

# Indigenous Engagement in Carbon Removal

## Insights from Rise Consulting's Research

Rise Consulting Ltd. was engaged by [Carbon Removal Canada](#) to provide research, both primary and secondary, regarding the priorities of Indigenous Peoples, communities, and organizations who are thinking of engaging in carbon dioxide removal and clean energy activities. Following desk research, Rise Consulting Ltd. identified major themes and conducted community interviews with key actors in clean technology verticals, with subject matter experts, and Indigenous clean technology business owners who are also members of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB). Outcomes and key findings for carbon removal actors to consider are summarized below.

### Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Long-Practised Knowing

- Some Indigenous communities are taking an active role in funding and resourcing their own projects, focusing on self-determination, sovereignty, and cultural preservation.
- Communication with Indigenous communities must prioritize authenticity, respect, and consensus-building, incorporating TEK and Indigenous perspectives while respecting cultural protocols and language. Financial and operational considerations should go beyond project-specific transactions to foster enduring relationships and community growth.
- Land-based kinship and teachings, sometimes called TEK, are integral to Indigenous communities' decision-making regarding projects. Teachings emphasize balance and interconnected relationships with land, resources, culture, and people.
- Indigenous Nations prioritize the integrity, preservation and restoration of lands, resources, and culture, guided by ancestral teachings and values. They hold deep concerns about potential harm caused by projects.

### Free, Prior, Informed Consent (FPIC) and Creating Value Within Community

- Indigenous communities inherit a legacy of trust betrayed by prior extractive and exploitative projects, which creates skepticism towards new endeavours, including clean energy and carbon removal projects.
- Building trust and enduring relationships requires reciprocity, alignment with community values, and a holistic approach to leadership and project development. It involves recognizing the interconnectedness of the community and the importance of economic, cultural, and governance well-being. The adoption of ESG standards and regulatory frameworks reinforces the need for FPIC and community-centred value creation.
- The era of one-sided, performative, and disingenuous consultation with Indigenous communities has ended. Developers should look toward earlier, meaningful engagement in project development, incorporating cultural knowledge and values.
- The principle of FPIC is an explicit norm in Indigenous Relations, and it is being actively integrated into legislative and policy processes, as mandated by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).



## Stewardship, Land Rights, and Land Management

- Indigenous worldview emphasizes land kinship, animacy, and interconnectedness, and incorporates the land as a rights holder integral to identity and culture.
- Stewardship of the land is of utmost importance to Indigenous communities, involving protection, preservation, and support for spiritual, sacred, and cultural places and practices.
- Clean energy and environmental science projects have historically excluded Indigenous relational interests and natural law, favouring developer benefits, but a new standard is emerging where projects must meet the immediate needs of the community without compromising stewardship.
- Policies and organizational culture should uphold Indigenous land rights, self-determination, and equitable benefit-sharing, aligning with Indigenous values.
- Communication and marketing should prioritize transparency, education, and engagement with Indigenous teachings, while operations and finance should budget for Elder and Knowledge Keeper guidance, incorporate cultural values into planning, and facilitate community participation in projects and access to resources/knowledge for sustainable development.

## Cultural Rights

- Cultural rights, as protected by UNDRIP, encompass the preservation and development of Indigenous peoples' cultural lineage, traditional knowledge, language, and cultural expressions. Linked to projects, they contribute to cultural revitalization and intergenerational knowledge transmission.
- Acknowledging and respecting Indigenous traditional knowledge and culture can help address historical harms, such as broken treaties, residential schools, and the epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People (MMIWP), fostering healing and reconciliation.
- Indigenous survivance, defined as the enduring core of Indigenous cultures, should be celebrated, emphasizing resilience and adaptation over colonialist narratives of absence and powerlessness.
- To promote equity and mutuality, policymakers and technology developers in carbon removal must prioritize respectful relationships, inclusive planning, and mutually beneficial outcomes, aligning with the spirit of treaties and reconciliation efforts.
- This requires cultural competency, anti-racism training, and understanding Indigenous resilience, diversity, and voice. Communication and marketing must engage Indigenous communities respectfully, avoid stereotypes, seek informed consent, provide context, fact-check rigorously, avoid exploitation, and involve Indigenous communications professionals.

### How do each of these themes apply to your organization's Indigenous engagement plans?

Indigenous engagement is central to the responsible scaling of carbon removal solutions. We hope this report serves as a starting point of discussion for carbon removal organizations.

### Interested in discussing this further?

Reach out to [info@carbonremoval.ca](mailto:info@carbonremoval.ca)

