



First Nations Climate Lens: Lessons from the AFN National Climate Strategy

50th Session of Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore

Traditional Knowledge and Climate Change: Views of Indigenous Peoples

March 3, 2025

Graeme Reed, PhD



Mandate (...)

“...climate change constitutes a state of emergency for our lands, waters, animals, ice, and peoples”

Resolution 36/2023, Urgent and Transformative Action through the AFN National Climate Strategy

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ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
JULY 11, 12, & 13, 2023; HALIFAX, NS

Resolution no. 36/2023

TITLE: Urgent and Transformative Climate Action through the AFN National Climate Strategy

SUBJECT: Environment, Lands and Waters

MOVED BY: Judy Wilson, proxy, Osoyoos Indian Band, B.C.

SECONDED BY: Chief Terry Richardson, Papineau First Nation, N.B.

DECISION: Carried by Consensus

WHEREAS:

A. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) states:

i. Article 25: Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.

ii. Article 29 (1): Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programmes for indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.

iii. Article 32 (1): Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources.

iv. Article 32 (2): States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to

Certified copy of a resolution adopted on the 12th day of July 2023 in Halifax, Nova Scotia

JOANNA BERNARD, INTERIM NATIONAL CHIEF

36 – 2023
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ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

NATIONAL CLIMATE STRATEGY

October 2023

AFN National Climate Strategy

- Guiding Vision: Elders' Statement
- Introduction & Objectives
- First Nations Climate Leadership (incl. the First Nations Climate Lens)
- Priority Areas
- Conclusion



Guiding Vision: Elder's Statement

*“Mother Earth is in a climate crisis.
We therefore insist on an
immediate end to the destruction
and desecration of the sacred
elements of life...”*





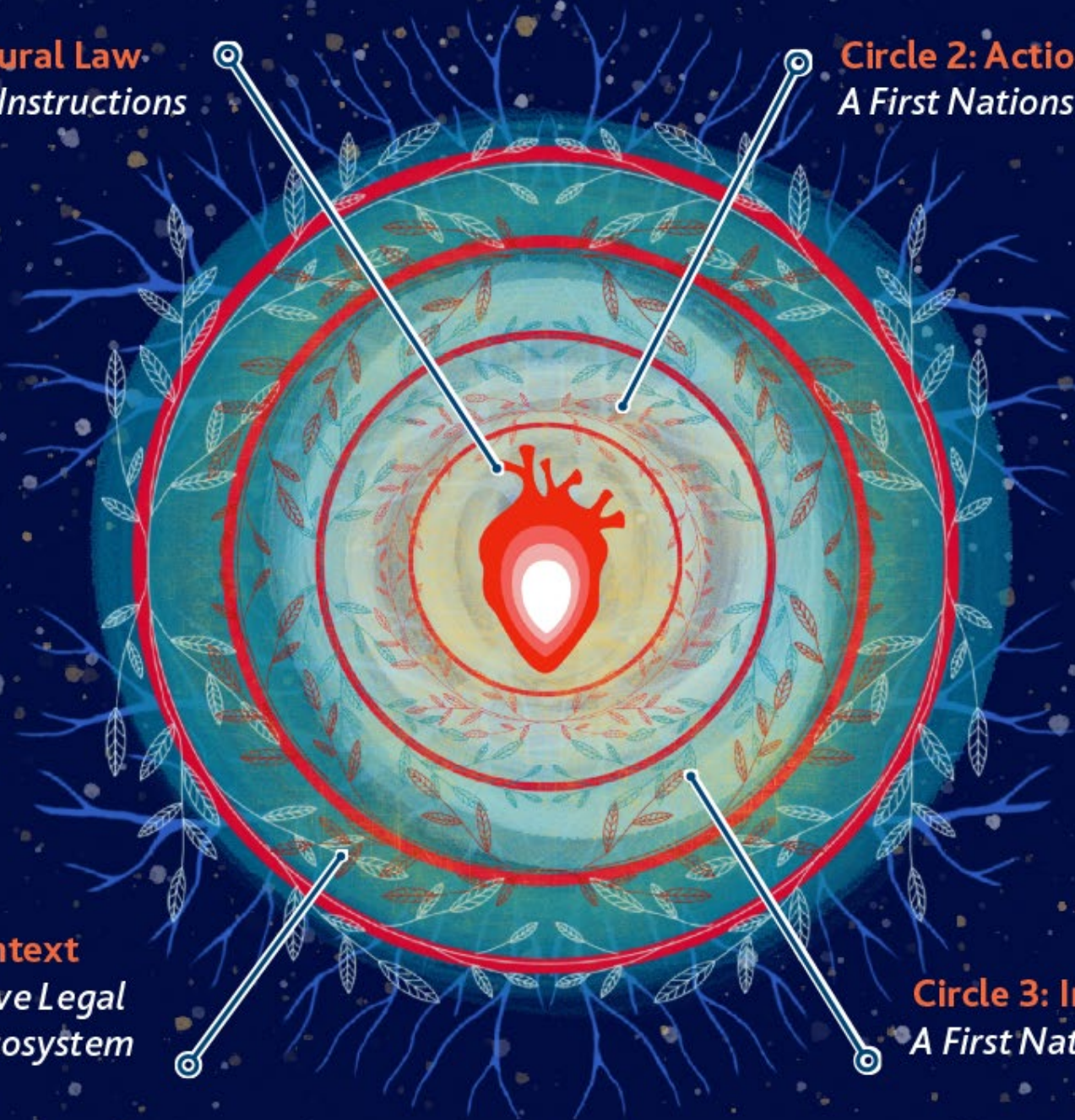
Guiding Vision: Elder's Statement (...)

