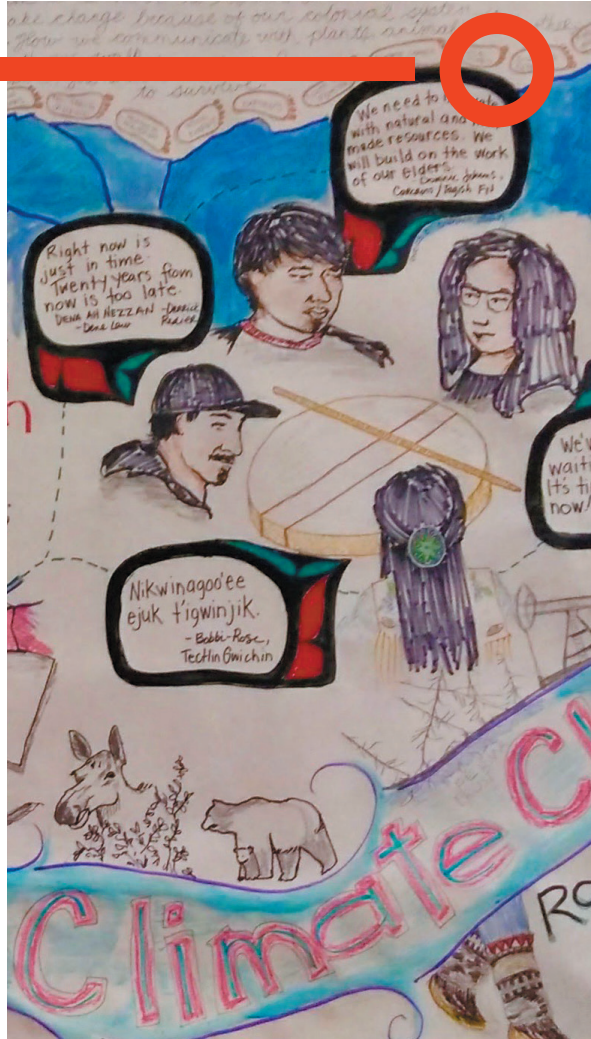


Exploring  
Climate Change in  
My Community:  
Assessing Opportunities  
for Action

Youth Climate Change Community  
Assessment Toolkit

January 2017



## Acknowledgments

The Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research would sincerely like to thank all the YIC4 youth for their passion, drive and dedication to serving their communities. We hold you up and honour you as our champions for change!

A special thank you must also go to all the guest speakers, Elders, Indigenous knowledge holders, scientists, community leaders, and researchers who shared their knowledge with us all during the training.

We'd like to acknowledge all the members of AICBR's team and the project steering committee, who included members from Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon Research Centre, Yukon Government's Climate Change Secretariat, and Kluane First Nation.

Last but not least, thank you to our generous funders who helped make this work possible, namely Yukon Government's Environmental Awareness Fund for contributing to the development of this toolkit, in addition to our overarching project funders, Indigenous Services Canada (Climate Change Preparedness in the North Program) and Polar Knowledge Canada.



Polar Knowledge  
Canada



Indigenous  
Services Canada

## Table of Contents

<b>4</b>	Background: Yukon Indigenous Community Climate Change Champions Project
<b>5</b>	A Message From the Youth
<b>6</b>	Exploring Our Communities Through the Four Elements of Climate Change
<b>7</b>	Some Examples of Climate Change
<b>9</b>	YIC4 Project Cycle
<b>10</b>	Building a Community Inventory Map
<b>12</b>	Assessment Planning Framework
<b>14</b>	Assessment Themes:
<b>15</b>	Health, Social & Culture
<b>16</b>	Food & Water Security
<b>17</b>	Infrastructure & Transportation
<b>18</b>	Economy
<b>19</b>	Species & Habitat Areas
<b>20</b>	Ideas for Next Steps
<b>22</b>	Workbook: My Plan
<b>23</b>	Workbook: Things to Consider



