

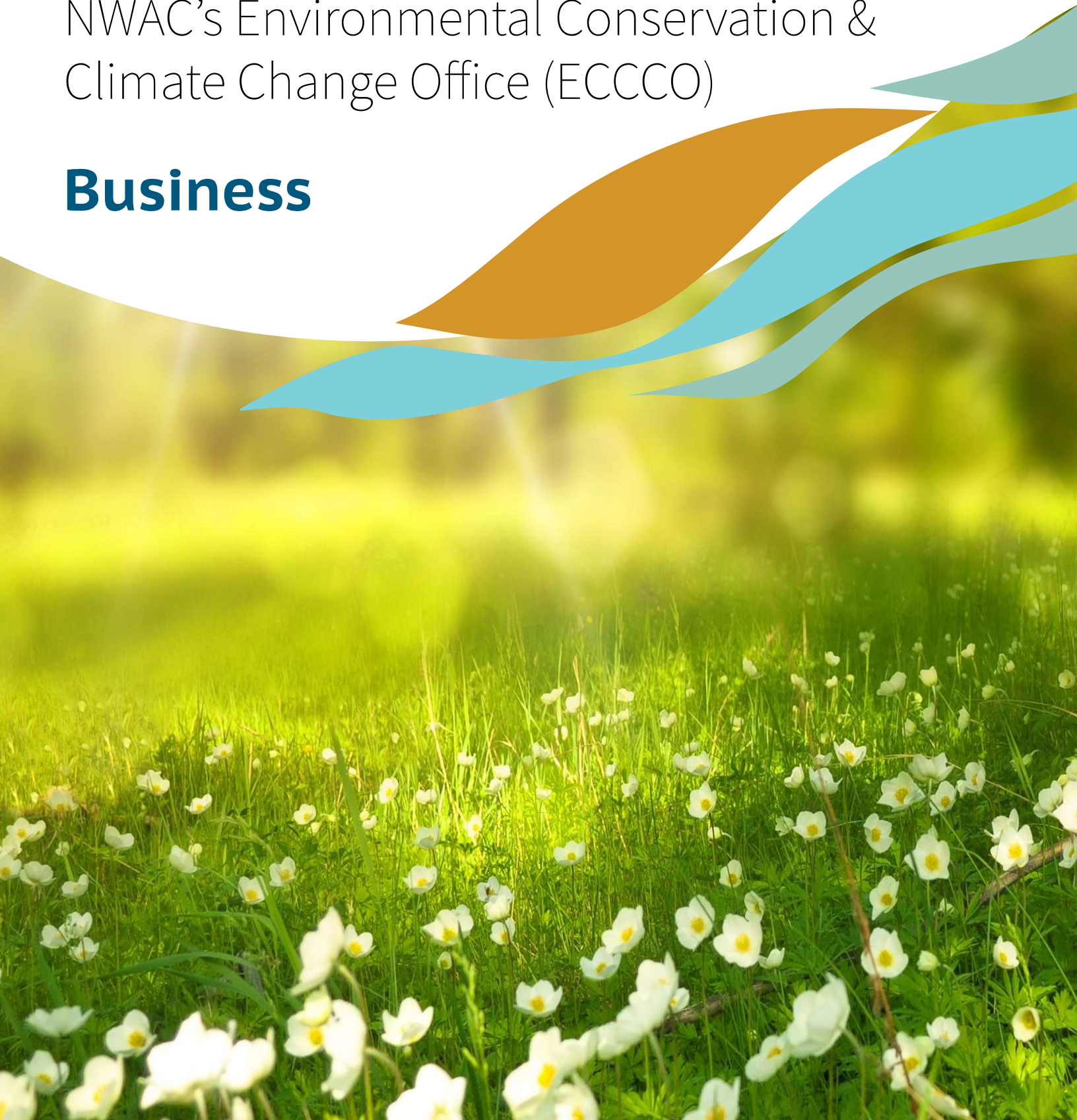
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E-Newsletter

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Business





Across Turtle Island, businesses are combining Indigenous Traditional Knowledge with Western science and technology to respond to the effects of climate change. This edition of NWAC's Environmental Conservation and Climate Change Office newsletter looks at Indigenous approaches to land-based governance inform business practices.





