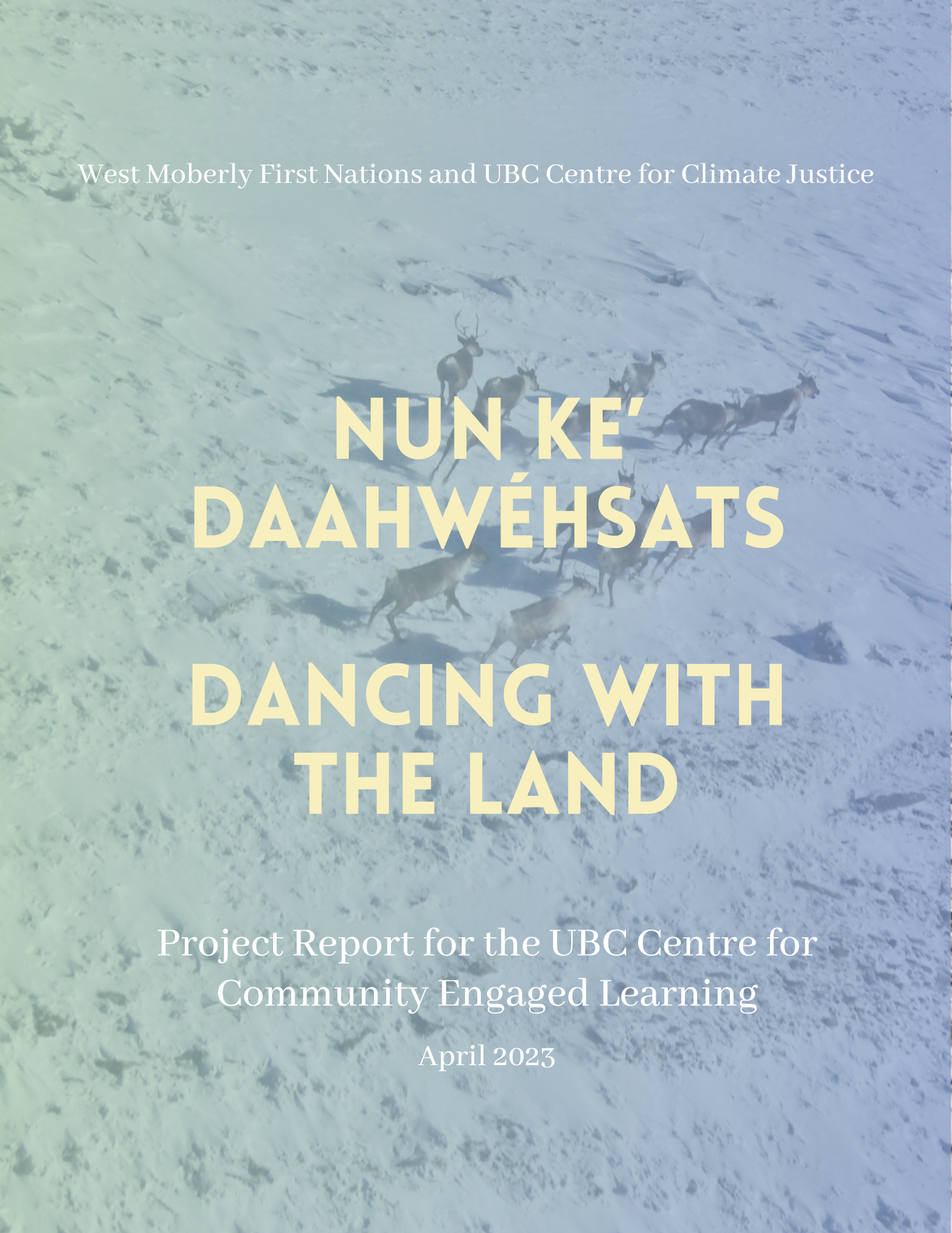


West Moberly First Nations and UBC Centre for Climate Justice

An aerial photograph of a herd of caribou running through a snowy, forested landscape. The caribou are in the center of the frame, moving from the upper left towards the lower right. The snow is bright white, and the trees are dark green and brown. The overall scene is dynamic and captures a moment of movement in a winter setting.

