



# A GUIDE TO ADVANCING EQUITABLE CLIMATE ACTION

the Tamarack Institute



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## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We at the Tamarack Institute recognize that most of our work occurs on the ancestral homelands of Indigenous Peoples, including the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. We recognize the contributions of Indigenous people and support their ongoing struggle for self-determination and sovereignty. We work to understand the history of the lands upon which we are guests and to contribute to justice for all Indigenous Peoples.

## AFRICAN ANCESTRAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We also wish to acknowledge those who came to Turtle Island – as migrants either in this generation or in generations past – and those of us who came here involuntarily, particularly those brought to these lands because of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery. Tamarack pays tribute to those ancestors of African origin and descent and thanks them for their contributions toward transforming systems in ways that promote everyone’s sense of belonging and safety. At Tamarack, we are taking action that allows us to be aware of, recognize, and address the systemic ways in which anti-Black racism manifests. Black and Indigenous communities demonstrate that we can work together in solidarity toward peace and equity as we use collective wisdom, knowledge, and gifts that promote healing within our communities.

## GUIDE CONTRIBUTORS & KNOWLEDGE HOLDERS

This guide is built on a foundation of shared wisdom and collaborative effort. We thank Prachir Pasricha and Laura Schnurr for their foundational resource, [10: A Guide to Advancing Climate Equity Through Place-Based Collaboration](#), which paved the way for this work.

This guide is further grounded in Tamarack’s [Seeds of Transformation: A Loving Framework for Equity, Reconciliation, and Belonging](#), which reminds us that this work is a continuous journey – one that evolves as we learn, unlearn, and act with empathy and understanding.

This guide was developed by Stephen Ngonain and the Communities Climate Transition Team of the Tamarack Institute.

We thank Ruté Ojigbo for the graphic design and copy editing. We deeply thank Danya Pastuszek, Jorge Garza and Erika Massoud for their thoughtful and insightful contributions.

Our appreciation extends to the many creators and practitioners whose work is referenced throughout this guide, and to the Arctic Council for first sharing the powerful story of the Old Crow community in the Yukon, which continues to inspire place-based, community-led climate action.

Cover photo of the Old Crow Solar Array in Old Crow, Yukon, taken by [GBP Creative](#).



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Climate change is no longer a distant threat. Across Turtle Island (North America), communities are already feeling the impact through extreme heat, flooding, rising costs, and growing uncertainty. We know that climate change does not affect everyone equally. Communities that have long been marginalized, including Indigenous Peoples, racialized communities, low-income households, and people with disabilities, are disproportionately vulnerable to climate hazards (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2022).

A Guide to Advancing Equitable Climate Action was developed to help local governments, Indigenous rights holders, and community-based organizations respond differently and better. It offers practical tools and real-world examples to support climate action that is not only ambitious but also fair, inclusive, and rooted in community leadership.

At the heart of the guide is a systems-change approach. Rather than focusing only on quick fixes, the guide invites readers and practitioners to look beneath the surface and ask deeper questions: Who benefits from current climate solutions? Who is being left out? And what needs to change for everyone to thrive? Our approach is rooted in the “[Water of Systems Change](#)” framework, which identifies six key conditions that hold problems in place: policies, practices, resource flows, relationships, power dynamics, and mental models (Kania et al., 2018). By addressing these deeper, often hidden factors, we can move beyond quick fixes and create transformative strategies that build lasting resilience.

To support action, the guide introduces the Climate Equity Readiness Assessment Tool - a simple, reflective resource designed to meet communities where they are. Through ten guiding questions on governance, engagement, accountability, data, and implementation, users can assess their current approach to equity across five stages, from “Not Ready” to “Leading.” Each stage offers practical recommendations, helpful resources, and examples, making the tool useful for both beginners and experienced practitioners.

The guide also brings ideas to life through three community stories that show what equitable climate action looks like in practice.

- In Old Crow, Yukon, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation led the development of a community-owned solar project to reduce dependence on diesel fuel. The project has strengthened energy independence, created local jobs, and redirected savings toward food security and caribou conservation - demonstrating how Indigenous leadership can advance climate, economic, and cultural priorities at the same time.
- In Regina, Saskatchewan, the city worked closely with residents, unions, and community groups to shape an energy transition that reflects local values. By tracking not only emissions reductions but also social and economic benefits - such as affordability, jobs, and fairness- Regina shows how equity can be built into policy, measured, and sustained over time.
- On Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, residents and local organizations are strengthening resilience through grassroots efforts like food sovereignty projects, neighbourhood emergency preparedness, and community-led planning. These small, relationship-driven actions have helped build trust, mobilize participation, and scale local ideas into broader systems change.

Together, these stories show that climate equity is not abstract or idealistic. It is practical, achievable, and already happening in communities across the country when people are supported to lead.

At its core, *A Guide to Advancing Equitable Climate Action* is both a roadmap and an invitation. It recognizes the urgency of the climate crisis while reminding us that lasting solutions must be built with care, shared leadership, and lived experience.

By centring equity at every step, the guide helps communities move from good intentions to meaningful action, ensuring that no one is left behind as we work toward a more just, resilient, and low-carbon future.

## INTRODUCTION

For over two decades, the Tamarack Institute has witnessed the incredible power of community to drive transformational change. Our journey began in 2001, with a focus on ending poverty in all its forms. Today, as we confront the dual crises of climate change and systemic inequities, our commitment to place-based, community-led solutions is stronger than ever.

