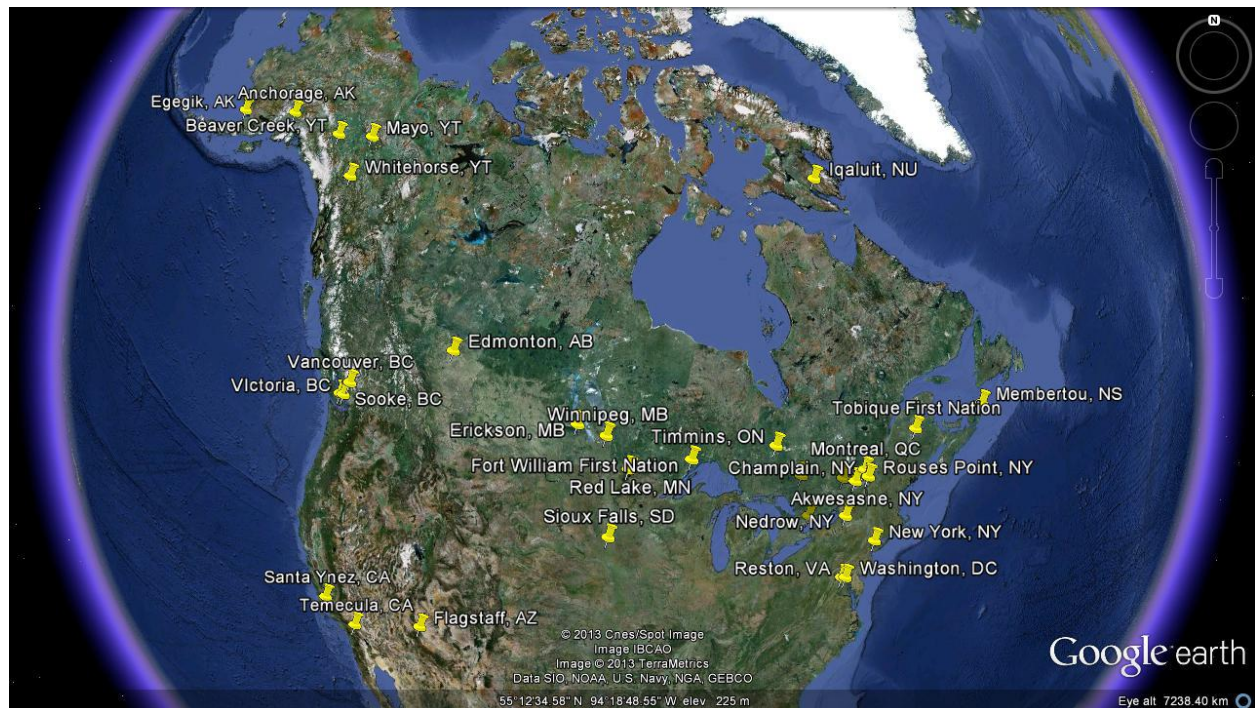


(Disponible en anglais seulement)
(Disponible solamente en inglés)

Facilitating Action to Address Climate Change Adaption Needs in Indigenous North America Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER)

Project Summary - Part I. Description

Participating organizations and geographic location of the project



Participants at CIER-Akwesasne Forum 2012.jpg

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Background or problem statement

Climate change will have adverse impacts on all communities. Indigenous communities are particularly vulnerable to these changes, given their relationships with lands/waters and dependence on natural resources. To address this, indigenous, aboriginal, and tribal groups will require strong efforts to plan for and adapt to projected changes, yet adaptation planning has largely not occurred. Indigenous groups in North America have different ecosystems and cultural realities; however, all are stewards of their environments and given the opportunity, could learn from each other to develop plans and programs to build resiliency and long-term sustainability. This project convened a group of people working directly on climate change adaptation issues in their communities and organizations to share information, learn about adaptation planning, and build networks.

General description of the project

The primary goal of this project was to host a workshop to further capacity building among tribal and indigenous groups to build resilience in their communities and adapt to climate change. A forum of 55 people was held in Akwesasne, a First Nation and Tribal community in Canada and the USA from September 18-20, 2012. Participants came from 7 provinces and 3 territories in Canada, and 7 states in the USA.

Representatives from the Canadian departments Health Canada, Aboriginal and Northern Development Canada, and the US EPA and Geological Services attended. The forum was a combination of formal presentations, case study presentations by participants, group discussions, networking opportunities and cultural events. A second meeting of 10 people was held in Toronto on December 3-4, 2012 to delve more deeply into adaptation planning processes, share additional local information, and foster meaningful networks and friendships among these participants. This second meeting was a working session focused on the purpose and methods of sharing western and traditional knowledge, internal and external communication and partnerships, and the adaptation planning steps.

Brief description of outcomes and follow-up

The project products include: 1) a written summary of the forum and the follow-up meeting in the form of a workshop report; 2) the adaptation getting started worksheets with an introductory letter to the reader; 3) PDF copies of the majority of the presentations given at the forum in Akwesasne, and 4) videos of several presentations.

Electronic copies of these documents are available on CIER's website at www.yourcier.org. The available case study presentations can be viewed on CIER World on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/user/CIERworld?feature=watch>

A short document titled, Lessons Learned: Tips to Hosting a Successful Indigenous Climate Change Planning Forum, is being completed with the working group members to allow others to build on the learnings from this project, and in particular the process involved in organizing a similar event. This will be made available shortly to the team and to the CEC.

