



# INDIGENOUS CLIMATE ACTION

Lush Spring Prize 2017:  
Canada

Young Project

Project started: 2015

## ICA Summary

Indigenous Climate Action (ICA) is an Indigenous-led organization that inspires action for climate justice by supporting Indigenous communities to build power and drive solutions to climate change. ICA work to equip Indigenous communities with the right tools, education and capacity needed to ensure Indigenous knowledge is a driving force in climate solutions.



The National Steering Committee, formed in January 2017, to guide and support the work of Indigenous Climate Action (ICA).

## Key Project Information (at 2018):

Climate: continental to cool temperate, coastal and arctic.

Key words: indigenous peoples; climate change.

Beneficiary community: indigenous peoples & territories.

Project reach: nationwide and global.

Education Activity: increasing climate literacy; the rights of Indigenous people; effective community action.

Other key features: use of UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' connected to on the ground actions.

Indigenous communities contribute the least to climate change yet are first to experience the effects of it. Therefore, ICA state that climate change has to be addressed from a human rights and indigenous peoples' rights perspective, as well as a science perspective.

ICA's mission is "to inspire action for Indigenous-led climate justice while serving and supporting our communities to build power and drive climate solutions. ICA work to equip Indigenous communities with the right tools, education and resources to ensure our knowledge and rights are the basis for climate solutions, while also responding sustainably to the climate crisis."

## ICA Outputs & Outcomes

ICA co-hosted and jointly-coordinated three gatherings that brought together Indigenous peoples from around the world to discuss climate change and strategize on climate solutions:

- Red Tide International Indigenous Climate Action Conference and Youth Summit (New Zealand) with Toi Toi Manawa Trust and Pacific Peoples' Partnership
- Protecting Mother Earth Conf (USA): 1,500 attendees
- Grassroots Grow Deep: 120 attendees

## ICA's Education Lessons

ICA's education activity has found that there is great interest and value in increasing climate change literacy in their communities. Through face-to-face and online interactions, including 14 *Climate Change Toolkit Community Workshops* in 2018, ICA find that communities are taking action and becoming agents of change in building a climate stable future. "Collectively, we amplify our worldviews into climate discussions and share knowledge towards evolving climate solutions that are sustainable, equitable and effective."

## Dawn's Story, ICA Workshop Facilitator

It has been an incredible journey of learning and holding the space while I coordinated workshops and interviews for ICA. The conversations helped me better understand the kinds of knowledge and practical tools that can support Indigenous peoples in our efforts of responding to the climate crisis with strength and resiliency. The deep ecological sensibility and social responsibility that was shared by all challenged me to hold the space for the complexity that arose in the process of interpreting the conversations. Some of the key concepts and themes that arose were: climate change meets Indigenous knowledge, land and water rights, ecosystem-based conservation planning, gender and generations perspectives of youth, Elders and women, sustainable tribal economies and energy plans, Indigenous food sovereignty, and decolonizing education, just to name a few.



## An IPEN Case Study

International Permaculture Education Network (IPEN)

IPEN Case Studies have been enabled by the Lush Spring Prize

Case Study date:

December 2019



Eriel Tchekwie Deranger, Executive Director & Co-Founder, ICA

## Eriel's Story – ICA Executive Director

My journey with Indigenous Climate Action (ICA) has been a profound experience guided by the voices and direction of so many. In the summer of 2017, I made the life-changing decision to leave my job with the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and accepted the position of Executive Director for ICA. ICA's work is driven by our deep desire to inspire communities and broaden the definition of climate solutions while supporting community resistance to the drivers of climate change and building Indigenous-led climate solutions. I recognize that I am, along with ICA as a whole, still in my infancy as a leader in this work. I hope to continue to grow with my community and ensure that I hold true to nurturing an organization rooted in decolonial values and relationships. It has been such an amazing journey so far and I am excited for what is to come.