**NUN KE'  
DAAHWÉHSATS  
DANCING WITH  
THE LAND**

Project Report for the UBC Centre for  
Community Engaged Learning

April 2023

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2022, the UBC Centre for Community Engaged Learning awarded the Chapman and Innovation Grant to Nun ke' Daahwéhsats / Dancing with the Land.

This grant was used to convene West Moberly First Nations (WMFN) and UBC researchers on the topic of climate impacts and climate justice in WMFN's traditional territory. The objective of this meeting was to share knowledge about ongoing climate research at UBC and to explore potential climate-related research projects that would support WMFN's ability to plan for their community and lands with regard to climate change in the short and long term.

The cooperative climate research agenda (CCRA) put into motion at the Winter 2023 workshop will inform a multi-year process of collaborative climate and ecosystem research in WMFN territories.

This will allow WMFN to co-direct applied research on climate impacts, while also creating opportunities for UBC faculty and graduate students to participate in a long-term research project with implications for ecosystem restoration, climate justice, and Indigenous self-determination. These areas for future research are outlined in more detail below.

## ABOUT THIS PROJECT

Nun ke' Daahwéhsats / Dancing with the Land is a collaboration between West Moberly First Nations (WMFN) and the UBC Centre for Climate Justice (CCJ) that seeks to advance understanding of how climate change impacts and policies will impact Indigenous self-determination as well as the cultural values and rights associated with WMFN's terrestrial and aquatic environments. To accomplish these goals, WMFN and CCJ have partnered to establish a cooperative climate research agenda (CCRA), which will lay out research priorities and the next steps to fill these knowledge gaps in line with WMFN community priorities, values, and objectives.





# BACKGROUND

## Cumulative Effects, Climate Change & Environmental Racism in Northeastern BC

### BACKGROUND

Dunne-za (Beaver people), the ancestors of West Moberly First Nations (WMFN), have successfully navigated climatic and ecosystem changes for the past 15,000 years. Colonial systems have significantly increased the pace and scale of change over the past few hundred years; WMFN is now confronted with rapid, human-driven climate change that may result in further losses to their Indigenous way of life. As with many governments, climate impacts are not currently well-factored into WMFN's decision-making and environmental planning and management. Nor are they presently considered within the scope of government-to-government consultation (G2G) processes pertaining to land uses and activities that contribute to climate change. Understanding the impacts of climate change on these landscapes is of particular importance given ongoing struggles to protect these ecosystems and their cultural value from the existing impacts of industrial development in Northeastern BC, particularly related to forestry, oil and gas exploration and development, hydropower development, and mining. Researching how to best protect and restore these landscapes in the face of these cumulative impacts is an urgent matter given their already-precarious position.

### DEVELOPING A COOPERATIVE CLIMATE RESEARCH AGENDA (CCRA)

The cooperative climate research agenda (CCRA) uses a community-based research model, which means that the foundations of research questions and objectives come from WMFN, including in the initial stages of project development. In contrast to traditional academic research plans, the CCRA will be drafted by the partners (including UBC faculty) and distilled by WMFN staff for WMFN community members, then disseminated through WMFN community protocols for feedback. After community feedback and revision, the final CCRA will be produced and used as a basis for fundraising and project formation, thus ensuring that the climate research plan addresses wider community priorities.

*Image courtesy of the Land Use Department of West Moberly First Nations.*

# 2023 WORKSHOP

## 2023 WORKSHOP AT UBC

In the Winter of 2023, WMFN Chief and Lands Department staff met with UBC faculty and researchers at the UBC campus in Vancouver to lay the foundation for the CCRA. The objective of this workshop was to advance meaningful and consequential relationship-building, knowledge exchange, and research planning around climate change impacts and policies. Through exchanges between WMFN Chief and staff and UBC professors with expertise in climate-related research, we contextualized what is known and unknown about existing and projected climate change in WMFN territory and determined some initial directions for research that might support efforts for Indigenous self-determination and environmental justice.