Our immediate follow-up includes hosting monthly conference calls with the forum participants to continue momentum and sharing information about climate change adaptation planning and local actions. For more information about the project please contact Maria M'Lot at CIER.

Project Summary - Part II. Analysis

Successes

Hosting two events - the forum and the working meeting - as part of this project was a great success, when only one event had been expected. This allowed people who participated in both meetings to gain a greater understanding of each other's needs and issues, discuss and learn more about adaptation planning, and strengthen relationships. It allowed CIER to complete the project in a more robust way, enhance the results of the project and to achieve the results, and more, as outlined in the proposal.

Three quotes were received to host the forum (two from Canada; one from the USA). The quote from Akwesasne was well thought out, reasonably priced, and provided a location where the participants would be in both Canada and the USA during the course of each day. This was an interesting experience for people, and also pointed out the transboundary nature of the issues (i.e. climate change impacts on food, plant and medicine security) at hand.

Planning for an event in a First Nation from away, and one that is not easily accessible without a vehicle took careful planning and regular communication between CIER and Akwesasne.

Dedicated time by a staff member of the Akwesasne Environment Department to the project was included in the cost for the First Nation to host the meeting, which ensured that the local logistical planning was a priority and completed.

All participants arrived and departed without major complications and were bused at two separate times between the Ottawa airport and the community through a collaboration with the local education department and the project hiring of a school bus and driver. The hotel, meeting space, food, videography, crafter tables, dancing performance, boat tour, presenter gifts were all organized in collaboration with Akwesasne and provided economic support to the local community.

Challenges

Travel planning for large gathering is often a logistical challenge. CIER used a travel agent to complete the flight bookings which was very helpful. Coordinating travel for the Akwesasne forum required contacting people and booking flights during the summer months, which meant booking delays due long response times from participants (e.g. due to vacations). Completing all of the travel booking was required before CIER and Akwesasne could plan local bus transportation around arrival times. Patience and flexibility on all parts was required at this stage, and as participants arrived and had to wait, sometimes for several hours, for the bus.

Connecting with Oren Lyons, an Elder and key presenter at the forum was difficult given his schedule and phone contact only. Fortunately one of the EPA working group members was able to coordinate his participation.

The video recording was completed by a member of the communications group in Akwesasne.

This service and the associated equipment was included in the fee to host the workshop.

Unfortunately, the video was not edited (as was the intension) which caused delays in posting the presentations. When CIER received the unediting video several presentations were missing. We believe that there is an additional disk that was missed when it was sent to CIER and have requested that the community look for this. The quality of the video recording (the choice of angle, what is captured in the video) and the sound is also poor. CIER has posted the available presentations on its CIER World YouTube channel but they are not as useful to the public as we had anticipated. To edit and post reasonable videos, CIER purchased an editing software (as webinars were not deemed useful for the adaptation worksheets, this replaced the need for webinar software purchase).

Lessons Learned

Requiring people to apply to attend the forum, and request travel sponsorship as needed, was a success. This is different from CIER's approach to hosting workshops in the past, where participants have been identified and approached directly. In this case, because the project included the USA where CIER does not have a network (yet the EPA, a working group member does) casting the invitation widely among all our networks allowed for a broader reach. The requests to attend via travel sponsorship exceeded the space available at the forum, indicating the interest in, and need for, such an event.

Gathering together in person was an effective way of building relationships, trust and then capacity for adaptation planning. This way of sharing knowledge is a culturally appropriate method of learning and building capacity for climate change adaptation planning. Other tools such as worksheets, newsletters, email, conference calls, etc. can be used much more successfully to continue to build capacity and communicate now that people have established initial relationships. Formal facilitation, as identified earlier, was lacking and was needed at the forum. In the future such a person should be identified early on and agree to their role and scope of the work required in a more formal manner. In-person or dedicated calls with the facilitator should take place more often (there were two calls).

Alternatively, a third CIER staff could have attended the forum to take over general running of the forum to allow a CIER facilitator. The decision to video-record the forum was intended provide participants a chance to review the materials, and for others to benefit from the presentations. CIER assumed the quality of the video would be sufficient. In future, asking for work samples or completing this task internally would be more effective economic benefit as possible.

What next?

As a First Nation non-profit organization, CIER, is well positioned to continue to plan and host these types of events. CIER will host monthly conference calls for interested forum participants for the twelve months to continue to build relationships and share knowledge and resources. This will give people an opportunity to connect with each other and share high level results, actions, issues that can then be follow-up between individuals afterwards.

There is also a desire among the participants to meet again in-person. This to occur in a variety of different ways, such as: additional international meetings, regional meetings; creating a core working group (e.g. such as the group who attended the second meeting) from diverse geographic locations to then branch out in their local areas; build in a train-the-trainer approach so that key topics were covered during core group meetings that could then be shared. Including Indigenous communities and groups from other countries would also add value to the dialogue, the adaptation planning toolbox, and foster new relationships. Oftentimes, the experiences in the 'development planning' community, which tends to be the international community has more relevance to Indigenous communities than the 'urban planning' taking place closer to home. Participatory methodologies and action research are examples. Lastly, continued relationship building with government departments and western

scientists will help these groups understand the value and role of Indigenous knowledge in climate change adaptation. It will also build trust between the (largely) non-Indigenous government staff and scientists, and Indigenous leaders and communities, which is required for partnerships, and joint adaptation solutions.

For more information about this project, please contact:

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