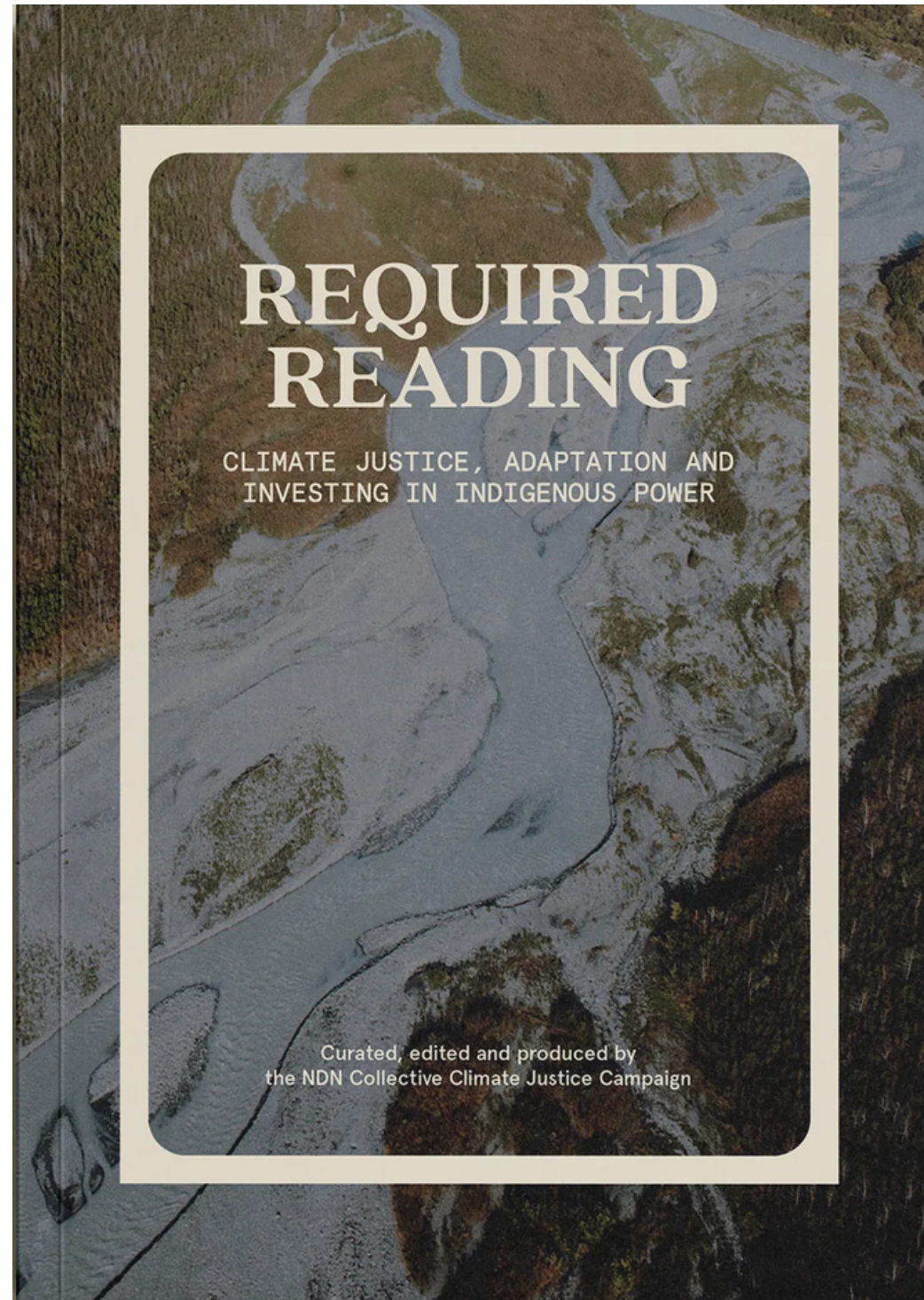


**Skw'akw'as Dunstan-Moore, Nlakapamux  
and Yakama Youth Leader**



# Activity

2



## Read an excerpt: *Climate Justice Adaptation and Investing in Indigenous Power*

How does self-determination and climate action go hand-in-hand?

# ***Required Reading: Climate Justice Adaptation and Investing in Indigenous Power***



**Kaniela Ing, former member of the Hawaii House of Representatives, Director of the Green New Deal Network and Co-founder of Our Hawaii**

"Climate justice requires us to radically restore our relationship with the natural world around us and transform our political and economic systems to support this deep cultural change. No one is better equipped to lead this vision than the Indigenous people who have maintained reciprocal relationships with their homelands for millennia."