Since 2019, our [Communities Climate Transitions](#) network has supported local leaders across Turtle Island in building more just, equitable, and regenerative futures. We have learned that to truly address the climate crisis, we must ensure that no one is left behind. This means centring the voices and experiences of those most impacted by climate change and working to dismantle the systems of oppression that have created these vulnerabilities.

## THE POWER OF PLACE IN CLIMATE ACTION

While the climate crisis is a global challenge, the most meaningful solutions are often born at the local level. Municipalities have influence over approximately half of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions, making them critical players in our transition to a low-carbon future (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, n.d.). Yet no single actor can do this work alone. It requires a whole-of-community approach, bringing together diverse voices and perspectives to co-create solutions that are both effective and equitable.

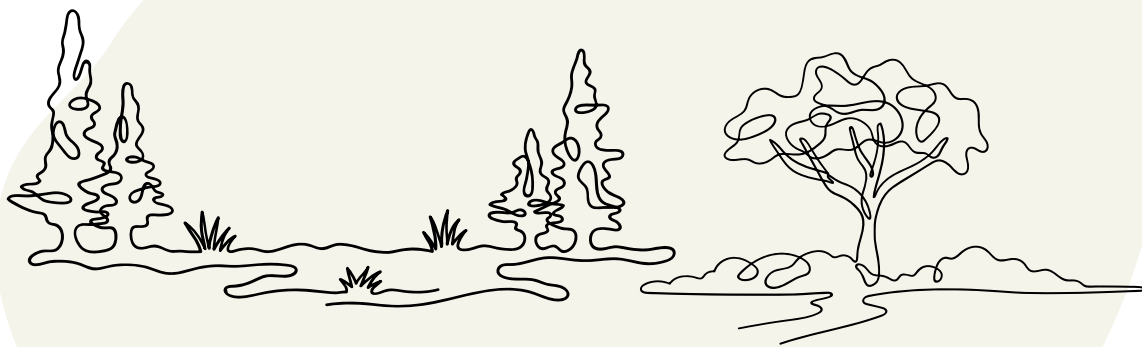
## UNDERSTANDING THE UNEQUAL BURDENS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change does not affect everyone equally. Systemic inequities, rooted in colonialism, racism, and economic injustice, have left many communities disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of climate change (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2022). To build a truly resilient future, we must ask ourselves the hard questions:

- How do poverty and housing insecurity limit a person's ability to prepare for and recover from a flood or wildfire?

- Are our emergency response plans designed to support seniors, people with disabilities, and those with limited resources?
- How can we shift resources and authority to ensure that Indigenous communities have the self-determination to lead their own land-based revitalizing and climate resilience strategies?

By asking these questions, we can begin to design climate solutions that not only reduce emissions but also heal past and current harms and build a more just and equitable society for all.



## DEFINING OUR PATH: CORE CONCEPTS

Term	Definition
<b>Climate Adaptation</b>	<p>Climate adaptation refers to the action of adjusting to the current and/or expected impacts of climate change. It refers to making changes to processes, practices, and structures that will help limit harm posed by a changing climate. Actions can include those that happen in both the short and long term, those that are incremental, and those that are transformative. This definition was adapted in part from the <a href="#">UNFCCC</a> and <a href="#">Grantham Research Institute</a>.</p>
<b>Climate Change Mitigation</b>	<p>Climate change mitigation is a preventative approach to climate action focused on alleviating the inputs and conditions that cause climate change before further climate impacts are felt. Generally, climate mitigation refers to actions taken by governments, businesses, or people to reduce or prevent greenhouse gases emissions, or to enhance carbon sinks that remove them from the atmosphere.</p>
<b>Climate Equity</b>	<p>Climate equity refers to the practice of addressing the unequal burdens of climate change while ensuring that all people share the benefits of climate action. It recognizes that climate change does not affect everyone equally, and that historic and ongoing injustices shape who is most exposed to risk and who has access to protection, resources, and decision-making.</p> <p>Within this understanding, achieving climate equity means creating the conditions for all people regardless of ancestry, race, gender, age, sexuality, immigration status, ability, or income to live in safe, healthy, and just communities. Grounded in <a href="#">Tamarack’s Seeds of Transformation</a> framework, climate equity is rooted in belonging and shared power: it calls for centering the lived experiences, knowledge, and leadership of those most impacted by climate change, and for designing climate actions with communities rather than for them. Extra care must be taken to ensure that climate solutions do not reinforce existing inequities, but instead contribute to healing, trust, and long-term systems change.</p>

<p><b>Climate Equity Principles</b></p>	<p>Climate equity principles within the context of this guide refer to the foundational conditions that ensure fairness and justice in how climate impacts, benefits, and decisions are distributed and governed. These are commonly understood to include distributive equity (fair outcomes), procedural equity (inclusive decision-making), and recognition equity (respect for diverse identities, knowledge, and lived experiences), alongside intergenerational responsibility (fairness across present and future generations) (Intergovernmental Climate Panel on Change, 2022).</p>
<p><b>Climate Justice</b></p>	<p>Climate justice acknowledges that the causes, impacts, and solutions to climate change are deeply tied to systemic inequities rooted in colonialism, racism, and classism. It seeks to address the disproportionate burdens faced by marginalized communities, including Indigenous, Black, racialized, and low-income groups, by ensuring equitable climate action. This involves shifting power in decision-making, holding major polluters accountable, and prioritizing solutions that repair harm and prevent further injustices. Without justice, climate action risks reinforcing existing inequalities rather than resolving them.</p>
<p><b>Climate Resilience</b></p>	<p>Climate resilience refers to the actual capacity to prepare for and recover from the current and/or expected impacts of climate change. Resilience is more associated with a worldview that advocates for system-wide changes and long-term capability-building to enhance the ability to absorb changes and recover from their impacts. This definition was adapted in part from the <a href="#">UNFCCC</a> and <a href="#">Grantham Research Institute</a>.</p>
<p><b>Community</b></p>	<p>There are many kinds of communities in today’s world and many ways to define the term. Here, we refer specifically to those groups of people defined by a particular place, whether that be a neighbourhood, town, city, or district.</p>
<p><b>Equity</b></p>	<p>Equity recognizes that people have different needs and that treating everyone the same may not lead to fair outcomes. Equity involves giving everyone what they need to be successful, even if that means giving some people more resources or opportunities than others. Equity leads to equality of opportunities.</p>

