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A Reconciliation and anti-racism, equity and inclusion lens in municipal climate adaptation

Climate-ready communities assessment tool tip sheet

Climate change affects everyone, but it affects some people much more than others. Municipal climate adaptation efforts are most effective when they consider the impacts of climate change on different populations and how these impacts can be best managed. To do this, climate adaptation work must integrate, and be informed by, the unique Reconciliation and anti-racism, equity and inclusion (Reconciliation and AREI) needs of your community. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, and thoughtful consideration is required.

This tip sheet is intended to support you in understanding and implementing climate adaptation activities in ways that integrate and are informed by Reconciliation and AREI. It:

1. describes the importance of applying a Reconciliation and AREI lens to the *Climate-Ready Communities (CRC) Assessment Tool's* 11 milestones
2. outlines common realities local governments face in integrating Reconciliation and AREI into climate adaptation
3. illustrates concepts in action using practical examples
4. offers tailored guidance relevant to small communities and/or those with limited resources

This tip sheet is designed for use alongside the CRC assessment tool. Although it is primarily associated with the CRC assessment tool, it can independently facilitate climate adaptation initiatives, enhancing their effectiveness by incorporating Reconciliation and AREI considerations.

The following sections provide insights and examples of CRC assessment tool activities, helping you envision what applying a Reconciliation and AREI lens to climate adaptation looks like in your community.

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PILLAR 1: PEOPLE, PARTNERSHIPS AND GOVERNANCE

Local government decision-making processes don't always include perspectives from equity-deserving groups. As a result, policies and practices may overlook those groups' contexts or needs, leading to ineffective and inequitable climate adaptation.

For example

Initiating climate adaptation without meaningful partnerships with equity-deserving groups from the outset can result in superficial or symbolic engagement. This may result in missed critical local insights, eroded trust, ineffective efforts, reduced community support and increased burdens on local governments to address these issues later.

Applying a Reconciliation and AREI lens to pillar 1 activities helps create policies and processes that better address the needs of all groups, particularly those most vulnerable to climate impacts.

Select pillar 1 activities

Putting it into practice

Consider who is and is not part of the team dedicated to working on climate adaptation to identify gaps in representation. Where there are gaps in representation, identify how you might seek other perspectives to address gaps.

You reach out to youth organizations and disability advocacy groups to invite their members to join the team and provide their unique perspectives.

Curious about the benefits of including diverse perspectives? Read the document [Factsheet: Advancing equity, diversity and inclusion in municipal service delivery](#).

Initiate discussions with local and regional First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous Peoples communities and organizations about whether and how they would like to collaborate and/or partner on climate adaptation work.

You reach out to representatives of local Indigenous communities and groups and arrange a meeting to share perspectives, concerns and goals related to climate adaptation. You identify common goals and opportunities to work together in ways that provide mutual benefit.

Read the document [Factsheet: Applying an Indigenous inclusion lens to climate adaptation](#) to learn how Indigenous perspectives strengthen municipal climate adaptation strategies.

Increase engagement opportunities for populations disproportionately impacted by climate change.

You schedule community engagement events at accessible locations and times and/or provide childcare and transportation support.



PILLAR 2: RISK AND ADAPTATION PLANNING

Climate impacts are not experienced the same way by all community members. Vulnerable populations often face more severe effects and may be denied the resources or political influence to have their needs heard. Consequently, local governments may overlook critical areas, exacerbating disparities and leaving the most vulnerable unprotected.

For example

Risk and adaptation assessments often include only climate-related data (e.g., climate projections, cost of infrastructure repairs), overlooking critical information on vulnerable community members (e.g., poverty levels, racial data). This, in turn, results in plans that fail to address the community's most significant vulnerabilities.

Applying a Reconciliation and AREI lens to pillar 2 activities helps communities comprehensively understand climate risks and develop action plans that respond to the needs of the whole community.

Select pillar 2 activities

Putting it into practice

Develop awareness and understanding of the unique contributions of Indigenous knowledges to developing climate adaptation.

You work with Indigenous Knowledge Holders to understand their perspectives of climate change and adaptation. You ensure that those contributing valuable knowledge, experience or skills are compensated for their contributions.

