

Participant Declaration

At the end of the 2017 summit, the participants wrote the following declaration, which they presented at a press conference in Whitehorse on August 22, 2017.

From August 16th – 22nd, 2017, 11 youth participants from the three northern territories came together in Whitehorse, Yukon, for the 2017 Young Leaders' Summit on Northern Climate Change. During this week, we learned from each other, community members, and local organizations about the land and the effect that climate change is having on it, as well as ways that the communities are adapting to these changes.

We have learned that the struggles the north is facing with the changing climate are complex and far reaching. In addition to the environmental impacts, these changes affect modern and traditional ways of life, mental and physical health, as well as socioeconomic wellbeing. We have learned that as young leaders we have power to incite change. This declaration has been developed to be accessible to all, to encourage individuals to take up positive lifestyle changes, and to motivate youth to become leaders in their community.

As northern climate leaders, we commit to:

Networking

- Maintaining and growing the pan-territorial network created through these Summits,
- Continuing to foster resource and knowledge sharing,
- Sharing our experiences, observations, and research,

Actively Making Changes in Our Lifestyles

- Working towards resource sustainability, conscious consumption, and reducing our carbon footprints,
- Supporting initiatives and organizations that address climate change,
- Expanding our knowledge of climate change,
- Pursuing an understanding of government relations and policy, and ways to go about effecting meaningful change,

Fostering Communication and Action

- Effecting and encouraging change in our peers,
- Organizing and leading environmental initiatives within our communities and social circles,
- Creating dialogue on the topic of climate change.

We call on all levels of government, community organizations and self-governing First Nations to:

- Develop and implement strong climate change adaptation and action plans,

- Support organizations and initiatives that advocate sustainable resource usage and climate education,
- Embrace the implementation of policies which work to reduce negative human impact, through legislations such as the carbon tax.

The unique situation of the north calls for innovation within the areas of:

Industry

- To be proactive leaders within the environmental field, developing strong climate protocols before policy requires it and
- To reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by initiating energy reduction projects and converting to renewable energy sources.

Research

- To recognize that the scientific method is not the only way to collect data and understand the land,
- To fill information gaps that address the needs and concerns of northern communities, and
- To respect local culture and to disseminate results to communities involved.

We are making this declaration because future generations depend upon our collective action not only to try to preserve our way of life and the natural beauty of the North, but also to adapt with it. We urge all individuals to respect the implications of climate change.

We achieve this by recognizing the inherent value of these Indigenous lands and through furthering our education on traditional knowledge and current research.

We commit to make change.