“With our spiritual laws, practices, experiences, and relationships with our Lands and territories, First Nations peoples have a vital role in defending and healing Mother Earth...”



Circle 1: Natural Law
Our Original Instructions

Circle 2: Actions
A First Nations' Worldview



Circle 4: Context
*The Legislative Legal
and Policy Ecosystem*

Circle 3: Impacts
A First Nations' Lived Reality

First Nations Climate Lens



Applying the Climate Lens to Intellectual Property

- First Nations conceptualize intellectual property differently, grounded in our knowledge systems, rights, collective stewardship, and legal systems.
- Numerous terms (novelty, ownership, property, commercialization) are inconsistent with First Nations knowledge systems.
- Engaging with the First Nations Climate Lens can help shift conversations towards Indigenous Intellectual Property.

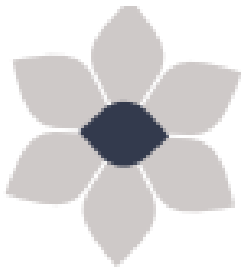


Priority Areas For Action

“... the AFN National Climate Strategy is intended to be an enabling document that creates space for First Nations at the local and regional level to advance their self-determined climate strategies and priorities.”

AFN National Climate Strategy





3.1 Prioritize First Nations Knowledge Systems, health, languages, cultures, and spiritualities.

Goal:	First Nations use, without restrictions, their knowledge systems, languages, cultures, spiritualities, and legal systems to respond to climate crisis today and in the future.
Objectives	
3.1.1	Preserve First Nations' knowledge systems, languages, cultures, way of life, and legal systems.
3.1.2	Adequate and long-term funding for revitalization of legal and governance systems.
3.1.3	Ensure First Nations' knowledge systems lead all levels of government to understand the root causes of the climate crisis, including decision-making processes.
3.1.4	First Nations are equipped with understanding the short- and long-term impacts of climate change on their health and wellbeing.



In practice, what does this mean?

- Stable, adequate, and long-term financial resources to First Nations, moving to models of direct transfers to First Nation governments (33):
 - invest in practices, such as Land-based culture camps, documentation, and language apps, that protect, preserve, and share First Nations languages, cultures, and knowledge systems (1),
 - climate crisis and health-related programs that integrate culture, knowledge, spirituality, language, and community support (10)
 - revitalization of Indigenous languages and involvement in decision-making (3,) and legal and governance systems (24)
- Development of First Nations-led protocols for equitable and ethical engagement with First Nations knowledge systems (6), presence of Knowledge Keepers and language speakers in climate and biodiversity discussions (8) as well as resources on ethical and equitable engagement with First Nations (103)



Miigwech (thank you)

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