## ICA's story

Indigenous Climate Action was founded in 2015 by Alberta Indigenous women who saw a need to bring Indigenous peoples together to begin discussions on climate change and Indigenous rights. ICA is driven by a volunteer Indigenous National Steering Committee from communities and regions across Canada that believes in the power of our communities as agents of change.

The first ICA Indigenous Peoples' Meeting on Climate Change was held in January 2016 in the heart of Treaty No. 6, Amiskwaciwâskahikan, Edmonton. It set the stage for ICA by inviting Indigenous leaders from across Canada to come together to discuss climate change and the unique rights of Indigenous peoples. Since then ICA has made it a priority to continue engaging Indigenous peoples and ally organizations in hosting events, in person and online. ICA gatherings serve to build community driven organizational direction while bringing Indigenous peoples together to demand our rights are included in climate change solutions.

In December 2017 ICA rejected a \$150,000 prize from Aviva Canada Community Legacy Award because of a 'direct contradiction' between Aviva's financial relationship with oil and gas projects and ICA's Mission, values and aims.

*"We cannot in good conscience accept an award from a corporation that is financially associated with fossil fuel energy projects that violate the rights of Indigenous peoples and contribute to global climate change. Our organization is working to support Indigenous rights and address the climate crisis while Aviva is investing in corporations proposing or operating tar sands projects that threaten water, land, the climate and Indigenous rights,"* Eriel Deranger, Executive Director of Indigenous Climate Action.

## Examples of Good Practise: What ICA Has Done

Some ICA highlights of good practice engagement since 2017 include:

- launched online climate surveys to support outreach and data for ICA Indigenous Worldview Climate Change toolkit
- hosted second annual ICA National Steering Committee meeting to develop a clear vision and strategy moving forward
- began national community-based research on Indigenous climate mitigation, adaptation and solutions - for the development of the ICA Indigenous Worldview Climate Change Toolkit
- supported ICA and Indigenous youth delegates (from communities impacted by tar sands oil and gas and pipeline mega-projects) to attend the UN Climate Change Conferences (COP23, COP25), attended the UN permanent forum on Indigenous issues, submitted statements and participated in panel discussions
- delivered the keynote address at the American Public Health Association

In 2018 ICA jointly coordinated 3 international gatherings, organised 14 climate action toolkit workshops, grew its strategic partnerships, increased its visibility in Indigenous spaces and with the wider public, and launched its media strategy.



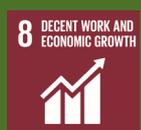
ICA - Supporting Sovereignty

## ICA Vision

ICA envisions a future built upon solutions that actively affirm, incorporate and uphold the knowledge and rights of Indigenous peoples, as defined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Indigenous customary laws and the Principles of Climate Justice [Bali 2002]. Indigenous sovereignty and autonomy are critical to climate justice, in order to implement effective solutions that are guided by the ancestral wisdom of our Elders, knowledge holders and land users. This will allow Indigenous peoples to effectively reclaim our roles and responsibilities as stewards, caretakers and protectors of the lands, waterways, and biodiversity of the planet, as well as ensure Indigenous cultural and spiritual survival.

**2019 Goals:** Youth focus; Sustainable Energy Sovereignty; Workshops, Gatherings and Resources.

ICA contributes to these SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) being achieved:



## What ICA Has Done *continued* ...

- launched a Crowdfunding Campaign to support Indigenous-led media on climate actions and climate solutions
- launched Indigenous Climate Change Media project
- built strategic partnerships with the Indigenous Environmental Network, Rainforest Action Network, Treaty 8, Pacific Peoples Partnership, Toitū Manawa Trust and 350.org

During 2018 ICA rolled out the toolkit project through 14 community workshops and facilitated sessions across Canada with Indigenous communities. From this, ICA are developing Indigenous tools and resources that will elevate Indigenous climate solutions and inspire others to take action.

