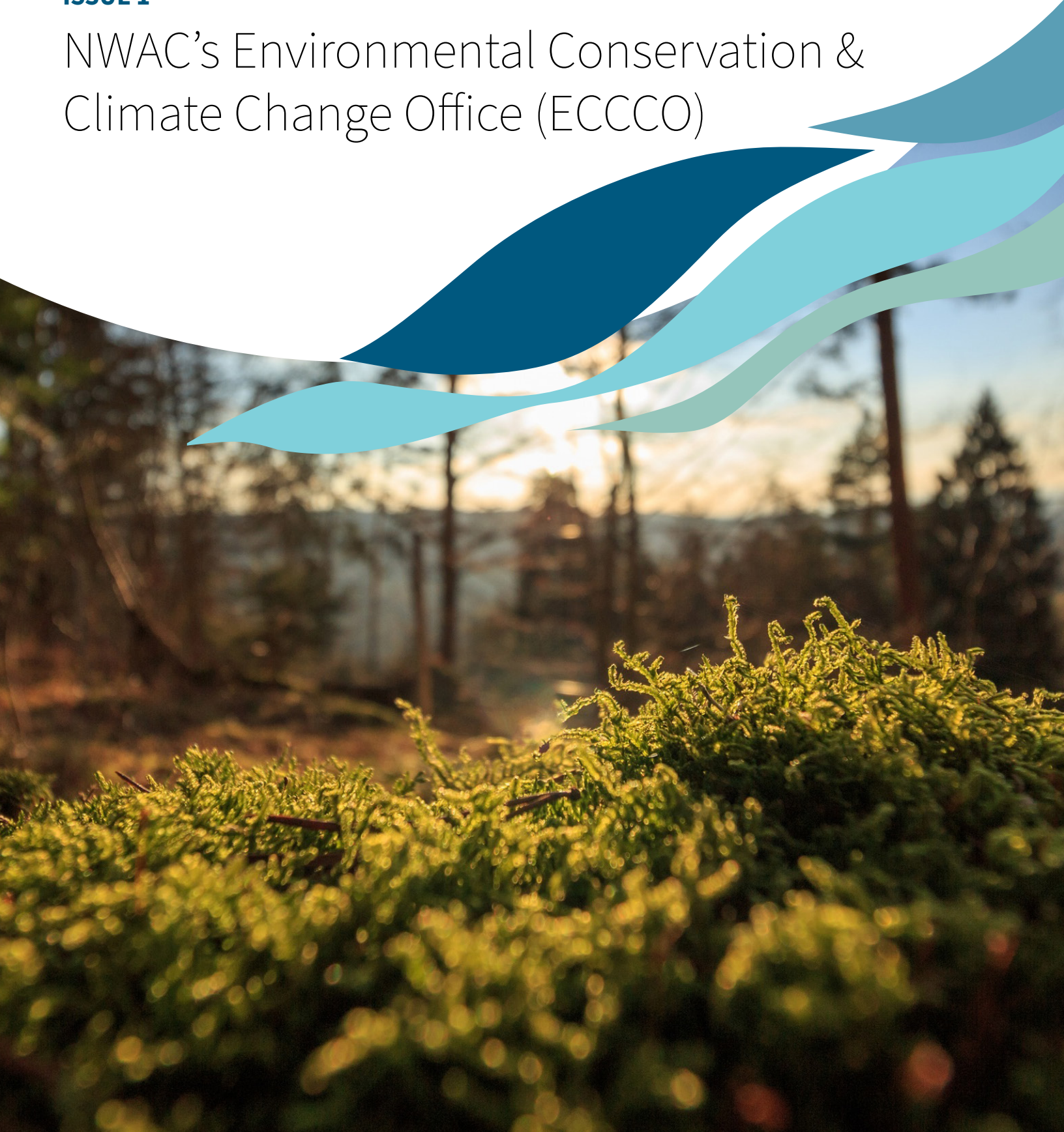


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# E-Newsletter

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# Indigenous women in the fight against climate change: Missing planks in the parties' platforms

By Adam Bond



## CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS CAN BE DISRUPTED BY LOSSES TO ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

Indigenous women and girls face disproportionate risks related to the effects of climate change, and even the effects of some climate actions. Ensuring that the concerns and rights of Indigenous women are accounted for in climate actions require the inclusion of their voices at domestic and international fora dealing with these exceedingly important issues. Unfortunately, as the federal election draws ever closer, none of Canada's political parties appear to have even acknowledged the vulnerability of people at the intersection of indigeneity and gender to the dangerous effects of climate change.

Indigenous leaders from around the world have, in recent years, claimed important success in ensuring respect for the rights of Indigenous peoples to meaningfully participate in international discussion on climate change.<sup>1</sup> The decision of the United Nations

<sup>1</sup> For example, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,

Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to adopt the Paris Agreement recognized the importance of Indigenous knowledge and action in climate action and established a platform for the exchange of Indigenous experiences and best practices on mitigation and adaptation.<sup>2</sup>

At the 23rd UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP), state parties reaffirmed the importance of the platform and decided that its purposes are to strengthen the role of Indigenous peoples in combating climate change and facilitating the exchange of information related to Indigenous action and knowledge

UNGA, 61/295 (1 September 2007) [UNDRIP], Art. 41 requires the UN to contribute to the full realization of the provisions of UNDRIP, including Art. 29, the right to the conservation and protection of Indigenous peoples' environments, productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources.

