

NATIVE COMMUNITY AND CLIMATE VIEWS

BACKGROUND

Indigenous communities experience many environmental stresses, including water availability, unhealthy soil, and poor water quality impacting human health. To address these issues, "locally relevant" and "regionally specific" information should be used to tailor sustainable solutions to the needs of each area.

"Indigenous responses to challenges are strongly based on their values, creativity, and ingenuity. It is not enough just to solve a problem, but to solve it in a way that is consistent with such values as ancestral teachings, moral responsibilities, relational accountability to the community and the natural world, trust, reciprocity, and consent"

The Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals Status of Tribes and Climate Change Working Group, 2021

OBJECTIVE

Understand how Indigenous peoples in Southeastern Utah view climate change and how it impacts their communities.

RESULTS

1. Exploitation of resources on Indigenous land has impacted Indigenous livelihoods and traditions

"I wish that a long, long time ago they didn't find that uranium. The uranium is in the water table now. That's the water that we drink. My understanding is not far away from those water tables are the main water tables that are going to affect my community." (P17)

2. Access issues to resources such as money, clean water, healthcare, etc.

"We have absolutely no economic base here on the reservation. So, we really don't have any type of resources to come up with different programs to help our communities where climate change or economic development are a concern. So, we must look at different organizations who are willing to provide some of these monetary resources." (P5)

3. Knowledge sharing is becoming difficult

"There are a lot of songs that only certain elders know now that a lot of people never learned that they can't pass on anymore." (P15)

4. Privacy

"How much more do we have to give up for people to realize that this is our lives, we want to keep as much of it intact and within ourselves within the communities and not be exposed to everyone else." (P5)



COLLABORATORS

WOMEN OF BEARS EARS

RURAL UTAH PROJECT

NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES
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NATURE
Native American Tribes Upholding Restoration & Education

5. Climate Change and Capitalism

"I want everybody to say this with me: colonialism causes climate change, okay? Say it with me: colonialism causes climate change. When you have an economy that's built on extraction, more and more capitalism. 'I need more stuff. Bigger is better.' If there's not an opportunity to make profit, they don't want to do it. And as Indigenous people, we don't really look at things like that. That was a very non-Indigenous settlers' mentality. Now the settlers that came here, that was their way of doing business, they came here, killed a lot of people, raped the land, and it's been continuing for the last 500 years of occupation. We have to change the way we think of things, we have to not only include indigenous people, but they need to be leading the charge. There needs to be a change, a shift in power. It's hard for people who are settlers to realize that because they've been driving the car for the last three to 400 years. But it's funny because in the last 300 or 400 years, we're in a climate change crisis right now." (P18)

"Once we were colonized, you know, everything from there on has been adapting to 'progress'." (P6)

6. Climate Change and Food Sovereignty

"It affects our crops; it affects our lifestyle. This is our food this is how we survive because we don't have stores that are right next door, Walmart's that are 20 minutes away. Some people must travel hours. We rely on making sure our cattle our sheep, all those animals our crops survive in the season. Because at the end of our crop season, that's what's going to make us get through winter. And our crops don't grow like that, we are stuck halfway through winter, starving. Got to go to the city, go get food and pay those prices, and then processed food gets us sick, because we're so used to our foods on our land, with no processed, no pesticides, no extra sugars, no salt." (P15)

"You know, I noticed this year that there has been a lack of bees. So that pollination between, whether it's dry farming, or there's irrigated farming, any of that the lack of bees has really impacted growth, whether it's within the city or out in rural areas. That's another thing that would really help with a lot of these farmers, because a lot of them, they'll grow things, but they don't produce anything from it." (P6)

