




## The health impacts of climate change on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples are interconnected and far-reaching

The impacts of climate change on the land, and on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples' relationships to the land, are already evident in communities from coast to coast to coast, not just in terms of physical health, but also emotional, spiritual, psychological, and cultural well-being. These health impacts, summarized in the table below, are interconnected and far-reaching, from increased food and water insecurity and infrastructure damage, to threats to personal safety and mental health, all of which are experienced differently within and between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis men, women, boys, girls, and gender-diverse people.

## First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples have been actively observing and adapting to changing environments in diverse ways since time immemorial

Indigenous Peoples have unique and diverse knowledge systems and practices, passed down from one generation to the next, that have enabled them to respond, adapt, and survive changing environments for millennia. Applying these systems and practices to the growing threat of climate change and its related health risks will support more robust mitigation, adaptation, research, and policy in Canada and internationally. It will require addressing key knowledge gaps, such as how health impacts differ within and between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and geographies, while taking into account their rights and responsibilities over their lands, natural resources, and ways of life.



*“Rapid climate change is yet another layer of stress cast over our already stressed society.”*

Natan Obed <sup>2</sup>



*“It’s going to be the blink of an eye before my great grandchild is living in a completely different territory, and if that’s not an emergency, I don’t know what is.”*

Dana Tizya-Tramm <sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Natan Obed, as quoted in Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK). (2016). *Inuit Priorities for Canada’s Climate Change Strategy: A Canadian Inuit Vision for Our Common Future in Our Homelands*. Ottawa, ON, page 28.

<sup>3</sup> Dana Tizya-Tramm, as quoted in Avery, H. (2019). Old Crow, Yukon, declares climate change state of emergency. CBC News, May 21. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/old-crow-climate-change-emergency-1.5144010>.

## Health impact or hazard category: Impacts on First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and communities<sup>4</sup>

Climate-related causes	Possible health effects
Increased wildfire, drought, and flooding events	Air quality health impacts (e.g., respiratory and cardiovascular diseases)
Instability and melting of permafrost and changes to ground snow cover, sea ice extent and thickness	Increased water and foodborne diseases
Changes to sea levels and weather patterns	Mental health impacts (e.g., stress, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder)
Higher exposure to climate risks in relation to natural and built environments (e.g., poor housing, water, sanitation, and environmental contaminants)	Increased injuries and deaths from accidents (e.g., natural hazards and extreme weather events)
Decreased availability, quality, quantity and health of traditional food sources	Increased direct and indirect health impacts from permafrost-related infrastructure damage
Melting and damage to ice roads	Exacerbation of health and socio-economic inequities
Effects of warming and changes to precipitation patterns that affect survival and transmission of disease-causing organisms	Exacerbation of chronic and infectious diseases
	Food and water insecurity due to decreased access to, and quality of land, waters, plants, animals, and natural resources
	Decreased opportunities for transmission of Indigenous knowledges and land skills, particularly among youth, affecting sense of identity, mental well-being, and cultures
	Temporary or long-term evacuation or displacement of populations from traditional territories, disrupting lives, creating financial hardship, and affecting mental well-being
	Impacts on health and infrastructure (e.g., restricted or delayed travel for health and emergency services, access to medical supplies, and patient safety)



<sup>4</sup> National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health (NCCIH). (2022). Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples' Health in Canada. In P. Berry & R. Schnitter (Eds.) *Health of Canadians in a Changing Climate: Advancing our Knowledge for Action*. Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada.