**- Kaniela Ing** Hawaiian Climate Justice Activist

# Indigenous Climate Action

Since 2008 over 50 indigenous tribes and inter-tribal organizations in North America have created climate adaptation plans & strategies to mitigate and monitor the impacts of climate change.

A list of these plans and strategies: <https://www.ncai.org/ptg/climate-action-tribal-approaches>



Activity

3

## Case Study:

# Metlakatla Indian Community Climate Change Adaptation Plan



Read the full document here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Pba8RIj5q4nkWH4c8bT-RwLD-lg2aKLb/view> 8

# Background:

The Metlakatla Indian Community is located on the Annette Islands Reserve (AIR) in Alaska. The adaptation plan addresses the following: Coastal Erosion, Invasive Species, Salmon, Shifting Precipitation Patterns, Overall Subsistence Practices including Yellow Cedar, Berries, and Shellfish, and Human Health.



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# Coastal Erosion

**The tribe has acknowledged the visible signs of coastal erosion. Some adaptation strategies include:**

- "Collaboration with the Annette Island School District students while using methods for monitoring coastal erosion is likely to be incorporated within the science curriculum.
- Nourishment of the coast through new stabilization using natural materials, vegetation planting, bio-engineering techniques, forming hard barriers such as seawalls or breakwaters are strategies recommended for restoration opportunities should future funding be available."

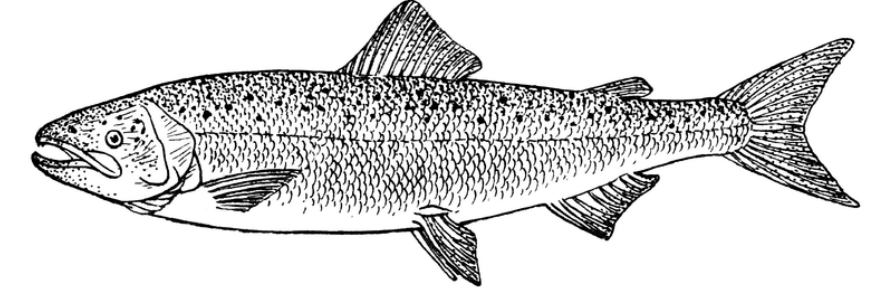
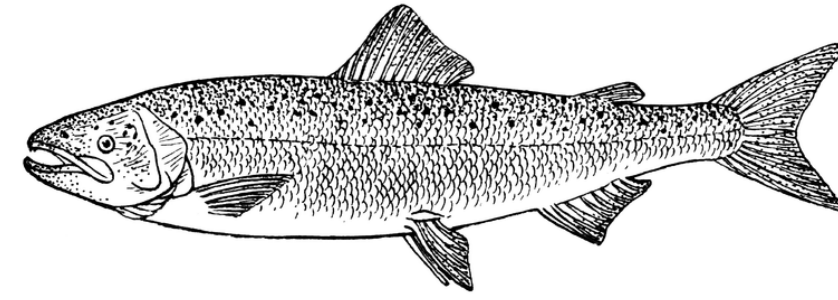
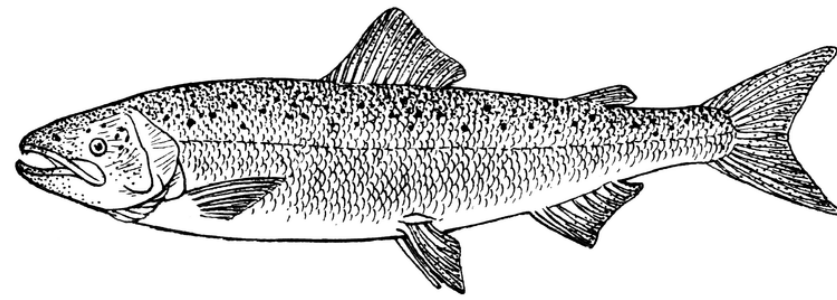


# Invasive Species

**The tribe has identified many invasive species within the AIR and have decided on implementing these solutions with their pre-existing Invasive Species Management Plan:**

- "Usage of a vehicle/vessel decontamination system to prevent the spreading of potential contamination.
- Treatment or removal of invasive species immediately when detected for the reduction and likelihood of establishment.
- A consistent community education program to ensure new infestations are noted and managed."