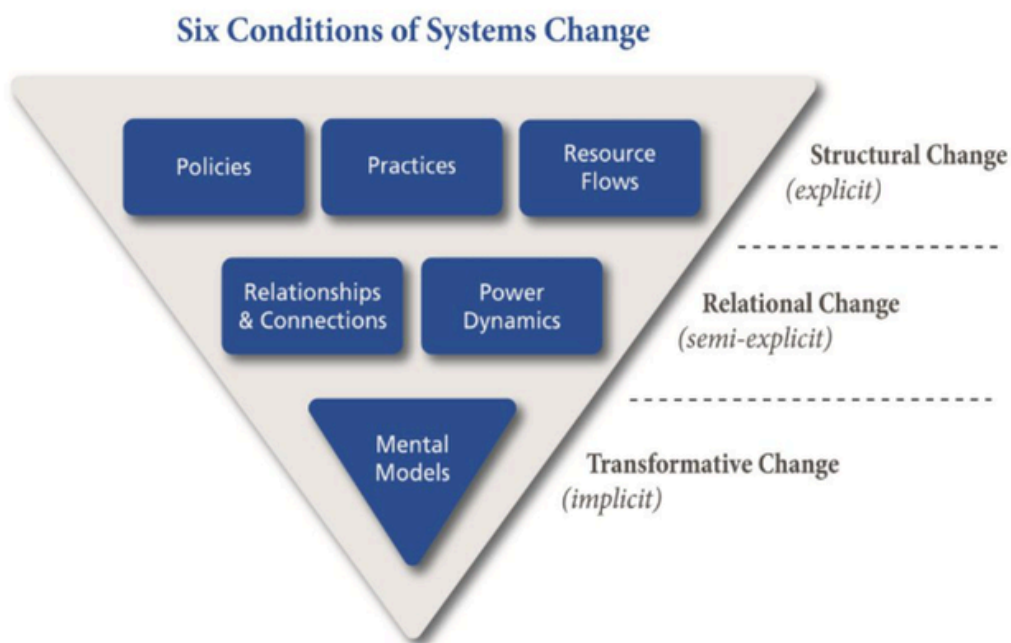
<p><b>Equity-Denied Groups</b></p>	<p>Equity-denied groups experience ongoing systemic barriers to full inclusion and participation because of entrenched histories of discrimination and exclusion. These barriers limit fair access to opportunities, resources, and decision-making power and are shaped by intersecting factors such as race, Indigeneity, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, disability, age, and religion. In the Canadian context, equity-denied groups often include Indigenous Peoples, Black and racialized communities, migrants, 2SLGBTQI+ individuals, women, people with disabilities, and religious minorities. Addressing inequity requires recognizing that these barriers are created and maintained by institutions and systems, not solely by individuals or communities.</p>
<p><b>Energy poverty</b></p>	<p>Energy poverty is the lack of access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy for basic needs like heating, cooling, and powering household appliances. This state of being often forces individuals to choose between energy costs and other essentials. Energy poverty leads to adverse health, economic, and social impacts, including discomfort, utility disruptions, financial hardship, and reduced well-being. Energy poverty can have disproportionate impacts on low-income households, people living with disabilities, and the elderly, among other groups.</p>
<p><b>Indigenous</b></p>	<p>Indigenous refers to the original peoples of any given land (CFS, n.d.), who have been adversely impacted by colonization, imperialism, and capitalism through forced displacement and settlement of their traditional territories. In so-called Canada, the Indigenous Peoples of these lands include First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples.</p>
<p><b>Lived/Living Experience</b></p>	<p>People with lived/ living experience have first-hand experiential knowledge of an issue or topic. In the context of this guide, this includes people who have directly experienced the impacts of the climate crisis and the inequities associated with it.</p>

# SECTION 1: ADVANCING CLIMATE EQUITY THROUGH A SYSTEMS CHANGE LENS

To create lasting and meaningful change, we must look beyond surface-level problems and address the underlying systems that hold them in place. The “Water of Systems Change” framework, developed by John Kania, Mark Kramer, and Peter Senge, provides a powerful lens for understanding and transforming these systems (Kania et al., 2018). It invites us to see the full picture, from the explicit policies and practices that shape our daily lives to the implicit mental models and power dynamics that often go unseen.

## 1.1: THE SIX CONDITIONS OF SYSTEMS CHANGE

The framework identifies six key conditions that can either perpetuate the status quo or, when shifted, unlock transformative change. These conditions operate at three distinct levels: structural, relational and transformative as represented below.



The Six Conditions of Systems Change is a component of the Water of Systems Change, a framework for understanding broad systems change that was developed by John Kania, Mark Kramer, and Peter Senge.

