Our Recommendations, Our Future

27 Programs and Policies to Embolden the Yukon’s Climate Action
The Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change prioritizes reconnection and sustainable relationships with the land and people to ensure that social and economic systems are based on reciprocity and supported by ecological integrity. Overall, this results in a changed mindset and way of living to sustain a healthy planet.
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Thank you to everyone who we interviewed, who answered our survey, who provided us with guidance, and who supported our journey. Let’s keep this conversation going.

Recommendations include connections to the seven areas of Our Clean Future:
- Transportation, Homes and buildings, Energy production, People and the environment, Communities, Innovation, Leadership

All of the recommendations take the four goals of Our Clean Future into account.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions, Ensuring Yukoners have access to reliable, affordable and renewable energy, Adapting to the impacts of climate change, Building a green economy
Recommendation 1: Education

“If more people understood the very complex science behind climate change in a basic sense, it would make people understand the urgency more.” - Yukon youth

“I really hope [climate change] is discussed across fields because it’s important across industries.” - Yukon youth

“I remember learning about climate change, but the ‘Take Action’ part always seemed to be small-scale.” - Yukon youth

“Education is necessary so people can make informed decisions and take action quickly.” - Yukon youth

“How am I supposed to have read ‘Our Clean Future’ when we are not educated about climate change in school?” - Yukon youth

“We need a First Nations school in Whitehorse … it’s such a huge part of climate action. I think that the Yukon would thrive if the government funded and built a First Nations school.” - Yukon youth

“We need to educate our youth so they can realize the need for systemic change and so they can teach others.” - Yukon youth

To build sustainable and resilient communities, education systems must be centered on land-based learning, environmental literacy, and stewardship. Education and training initiatives related to climate adaptation and renewable energy must be prioritized for Yukoners, particularly Yukon youth.

1. Ensure climate change awareness and preparedness is implemented into the curriculum for all courses in every grade from pre-Kindergarten to secondary school.
   a. Education must be centered on culturally relevant, land-based learning and incorporating relationships with communities, including learning from Elders.

2. Establish a program where every high school student requires four (4) credits for climate change related or environmental stewardship activities to graduate.
   a. This program can incorporate a flexible approach that includes extracurricular activities and employment.
3. Understanding that a holistic Indigenous worldview, pedagogies and philosophies, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and land-based learning promote greater environmental stewardship and responsibility: Support the development of a First Nations school that is open for all.
   a. Uphold the work already being done by Indigenous-led and serving organizations to conceptualize and implement a school like this.

4. Create full scholarships for Yukon students pursuing out-of-territory post-secondary education in programs related to the green energy transition, with a condition of a return-for-work period.

5. Make Yukon University tuition-free for all Northern youth, including Indigenous youth from transboundary northern nations and youth from northern British Columbia.
   a. This would encourage more Northern youth to be skilled and knowledgeable stewards in their community at a time when the green transition requires support from all fields.

6. Create a funding pool for arts and cultural projects related to climate change and climate adaptation.

7. Support Yukon University in expanding capacity for broader degree programs related to renewable energy and climate adaptation with a northern lens.

Recommendation 2: Capacity Building

81.5% of youth survey respondents indicated they were “somewhat” (61.5%) or “very” (20%) concerned about invasive species in the Yukon.

“Meaningful climate action will require efforts from all departments because climate change affects everything we do. I want to see a government that prioritizes comprehensively educating those who are directing our future.” -Yukon youth

“Any and all [native plants and animals] can be affected by invasive species that are harmful.” -Yukon youth

“I think invasive species are a bigger issue than Yukoners realize. Prevention is key” -Yukon youth

“Our Clean Future has so many great ideas in it. But even the best plan in the world won’t work if we don’t have the capacity to carry it out.” -Yukon youth
Increase and build capacity within the Government of Yukon using climate change decision making within all departments.

1. Establish an Invasive Species branch within the Government of Yukon that implements and monitors a comprehensive invasive species program throughout the Yukon.
   a. Utilize this invasive species program to ensure that the Yukon Government adequately responds to the growing number of invasive species in the Yukon by monitoring to prevent potential threats, and acting for protection of native species.

2. Understanding that a more timely and efficient response to climate change requires more power from people, increase capacity within the Climate Change Secretariat and other branches of government focusing directly on climate mitigation and adaptation."

3. Require all Government of Yukon employees to complete Yukon University's Decision Making for Climate Change course.
   a. Implement a climate lens for all aspects of work being conducted within Yukon and by the Government of Yukon.

Recommendation 3: Land Use Planning

"The vast majority of the Yukon doesn't have Land Use Plans that are currently being implemented, which is not great. We know with climate change the importance of natural areas as carbon sinks and carbon stores, yet we don't have that strategic focus."
-Yukon youth

“I think we saw some of the dangers of not having a land use plan with the Peel [Watershed]. I don’t want to see that happen in other places.” -Yukon youth

“Now is the time to complete land use planning across the Yukon. Then when we need to take action on an issue, a lot of the work has already been done. And when decisions are made, we’ll know that the proper research and collaboration has been put in.” -Yukon youth

“It has been 25 years since some Yukon First Nations have signed Final Agreements and were promised Land Use Planning within their Traditional Territories. I think it’s important that we prioritize Land Use Planning to avoid development that doesn’t involve First Nation priorities”
-Yukon youth
Prioritize and complete Land Use Planning that is centered on sustainability and ecological preservation throughout the Yukon, guided and led by Yukon First Nations.

1. Prioritize the completion of land use planning across the territory using processes that balance western science with traditional knowledge and prioritize environmental protection.

2. Work with and defer to the guidance of Yukon First Nations to identify areas for protection in order to foster a direct relationship to the land.