# Salmon



**To address declines in salmon populations in the AIR the tribe has proposed the following measures:**

- "The Tribe's Fisheries Department are currently and will continue to set limitations on the amount of species harvested and timing of the harvesting, to protect threatened species.
- Improvement and expansion of fisheries management through stream monitoring water quality and aquatic populations.
- Attempting to minimize stressors to fish species by voluntarily setting limitations on local disturbances by restoring water systems, removing unnecessary and potentially harmful barriers is necessary.
- Tracking trends and forming assessments on local impacts to annual recreation, tourism, commercial, and subsistence fishing will allow the Tribe to establish priorities."



# Shifting Precipitation Patterns



**The tribe is reliant on hydropower from two lake sources, but as precipitation patterns vary water levels drop. These lakes are also municipal water sources. The following measures are suggested to adapt to changing precipitation patterns:**

- "When water levels in the municipal supply drop below threshold levels, community conservation practices will be enforced. These should include, no hoses or other water left running; no draining and refilling of pools; and reducing water use community wide wherever practical.
- The Tribal leadership can also promote and make accessible water saving nozzles, showerheads and other tools to reduce water consumption.
- Larger efforts could include increasing the capacity of available water reservoir, through increasing the size of the existing dam or by increasing the number of storage tanks currently being utilized to treat and circulate municipal water supply."

# Subsistence Practices

**Traditional harvest times of essential materials or food items have been undergoing changes as the climate changes. These are some strategies that will be used to adapt to these changes:**



- "Cataloguing of Alaskan Yellow Cedar harvest should be enforced.
- Increase forestry staff on the AIR
- Update existing GIS data to be as accurate as possible. Improving database layers as necessary and maintaining conditions overtime to aide in forestry management.
- The Tribe's Landscaping or Forestry Department can collect seeds of each berry species and gift them to reliable community members.
- Test shellfish samples on both individual and community level to prevent PSP and PST poisoning."

# Human Health



**Climate change is estimated to impact the health of tribe members through an increase in diseases, allergies, and changes in food production & distribution. The following adaptation measures have been proposed:**

- "If more recreation trails were to be developed, it could create a community wide effort to change lifestyles and gain healthy habits.
- A better sidewalk system is necessary to protect pedestrians and a safe walking zone. It will also encourage residents to walk more.
- Collaboration between the Emergency Preparedness Task Force for implementation community wide referring to emergency plans and warning systems."

## Activity

# 4 Research indigenous led campaigns by the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN)



Visit the website: <https://www.ienearth.org/>  
and separate into groups or individually investigate one of  
the campaigns listed under the section "Our Work"

# Share your findings with your peers using this three sentence format:

Sentence 1: goal of the campaign

Sentence 2: summary of the efforts to achieve this goal

Sentence 3: What you found most interesting. Did you learn anything new?



# Project: Option 1



"Alaska Native Heritage Center" by Mind on Fire  
Photography is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

- Create a profile on an Indigenous climate action leader
- Present the profile to the class, discuss the background and work of your climate action leader.

How does their work connect to your classes and future?

# Project Option 2

Write a short paper on how your work can connect to the Metlakatla Indian Community Climate Change Adaptation Plan.

How can you support indigenous led climate change solutions?



Fishers in the Metlakatla Indian Community

# Additional Resources

1. (Instagram) Autumn Peltier: Known as 'the water protector', Anishinaabe Indigenous Rights advocate raised in the Wiikwemkoong First Nation'.
2. (Book): We Are Water Protectors
3. (Academic Publication): Does renewable electricity promote Indigenous sovereignty? Reviewing support, barriers, and recommendations for solar and wind energy development on Native lands in the United States
4. The RED Nation
5. The North American Indian Center of Boston



# Module References

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2. <https://www.science.org/doi/epdf/10.1126/science.abe4943>
3. <https://www.ienearth.org/>
4. <https://www.ncai.org/ptg/climate-action-tribal-approaches>
5. <https://www.yesmagazine.org/environment/2021/11/17/indigenous-leadership-transformative-climate-action>
6. <https://www.iucn.org/news/commission-environmental-economic-and-social-policy/201912/historical-journey-indigenous-peoples-climate-change-negotiation>
7. <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/indigenous-peoples-challenge-lack-ambition-and-rights-cop27-close>
8. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Pba8RIj5q4nkWH4c8bT-RwLD-lg2aKLb/view>
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10. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46997/3>