Along with the toolkit, ICA are developing an Indigenous-led media strategy that will insert Indigenous voices, values, and inherent rights at the centre of climate action. ICA is working within its networks to develop articles, webinars, mini-documentaries, and podcasts to share Indigenous climate action and solutions with other Indigenous communities. Moving forward, this will be an important project in helping to grow the climate justice movement and empowering Indigenous peoples to take action in their communities.

***“The mainstream media often portrays Indigenous peoples as victims of catastrophes in climate stories and rarely portrays Indigenous peoples as active agents of change. We wanted to adjust that perception by telling the true stories of our knowledge keepers, land defenders and water protectors, as well as uplift our voices in the public discourse and climate discussions.”***

ICA 2018, Annual Report

## ICA's Ways of Achieving Good Practise: How It Is Done

ICA works to empower our communities and inspire Indigenous peoples to take climate action. It focuses on four main areas of activity:

**1. Gatherings** - hosting gatherings of Indigenous peoples to discuss how climate change is impacting local lands and waters. ICA work hard to build a network of Indigenous communities, nations and organizations taking real action on climate change. Bringing people together in person and online helps to grow the land-based climate movement. Visit [ICA's Toolkit page](#) to learn more.

**2. Amplifying Voices** - ICA is committed to developing climate action and climate solutions by Indigenous peoples for Indigenous peoples, centring their inherent rights, knowledge, and worldview within climate change discussion. See [Stories of Resilience](#) and [News and Blogs](#) for more on ICA's Indigenous-led media.



**3. Producing Resources** - for Indigenous peoples, by Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples hold unique knowledge that can be used to build solid solutions for climate change. Sharing stories from the ground is one of the most powerful ways that ICA inform and inspire others to build climate solutions. ICA aim to elevate indigenous voices and values through their media and toolkit projects.

**4. Supporting Indigenous sovereignty** - ICA supports Indigenous communities in making decisions that affect them and their well-being. To ICA and the communities they represent sovereignty means the right to decide what's best for our people and territories. See some of the communities ICA partners with on the [Support ICA page](#).

As an example of its media work, and its connections across indigenous peoples globally, ICA sat down with India Logan-Riley from Te Ara Whatu during the *REDTIDE Climate Action Summit and Youth Conference* in Aotearoa (New Zealand, July 2018). She discussed the importance of young Indigenous People being involved in climate conversations and the power of Indigenous people coming together to build climate solutions - watch the interview [here](#)

In Sept 2018 in San Francisco, at the Solidarity to Solutions Week countering the Global Action Climate Summit, frontline leaders hosted a rally and delivered an open letter rejecting Governor Jerry Brown's Climate and Forest Task Force and demanding its cancellation. Advocates blocked the entrance to Gov. Brown's Climate and Forest Task Force meeting and risked arrest as they demanded entry. Calling out the false solutions the Task Force continues to push which do nothing to stop global warming, local and international Indigenous leaders delivered an open letter to Governor Brown and members of the Task Force. The letter states:

*“You cannot commodify the sacred -- we reject these market based climate change solutions and projects like the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation program (REDD+), because they are false solutions that further destroy our rights, our ability to use our forests, and our sovereignty and self-determination. The Governors' Climate and Forests Task Force does not represent us and has no authority over our peoples and territories.”*

Other examples of ICA activities include the following:

- Multiple actions related to the Trans Mountain pipeline and its proposed expansion project, which has not obtained consent from many of the Indigenous communities along its route and violates tenants of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which the Canadian Government bailed out by purchasing from Kinder Morgan in August 2018, and which has had four major spills since 2005.
- [Violence Against the Land is Violence Against Women Webinar](#) - Women are the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. This webinar explores how violence against the land through the extraction and exploitation of resources and fossil fuels perpetuates violence against women.
- Attendance at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), April 2018, United Nations, New York NY.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



15 LIFE ON LAND



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



## Permaculture Principles & Design in Action

Although ICA is not involved directly in permaculture, they state that years of experience has taught them that all it takes is one small change to make a big impact - which reflects a key permaculture principle, 'make the smallest change for the biggest effect'.