<sup>2</sup> UNFCCC, 1/CP.21 at para 135.



on climate-related issues.<sup>3</sup> At COP 24, the Parties established a Facilitative Working Group (FWG) for the platform (formally, the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform, or “LCIPP”) with the objective of operationalizing the LCIPP and facilitating the implementation of its functions.<sup>4</sup>

The FWG is composed of an equal number of Indigenous and state representatives and requires that parties and Indigenous regions strive for gender balance when appointing their FWG representatives.<sup>5</sup> The establishment of the FWG as a body designed to include the voices of Indigenous women is exceedingly important as the impacts of climate change and climate action on Indigenous women and girls have not been sufficiently studied or addressed.

Indigenous women and girls experience heightened vulnerability to the effects of climate change and even policies and initiatives to address climate change due to the intersection of their indigeneity and gender. Socio-economic conditions, cultural traditions and physiological stages can result in synergistic effects that amplify the adverse impacts of environmental changes on Indigenous women and girls while minimizing the positive benefits and opportunities related to climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.

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3 UNFCCC, 2/CP.23 at para 5.

4 UNFCCC, 2/CP.24, at paras 1 & 2.

5 Ibid, at paras 3 and 14.

Economic marginalization results in greater dependency on country food supplies that can be disrupted from environmental change, creating serious health risks for young girls and pregnant and breast feeding women. Additionally, cultural and spiritual traditions can be disrupted by losses to ecological systems –further exacerbating colonial impacts on cultural diversity. To add insult to injury, efforts to transition the workforce and create decent work and quality jobs in a sustainable, low-carbon economy<sup>6</sup> fail to account for the existing inequities of economic opportunities faced by Indigenous women.

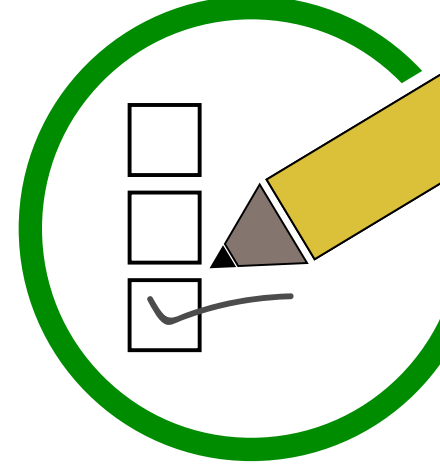
As the federal election nears, it is important that voters hear from Party leaders and local candidates, not only how they plan to fight climate change, but how they will do so in a way that ensures that the voices of Indigenous women are heard at the domestic and international policy tables. Without ensuring the meaningful participation of Indigenous women in these processes, climate change and even climate action will continue to marginalize some of the most vulnerable people in Canada and, indeed, on the planet.

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6 For example, see the Silesia Declaration, agreed to by 56 Parties at UNFCCC COP 24, < <https://cop24.gov.pl/presidency/initiatives/just-transition-declaration/>>.

# Climate change issues are top of mind for many voters

By Isabel McMurray



Climate change issues are top of mind for many voters, and the parties make promises that can be difficult to distinguish from each other.

Below are the summaries of the parties platforms on the environment as it relates to indigenous peoples.

## Liberal Party of Canada: “Forward: A Real Plan for the Middle Class”

The Liberal platform promises tax cuts and credits to encourage green innovation in a wide variety of spaces. The platform promises to use Trans Mountain Expansion Project revenue to fund natural climate solutions and clean energy projects, with the end goal of transitioning Canada to clean energy.

In this transition to clean energy, the Liberal platform promises a national benefits-sharing framework to ensure Indigenous communities have a mandatory share in revenue from projects on their traditional territories. This framework would likely apply to all resource extraction projects, from mines to oil to green energy.

The platform also promises to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples within one year and promises to transition away from the Indian Act.



## Conservative Party of Canada: “A Real Plan to Protect our Environment”

The Conservative environment platform runs on three principles:

- 1) Green Technology, Not Taxes: tax cuts and policies to promote growth in the green technology sector
- 2) A Cleaner and Greener Natural Environment: partner with provinces and territories to engage with communities and Indigenous peoples, and enforce environmental legislation.
- 3) Taking the Climate Change Fight Global: create a ‘clean’ Canadian oil and gas brand for international markets to encourage international buyers away from ‘dirty’ oil and gas and to reduce foreign emissions.

The environment platform promises to work with Indigenous communities to incorporate Indigenous Knowledge into climate change and environmental policy work. This would occur in the context of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012, because the party has promised to repeal the Impact Assessment Act.

## New Democratic Party of Canada (NDP): “A New Deal for People”

The NDP platform links Indigenous peoples and stewardship over traditional territory with climate solutions.

The NDP platform promises to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, emphasizing the tenet of free, prior, and informed consent. The platform promises to include Indigenous peoples in high-level decision-making frameworks around climate change efforts by recognizing Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous stewardship over traditional territories. This includes implementing Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Indigenous Law programs.

