

Breakout Session 2D: Climate Action in Modern Treaty Implementation

February 25, 2025

3:15PM – 4:45PM

Moderator: Duane Gastant Aucoin, Executive Councillor, Teslin Tlingit Council

Speakers:

- Chief Anne Mack — Toquaht First Nation
- Nigel Moore — Special Projects Manager, Uchucklesaht Tribe Government
- Chemkwaat, Valerie Cross – Executive Councilor, Tsawwassen First Nation
- Jennifer Mierau – Cultural Steward, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation
- Ékè Éwe, Carissa Waugh – Ambassador, Reconnection Vision/Kwanlin Dun First Nation

Duane Gastant Aucoin:

- Chinook fishery in Yukon has collapsed.
 - Salmon is the lifeblood, and it has collapsed.
 - Duane drew similarities to the Cod industry on the East Coast.
- Trump ripping up all the climate change agreements.
 - Yukon signed a moratorium with Canada and the USA to stop overfishing. Uncertain about what Trump will do.
 - Even in Canada there are politicians who deny climate change. Indigenous Peoples bear the brunt of burdens of climate change. What does this mean beyond humans – e.g., for winged animals or the four legged?
- Agreements are good – but sometimes they are not enough. Indigenous Peoples have inherent rights as Original Peoples. Sometimes you must be a rebel and not rely on the Treaty.

Chief Anne Mack:

- Toquaht Nation (Barkley Sound in BC on the west side of Vancouver Island) does marine stewardship. Integration of climate change in land management opportunities.
 - Guided by principles of interconnectedness.
- Traditionally there was access to bountiful seafood. Forests with massive old growth trees. Lands and waters must be maintained for future generations. Maintain relationships with the natural environment.
 - Principles: Everything is one. Highest respect.
 - Taking care of one another.
 - Taking care that something proceeds correctly.
- Community plan and development has six broad goals for land use. One of those is

building climate resilience and adaptation, including sea rise and coastal flooding.

Important since the Nation resides in a tsunami zone.

- Within the Treaty if land becomes for sale, Toquaht would have the first option to buy. Foresters own the land.
 - Developing a marine use plan that outlines culturally significant places, species surveys, outreach to visitors, and rich/sensitive ecosystems.
 - Developing increased stewardship opportunities. Developing IPCAs. Data informs coastal development and figuring out what productive measures are necessary moving forward.

Nigel Moore:

- Working on clean energy projects and working closely with Ehtlateese Village. Fishing village at Hucuktlis River/Lake. Demand from citizens to move home fueling new growth. Infrastructure is being built to accommodate citizens wanting to go home to the village.
 - What does climate change mean to Uchucklesaht? Mitigation (reducing emissions from our activities) and adaptation (responding to changes in climate). There's been a climate action process that addresses mitigation and adaptation.
 - Quantifying all Uchucklesaht Tribe Government (UTG) emissions, building energy audits, clean energy feasibility studies, climate change vulnerability study. Addresses how humans and other species are being affected or made vulnerable by climate change. There are also surveys, video crews, working groups and community wide events that help document the response to climate change.
- Writing a final report with recommendations done by UTG staff rather than outside consultants. It will be a report that comes from within the government.
 - Sacred principles:
 - Everything is one.
 - Respect.
 - Taking care.
 - A lot of local emission comes from electricity powered by diesel in the village. So, clean energy strategies are essential featuring a turn away from fossil fuels.
 - Quantifying nature: What is the value of a forest? How does that play into its management?
- Smaller scale projects: solar installations, batteries and EV chargers. These things enhance community resilience through clean infrastructure.
- Adaptation:
 - Strong area of concern and focus. Impacts on key species and traditional food security. Salmon, cedar berries – what will survive in the territory by 2100 and beyond? Some species may be gone. This poses a challenge to Uchucklesaht way

of life and identity. What would it mean to be Uchucklesaht in an environment where key species struggle to exist?

- Modern Treaty context:
 - Autonomy provided by Modern Treaties enhances opportunity for energy sovereignty and self-sufficiency through clean energy projects. Legal authority to be more inventive and creative with climate change adaptation, launching ambitious Nation-led interventions to protect cherished ecosystems and traditional food sources.