## Background: Yukon Indigenous Community Climate Change Champions Project



This Community Assessment Toolkit evolved out of a two-year training initiative called the 'Yukon Indigenous Community Climate Change Champions (YIC4) Project: Mobilizing Knowledge for Developing Indigenous Community Champions for Climate Change Adaptation in the Yukon' (2017-2019). Participants include 21 Yukon First Nations youth (aged 18-30 years), six First Nation and Inuit youth from Northern BC, Northwest Territories and Nunatsiavut as well as two Renewable Resource Council members from Yukon. The overall goal of this initiative is to build upon Indigenous communities' capacity to respond to complex issues related to climate change.

The YIC4 project was led by the **Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research (AICBR)**, a unique northern non-profit organization, based in Whitehorse, Yukon. The AICBR works with communities to develop their own solutions to complex problems that are relevant, community-driven and sustainable. Current organizational priorities include: climate change adaptation, food security/food sovereignty and healthy living. In all of AICBR's work, there is a focus on strengthening youth capacity and integrating Indigenous and western scientific knowledge systems, with an approach guided by the principles of respect, relevance, responsibility, and reciprocity.



### A Message From the Youth

The following toolkit is written from the perspective of the YIC4 youth champions and is meant to share lessons learned in hopes of informing future community-based assessment work related to climate change and its effects on First Nations' communities.

Between November 27-30th, 2017, 29 of us gathered in Whitehorse, Yukon to learn about climate change.

During the training, we learned about the global to local causes and effects of as well as community adaptation strategies to climate change.

We were taught by our Indigenous knowledge holders and Elders, outside scientists and local community-based researchers, and most importantly, we also learned from each other.

This toolkit is our guide to assessing our communities' needs, strengths and

opportunities for action on climate change. It describes the process we underwent in planning and we hope that it might help inform future work for your communities.

*"I can't stand by and watch the future generations lose everything we took for granted."*

-YIC4 youth participant from Dawson City, YT



## Exploring Climate Change Through the Four Elements of Mother Earth

*"The land is who we are as a people"*

Our Planet: She is our Mother, our healer and our guide. Within the four directions, she has **Earth, Air, Fire and Water**.

Throughout the training, these four elements of Mother Earth guided our teachings and our work.

This is how we explored our communities. Together within our Nations, we looked at the changes that are happening due to climate change. We also looked at adaptation and what our communities are doing already to adjust to the challenges we are faced with every day.



*Climate change impacts our communities in many complex and interconnected ways. These are some examples of them.*

*When we started looking at our communities in the four elements, five themes evolved: **Health, Social & Culture; Economy; Infrastructure & Transportation; Species & Habitat Areas; and Food & Water Security.***

*These are the themes that will guide us in assessing our communities today developing our priorities for future climate change adaptation projects and mitigation strategies.*

## Some Examples of Climate Change

### Health, Social & Culture ❤️

- Shifting and declining species and altered landscapes threaten our traditional lifestyle and culture
- Natural disasters are becoming more common and more severe
- Mental health and wellness are negatively impacted as climate change threatens our intrinsic connections to our Homelands

### Economy 💰

- Our economy in Canada continues to be heavily tied to extractive industries (oil, gas & mining), which are key contributors to climate change
- Forest fires and natural disasters threaten our natural resources as well as the safety of our people, our animals, and our livelihoods



## Species & Habitat Areas

- Invasive species (plant, animal & insect) are altering the local habitat
- Glaciers are melting at an increasing pace, causing concern about the decreasing levels of water within our rivers and lakes
- Permafrost melt causes erosion and contributes to climate change and aquatic systems contamination

## Food & Water Security

- Declining traditional food species heavily impacts our food systems
- Waterways are becoming contaminated due to warming temperatures and runoff from industrial development
- Our food system is largely made up of heavily processed market foods which have to travel a long ways; food costs are rising due to unstable harvests, droughts, floods, and fires.

