Climate Change and Impacts on Indigenous Forestland Stewardship

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Tribal Forestry: Understanding Current Issues and Challenges
1. Tribes and Climate Change
2. Tribal Resilience
3. Tribal Climate Leadership
4. Conclusion and Questions
American Indian Forestry

- 574 Federally Recognized Tribes
- 19 million acres
- Tribes managed their lands to meet many goals for generations
- Managed many changes
- All tribes are different: separate nations, cultures and history
Climate Change is a major issue for American Indian communities.
“Climate change continues to negatively affect the livelihoods, health, and cultural practices of Indigenous Peoples, as well as the ecological resilience of their territories. Self-determination is key to implementing effective resilience strategies that meet the needs of Indigenous communities. Indigenous Peoples are leading climate adaptation and mitigation actions guided by Indigenous Knowledge and values.”

nca2023.globalchange.gov
“Tribal members feel that climate change has a direct impact on their use of tribal forest lands.”

-Finding V4
Tribal Resilience
Confronting Climate Change in the Great Lakes Region (Kling et al. 2003)
Potawatomi "Trail of Death" march: Sept. – Nov. 1838

Designates 1838 Potawatomi "Trail of Death" route starting in Indiana, crossing Illinois and Missouri, and ending at present day Osawatomie, Kansas.

In September 1838 over 850 Potawatomi Indian people were rounded up and marched at gunpoint from their Indiana homeland. Many walked the 650-mile distance, which took two months. More than 40 died, mostly children, of typhoid fever and the stress of the forced removal.

Dots on Trail are some of the 48 places where the Potawatomi people camped one night or more on the forced removal, and certain other locations mentioned in the official journal kept by a government agent.
What does this mean for our cultures? All our relations?
• Partnerships
• Climate Adaptation
• On-the-Ground Projects
Perspectives on partnership and collaboration from the Manoomin Project
Partnership Building
Strategy #1

Acknowledge past and present harms
Partnership Building

Strategy #2

Collaborate as equals

- Respect tribal knowledge
- Respect tribal labor
- Respect tribal goals
Partnership Building Strategy #3
Data protocols – Formal Agreements – Leadership
Partnership Building Strategy #4
Foster personal relationships
Tribally lead partnerships are the foundation of integrating Indigenous Knowledge into natural resource management and climate adaptation.
Tribal leadership in climate adaptation
Indigenous peoples face a wide range of vulnerable opportunities regarding the impacts of climate change. The Indigenous Climate Resilience Network (ICRN) convene Indigenous peoples to identify threats to Indigenous self-determination and ways of life and formulate adaptation and mitigation strategies, and educational programs that build Indigenous capacity to address climate-related issues.

This website provides the latest tools and resources for Indigenous peoples and scientists to work together in meeting the current challenges of climate change.
Innovative Adaptation Strategies

#1. Consider cultural practices and seek spiritual guidance.
   – elders, reciprocity, all our relations, both tangible and intangible

#2. Support tribal engagement in the environment.
   – Language programs, youth, partnerships

#11. Encourage community adjustments and transition while maintaining reciprocity and balance.
   – new mixes of local beings and/or bakaan ingoji ga-ondaadag (non-local beings)
NCA5 Key Message #3: Indigenous Leadership Guides Climate Change Response

The Tsha’ Thoñswatha’ firehouse and community hall in the Onondaga Nation relies on renewable energy and meets a net-zero standard of energy use.

**FIGURE 16.7.** The firehouse was designed in collaboration with the community and reflects the Onondaga Nation’s language and culture. Photo credits: © Kelsey Leonard, University of Waterloo.
On-the-ground projects

• Tribes are not going anywhere
• Tribes live closely with land management decisions
• Tribes have responsibilities for all our relations
Sustainable Forestry as continued on-the-ground innovation
Anchor Forests - PNW

“Tribes are leaders and conveners rather than stakeholders or participants”

“Joint long-term commitments to harvest and steward [landscapes] to strategically promote ecological resilience across the landscape and economic vitality of the local forest-products industry”

Fire/Fuels Management
Is climate change the main issue for tribes?
Research Article - policy

An Assessment of American Indian Forestry Research, Information Needs, and Priorities

Michael J Dockry,¹,* Serra J. Hoagland,² Adrian D Leighton,³ James R Durglo,⁴ and Amit Pradhananga¹,*
Results: Top 10 Overall Research Needs

1. Forest health
2. Silviculture
3. Water quality
4. Workforce development/training
5. Fish and wildlife responses to treatments
6. Fuels management
7. Planting/reforestation
8. Planning
9. Growth and yield
10. Invasive species
Most Important Themes

- Water
- Fish and wildlife
- Traditional ecological knowledge integration
Where is climate change?

• Important but not ranked as high as other on-the-ground topics
• Maybe there is enough information already?
• Climate change is long-term vs other topics?
• Climate change might not be seen as a stand-alone topic!
Conclusions

• Climate change is fundamentally important to tribes and tribal lands
• Change, resilience, and adaptation are tribal experiences and values
• Climate change is not new for tribal communities
• Tribals are leading climate adaptation
  – Partnerships
  – Adaptation Planning
  – On-the-ground projects
• Tribal Sovereignty and Self Determination!