Leading the Way in Clean Energy

By Isabel McMurray

Indigenous communities continue to deal with energy injustices in terms of access, usability, and socio-economic benefits, with many remote communities being forced to rely on harsh diesel generators. Even when clean energy projects are built, Climate Change Nunavut notes that many in Nunavut have failed due to equipment malfunctions, issues with routine maintenance, and financial restrictions.

Despite these constraints, Heather Castleden, Canada Research Chair in Reconciling Relations for Health, Environment and Communities and researcher on A SHARED Future (Achieving Strength, Health, and Autonomy, through Renewable Energy Development for the Future) points out that many Indigenous communities and organizations across Canada are working towards installing clean energy projects to “break free of colonial ties, move towards energy autonomy, establish more reliable energy systems and secure long-term financial benefits.” Castleden and her team emphasize that this work allows space for the collaborative meeting of Indigenous knowledge and Western science to promote Indigenous economy, knowledge sharing, and capacity building. A SHARED Future is currently researching renewable energy as a platform for exploring reconciliation and healing between these two knowledge systems and the world around them. To date, they support nine projects across Canada that are working to support or explore Indigenous-led renewable energy.

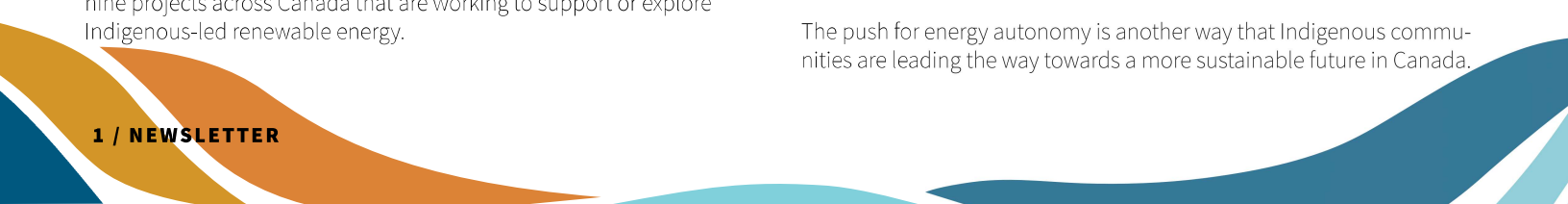
“Indigenous communities and organizations across Canada are working towards installing clean energy projects to “to break free of colonial ties, move towards energy autonomy, establish more reliable energy systems and secure long-term financial benefits.”

Beyond these nine projects, the Indigenous Clean Energy Social Enterprise (ICE) displays over 150 Indigenous communities in Canada who are significantly involved in large clean energy projects. ICE itself is a non-profit organization that works to connect Indigenous communities across Canada to knowledgeable partners and mentors in the clean energy sector. They run three programs aimed to help Indigenous communities learn the skills, tools, and resources they need to maximize their socio-economic benefits gained through participating in clean energy projects. In addition, ICE offers networking spaces for communities to collaborate with each other across the country and globally.

Some communities are going beyond simply participating and have decided to build their own renewable energy projects. The Tsilhqot’in First Nation have opened British Columbia’s largest solar farm, which is expected to generate 1,500 megawatt hours of electricity per year over the project’s 25-year lifetime. Although the Tsilhqot’in hired specialists and contractors to help set

up the farm, they ensured that community members received the training they needed in order to maintain the solar farm themselves. Projects like these are exercises in sustainability and autonomy in more ways than one.

The push for energy autonomy is another way that Indigenous communities are leading the way towards a more sustainable future in Canada.