The topics of the discussion, based on faculty presentations, included:

Rachel White	Climate projections, impacts and knowledge gaps for British Columbia
Tongli Wang	Biogeoclimatic Ecosystem Classification modeling for WMFN territory
Jeanine Rhemtulla	Aligning habitat restoration with cultural values and forest change
Jocelyn Stacey	Tsilhqot'in Nation's Collaborative Emergency Management Agreement
Kaitlyn Gaynor	Impacts of wildlife, extreme weather and climate change on animals
Dawn Hoogeveen	Health and climate impacts, and Indigenous health impacts
Bernard Perley	Language, environmental change, and self-determination



**West Moberly First Nations Chief and Lands Department Staff met with UBC Faculty to identify knowledge gaps and potential pathways for research on climate impacts in Northeastern BC.**



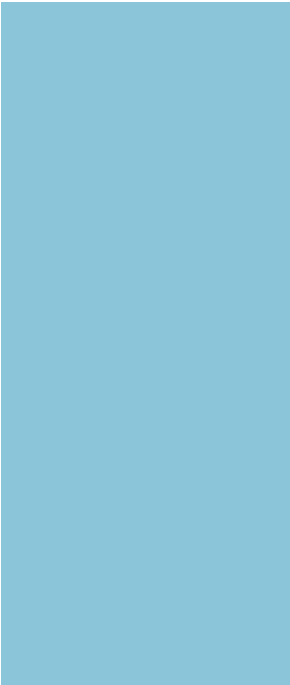
# RESEARCH AGENDA 1

## UNDERSTANDING THE ECOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN WEST MOBERLY TERRITORY

Spatialize the potential and projected climate impacts upon ecosystems in WMFN territory, through further Biogeoclimatic Ecosystem Classification modeling and connection with on the ground impacts.

Study these climate impacts with regard to harvesting, traplines and other cultural practices, such as extreme heat, on species of key importance to both Indigenous ways of life and overall ecosystem health.

Examine how the projected vegetation change is affecting on-the-ground ecosystem change by establishing a current baselines and initiating monitoring programs.



Engage WMFN community around existing climate information and projects in order to develop priorities for both further research and for policy and planning action.

Establish cultural and climate-informed plans for protection and restoration of significant ecosystems facing threats from industrial development and climate change impacts.

# RESEARCH AGENDA 2

ASSESSING THE POSSIBILITIES AND PRIORITIES FOR PREVENTING OR AMELIORATING IMPACTS ON CULTURAL PRACTICES AND RIGHTS

As a part of this event, West Moberly First Nations Chief Roland Wilson gave a public lecture on land, culture, and cumulative effects in Northeastern British Columbia





# RESEARCH AGENDA 3

## **PLANNING FOR EXTREME WEATHER AND DISASTER EVENTS IN WEST MOBERLY TERRITORY.**

Pursue more accurate weather predictions at a small scale for WMFN territory in the face of climate change, in order to understand what types of extreme events may impact the WMFN community.

Assess the potential climate-related impacts of hydroelectric development on WMFN territory.

Create community plans to prepare for extreme weather, recognizing the rights of WMFN to establish their own emergency protocols in the face of events such as wildfires and extreme heat.

# NEXT STEPS

REFINE AND DEVELOP THE CCRA

These initial areas of research and collaboration came out of the Winter 2023 workshop and will be taken back to the WMFN government and community for input and prioritization.

After community feedback and revision, the highest priority research projects will be further refined and developed as the first research plan of the CCRA, which can be used as a basis for fundraising for these research projects.



# PROJECT CONTACTS

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The collaborators behind this project would like to acknowledge that the work for this project took place on the unceded ancestral lands of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō and Səlílwəta?/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

We would also like to thank the following individuals for their contribution, feedback, and support given to this project: Sally Otto, Nicola Love, Mary O'Connor, Sara Nelson, Naomi Schwartz, Maggie Low, and Jennifer Williams.



## ABOUT WMFN

West Moberly First Nations is a unified and self-sustaining community that is in control of our own future, uniting our community in building for the future. Our mission is to positively enhance the progression of West Moberly First Nations ethics with respect, honesty, fairness, integrity, and self motivation by promoting open communication with members, Chief & Council and staff.

<https://westmo.org/>

## ABOUT CCJ

The Centre for Climate Justice works with movements, communities, students, and policy makers to develop research and analysis that addresses climate breakdown in connection with multiple, interlinked, and cascading crises. We believe that climate justice at its best is the labour of repair, redistribution, and world building.

<https://climatejustice.ubc.ca/>