As both draw on the deep wisdom and experience of nature, many permaculture principles resonate with the values and principles of indigenous peoples'. Some permaculture principles draw directly on indigenous wisdom, most notably: **Apply Self Regulation and Accept Feedback**: "The sins of the fathers are visited on the children of the seventh generation".

ICA's work is rooted in discouraging inappropriate activity to ensure that indigenous and natural systems can function well in the future.

ICA's work also relates to the permaculture tool **Removal of Limiting Factors**: increasing climate literacy, training communities on the rights of indigenous peoples and providing an ICA toolkit all remove factors that limit action being taken by indigenous peoples.

Permaculture Principles in Action: make small changes for big effects; observe & interact; apply self-regulation & accept feedback.

## From Inspiration to Action

The ICA Toolkit and four focused themes - Gatherings; Amplifying Voices; Producing Resources; and Supporting Indigenous sovereignty - feed and lubricate an education-for-action system and approach.

What experience from ICA could help your project, community or network in relation to:

- Increasing climate change literacy in your communities.
- Developing a toolkit to support and grow grassroots mobilization and capacity building
- Face-to-face interactions and online communications that lead people and communities to take action and become agents of change in building a climate stable future.

The inherent indigenous values and principles that sit within and behind ICA's work are as much an inspiration as the methods they use in their work. In this sense, permaculture and other movements can be inspired to understand the importance of our values of earth care, people care and fair share being embedded in our hearts and spirits, as well as our minds, for them to be lived through our actions.

## The Difference the Lush Spring Prize has made

"The LUSH Spring Prize has been a huge and truly impactful boost for our burgeoning organization. We were able to grow from a volunteer-run project to a national network with experienced and dedicated staff that are helping us to grow the movement for Indigenous-led climate justice. This enabled us to significantly scale-up our efforts, and achieve greater success in building our network. As a national organization aiming to connect with communities across a vast geographic region, we have also invested heavily in our electronic and online communications.

Since receiving the Prize, ICA have become a source for Indigenous peoples to access tools and information on climate change and climate solutions, and an organization that environmental and ally organizations reach out to. ICA are becoming the authority on Indigenous-led climate justice. Being a unique Indigenous-led project, we are well-situated to represent our communities, the impacts climate change as in Indigenous territories, and the solutions that we are seeing on the ground.

We are so appreciative of companies like LUSH who model a socially and environmentally approach to business.

Haw'aa, mussi cho, and thank you."

## Legal Status, Structure & Size: Project start date: 2015

ICA is an Indigenous-led organization, guided by a Steering Committee of Indigenous peoples from communities & regions across the country. ICA's staff team was formed in 2017 and now includes Executive Director, Development Director, Director of Operations and Youth Coordinator. Indigenous Climate Action is fiscally-sponsored by the Polaris Institute, a registered non-profit organization in Canada and 501(c)(3) organization within the United States.

## Funding, Finance, Resources

ICA had a healthy 2018 budget with income being balanced between philanthropic money (59.4% grants) and donations from individual friends and supporters (35.8%), and 4.8% earned/other. ICA's breakdown of 2018 expenditure (Cdn\$556,000) is published in its Annual Report. ICA was a LUSH Spring Prize 2017 winner in the Young Project category (£25,000).

## Potential Areas for Collaboration with Project (Local, Regional, National or International)

ICA's Needs: [5 Ways to Support ICA](#);

ICA's Offers: [Indigenous Climate Change Toolkit](#) and [Webinar series](#)

Other opportunities: collaboration with other indigenous peoples' and climate action organisations around the world.

## Contact Information

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### International Permaculture Education Network (IPEN)

Increasing the effectiveness and coherence of permaculture education internationally

IPEN Case Studies have been enabled by the Lush Spring Prize

IPEN website <https://www.permaculture.org.uk/ipen>