The platform’s climate change promises focus on a low-carbon future and Indigenous participation. The platform promises to redesign resource extraction industries to help Canada meet the party’s emission-reduction targets. The platform commits to enshrine the right to a “right to a healthy [environment]” into legislation that would guarantee communities’ rights to clean water, land, and air.

## Green Party “Honest. Ethical. Caring. Leadership.”

The Green Party platform promises to revitalize the economy to meet international climate change and emission reduction commitments. The platform promises a moratorium on approving resource extraction projects and implementing a transition framework for workers currently in the energy sector.

The Green platform promises to introduce legislation to enshrine the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action, and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women’s recommendations. The

platform recognizes Indigenous sovereignty over waters and territories, and recognizes Indigenous communities’ right to self-determination, “[respecting] all rights that their title to the land entails.”

Related to Indigenous issues specifically, the Greens promise to dismantle the Indian Act’s framework, allowing self-governing nations to opt in or out.

## People’s Party of Canada (PPC)

The People’s Party of Canada has issued a number of platform documents that individually address specific policy issues.

In “Global Warming and Environment: Rejecting Alarmism and Focusing on Concrete Improvements” the PPC disputes that climate change is a human phenomenon, and denies that the planet is changing rapidly. To that effect, the platform promises to withdraw from the Paris Agreement on climate change, to abolish the carbon tax, and green subsidies. The PPC platform prioritizes solutions to make the environment cleaner, which would include ensuring clean drinking water on reserves.

In “Pipelines: Allowing Our Oil and Gas Industry to Grow” the PPC platform promises to repealing C-48, which deals with tanker traffic in British Columbia, and C-69, which governs the federal environmental/impact assessment regime. The platform promises to approve pipelines in a more streamlined manner by invoking the constitution to determine that pipelines are for the general advantage of Canada.

This is the context in which the PPC speaks to Indigenous issues in “Aboriginal Issues: A New Relationship Based on Mutual Respect.” This section of the platform commits to exploring options to replace the Indian Act, and states that a PPC government will continue to approve natural resource and infrastructure projects after adequate consultation with affected Indigenous groups, and would ensure that groups benefitted economically from these projects.

## The Bloc Québécois: “Le Québec, c’est nous.”

The Bloc Québécois platform promises to harmonize Canada’s carbon-reduction targets with the targets in the Paris Accord in a rigorous and progressive way, mandating a review of the targets and reduction measures every four years to help keep Canada on track. This framework would also mandate that climate change considerations be incorporated into all aspects of federal decision-making.

The Bloc platform indicates that they would meet these reduction targets through a number of ways, including a complex green equalization fund that would tax high polluters and redistribute the revenue to provinces who consistently decrease emissions beyond the target goal.

The Bloc platform also promises to ratify the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.





The current generation's  
**Indigenous  
grandmothers**  
could not vote in Canada  
without losing treaty rights  
and **status.**

*By Sarah Niman*



*By Sarah Niman*

The current generation's Indigenous grandmothers could not vote in Canada without losing treaty rights and status.

Today, grandmothers, aunts, Elders, mothers, gender-diverse and young voices have a growing audience leading into the federal election. They are land and water protectors who can impact federal climate change policies that benefit Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island.

"It is really important to signify the innate power that Indigenous women, Two-Spirit people, transgender women and queer folks have to shape the worlds we navigate," writes Ojibwe-Anishinaabe scholar waaseyaa'sin Christine Sy (Lac Seul First Nation), assistant professor from the University of Victoria.

The world took notice of Autumn Peltier's (Wikwemikong First Nation) innate power last year, when the 13-year-old told UN delegates to 'Warrior Up' to protect water. Peltier cannot vote, so her call extends to all those over 18 to exercise their right on behalf of her, all youth, water and land. Sy writes there is much value in learning across generations this way, for Elders to listen to the young and vice versa.

Kathy Brock, a political science professor from Queen's University, wants Indigenous women and gender-diverse people to un-

derstand their roles and voices matter in this election. "They are stewards of the land and waters," she writes. "All people should enter political debates and vote to ensure that their views are considered." Brock writes that recent national climate change discussions and events make people more prepared to take the issue seriously.

"Women as mothers, sisters and daughters have a role to play in explaining to society how the use of lands and waters affects them in their daily lives," writes Brock. Beyond voting, Indigenous women and gender-diverse people can help federal policymakers understand how their decisions affect communities. If they do not understand, or are not aware, they cannot respond to those needs effectively.

While some 'warrior up' and become advocates, we must acknowledge our human limits and work together to enact change. Sy cautions not to "download the climate changing outcomes of historical, structural, colonial and global human-made decisions onto our bodies and relationships." We can balance personal and community responsibilities with holding power brokers accountable to the lands and waters of ancestors and generations coming.

The choice to vote is personal. Like a stone thrown into water, ripples widen and carry the impact far and wide.

[WWW.NWAC.CA](http://WWW.NWAC.CA)



Native Women's  
Association of Canada

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L'Association des  
femmes autochtones  
du Canada