

Kluane Climate Futures

Strengthening Climate Capacity in
Kluane First Nation Traditional Territory



Environmental change in the Kluane region is affecting how Lhù'ààn Mân Ku Dañ (Kluane Lake People) live, travel, and sustain their relationships with the land.

How is Kluane First Nation adapting to a changing climate, and what does the path forward look like?

*This project is led by
Kluane First Nation
Lands, Resources
and Heritage
Department*

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Building Relationships

This project evolved from **Bringing Research Home** and was shaped by what Kluane First Nation shared about respectful research practices. At its core, the work prioritized relationships – recognizing that trust takes time and that meaningful research must be grounded in strong, authentic connections. Guided by Kluane First Nation leadership and community direction, the project emphasized self-determination and active listening.

- **Focused** on getting to know the community, with special attention to involving **Elders and Youth**, and engaging the Dän Keyi Renewables Research Council
- **Hosted** the **Polar Winter Festival**, an event focused on spending time together enjoying winter activities, including fish netting, ice skating, basket making, fish processing, community feast, games, and the Signal Fire film debut
- **Engaged** youth through a variety of activities focused on climate change at **Zana Ka Nanààje**, Kluane Lake School, Kluane Lake Research Station, and hunting & gathering camps
- **Engaged** Elders through community events, **Elders Council**, and hunting & gathering camps

The Kluane Lens: Land, People and Knowledge

We co-developed an approach to understand climate related changes and their relationship to Kluane's past, present, and future.

- **Explored** environmental changes and their relationships to cultural, social, and traditional practices in Kluane First Nation territory
- **Connected** community observations with Kluane First Nation values, stories, and memories
- **Discussed** how changing landscapes are affecting the community
- **Mapped** relationships between different types of changes and their impacts



From Stories to Themes

How do memories and stories connect to climate-related changes identified by the community?

Listening is at the heart of this project. We gathered stories and observations from Kluane community members and organized what we heard around four guiding questions. This is an ongoing conversation that Kluane First Nation will continue to shape.

- **Change:** What environmental, social, and biological changes are Kluane community members witnessing?
- **Impact:** How are these changes affecting cultural practices, community wellbeing, and knowledge systems?
- **Adaptation:** How are families, communities, and Kluane First Nation government already responding?
- **Future:** What values, practices, and knowledge should guide Kluane First Nation forward for future generations?

Knowledge Sources



Elder's Memory Book



Six Interviews



2-Day Workshop



Timeline Activity

Timeline of Change

During the October 2025 Kluane Climate Futures workshop in Jacquot Hall, we completed a "Timeline of Change" activity. Community members were invited to reflect on environmental shifts they are witnessing, how these changes are affecting their lives, and how they are adapting. Moving from observation to action, the activity connected lived experience and cultural knowledge to a future vision for Kluane First Nation.

Here are some quotes provided during the workshop:

What changes are you seeing?

"Dry conditions - lack of rain, flowers dried up quicker, no soap berries, impact on bears, no food"

"Used to have cold storage/root storage"

"Little whirlwinds and sand storms"

What do you hope to maintain?

"Need to support building self-reliance"

"Sharing culture & knowledge should be valued and supported"

"Funding not only for group activities organized by KFN, but also individual families to share knowledge/ do land-based activities"

How are these changes impacting you?

"Safety when in bush: weather less predictable"

"No berries means a change of lifestyle - can't get out on the land - loss of cultural activity"

"Ice thinner, unsafe for travel"

What do you hope to change?

"Landscape curriculum to teach youth/ children"

"We need citizens here. Build cabins in remote areas of TT to enable citizens to come home"

"Fire smarting around the community to reduce risk of fires"