Determine how climate impacts may exacerbate existing inequities.

When analyzing and evaluating climate risks, you consider different populations and their access to resources to cope with impacts (e.g., proximity to green spaces, housing with adequate cooling, access to information).

Include benefits to equity-deserving groups as a weighted criterion when prioritizing adaptation actions.

When developing your climate adaptation plan, you prioritize development of a program that incentivizes high-efficiency cooling systems in lower-income areas and seniors' homes over a program that incentivizes owners of single-family homes to plant trees.



PILLAR 3: IMPLEMENTATION AND INTEGRATION

Applying a Reconciliation and AREI lens to the activities in **pillar 1** and **pillar 2** helps municipalities develop climate adaptation plans that are effective and representative of their communities. However, without Reconciliation and AREI-informed implementation and integration activities, communities may not achieve the desired outcomes of their efforts.

For example

Implementing a wildfire management initiative that focuses on fire suppression techniques without consulting the local First Nation, which has extensive knowledge in land stewardship and controlled burning, could harm the relationship with the First Nation and compromise the effectiveness of the wildfire risk management effort.

Applying a Reconciliation and AREI lens to pillar 3 activities helps communities implement identified adaptation actions in ways that mitigate climate risks and benefit the whole community, allowing for informed adjustments as needed.

Select pillar 3 activities Putting it into practice

Maintain open two-way communication with local and regional First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous Peoples communities and organizations throughout implementation.	You work with the local First Nation to co-develop a communication protocol that outlines the nature, frequency and format of communications related to the implementation of your climate adaptation plan. Together, you decide to meet twice a year over lunch to talk about the actions you've taken and to seek input from the First Nation about what's going well and what could be better. Consult the document Factsheet: Advancing government-to-Nation relationships to learn how your community can build strong, respectful and equitable partnerships with First Nations.
Procure external services as necessary to supplement internal efforts and skills.	You develop a list of local vendors and services that meet criteria related to Reconciliation and AREI (e.g., those owned by Indigenous, Black, racialized, 2SLGBTQIA individuals and/or communities and/or women). You hire an Indigenous-owned business for a project to restore the riparian area of a local creek.
Ensure data is accessible and updated regularly.	In addition to updating council annually on climate adaptation progress, you provide updates to the community through diverse communication channels (e.g., social media, community centres, multilingual newsletters, door-to-door handouts, local radio stations) and formats (e.g., virtual forums specifically for equity-deserving groups).

COMMON REALITIES

At any stage of progress in undertaking Reconciliation and AREI-informed climate adaptation work, local governments may encounter shared realities that impact how they proceed. These include:



Continuous learning and unlearning

- Integrating Reconciliation and AREI into climate adaptation is a developing practice. Everyone is learning as “good practices” emerge.
- Staff may lack awareness of the topic or opportunities to learn about it.
- Existing policies and practices may not support integrating Reconciliation and AREI.



Competing timelines

- Project funding timelines may not align with the time needed to form meaningful partnerships.



Limited resources

- Both municipalities and equity-deserving groups may face resource constraints.



Historical and current state of relationships

- Equity-deserving groups may have varying levels of interest or willingness to engage, influenced by past experiences, trust levels and the perceived relevance of climate adaptation efforts to their immediate needs and priorities.

WORKING WITH COMMON REALITIES

Here are some tips to help you begin this work:

1. Identify your starting point. Reflect on your organization’s current understanding and commitments to Reconciliation and AREI. What do you need to learn?

2. Start with learning. If unsure where to start, focus on learning. Each step, no matter how small, is a chance to review, learn and improve.

3. Don’t do it alone. No one person or organization can do this well alone. Partnering helps ensure climate change adaptation benefits the entire community.

4. Invest in building trust and relationships. Developing internal and external relationships is crucial. Though time-consuming, the benefits extend beyond climate adaptation efforts.

5. Seek input and follow up. One-off engagement with equity-deserving groups may provide some useful information, but it does not support building the ongoing relationships and partnerships that are needed to do this work effectively. Keep communication open, follow up on how input is used and discuss progress and improvements.