## Infrastructure & Transportation

- Highways/roads are more at risk of closure due to wash-out and forest fires causing food shortages
- Most houses/buildings are not able to resist flooding and shifting ground due to permafrost melt
- In northern regions of Canada, a majority of our communities are diesel dependent, which contributes to a high cost of living and further exacerbates climate change



## YIC4 Project Cycle

This diagram shows the different stages of the YIC4 project cycle (2017-2019) and how they connect. Follow along the arrows starting with Training 1.

**Training 1:** Introducing Climate Change Causes, Effects & Adaptation/Mitigation – Global to Local Indigenous Knowledge & Science

During Training 1, we came up with questions that we should be asking our communities to explore climate change needs and priorities for action.

**Training 2:** Developing Leadership and Advocacy Skills in Preparation for Future Adaptation to Climate Change

**Community Assessment:** Youth are supported to implement an assessment of their communities in the five key theme areas. We use these themes to choose which knowledge holders to interview in order to gather multiple diverse perspectives and give us a holistic understanding of what is going on related to climate change.

Once we have assessed our communities' needs, we can begin to prioritize various community-led project ideas

*The information that we gather from the assessment describes what is going on now with regards to counteracting and adapting to climatic changes and what further opportunities there are for action.*





# Building a Community Inventory Map

## We're also building a map!

We need to know what activities are going on across our communities in order to identify our strengths and build upon them, learn from each other, strengthen our network, and work better together.

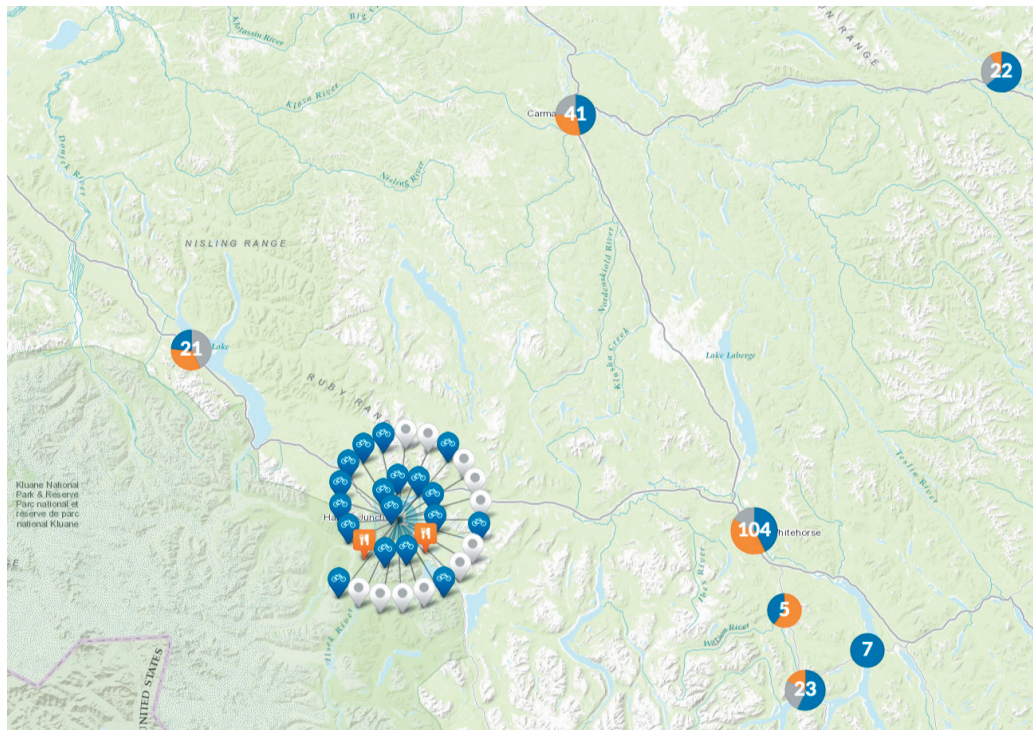
Presently, AICBR is gathering important information on all the climate change related activities going on in the Yukon through the development of an online public inventory mapping tool.