## 1.2: WEAVING EQUITY INTO THE FABRIC OF CLIMATE ACTION

The climate crisis is not just an environmental issue; it is a social justice issue. The impacts of climate change are disproportionately shouldered by communities that have been historically marginalized by systems of oppression (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2022). By applying a systems change lens, we can begin to unravel these inequities and weave justice into the very fabric of our climate solutions.

Here is how the six conditions of systems change can be leveraged to advance climate equity:

- **Policies:** We should move beyond one-size-fits-all policies and co-create policies that are tailored to the unique needs and vulnerabilities of different communities. This includes ensuring that the benefits of climate action, such as clean energy and green jobs, are equitably distributed.
- **Practices:** Our planning and engagement processes should be inclusive and participatory, centring the wisdom and leadership of those most impacted by the climate crisis. This means creating authentic partnerships with Indigenous communities, Black and racialized groups, and other equity-denied groups.
- **Resource Flows:** We should redirect financial and other resources to support community-led climate solutions. This includes investing in grassroots initiatives, supporting Indigenous-led conservation efforts, and ensuring that climate finance reaches the communities that need it most.
- **Relationships & Connections:** Building trust and fostering collaboration between diverse stakeholders is essential for collective action. This requires open and honest communication, a willingness to listen and learn, and a commitment to building authentic relationships.
- **Mental Models:** To truly advance climate equity, we should shift the underlying beliefs and assumptions that perpetuate injustice. This includes challenging the narratives that devalue certain communities and embracing a worldview that recognizes the interconnectedness of all people and the planet.

**Food for Thought:** When we try to make changes in any of the six areas of a system, it is important to note that we are working with systems that are dynamic and constantly shifting. This means:

- Even if we design a policy or change how resources are used with a clear goal in mind, the results might look different from what we expected, which is okay.
- Just because we plan carefully does not mean it will go exactly as planned. Systems respond in complex ways, and unintended outcomes are part of the process. Learning from these outcomes is key.
- Change is not a one-time event. We need to keep checking in, adapting and improving how we intervene to make sure we are moving toward real, lasting and equitable change.



# SECTION 2: WHERE ARE YOU ON YOUR CLIMATE EQUITY JOURNEY?

## CLIMATE EQUITY ASSESSMENT TOOL

### 2.1: TEN QUESTIONS TO DETERMINE CLIMATE EQUITY READINESS

Before answering these questions, take a moment to reflect on your community, municipality, or organization’s readiness to advance climate equity. It’s okay to not have answers to all the questions yet; they are meant to help you assess your current position, recognize existing strengths, and identify key areas for growth as you embark on this work.

This framework was adapted from [10: A Guide to Advancing Climate Equity Through Place-Based Collaboration](#), developed by Prachir Pasricha, and Laura Schnurr from the Tamarack Institute.

#### HOW TO USE THIS ASSESSMENT

- Municipalities, organizations and communities can self-score each question based on their current policies, programs, and engagement efforts.
- The final score identifies gaps and opportunities for improvement.
- Lower scores indicate areas that need urgent attention to strengthen equity-driven climate action.
- Regular assessments (e.g., annually) can track progress over time.

#### SCORING SYSTEM

Score	Description
0	I don’t know
1	Not yet
2	Just getting started
3	We are part way there
4	We are doing this
5	We are there

## ASSESSING READINESS: 10 KEY QUESTIONS

Questions	Assessment Indicator	Score
Does your community, municipality or organization have a clear and publicly stated commitment to advancing climate equity within its climate action plan, with measurable objectives to track progress?	Commitment and Vision	
Has your community, municipality or organization conducted an equity-based assessment to identify and understand the local communities most vulnerable to climate impacts and their lived experiences, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples, and equity-deserving communities?	Understanding Climate Inequities and Local Ecologies	
Has your community, municipality or organization developed long-term strategies to build relationships with and ensure that First Nations, Métis, Inuit Peoples, and equity-denied communities have accessible and equitable pathways to collaborate in climate planning and decision-making?	Inclusive Community Engagement	
Has your community, municipality or organization identified and taken steps to address the systemic barriers, historic and current harms (e.g., extractive engagement, broken trust, and other legacies of discrimination) that prevent equity-denied groups from fully participating in and benefiting from climate action initiatives?	Addressing Systemic Barriers and Historical Harms	
Are your teams, municipal leaders, and staff trained in climate equity principles, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives, and is there a mechanism for holding decision-makers accountable to equity commitments?	Leadership, Accountability, and Capacity Building	

Questions	Assessment Indicator	Score
How well does your community, municipality or organization integrate climate equity considerations into policies, such as housing, transportation, economic development, and emergency planning, to avoid unintended consequences and systemic inequities?	Policy and Program Integration	
If relevant, does your organization or municipality have systems in place to ensure climate adaptation and mitigation resources are equitably distributed, ensuring that communities at the highest risk and those historically and currently underfunded receive targeted support and benefits?	Resource Allocation and Funding	
Does your community, municipality or organization have collaborative governance and partnership protocols that enable power-sharing with groups representing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples, local residents, and equity-focused partners, in shaping and implementing climate policies?	Cross-Sector Collaboration and Power-Sharing	
Has your community, municipality or organization outlined clear and measurable opportunities to advance equity at every stage of climate planning, from development to implementation and long-term impact assessments?	Setting Equity Objectives and Course Correction	
10. Does your community, municipality or organization collect and analyze disaggregated data (i.e., quantitative and qualitative data that has been broken up by sub-categories that relate to equity-denied groups) to track participation, monitor impacts of climate initiatives, and make necessary adjustments to improve outcomes for equity-denied populations?	Data, Performance Measurement, and Adaptive Learning	

**Add up your score to assess how you're doing:**

## WHAT YOUR SCORE SAYS ABOUT YOUR READINESS LEVEL

The total score (out of 50) determines your community’s or municipality’s Climate Equity Readiness Level. See Section 2 for a more detailed breakdown of next steps according to your Readiness Level based on your score.