Chemkwaat, Valerie Cross:

- Sharing the Tsawwassen (salmon people) Modern Treaty Experience.
 - Concerned with climate change and committed to addressing it in their way.
 - Climate reconciliation must be an integral part of Modern Treaty implementation.
 - Climate change is disrupting the lands and waters, harming an important link to identity.
 - Limiting treaty rights.
 - Hurting salmon.
 - Threatening community and livelihood.
 - Pollution corrupts the land and relationships with land.
- Fish ceremonies, fisher people, have all been impacted by climate change on the Fraser River. Climate change threatens established Treaty rights. It is expected that by 2100 Tsawwassen will experience the highest sea level rises, damaging heritage sites, cemeteries, and other important sites.
- Treaty implementation as a 'toolkit.'
 - Modern Treaty agreements are integral to combating climate crises. Can't just sit idly by. Don't need to wait for others to act. Can build the capacity within Nations to create plans and innovativeness to respond to climate change. Can build infrastructure that is resilient. Important to ensure the next seven generations inherit a good earth.
- Tsawwassen focusing on:
 - Upgrading and maintaining dikes, prioritizing climate resilient and energy efficient infrastructure, and leading and partnering in habitat restoration projects.
 - Charter lays the foundation. Charter was built with community members. Important is employing kinship (human and nonhuman) environmental responses.
 - Building stewardship together through land guardianship training programs.
 - Teaches skills like:
 - Advocating for environmental policy change, restoring food sovereignty on Tsawwassen lands, and employability of community members to combat cost

of living crises.

- Self-determined climate initiatives can renew hope for our present and future generations. Must work together to support full Treaty implementation to reflect our established rights and responsibilities to citizens.

Jennifer Mierau and Ékè Éwe, Carissa Waugh:

- Reconnection Vision – youth led Yukon guide and toolkit.
- Developed by 13 young people that represent different clans and communities. Travelled to Aotearoa/New Zealand to learn from Māori.
 - We are all one people and share similar stories, aiming to revitalize ways of life.
- Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow. Yukon Native Brotherhood asserted their rights to Pierre Elliot Trudeau.
- Reconnection vision was that youth should engage in climate action.
 - The timeline follows a river – ebbs and flows and is not always calm but can follow rough patches. Work through that in ceremony.
- Gather in community and reflect on what reconnection means for Yukon First Nations as a guide for future generations. We recognize and acknowledge the work that is being done in communities around the world.
 - What does disconnection mean? Disconnected from ourselves - from emotions and spiritual insight.
 - Become disconnected from each other and the sense of belonging as part of a community.
 - Disconnected from land and knowing our place as part of her—living in a state of disconnection.
 - A 50-year plan that focuses on education, governance, wellness, food, and other considerations.
 - What are we in relationship with and what do we bring to the relationship? How do we work together?
- Philosophy:
 - From disconnection to reconnection.
 - Becoming whole people.
 - Honour Indigenous cultures and worldviews/values.
 - Connecting to spirit, language, culture.
 - Planting reconnection seeds.
 - Working with status, non-status, and non-Indigenous people.
- The Reconnection Emblem:
 - Caribou hoof, salmon, swan, soap berries—all have been heavily impacted by climate change.

- The four sacred colours are included.
 - Green resembles the northern lights.
 - Orange represents the first 215 children found.
 - A spider web for the spider story, which includes important life lessons.

Q&A:

- **Comment:** Under a lot of pressure in the context of critical minerals. Mining has impacted titles and rights in the North for 100-plus years. Canada claiming it's open for business undermines Treaties in the North. Action plans must be made that reflect these geographic considerations. It's important that we take our time and assess what is happening at the national level. Let's not lose sight of what Indigenous Peoples have been doing for thousands of years: being stewards of the land. I'm worried that in some cases we might be going backwards. Be cautious, be diligent, protect your territory.
- **Q: On the Uchucklesaht clean energy project, did your community apply to any incentives from the federal or provincial government? Are these incentives helpful to your project? Some communities want clean energy, but the upfront costs are very high.**
 - **A:** Projects are grant-funded. Uchucklesaht has benefited from having clear problems to solve. A village is dependent on diesel, and the amount of carbon that comes from diesel is high. Specific programs at the federal and provincial levels are trying to get remote communities to move away from using resources like diesel for power. Natural Resources Canada has been helpful for this through their Indigenous Off-Diesel program. The Uchucklesaht story is one where federal and provincial funding has been supportive, but this isn't the case for everybody.