It will list information about the various climate change adaptation, monitoring and mitigation projects, activities and entities that exist in our communities; including details on who runs these activities, who funds them, what some successes and challenges may be, as well as contact information.

We encourage you to help contribute to the map of information by answering some questions about the initiatives going on in your community.



Help us Build a Map:  
<https://arcg.is/15Snfn>



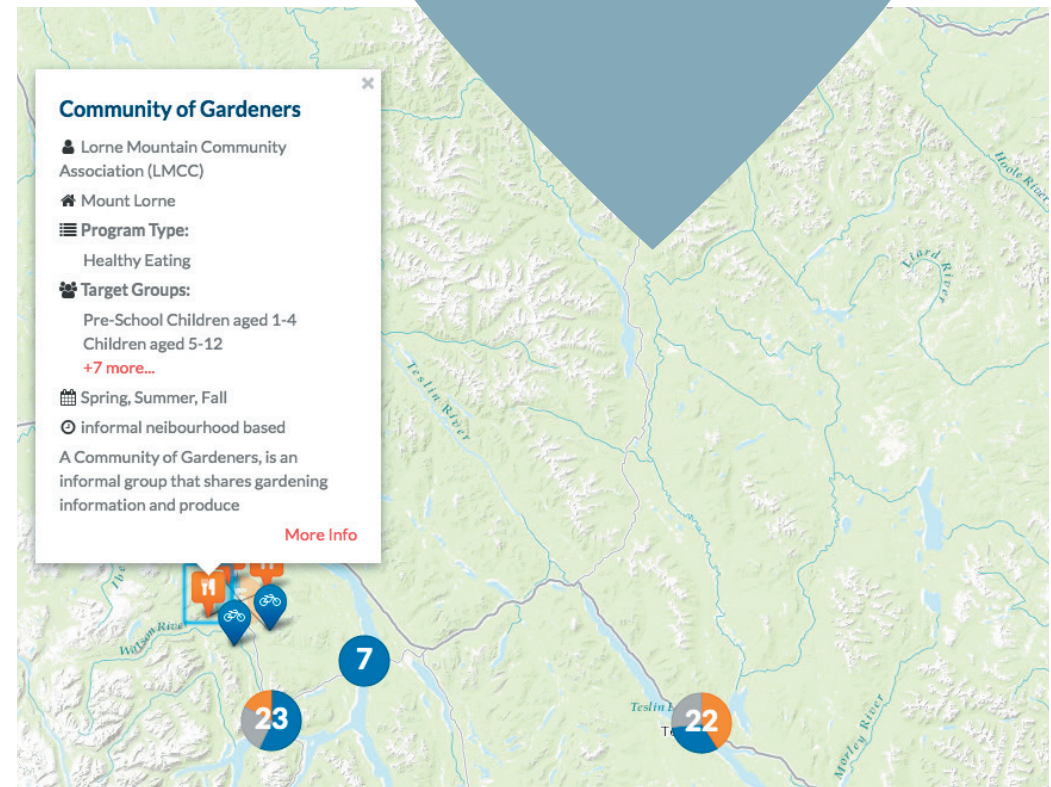
Once the inventory is completed and we've gathered enough information about the various initiatives going on, we will develop a mapping tool that will look like this!

These images are of AICBR's **Healthy Living Inventory** ([aicbr.ca/healthy-living-inventory](http://aicbr.ca/healthy-living-inventory)), which is another mapping project that informs about programs which relate to our health. When you zoom in and click on the icons, you'll see specific program information.

You'll also be able to search by community or type of initiative and quickly see what is going on.