Score	Readiness Level	Description
0-10	Not Ready	Equity is not considered in climate planning. Immediate action is needed to integrate climate equity principles.
11-20	Early Stage	Some recognition of climate equity, but limited action. Needs significant policy and engagement improvements.
21-30	Developing	Some policies and programs include equity, but gaps exist in implementation and community participation.
31-40	Progressing	Equity is well-integrated into multiple systems, with strong community engagement and funding mechanisms.
41-50	Leading	Climate equity is a core principle across policies, funding, and governance, with measurable outcomes and leadership in inclusive climate action.

## 2.2 YOUR NEXT STEP: A GUIDE FOR EVERY STAGE OF THE JOURNEY

No matter where you land on the readiness spectrum, the path forward is one of continuous learning and action. This section offers tailored guidance, resources, and inspiration to support you in taking the next steps to advance climate equity, wherever you may be starting from.

In addition to the resources below, Tamarack offers collective and tailored support to communities, municipalities, and organizations at all stages of their climate equity journeys through our [membership](#) and ongoing [Communities of Practice](#). Read more about the Communities Climate Transitions [network offerings](#).

### If You Are at the "Not Ready" Stage (0-10 Points)

If you are just beginning this work, know that you are not alone. The most important step is the first one. At this stage, your focus should be on building a foundational understanding of climate equity and starting conversations within your organization and community. It's a time for learning, questioning, and opening your heart and mind to new perspectives.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AS YOU BEGIN YOUR CLIMATE EQUITY JOURNEY

### Capacity Building and Awareness

- Resource: [Why Equity Matters in Municipal Climate Adaptation](#) (Federation of Canadian Municipalities). This factsheet explores why equity is so critical in municipal climate adaptation and lays out the fundamental case for this work.
- Toolkit: [10: A Guide for Advancing Climate Equity Through Place-Based Collaboration](#) (Tamarack Institute). Use this structured guide to embed equity in climate action through place-based collaboration.
- Training: [DEIA Pathways](#) (Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion). Enroll in this training for professionals on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

## Engagement and Governance

- Resource: [Why Community Engagement is Essential to Climate Adaptation and Resilience](#) (Tamarack Institute). This article makes the case for community engagement as essential to climate adaptation and resilience efforts.
- Case Study: [Vancouver's Climate Justice Charter](#) (City of Vancouver). The City of Vancouver is redefining what it means to lead with heart in the face of the climate crisis. Through its Climate Justice Charter, Vancouver is reshaping how we think about climate action - starting with people and communities. Instead of focusing solely on emissions reductions, the Charter takes a more holistic approach, grounded in Indigenous sovereignty, equity, and belonging. It imagines a city where communities are deeply connected, working together toward healing and hope. From honouring the sovereignty of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations to embedding racial, migrant, disability, and multi-species justice into everyday decision-making, the Charter turns big ideas into meaningful, lasting change. At its core, it invites every city to reflect on how we govern, collaborate, and share power, and to build a future where no one is left behind, where justice becomes the foundation of resilience.
- Case Study: [ATULIQTUQ: Action and Adaptation in Nunavut](#) (Government of Nunavut, the Canadian Institute of Planners, Natural Resources Canada, and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada). In Iqaluit, climate change isn't a distant forecast - it's happening now, reshaping the ice, the land, and the rhythms of daily life. Yet in this northern capital, adaptation is more than survival; it's about honouring knowledge, strengthening community, and planning for generations ahead. Through this plan, Iqaluit is charting a new path - one that blends science, traditional knowledge, and collaboration to prepare for rising seas, shifting permafrost, and changing access to land and food. This plan transforms adaptation from a technical exercise into a collective journey of learning, connection, and care. It's a reminder that in places where the ground itself is moving, resilience is built not just with data and infrastructure but through relationships, trust, and shared purpose.

## If You Are at the "Early Stage" (11–20 Points)

At this stage, you have begun to recognize the importance of climate equity, but now it's time to translate that awareness into concrete action. Your focus should be on gathering data, strengthening your policies, and building more intentional relationships with community partners.

### RECOMMENDATIONS IF YOU'RE AT THE EARLY STAGE

#### Sourcing Data and Solutions

- Resource: [Climate Insights Platform](#) (ICLEI/Local Governments for Sustainability Canada). This website offers a diverse resource hub to find baseline equity-oriented climate data for decision-making. It also presents equity considerations related to different climate solutions.

#### Policy and Planning

- Resource: [Climate Policies and Resource Library](#) (Climate Caucus). This resource library compiles examples of climate policies, including motions, bylaws, and council reports, from municipalities across the country.
- Toolkit: [Climate Justice Toolkit for Municipalities](#) (British Columbia Council for International Cooperation). This toolkit provides a guide for incorporating equity and justice into local climate action.

#### Collaboration Considerations

- Resource: [The Collaboration Spectrum Revisited](#) (Tamarack Institute). This article provides key considerations for organizations thinking about engaging in partnerships and collaborations to ensure they are purposeful in form and function.

#### Community Engagement and Inclusion

- Toolkit: [Community Engagement Toolkit](#) (Social Planning and Research Council of BC). This collection of resources can help municipalities engage underrepresented groups in climate planning and beyond.