Read More:

[Indigenous Clean Energy Social Enterprise](#)

[Map of Projects](#)

[“Indigenous-led clean-energy projects could power reconciliation”](#) by Heather Castleden

[A SHARED Future](#)

Current Projects: [A shared future](#)

[“Tsilhqot’in First Nation opens British Columbia’s largest solar farm”](#) by Judith Lavoie

From Canada’s North

Climate Change Nunavut – [Renewable Energy: “How can Canada’s North get off diesel?”](#) by Jimmy Thomson

How an Indigenous Corporations Act can facilitate the transition to a green economy

By Adam Bond

Indigenous women entrepreneurs can reach their full potential in the transition to a low-carbon economy if the legislature removes colonial constraints on their ways of doing business.

Many Indigenous peoples view economics from a significantly different worldview than the Western model—traditional economic activities integrate community, environment and culture. An Indigenous Corporations Act would accommodate this more holistic economic approach.

An Indigenous Corporations Act could facilitate business development among Indigenous entrepreneurs by providing them with structuring options that respond to their communities' economic, social, cultural and environmental needs. As it stands now, companies can incorporate under the [Canada Business Corporations Act](#), not-for-profit companies can incorporate under [the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act](#) and civil society organizations can organize and qualify for charitable status under the [Income Tax Act](#).

Corporate directors and officers must act in the corporation's best interests. Indigenous worldviews, however, approach economic activities through holistic lenses that may prioritize other social, environmental or cultural interests over the corporation's immediate fiscal interests.

Not-for-profit corporations cannot distribute profits or property to its members, which is incompatible with many Indigenous communities who do distribute economic profits and wealth among members.

An Indigenous business framework could facilitate these differences and foster the development of sustainable low-carbon industries.

For example, Canada lags in transitioning the energy workforce to sustainable industries. Rare earth elements (RREs) can help transition to a low carbon economy. While Canada has massive RRE repositories, few are actually extracting and processing them.

Non-Indigenous companies have tried extracting these resources but, in doing so, shattered the trust of nearby Indigenous communities. This causes significant challenges in resource extraction and processing, even for the responsible proponents.

An Indigenous corporate framework could ensure companies owe duties of care to their communities, nations and heritage environment. Such Indigenous-led corporations could take charge of developing their own resources in environmentally, socially and culturally responsible ways.

Indigenous businesses that are organized to achieve holistic purposes and respect traditional duties can help ensure Indigenous peoples maintain control over if, how, and when their natural resources are developed. This can also help guarantee the wealth generated from natural resource development in a sustainable low-carbon economy meaningfully benefits Indigenous peoples—those who are most connected to the lands from which these resources come.

“Indigenous business organization laws could ensure Indigenous peoples maintain control over if, how, and when their natural resources are developed.”



“Science can only take us so far,”
Nalaine Morin, Tahltan member and engineer

Land developers learn land’s value using Indigenous Traditional Knowledge

By Sarah Niman

Tahltan Nation member Nalaine Morin helps developers learn to measure land’s value in new ways.

Morin is a metallurgic engineer and environmental assessment consultant with her company, Arrowblade Consulting Services. Women in Mining Canada named her 2018’s Indigenous Trailblazer. She spoke with NWAC recently about how Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (TK) produces more sound research results than Western science alone.

TK is an unbroken chain, teaching us that land cannot be measured with data. Land informs an Indigenous community’s lived and learned knowledge. As the effects of climate change inform more business practices, TK has a big part to play.

“Science can only take us so far,” Morin said. She sees a fatal flaw in making large-impact land decisions without TK.

A recently passed federal law recognizes TK’s role in responsible decision-making. The final tabled copy of the Impact Assessment Act makes 179 references to Indigenous peoples. The new law contributes to a growing conversation that asks how governments, researchers and developers achieve informed consent from a territory’s Indigenous inhabitants.

Morin said when developers respect the Indigenous communities who give voice to their lands, the outcomes reflect more than dollars and cents. These newcomers adapt to new ways of evaluating land because TK asks, “Are the proposed benefits outweighing the values of the people who live in the area hold for that landscape?”

Morin said in the last decade, she has seen scientists and researchers learn to respect TK as an equally valuable source of information. Parties that honour TK make much more informed business decisions. In addition, communities are feeling more connected to decisions about their territory.

“The area where we’ve hunted for generations is part of the conversation now,” she said.