Visit AICBR's website for more information:

[aicbr.ca/climate-change-and-food-systems-inventories/](http://aicbr.ca/climate-change-and-food-systems-inventories/)







## Assessment Planning Framework

*This framework summarizes some of our ideas for how to go about the community assessment. Use it as a guide to formulate your plan. Adapt it to your own language and way of speaking in your community.*

### Who?

Who might you want to talk to during your assessment?

- Chief/Council, municipality & informal community leaders
- Land & Resources, Capital Works, Heritage Departments
- Schools/youth, Elders, general community, friends and family
- Researchers, biologists & conservation/environment/wildlife officers/monitors, and Indigenous Guardians
- Renewable Resource Councils (RRCs)
- People who live on the land & hunters/gatherers
- Indigenous knowledge holders

### When & Where?

When and where is a good time to connect with people?

- Seasonal harvest and hunting times
- Community gatherings, General Assemblies & Harvest Camps
- Radio-call in lines or social media
- School
- Archives and internet
- Executive Council and Heritage department and offices
- Ancestors – through oral teachings and stories

### What?

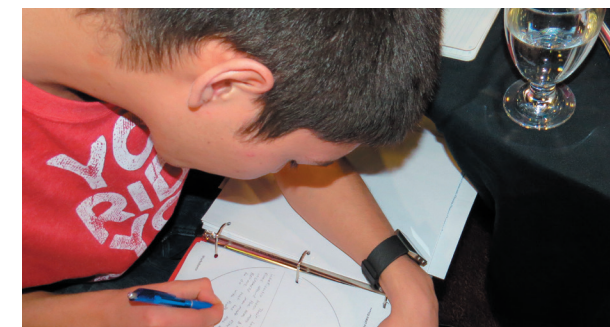
What are the overall guiding questions to your assessment? What are you trying to find out? What is most relevant to your community? More specific questions are categorized under themes in the following pages.

- What are our main concerns with climate change (in the areas of health, species & habitat areas, food and water security, infrastructure & transportation, and economy)? What are the ways we are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change?
- What are we doing now to adapt to and mitigate against climate change? What more could we do?
- What ways can we educate our people more and communicate what is going on to others outside our communities?
- What are our main sources of energy use/highest forms of carbon emissions in our community?
- Where do we start? What are our priorities?

### How?

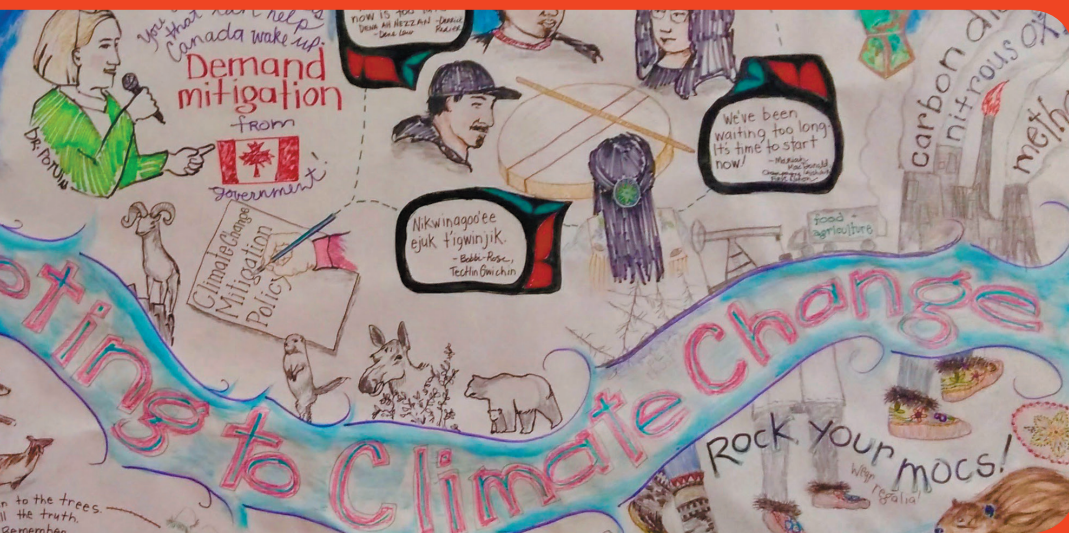
How do you go about starting your assessment?