- Tools: [Evergreen Resource Hub](#) (Evergreen). This repository of tools can help you with equitable urban climate planning and community engagement strategies.

### **If You Are at the "Developing" Stage (21-30 Points)**

You have made significant progress in integrating equity into your work, but you may be facing challenges with implementation and ensuring deep community participation. Your focus now should be on strengthening your programs, measuring your impact, and deepening your community engagement.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS IF YOU'RE AT THE DEVELOPING STAGE**

### Planning and Evaluation

- Tool: [Climate-Ready Communities Assessment Tool](#) (Federation of Canadian Municipalities). This in-depth planning tool can help you assess your current climate adaptation progress through an equity lens to identify areas for improvement.
- Case Study: [TransformTO Net Zero Strategy](#) (City of Toronto). This strategy offers a model for embedding equity in municipal climate policies. Read more about the work in Tamarack's [case study](#) on TransformTO in 2019.

### Data and Impact Measurement

- Resource: [ClimateData.ca](#) (Environment and Climate Change Canada, Computer Research Institute of Montreal, Evolving Web, Pacific Climate Impacts Consortium, ClimateWest, Prairie Climate Centre, ORCCA, Ouranos and CLIMAtlantic). This website offers open-access data for assessing climate risks in equity-denied communities.
- Resource: [Roadmap: Inclusive Planning Indicator Module](#) (C40 Cities). This guide provides details on how to create indicators to measure and track progress on inclusivity and equity in climate actions. Note: To access the module, click Download Resource on the right side of the page.

## Deepening Community Engagement

- Resources: [Indigenous Climate Action Network Publications](#). This Indigenous-led organization provides a resource hub of reports and tools to deepen your understanding of decolonizing climate policy. It also offers insight into promising trends in Indigenous-led climate action.
- Toolkit: [Connected Community: A Trauma-Informed Community Engagement Toolkit](#) (Impact Services and the New Kensington Community Development Corporation). This toolkit can help planners and facilitators consider how to host spaces in ways that are more supportive and responsive to communities who experience trauma

### If You Are at the “Progressing” Stage (31–40 Points)

You are a leader in climate equity, with strong policies, funding mechanisms, and community partnerships. Your focus now should be on scaling your successes, sustaining community-led solutions, and sharing your knowledge with others.

## RECOMMENDATIONS IF YOU’RE AT THE PROGRESSING STAGE

### Scaling Policy Success

- Webinar Recording: [Towards Inclusive Adaptation: Tools and success stories for local governments](#) (ICLEI/Local Governments for Sustainability Canada). This webinar recording offers practical tools, strategies, and case studies to help embed equity and inclusive engagement into climate adaptation projects, with a complementary resource available on Equitable Climate Adaptation for further guidance.
- Webinar Recording: [Advancing Municipal Equity Through Municipal Leadership](#) (Tamarack Institute). This webinar recording offers practical tools, including the [Green Municipal Fund’s Climate-Ready Communities Assessment Tool](#), to help communities identify gaps, address power imbalances, and prioritize actions that support a more just and equitable climate transition.

- Toolkit: [INCLU:DE Climate Equity Toolbox](#) (ICLEI/Local Governments for Sustainability Canada). This equity toolbox offers tools for strengthening municipal climate equity programs. It is designed to support city practitioners in designing socially just subsidy programs, drawing on insights from collaboration with city officials and other interested parties.

### Sustaining Community-Led Solutions

- Resource Series: [Collaborative Leadership and Governance Resource Series](#) (Tamarack Institute). This collection of 11 articles and tools will help inform both the process and people aspects of effective collaboration.
- Guide: [Equity Framework: Getting Our House in Order](#) (City of Vancouver). This strategy document offers guidance for embedding equity into sustainability planning and beyond. A 2024 update on its implementation can be found [here](#).
- Guide and Toolkit: [Replenishing Trust™](#) (Spitfire Strategies). This guide provides practical steps for organizations to address trust deficits and take action to build community trust.

### Long-Term Impact Measurement & Reporting

- Network: [Global Covenant of Mayors – Canada Chapter](#). This network can help leaders of Canadian cities benchmark climate equity progress.
- Resource: [Reliable, Affordable, Predictable, Clean](#) (Clean Energy Canada). This white paper offers strategies for ensuring fairness in municipal decarbonization efforts, with a focus on Ontario.

## If You Are at the "Leading" Stage (41-50 Points)

As a leader in climate equity, your work is a model for others. Your challenge is to continue to push the boundaries of what is possible, to deepen your commitment to justice, and to mentor and support others on their journey.

## RECOMMENDATIONS IF YOU'RE AT THE LEADING STAGE

### Deepening Equity Scope and Practice

- Resource: [Equity and Justice in Urban Coastal Adaptation Planning: New Evaluation Framework](#) (Tira Okamoto and Andréanne Doyon). This journal article outlines the JustAdapt framework that expands beyond equity and considers five forms of justice.
- Resource: [Indigenous Climate Action](#). This Indigenous-led organization provides a resource hub of reports and tools to deepen your understanding of decolonizing climate policy. It also offers insight on promising trends in Indigenous-led climate action.
- Resource: [Forging a Future of Belonging: Building Awareness and Will for a Canada-Wide Strategy](#) (Tamarack Institute). This report highlights how strengthening belonging is key to advancing equity by addressing power imbalances and fostering inclusive communities. It offers a roadmap for embedding equity and belonging into policies, leadership, and collective action across Canada.