Recommendation 4: Indigenous Sovereignty

“The fate of the FCH [Finlayson Caribou Herd] and Kaska are inextricably linked; if the herd is extinguished, part of what it means to be Kaska will die with them.” -Liard First Nation in response to proposed Quartz Exploration program

“Indigenous knowledge is a critical underpinning to what we all need to know in order to secure our future and to protect our environment.” -Yukon First Nations Elder

“I think that First Nations have the right to decide when hunting is appropriate in their Traditional Territory. The Government should respect those rights.” -Yukon youth

Policies and programs, particularly those related to extractive industry development and land use, must respect Indigenous sovereignty and prioritize co-governance with both settlement and non-settlement First Nations.

1. Legislate a veto power for settlement and non-settlement nations concerning development and extractive industry projects proposed on their traditional territories.

2. Allow First Nations governments the mandate to establish best practices for consultation.

3. Require the consent of First Nations for spot-land applications before those applications proceed to the Yukon Government.

4. Respect and adhere to the inherent right of First Nations to determine when hunting and other subsistence activities may occur within their respective traditional territories.
Recommendation 5: Local Transportation and Food Production

“Our reliance on importing goods from down south, through the highway, makes us really susceptible to climate change impacts down the road. It makes food increasingly unaffordable.” -Yukon youth

26.2% of youth survey respondents say that food security is sometimes (20%) or often (6.2%) a concern for them personally.

“I feel like localizing food production is a really smart way of securing the health and safety of our northern communities” -Yukon youth

“One of the largest contributors to GHGs in the Yukon is the transportation sector. Whitehorse seems to be a pretty car-centric place at times and I think more can be done to strongly encourage active transportation, public transit and carpooling opposed to most people driving solo in their vehicles.” -Yukon youth

“Food insecurity is problematic in the North, especially in communities. Pricing of food has significantly increased and as Yukoners, a lot of food is trucked/flown, which contributes to climate change.” -Yukon youth

Support the investment in emissions-reducing innovations through the promotion and creation of greater public transportation, local food production, and food transportation efficiency and sustainability. Ensure that local food and public transportation are increasingly accessible for all Yukoners.

1. Prioritize decreasing the number of single occupancy commuter vehicles by providing more frequent and more accessible public transit. Emissions reduction targets for greenhouse gas emitting single occupancy vehicles should be based on a reduction of current levels, not a percentage of future trips.

2. Implement a bicycle rental program in each community.

3. Develop a committee to monitor improvements to active transportation infrastructure and safety and provide recommendations to the Yukon Government.

4. Develop a winter food market to support local agriculture business.
5. Conduct a feasibility study of food waste biofuel production.

6. Support and delegate funding towards local food production initiatives in Yukon First Nation communities.

Recommendation 6: Knowledge Acquisition and Policy Creation

“Robust science and Indigenous practices of stewardship are crucial to protecting our environment. We cannot afford climate misinformation and we don’t want to be looking back in 25 or 50 years, wishing we had collaborated with the First Nations who have been respecting the environment for centuries.” -Yukon youth

“I wish there were more ways for people to collaborate across fields … climate change affects everything.” -Yukon youth

“Especially in the Yukon, Traditional Knowledge is essential in understanding how climate change is affecting our wildlife” -Yukon youth

Develop climate and environmental policy that is based on sound science and traditional knowledge to foster innovation and sustainable policy creation. Incorporate perspectives closely associated with the natural world at all levels, including traditional knowledge and ecological research.

1. Develop an NGO or panel which provides policy recommendations related to climate change based on scientific findings and traditional knowledge. This panel would provide unbiased reviews of politicized environmental issues to prioritize which scientific findings are the most critical. It will differ from current initiatives like the Climate Leadership Council through a broad mandate, making recommendations on all environmental policy rather than just emissions reduction.
   a. With representation from scientists, knowledge holders, and First Nations, the panel would focus on innovation based on sound, unbiased science and arms length from “populus” and “trending” science and political influence.
   b. Policy decisions should be based on the best evidence and decision makers should be obliged to follow the evidence of scientific findings.
   c. Ensure that science is ethical by incorporating multiple perspectives.
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Recommendation 7: Mining and Extractive Industry

“The idea that a mining company can give money to a government and then the government is expected to regulate that company doesn’t make sense to me.” - Yukon youth

“Watching shows like Gold Rush and Yukon Gold and seeing all of the damage they have towards the land that they’re on, and then when they do the ‘zoom out’ and show the land that’s been completely obliterated because of the gold mining … I feel like shows like that are kind of romanticizing the mining industry and not really taking into account the environment and the land, and respecting the land.” - Yukon youth

“The mining companies must be held to a very high standard to ensure that they are acting responsible and cleaning up behind themselves.” - Yukon youth

“There is a lot of good work being done, but I think one big gap is the lack of climate change targets for GHG emissions from the mining industry.” - Yukon youth

“I’ve never learned much about mining in the Yukon. It’s either been from TV shows who romanticize the industry or media discussing environmental disasters at mine sites. We’d all benefit from a clearer relationship with mining companies, that’s how we guide constructive conversation.” - Yukon youth

Address the impacts that mining and extractive industries have on ecological degradation and greenhouse gas emissions, transitioning the Yukon from outdated policies to becoming leaders in respectful and responsible development.

1. Separate the roles of policy legislation and enforcement within Energy, Mines and Resource and establish a non-governmental, non-partisan body for enforcement.

2. Prohibit corporate donations to political parties in the Yukon to ensure there are no real or perceived conflicts of interest surrounding environmental legislation for industry.

3. Explore alternatives to intensity-based emissions reduction targets for the mining industry that will set direct limits on emissions.

4. Maintain transparency with the public and youth on ongoing consultations to determine emissions targets with industry by 2022.
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