The intersection between Western science and TK requires compromise and balance from the outset. Science and technology advance quickly, and TK has grown over generations.

Morin continues to guide developers and businesses that assess environmental impacts, but she also continues to learn. She practices speaking her Tahltan language because it helps ground her in the landscape. The learning—on both sides—is ongoing.

Climate change and food insecurity in Inuit Nunangat require a new approach

By Soha Kneen

Global warming threatens Inuit traditional practices and ways of being. Around the world, climate change has an immense impact on Indigenous populations. The evidence is acutely seen in Inuit Nunangat—the Inuit homeland—with cases of extreme weather events and erratic seasons, species loss, land and sea mammals change migratory patterns, sea ice changes, ice sheets and permafrost melting.

Climate change is forcing Inuit communities to adjust their traditions and adapt to this current reality. Environmental changes such as unpredictable seasons and changing migratory patterns have forced Inuit hunters to travel larger distances and incur greater supply costs, including gas.


The Iqaluit Niqinik Nuatsivik Nunavut Food Bank's 2019 subsidy program adjusted course to respond to these climate impacts. The program sought to increase Iqaluit Inuit access to country food in order to alleviate food insecurity issues. Country food refers to the Inuit traditional food, including caribou, muskox, birds such as goose and partridge, char and foraged foods. Country food is integral in Inuit life because it provides climate-appropriate nourishment and symbolizes their connection to the land.

As part of the subsidy program, The Food Bank provided vouchers for bullets and gas to assist Inuit hunters. While this program was a success for Iqaluit-based participants, sustainable funding could expand this program, and others like it, to become a permanent response to climate change across Inuit Nunangat.


Previously, Inuit depended on a country food diet. Climate change impacts create an adverse effect on Inuit food consumption, forcing some to rely on store-bought foods made expensive by the high transport costs to Inuit Nunangat. Further compounding the problem, these high food costs due to high transportation costs forces Inuit Nunangat residents to buy more store-bought foods in bulk. These store-bought foods do not compare to the nutritional value country foods provide. Climate change is a major threat to the Inuit diet and has resulted in increased rates of food insecurity and poverty for Inuit communities.

Unstable sea ice is forcing caribou to change migratory patterns, which results in Inuit communities having to change when and where they can hunt caribou. The instability of sea ice also affects Inuit hunters' safety while traveling to hunt seal. What was once guaranteed is now changing and becoming unpredictable.

Climate change has a severe impact on Inuit communities. The traditional systems, livelihoods, food choices, and food consumption in Inuit Nunangat can only respond to climate change by adapting and moving forward.



“We are at a crisis now where this information, this knowledge, this understanding of our land, and how to travel especially on sea ice, is being eroded by climate change, and by the way in which ice systems are changing so rapidly.” – Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) President Natan Obed



5 links readers can follow to learn more about ways Indigenous Traditional Knowledge intersects with business and climate change.

1. Why Traditional Knowledge Holds the Key to Climate Change.

Gleb Raygorodetsky, (2011), United Nations University: <https://unu.edu/publications/articles/why-traditional-knowledge-holds-the-key-to-climate-change.html>

2. Acting on Climate Change: Indigenous Innovations.

Norma Kassi et al, Dialogues on Sustainability. (2020): <http://www.sustainablecanadialogues.ca/en/scd/indigenous-innovations>

3. The Role of Indigenous Peoples in Combating Climate Change.

Linda Etchart, (2017), Palgrave Communications 3, Article 17085 : <https://www.nature.com/articles/palcomms2017085#ref-teas>

4. 5 Ways Indigenous Knowledge Can Solve Global Problems.

Sophie Bertazzo, (2016). Conservation International: <https://www.conservation.org/blog/5-ways-indigenous-knowledge-can-solve-global-problems>

5. Reducing Carbon Emissions Through Indigenous Land Titles.

Christina Ospina, (2018), Climate Institute: <http://climate.org/reducing-carbon-emissions-through-indigenous-land-titles/>



Native Women's
Association of Canada



L'Association des
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