### Ongoing Learning and Knowledge Sharing

- Network: [Tamarack Institute Communities of Practice](#). The Tamarack Institute offers a variety of communities of practice, both open [freely to the public](#) and as part of [Tamarack Membership](#). Our climate-focused communities of practice comprise representatives from municipalities, community organizations, and resident-led groups who come together to regularly share promising practices, co-strategize, and learn from each other to strengthen their local work. Join us!
- Network: [The Federation of Canadian Municipalities \(FCM\) Climate Adaptation Community of Practice](#). This FCM community of practice is a collaborative space for local leaders, experts, and municipal practitioners to exchange knowledge and strategies for strengthening long-term climate adaptation and resilience.
- Network: [Quest Canada – Net-Zero Communities Accelerator Program](#). This program offers support for community energy planning for small and rural municipalities.

## SECTION 3: STORIES OF HOPE AND TRANSFORMATION

Beyond frameworks and tools, the heart of this work lies in the stories of communities courageously forging a new path. These case studies are not just examples of best practices; they are living testaments to the power of community, the importance of justice, and the boundless potential of the human spirit to create change.

### CASE STUDY 1: OLD CROW, YT – INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP IN RENEWABLE ENERGY AND CLIMATE ACTION



The town of Old Crow, Yukon, is a remote, fly-in Indigenous community that has become a leader in climate equity and energy sovereignty by transitioning to 100% renewable energy during the summer months. Historically reliant on diesel fuel, Old Crow faced high energy costs, environmental risks – such as fuel spills, local air and soil pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions– and supply chain vulnerabilities.

In 2008, the Vuntut Gwitchin Government made a pivotal decision to pursue green energy alternatives to achieve long-term energy sovereignty and security for their community. In response, [the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation \(VGFN\)](#) – of which many Old Crow residents are members – took charge of the community’s energy future, leading the development of the [Old Crow Solar Project](#). This solar project significantly reduces fossil fuel dependence and reinvests the benefits back into the community.

Developed in partnership with ATCO Electric Yukon, the Old Crow Solar Project features a 940-kilowatt solar array that replaces 190,000 litres of diesel fuel annually. More than just an energy transition, the initiative embeds climate justice and economic empowerment into municipal planning. It also creates local employment opportunities, trains First Nation workers in solar panel installation and maintenance and directs energy cost savings towards community-led environmental conservation efforts.

Crucially, the transition to renewable energy aligns with Gwich’in cultural values and protects the [Porcupine Caribou herd](#), a vital source of food and traditional knowledge. This integration of energy sovereignty, cultural preservation, and climate resilience showcases how equity can be embedded into municipal climate planning.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Energy sovereignty is a cornerstone of equity:** Community-led renewable energy initiatives reduce economic dependence on external fuel sources, ensuring community leadership in decision-making.
- **Climate action must be rooted in local culture:** Reinvesting energy cost savings into caribou conservation and food security supports community-driven climate justice and resilience.
- **Local capacity is the key to long-term success:** By investing in the skills and knowledge of its own people, the community has ensured that the benefits of this project will endure for generations to come.

[Read the full case study here](#)

## CASE STUDY 2: REGINA, SK – EMBEDDING EQUITY INTO ENERGY AND CLIMATE PLANNING



The City of Regina, Saskatchewan, has positioned itself as a leader in integrating equity into energy transition planning, having committed to achieving 100% renewable energy status by 2050. This process has been marked by extensive community engagement and strategically incorporating an equity lens into climate action frameworks.

In 2019, several months after the city set its bold climate target, researchers from the University of Regina and [EnviroCollective](#) initiated a comprehensive engagement process involving diverse local organizations representing equity-denied groups. Through focus groups with community-based organizations and union representatives, the researchers gathered insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by these communities related to the City's renewable energy commitment.

These consultations resulted in a [set of recommendations](#) spanning fare-free public transit, energy security (ensuring reliable, affordable, and sustainable access to energy for all residents), financial support for transition costs,

accessibility for green spaces, and ensuring a just transition for workers; one that supports workers and communities in shifting toward a low-carbon economy while protecting livelihoods and advancing equity.

The city then set up an advisory group made up of diverse community members and organizations to provide input on the guiding principles of the framework. This group also provided feedback on the deliverables created along the way. This step was critical in ensuring community perspectives were reflected in the plan. The city also ensured that a clear focus on equity was embedded into the procurement process, prioritizing the principle of ‘no one left behind.’ This made equity a common thread of discussion in every stakeholder engagement session, regardless of the focus.

Building upon this groundwork, the City of Regina unveiled its [Energy & Sustainability Framework](#) in early 2022, setting a new standard for integrating equity into energy planning.

The framework, consisting of seven “Big Moves” ranging from building retrofits to renewable energy generation, incorporates equity “co-benefit indicators” (equity, employment, and cost effectiveness) to gauge the impact of policies on equity-related outcomes. This approach helps demonstrate to what extent each policy not only reduces emissions and supports economic prosperity but also advances equity.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Equity is not an add-on; it is the foundation: By embedding equity into every aspect of its climate action plan, Regina is creating a more just and resilient city for all.
- Multi-solving is the future of climate action: By focusing on the co-benefits of its initiatives, the city is demonstrating that climate solutions can also address a wide range of social and economic challenges.
- Community engagement is the engine of change: By centring the voices of its people, Regina has unleashed a wave of creativity, innovation, and collective action.

- Free transit fares are a game-changer for youth: One notable early success connects to the Big Move that suggested increasing active transportation and transit use, with the city approving fare-free transit for youth aged 13 and under in July 2022. This was a big win for community groups concerned with transit accessibility and equity, which was achieved in large part thanks to the advocacy efforts of [Regina Energy Transition](#) and [Better Bus Youth](#), a youth-led organization championing accessible transportation for all.