- Ensure you have local Research Protocol & Consent Agreements in place
- Interview/focus group with key Elders and knowledge holders (either face-to-face or on the phone)
- Present to and discuss with leadership, Natural Resources/Heritage Department & RRCs
- Host a discussion/brainstorm session with flip charts in informal space or during community gathering
- Survey through social media
- Take pictures and make field notes
- Fill out online survey to contribute to the Inventory Map
- Sharing and storytelling
- Keep all the data within your First Nation office



## Some Example Assessment Questions

The following pages contain some of the interview questions we developed under each theme. You are likely to ask different questions to different people, depending on their knowledge and what you are looking to get out of the interview. Use the workbook to create your specific plan and develop your interview guides.



## Health, Social & Culture

Do you think the health of our people is changing due to climate change? If so, in what ways? (Probe for: mental, physical, spiritual, emotional)

Is our community vulnerable to the impacts from droughts, floods, and forest fires? How can we protect ourselves (especially the most vulnerable people in our community)?

How is climate change affecting our cultural traditions and language?

How are we protecting our waterways from contamination caused by mining and development?

What ways can we begin to educate our people about how climate change impacts our health?





## Food & Water Security

What are the main food sources (traditional and market foods) in our community? Where do most people in our community get their food from? Has the diet of people in our community changed due to climate change? If so, in what ways?

What is being done to protect our community food security? Does our community participate in community gardening or small-scale farming to increase food security? Do we have a food security strategy or an emergency food plan in place? If not, do you think we should have one?

How is our water affected by climate change? Where does our community get our water from? Is it safe to drink? Do we have enough for long-term water security? What changes, if any have you noticed about our water? What strategies do we have to protect our water sources from flooding, drought, earthquakes, etc.?

## Infrastructure & Transportation

What sorts of natural disasters are we most vulnerable to in our community? What is the community doing to adapt our housing and buildings to withstand flooding, shifting ground because of melting permafrost, earthquakes and/or increased moisture issues (mold)? Do we have an emergency evacuation plan in the case of a major natural disaster? Do we have a fire safety plan or Fire Smart Program in place?

In what ways do we deal with waste in our community (i.e. garbage dumps and sewage)? How well is the sewage system working? Is it affecting the health of our water systems? Are there plans for waste reduction? How can we research and educate about waste reduction? Do we have a recycling facility in our community? How is it working? How could it be improved?