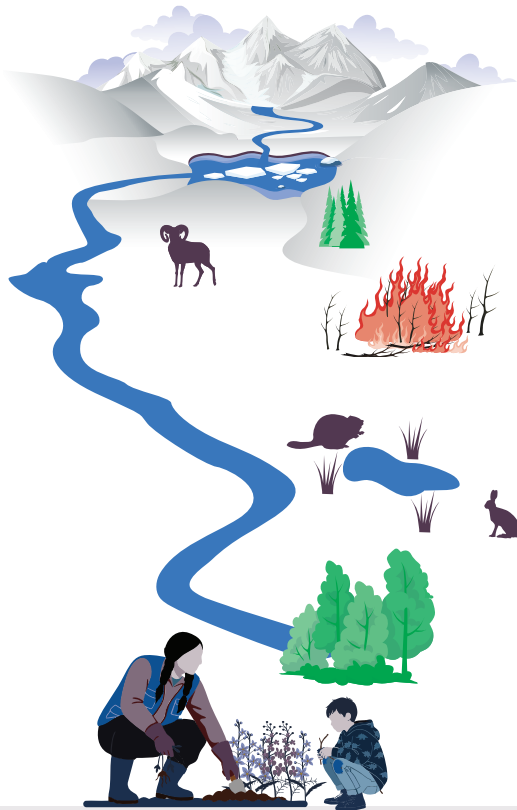
Crow
Creates
The World

KFN's
Vision for
the future

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“[We] would harvest many whitefish but now the lake doesn’t freeze in the same way, and now they don’t go to the same place.”

— (Workshop Participant)



What climate related changes are happening in Kluane?

Physical Changes:

- Inconsistent lake freeze-thaw cycles are linked to changing weather patterns
- Thinner ice and milder winters are changing travel and safety on the land
- Drying lakes, narrowing rivers, and changing shorelines are affecting traditional land use and access

Biological Changes:

- Shifting wildlife populations and migration patterns (e.g., caribou, sheep, rabbit, beaver)
- Changes to fish habitats and interactions between species are affecting fishing

Social and Cultural Changes:

- As the climate shifts, so do the conditions for practicing and passing on traditional land-based skills (e.g., hunting, trapping, beadwork, drumming, and gardening)
- **How do we create the conditions for these practices to thrive?**

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"Ever since this river dried up, we really noticed the difference on the lake. Because our cabin is at the Little Arm, it's very difficult to get there right now."

— (Interview Participant)

What are the impacts of these changes?

Cultural Practices

- Disruptions to traditional hunting, fishing, and trapping as wildlife patterns shift
- **How can KFN strengthen community access to land-based practices?**

Community Wellbeing:

- Shifts in food security with changing access to traditional foods
- **What food security and land stewardship strategies can support well-being?**

Knowledge Systems:

- Pressure on intergenerational learning and traditional skill transmission due to changing landscapes
- **How can KFN ensure that knowledge reaches future generations?**



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“So I teach my children, my grandchildren... because one day you’re going to need to know how to do it. I’m not going to live forever, but the land’s going to be here.”

— (Workshop Participant)



How are people adapting?

Kluane community members are strengthening intergenerational knowledge transfer as a direct response to climate change by teaching land skills, language, and cultural practices.

Kin Group Level

- Intentional transfer of knowledge across generations (e.g., teaching land-based skills)
- Family-based coping strategies rooted in land skills and foresight (e.g., preparing youth for future reliance on traditional knowledge)

Community Level:

- Cultural preservation through documentation and skills revitalization
- Community-led infrastructure development is supporting long-term resilience (e.g., land camp infrastructure)

Governance Level:

- Governance and economic capacity building is supporting self-determination
- Policy development to manage land, wildlife, and food security (e.g., wildlife management efforts, community gardening)

Kluane First Nation are already adapting. For example:

- Moose survey at the Duke
- Chum salmon monitoring in Silver City and Kluane River areas
- Vegetation monitoring at Duke Meadows
- Toboggan building and trapping skills development workshop

What is Kluane First Nation’s vision for the future?

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“...the importance of looking at our knowledge and our stories that shape some of those changes that are here.”

— (Workshop Participant)

Maintain

- Intergenerational knowledge, traditional laws, respect for land, animals, and Elders
- Storytelling, land-based practices, and community-led research

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“...we’re always looking for ways to increase our food security.”

—(Workshop Participant)

Change

- Reduce harms to health
- Strengthen community-based education, local economy, and land stewardship

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“I think KFN maybe has to take a stronger role in the hunting, like, because we’re, this area is pretty accessible from Whitehorse, I think that it’s being overhunted.”

—(Interview Participant)

Grow Towards

- Healing and ceremony
- Education for youth rooted in culture
- Ongoing knowledge-sharing across generations

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“I would like my children, grandchildren, and my great-grandchildren to have respect for what was done in the past and the way it was done.”

—(Louise Bouvier,
Kluane Lake People Speak Strong)