This story was originally published in [10: A Guide to Advancing Climate Equity Through Place-Based Collaboration](#), developed by Prachir Pasricha, and Laura Schnurr from the Tamarack Institute.



## CASE STUDY 3: SALT SPRING ISLAND, BC – ADVANCING SYSTEMIC CHANGE AT THE LOCAL SCALE



On Salt Spring Island in British Columbia, residents, community organizations, and the municipality are demonstrating how working at the hyper-local scale can affect systemic change, perhaps in even more meaningful ways than through working at regional, provincial/ territorial, or national levels. Through several initiatives focused on responding to climate change, restoring ecosystems, and reimagining community, local partners are shifting old ways of working.

One example is the [50 Farms Project](#), a grassroots effort led by the Farmland Trust to ramp up local food production and enhance food security. The goal is to have a network of 50 new and existing farms spread across the island that can leverage the networks forged by an existing [Community POD system](#) – a neighbourhood-based emergency response system on the island (POD – Point of Dispensing). The project aims to support these farms by strengthening their ability to grow more food both now and for future emergencies.

With only 2–3 days of food available in local grocery stores and increasing disruptions to ferry travel due to extreme weather events, islanders are coming

together to take care of each other as climate impacts mount in very tangible ways.

This initiative and others like it – such as repair cafés and clothing swaps – are some of the ways in which Salt Spring residents are interacting with and supporting the local [Salt Spring Island Climate Action Plan 2.0](#).

This plan was released in 2021 by Transition Salt Spring (TSS), a charity that has [catalyzed climate action on the island](#) and serves as the backbone organization for local collaborations around climate. Its development was informed by an engagement process that reached over 2,000 islanders (more than 10% of its population).

The plan includes 250 recommendations that aim to help Salt Spring Island halve its greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and prepare for climate change. Two years later, TSS released the [Climate Action Report Card 2023](#) that points to several wins (e.g., electric transportation, forest protection, improved food security) alongside a need for accelerated action to reach the plan's targets.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Build community first, then talk about climate: By focusing on building social connection and trust, Transition Salt Spring has created a fertile ground for collective action.
- Small acts can lead to big change: By providing accessible entry points for people to get involved, the community has built a powerful movement for change.
- Celebrate progress but never stop pushing: The community's commitment to tracking its progress and holding itself accountable is a powerful lesson on how to move climate action forward.

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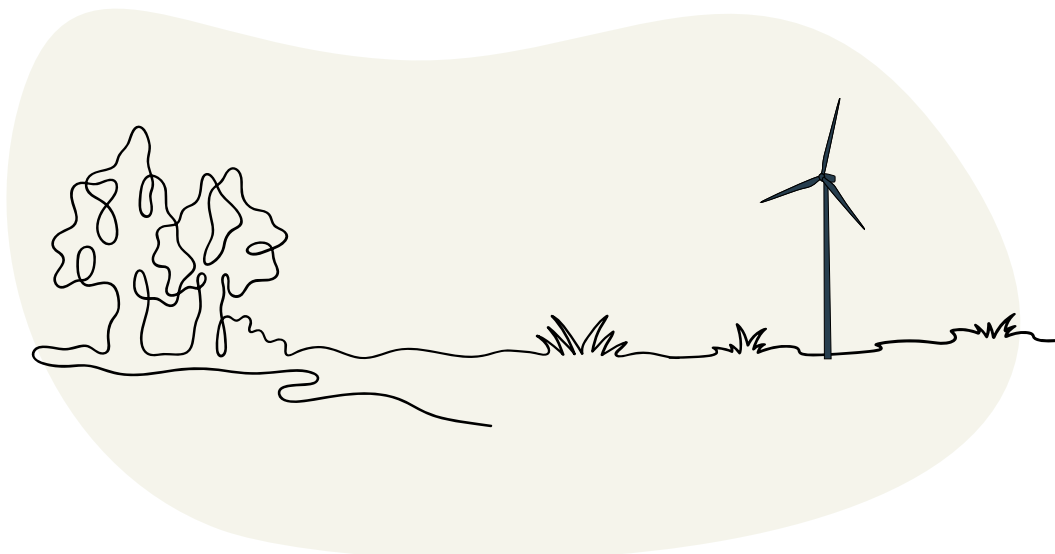
These 3 stories are just a few of the many that are unfolding across Turtle Island. They are reminders that the future does not happen to us; it is something we create together.

## CONCLUSION

Climate change is already reshaping communities across Turtle Island, and as this guide has shown, its impacts and solutions are not experienced equally. Advancing climate action that is both effective and just requires moving beyond surface-level responses to address the deeper systems, relationships, and power dynamics that shape outcomes. Through a systems-change lens (Section 1), a practical readiness pathway (Section 2), and real-world examples of community leadership (Section 3), this guide demonstrates that equitable climate action is not only possible but also already happening.

A Guide to Advancing Equitable Climate Action is both a roadmap and an invitation. It calls on local governments, Indigenous rights holders, and community-based organizations to lead with intention - centring equity, lived experience, and shared leadership to move from good intentions to meaningful and lasting impact.

This journey is ongoing, and no community has to navigate it alone. Through the [Tamarack Institute's Communities Climate Transitions network](#), practitioners across the country are coming together to learn, collaborate, and accelerate equitable climate solutions. We invite you to join our [community of practice](#) and be part of shaping a more just, resilient, and belonging-centred future for all.



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