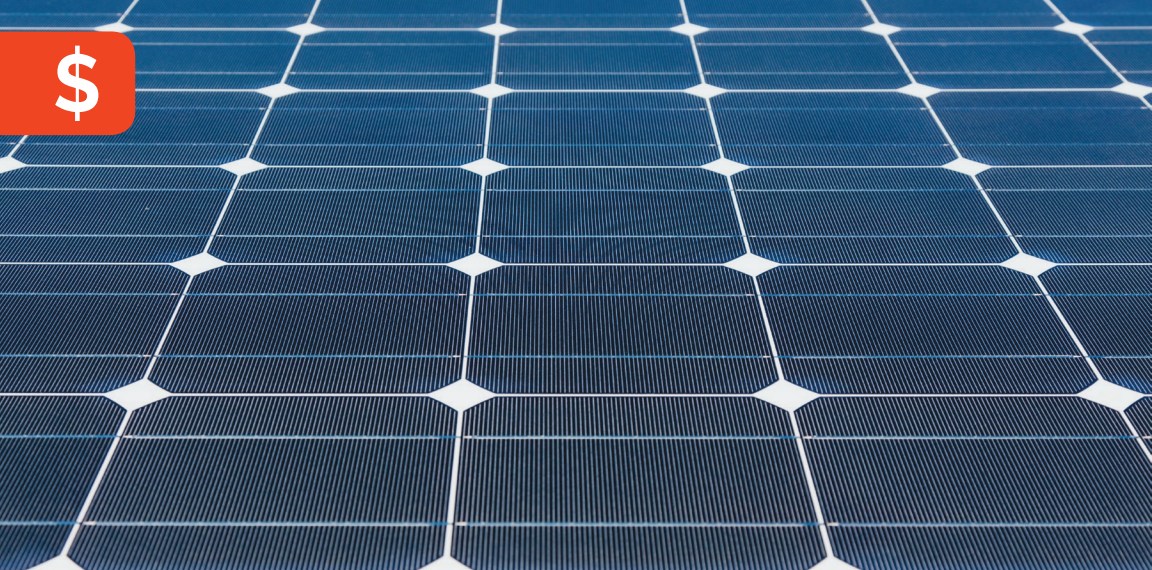
What are the main sources of emissions in our community? Home heating - how do most people heat their homes (i.e. propane, wood, oil, electric? What is the reason for this use)? Is there a plan to shift away from this type of heating?

Transportation – how do most people in our community get around?

Industry – what kinds of extractive industries surround our community (i.e. mining, oil and gas)?

How can we cut down on our use of diesel fuel and other emissions (i.e. transportation, home heating)? Do we have policies around emission targets and any plans for green energy projects?





## Economy

What is the main economy in our community? Is there interest in exploring green/renewable energy systems? If so, what kinds (i.e. wind power, solar, run of the river projects, geothermal, biomass, wood)? Is there interest in developing eco, land-based and/or cultural tourism in the community?

What is the relationship like with mining companies and other extractive industries who operate on our lands? Do we have policies in place for ensuring environmental clean up and to promote environmentally sustainable development? Who is responsible for reclamation on our lands after mining/oil and gas exploration projects are done?

What are the main jobs in the community? What kind of work training is offered to our citizens? Are there local hire policies for the companies that are working in our territory?

## Species & Habitat Areas

How is climate change affecting our air, land, species, and waterways?

Do we do any species and land monitoring? If so, in what ways do we monitor them? What are we doing to control invasive species (insect, plant, and animals)? Are we monitoring/researching the health of our species?

How are we preserving our Traditional Knowledge about our species and habitat areas?

Where are the vulnerable habitat areas that might be impacted the most by climate change? How can we protect them?

Who in the community is responsible for wildlife and fisheries management? What kind of fisheries/wildlife policies do we have?

Are there possibilities for creating Indigenous Protected Areas and Land Guardians programs?





## Ideas for Next Steps

### Draft Community Assessment Plan/Protocol & Training Overview

**STEP 1:** Fill out the workbook at the end of this toolkit to plan out your assessment

**STEP 2:** Invite inside and outside partners (if applicable) who will help you with your assessment and review your plan with them

Think of partners who have good research relationships in your community and those in your community who are well connected and respected to help you.

These will be the people who will help to mentor, train and guide you throughout your assessment and are knowledgeable about research protocols

**STEP 3:** Along with partners, review local research protocols and get training on how to conduct an interview, etc.

### Present to Chief and Council

**STEP 1:** Work on Powerpoint presentation and draft Research Agreements for Chief and Council to review

**STEP 2:** Meet with the Executive Director and Executive Assistant to Chief and Council, introduce yourself, explain the YIC4 project, ask to present to the Chief and Council and to discuss a Research Agreement

**STEP 3:** Set a date for this presentation

**STEP 4:** Do presentation:

- Introduce yourself (language and Traditional name)
- Explain the purpose of your project and why you think it is important
- Present the proposed assessment plan and draft protocol (gather feedback)

