



## Voices from the Field

Welcome to *Voices from the Field*, a podcast series produced by the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health. The NCCIH focuses on innovative research and community-based initiatives promoting the health and well-being of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in Canada.

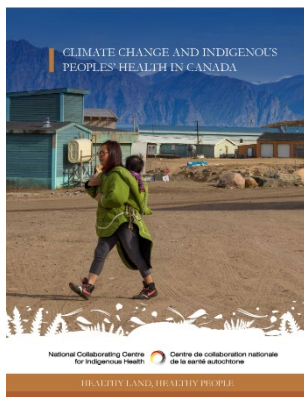
### Episode 20 – Climate change and Indigenous Peoples’ Health in Canada

This episode highlights the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health’s collaboration on the 2022 national assessment titled the *Health of Canadians in a Changing Climate: Advancing our Knowledge for Action*, produced by Health Canada’s Climate Change and Health Innovation Bureau. This comprehensive study of current and projected risks from climate change to the health of Canadians has ten chapters touching on the topic areas of health linkages; natural hazards; mental health and well-being; air quality; infectious diseases; water quality, quantity, and security; food safety and security; health equity; adaptation and health system resilience; and significantly – for the first time - a chapter dedicated to climate change and Indigenous Peoples’ Health in Canada.

Developed by the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health, this Indigenous-specific chapter looks at each of the different topic areas of the overall national assessment. It also examines the role of Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous rights in climate change policy and research to better understand how First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and communities are uniquely experiencing and responding to a changing climate.

The chapter titled is framed around six key messages.

The first message highlights and recognizes that although climate change will affect the health and well-being of all Canadians, the distribution of these impacts and related health risks are not equal. This is because First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada are uniquely sensitive to the impacts of climate change, given their close relationships to land, waters, animals, plants, and natural resources; their tendency to live in geographic areas undergoing rapid climate change, especially Northern Canada; and the greater existing burden of health inequalities and related determinants of health they continue to experience.



The second message is that the health impacts of climate change on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples are interconnected and far-reaching. They result from direct and indirect impacts of climate change, which exacerbate existing inequities and affect food and water security, air quality, infrastructure, personal safety, mental well-being, livelihoods, and identity, as well as increase exposure to organisms causing disease.

Thirdly, it is important to understand that the health impacts are experienced differently within and between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis men, women, boys, girls, and gender-diverse people. Thus, research and adaptations must respect cultures, geography, local contexts, and the unique needs of these communities.

A fourth key message is that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples have been actively observing and adapting to changing environments in a diversity of ways since time immemorial. Indigenous knowledge

systems and practices are equal to scientific knowledge and have been, and continue to be, critical to Indigenous Peoples' survival and resilience.

That Indigenous knowledge systems are increasingly recognized, both nationally and internationally, as important in adapting to climate change, monitoring impacts at the local and regional level, and informing climate change policy and research is the fifth key message of the chapter.

The sixth key message is that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples are rights holders. Preparing for the health impacts of climate change requires that Indigenous Peoples' rights and responsibilities over their lands, natural resources, and ways of life are respected, protected, and advanced through distinctions-based, Indigenous-led, climate change adaptation, policy, and research.

There are a number of knowledge gaps on the climate change impacts on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. As climate change research continues, there is a lot more to know on the health impacts that will be experienced outside of northern regions and amongst Indigenous Peoples living in urban centres, including gender-diverse people, children, and youth. In order to have a fulsome and ongoing understanding of health risks related to climate change, there is the need for holistic, disaggregated, and longitudinal data specific to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples from coast to coast to coast.

To learn more about the *Health of Canadians in a Changing Climate: Advancing our Knowledge for Action*, a national assessment, including the NCCIH's chapter on Climate change and Indigenous Peoples' Health in Canada, go to [changingclimate.ca](http://changingclimate.ca)

To hear more podcasts in this series, head to the Voices from the Field, on the National Collaborating Center for Indigenous Health's website, [NCCIH.ca](http://NCCIH.ca). Music on this podcast is by Blue Dot Sessions. It appears under a creative commons license. To learn more, go to [www.sessions.blue](http://www.sessions.blue).