- Get recommendations for any other knowledgeable community interviewees that were not initially included in your plan
- Get signature on final Research Agreement (which is needed before you start the project)
- Get approval on the plan and make revisions on the protocol/ Research Agreements (with research partners/supervisors)

### Visit Key Grandmothers and Grandfathers including Head of Elders Council

**STEP 1:** Meet with Head of Elders Council and request the possibility to do a presentation with the Elders Council

**STEP 2:** Introduce the project, what you will be doing in the community (with a gift)

### Inform the Community

**STEP 1:** Share info on project (Option: in a community newsletter, local gathering, General Assembly, local radio, etc.)

### Finalize Plan & Prepare for Assessment

**STEP 1:** Finalize the plan and interview list and consent forms (for interview and pictures)

**STEP 2:** Recruit people to participate and set up a time to meet

**STEP 3:** Finalize interview questionnaires for each group you are interviewing

**STEP 4:** Gather all materials you will need (notebook, recorders, consent forms, cameras, flip charts, pens/felts, Powerpoint presentations, computer/projector, honoraria/gifts for participants)

### Do Assessment Interviews/ Focus Groups

**STEP 1:** Explain consent and introduce the project. (Consent: needed for any interviews/focus groups – make sure to get consent forms signed or note verbal consent and give them a copy of the signed form)

**STEP 2:** Ask the questions, take notes, audio record, thank them and present gift

**STEP 3:** Collect all materials & notes, keep in central/secure place (i.e. First Nations office, or elsewhere, as decided upon in the Research Agreement.)

\* All information collected should be analyzed and prepared for community validation before being published. Consider upfront how to publish the results of the assessment in the best way for your community (i.e. as part of a film, in a report, with infographics, etc.)

## Workbook: My Plan

*The following pages are part of the workbook to help you outline your plan. Make sure to include the details (i.e. actual names and contacts) for who you will talk to, including when you'll talk to them and how you'll talk to them. Fill out the following questions for each group or person you will talk to during your community assessment. Individual workplan sheets can be downloaded at [aicbr.ca/y1c4](http://aicbr.ca/y1c4).*

**Who?**

**What?**

What actual questions that you want to ask them? Think of the overall questions guiding the interview as well as the detailed ones (according to themes) and any others that are of interest.

**When?**

**Where?**

**How?**

## Things to Consider

**Recording:** How will you record the assessment activities (i.e. take notes, record on a tape recorder, videotape, etc.)?

**Protecting:** How will you ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the person you are talking to? Make sure the consent form includes how you will protect the person's identify in all written files. If photographs are taken, make sure you have the person's consent to use their photos (and for what purpose you will use them).

Where will the raw data be kept (i.e. the notes, flip charts, recordings, etc.)?

**Partners:** Who will be helping to supervise or mentor you in your community? How are partners involved in the process?

**Additional Things to Consider:** Before starting the assessment, make sure the Chief has signed off on the Research Agreement. It is important to do ceremony before and after any kind of work you do in your traditional territory. Consider engaging a local spiritual elder or youth to help. Ceremony might include: making offerings to our ancestors and Mother Earth and asking for good guidance, safety and openness throughout the research process.

This is your community's assessment - your First Nation owns it and the data.

Make sure the plan is realistic and that you have the appropriate time and assistance you need to complete it.

If you are bringing in outside partners, you will need a partner and communications agreement signed.

*The following values and protocols should guide you in the research process:*

- Tread lightly
- Be respectful
- Listen well by maintaining appropriate eye contact, sitting still and using non-verbal communication

*Make sure also to follow any spiritual and cultural protocols that relate to your community.*



To download additional workplan sheets, please go to [aicbr.ca/y1c4](http://aicbr.ca/y1c4)

*\* Ask your First Nation office or partners you want involved if they already have one for you to use as a guide*





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